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The Life of Charles Dickens

by John Forster

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John Forster was Dickens's closest friend, his literary adviser, and the keeper of his letters and papers, and this is the life Dickens himself planned for him to write. Three volumes, published between 1872 and 1874, follow the novelist from his Portsmouth childhood and the blacking factory through fame, America, and the great novels to his death in 1870. The Osgood edition of 1875, three volumes in two, is the text here.

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Dedication

TO THE

DAUGHTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS,

MY GOD-DAUGHTER MARY

AND

HER SISTER KATE,

This Book is Dedicated

BY THEIR FRIEND,

AND THEIR FATHER'S FRIEND AND EXECUTOR,

JOHN FORSTER

Note to the Present Edition

SUCH has been the rapidity of the demand for successive impressions of this book, that I have found it impossible, until now, to correct at pages 31, 87, and 97 three errors of statement made in the former editions; and some few other mistakes, not in themselves important, at pages 96, 101, and 102. I take the opportunity of adding that the mention at p. 83 is not an allusion to the well-known "Penny" and "Saturday" Magazines, but to weekly periodicals of some years' earlier date resembling them in form. One of them, I have since found from a later mention by Dickens himself, was presumably of a less wholesome and instructive character. "I used," he says, "when I was at school, to take in the Terrific Register, making myself unspeakably miserable, and frightening my very wits out of my head, for the small charge of a penny weekly; which, considering that there was an illustration to every number in which there was always a pool of blood, and at least one body, was cheap." An obliging correspondent writes to me upon my reference to the Fox-under-the-hill, at p. 62: "Will you permit me to say that the house, shut up and almost ruinous, is still to be found at the bottom of a curious and most precipitous court, the entrance of which is just past Salisbury Street. . . . It was once, I think, the approach to the halfpenny boats. The house is now shut out from the water-side by the Embankment."

PALACE GATE HOUSE, KENSINGTON, _23d December, 1871_.

Volume II: Corrections Made in the Later Editions of the First Volume

A NOTICE written under date of the 23rd December, 1871, appeared with the Tenth Edition. "Such has been the rapidity of the demand for successive impressions of this book, that I have found it impossible, until now, to correct at pages 31, 87, and 97 three errors of statement made in the former editions; and some few other mistakes, not in themselves important, at pages 96, 101, and 102. I take the opportunity of adding, that the mention at p. 83 is not an allusion to the well-known 'Penny' and 'Saturday' magazines, but to weekly periodicals of some years' earlier date resembling them in form. One of them, I have since found from a later mention by Dickens himself, was presumably of a less wholesome and instructive character. 'I used,' he says, 'when I was at school, to take in the Terrific Register, making myself unspeakably miserable, and frightening my very wits out of my head, for the small charge of a penny weekly; which, considering that there was an illustration to every number in which there was always a pool of blood, and at least one body, was cheap.' An obliging correspondent writes to me upon my reference to the Fox-under-the-hill, at p. 62: 'Will you permit me to say, that the house, shut up and almost ruinous, is still to be found at the bottom of a curious and most precipitous court, the entrance of which is just past Salisbury-street. . . . It was once, I think, the approach to the halfpenny boats. The house is now shut out from the water-side by the Embankment.'" I proceed to state in detail what the changes thus referred to were.

The passage about James Lamert, beginning at the thirteenth line of p. 31, now stands: "His chief ally and encourager in these displays was a youth of some ability, much older than himself, named James Lamert, stepson to his mother's sister and therefore a sort of cousin, who was his great patron and friend in his childish days. Mary, the eldest daughter of Charles Barrow, himself a lieutenant in the navy, had for her first husband a commander in the navy called Allen; on whose death by drowning at Rio Janeiro she had joined her sister, the navy-pay clerk's wife, at Chatham; in which place she subsequently took for her second husband Doctor Lamert, an army surgeon, whose son James, even after he had been sent to Sandhurst for his education, continued still to visit Chatham from time to time. He had a turn for private theatricals; and as his father's quarters were in the ordnance-hospital there, a great rambling place otherwise at that time almost uninhabited, he had plenty of room in which to get up his entertainments." Two other corrections were consequent on this change. At the 21st line of page 38, for "the elder cousin" read "the cousin by marriage;" and at the 31st line of p. 49, "cousin by his mother's side" should be "cousin by his aunt's marriage."

At the 15th line of the 41st page, "his bachelor-uncle, fellow-clerk," &c. should be "the uncle who was at this time fellow-clerk," &c. At the 11th line of page 54, "Charles-court" should be "Clare-court." The allusion to one of his favourite localities at the 23d line of page 62 should stand thus: "a little public-house by the water-side called the Fox-under-the-hill, approached by an underground passage which we once missed in looking for it together."

The passage at p. 87, having reference to an early friend who had been with him, as I supposed, at his first school, should run thus: "In this however I have since discovered my own mistake: the truth being that it was this gentleman's connection, not with the Wellington-academy, but with a school kept by Mr. Dawson in Hunter-street, Brunswick-square, where the brothers of Dickens were subsequently placed, which led to their early knowledge of each other. I fancy that they were together also, for a short time, at Mr. Molloy's in New-square, Lincoln's-inn; but, whether or not this was so, Dickens certainly had not quitted school many months before his father had made sufficient interest with an attorney of Gray's-inn, Mr. Edward Blackmore, to obtain him regular employment in his office." There is subsequent allusion to

the same gentleman (at p. 182) as his "school-companion at Mr. Dawson's in Henrietta-street," which ought to stand as "having known him when himself a law-clerk in Lincoln's-inn."

At p. 96 I had stated that Mr. John Dickens reported for the Morning Chronicle; and at p. 101 that Mr. Thomas Beard reported for the Morning Herald; whereas Mr. Dickens, though in the gallery for other papers, did not report for the Chronicle, and Mr. Beard did report for that journal; and where (at p. 102) Dickens was spoken of as associated with Mr. Beard in a reporting party which represented respectively the Chronicle and Herald, the passage ought simply to have described him as "connected with a reporting party, being Lord John Russell's Devonshire contest above-named, and his associate chief being Mr. Beard, entrusted with command for the Chronicle in this particular express."

At p. 97 I had made a mistake about his "first published piece of writing," in too hastily assuming that he had himself forgotten what the particular piece was. It struck an intelligent and kind correspondent as very unlikely that Dickens should have fallen into error on such a point; and, making personal search for himself (as I ought to have done), discovered that what I supposed to be another piece was merely the same under another title. The description of his first printed sketch should therefore be "(Mr. Minns and his Cousin, as he afterwards entitled it, but which appeared in the magazine as A Dinner at Poplar Walk)." There is another mistake at p. 159, of "bandy-legged" instead of "bulky-legged" and, at p. 177, of "fresh fields" for "fresh woods."

Those several corrections were made in the Tenth Edition. To the Eleventh these words were prefixed (under date of the 23rd of January, 1872): "Since the above mentioned edition went to press, a published letter has rendered necessary a brief additional note to the remarks made at pp. 155-6." The remark occurs in my notice of the silly story of Mr. Cruikshank having originated Oliver Twist, and, with the note referred to, now stands in the form subjoined. "Whether all Sir Benjamin's laurels however should fall to the person by whom the tale is told,* or whether any part belongs to the authority alleged for it, is unfortunately not quite clear. There would hardly have been a doubt, if the fable had been confined to the other side of the Atlantic; but it has been reproduced and widely circulated on this side also; and the distinguished artist whom it calumniates by attributing the invention to him has been left undefended from its slander. Dickens's letter spares me the necessity of characterizing, by the only word which would have been applicable to it, a tale of such incredible and monstrous absurdity as that one of the masterpieces of its author's genius had been merely an illustration of etchings by Mr. Cruikshank!" Note to the words "person by whom the tale is told:" "*This question has been partly solved, since my last edition, by Mr. Cruikshank's announcement in the Times, that, though Dr. Mackenzie had 'confused some circumstances with respect to Mr. Dickens looking over some drawings and sketches,' the substance of his information as to who it was that originated Oliver Twist, and all its characters, had been derived from Mr. Cruikshank himself. The worst part of the foregoing fable, therefore, has not Dr. Mackenzie for its author; and Mr. Cruikshank is to be congratulated on the prudence of his rigid silence respecting it as long as Mr. Dickens lived."

In the Twelfth Edition I mentioned, in the note at p. 149, a little work of which all notice had been previously omitted; and the close of that note now runs: "He had before written for them, without his name, Sunday under Three Heads; and he added subsequently a volume of Young Couples." At p. 157, "parish abuses" is corrected in the same edition to "parish practices;" and at p. 173, "in his later works" to "in his latest works."

I have received letters from several obliging correspondents, among them three or four who were scholars at the Wellington-house Academy before or after Dickens's time, and one who attended the school with him; but such remark as they suggest will more properly accompany my third and closing volume.

PALACE GATE HOUSE, KENSINGTON, _29th of October, 1872._

Volume I, Chapter 1 (1812-1822): Childhood

Volume I: 1812-1842

Childhood

CHARLES DICKENS, the most popular novelist of the century, and one of the greatest humorists that England has produced, was born at Landport in Portsea on Friday, the 7th of February, 1812.

His father, John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy-pay office, was at this time stationed in the Portsmouth dockyard. He had made acquaintance with the lady, Elizabeth Barrow, who became afterwards his wife, through her elder brother, Thomas Barrow, also engaged on the establishment at Somerset House; and she bore him in all a family of eight children, of whom two died in infancy. The eldest, Fanny (born 1810), was followed by Charles (entered in the baptismal register of Portsea as Charles John Huffham, though on the very rare occasions when he subscribed that name he wrote Huffam); by another son, named Alfred, who died in childhood; by Letitia (born 1816); by another daughter, Harriet, who died also in childhood; by Frederick (born 1820); by Alfred Lamert (born 1822); and by Augustus (born 1827); of all of whom only the second daughter now survives.

Walter Scott tells us, in his fragment of autobiography, speaking of the strange remedies applied to his lameness, that he remembered lying on the floor in the parlor of his grandfather's farm-house, swathed up in a sheepskin warm from the body of the sheep, being then not three years old. David Copperfield's memory goes beyond this. He represents himself seeing so far back into the blank of his infancy as to discern therein his mother and her servant, dwarfed to his sight by stooping down or kneeling on the floor, and himself going unsteadily from the one to the other. He admits this may be fancy, though he believes the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy, and thinks that the recollection of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose. But what he adds is certainly not fancy. "If it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics." Applicable as it might be to David Copperfield, this was simply and unaffectedly true of Charles Dickens.

He has often told me that he remembered the small front garden to the house at Portsea, from which he was taken away when he was two years old, and where, watched by a nurse through a low kitchen-window almost level with the gravel walk, he trotted about with something to eat, and his little elder sister with him. He was carried from the garden one day to see the soldiers exercise; and I perfectly recollect that, on our being at Portsmouth together while he was writing Nickleby, he recognized the exact shape of the military parade seen by him as a very infant, on the same spot, a quarter of a century before.

When his father was again brought up by his duties to London from Portsmouth, they went into lodgings in Norfolk Street, Middlesex Hospital; and it lived also in the child's memory that they had come away from Portsea in the snow. Their home, shortly after, was again changed, on the elder Dickens being placed upon duty in Chatham dockyard; and the house where he lived in Chatham, which had a plain-looking whitewashed plaster front and a small garden before and behind, was in St. Mary's Place, otherwise called the Brook, and next door to a Baptist meeting-house called Providence Chapel, of which a Mr. Giles, to be presently mentioned, was minister. Charles at this time was between four and five years old; and here he stayed till he was nine. Here the most durable of his early impressions were received; and the associations that were around him when he died were those which at the outset of his

life had affected him most strongly.

The house called Gadshill Place stands on the strip of highest ground in the main road between Rochester and Gravesend. Often had we traveled past it together, years and years before it became his home, and never without some allusion to what he told me when first I saw it in his company, that amid the recollections connected with his childhood it held always a prominent place, for, upon first seeing it as he came from Chatham with his father, and looking up at it with much admiration, he had been promised that he might himself live in it, or in some such house, when he came to be a man, if he would only work hard enough. Which for a long time was his ambition. The story is a pleasant one, and receives authentic confirmation at the opening of one of his essays on traveling abroad, when as he passes along the road to Canterbury there crosses it a vision of his former self:

"So smooth was the old high-road, and so fresh were the horses, and so fast went I, that it was midway between Gravesend and Rochester, and the widening river was bearing the ships, white-sailed or black-smoked, out to sea, when I noticed by the wayside a very queer small boy.

"'Holloa!' said I to the very queer small boy, 'where do you live?'

"'At Chatham,' says he.

"'What do you do there?' says I.

"'I go to school,' says he.

"I took him up in a moment, and we went on. Presently, the very queer small boy says, 'This is Gadshill we are coming to, where Falstaff went out to rob those travelers, and ran away.'

"'You know something about Falstaff, eh?' said I.

"'All about him,' said the very queer small boy. 'I am old (I am nine), and I read all sorts of books. But do let us stop at the top of the hill, and look at the house there, if you please!'

"'You admire that house?' said I.

"'Bless you, sir,' said the very queer small boy, 'when I was not more than half as old as nine, it used to be a treat for me to be brought to look at it. And now I am nine, I come by myself to look at it. And ever since I can recollect, my father, seeing me so fond of it, has often said to me, If you were to be very persevering and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it. Though that's impossible!' said the very queer small boy, drawing a low breath, and now staring at the house out of window with all his might.

"I was rather amazed to be told this by the very queer small boy; for that house happens to be my house, and I have reason to believe that what he said was true."

The queer small boy was indeed his very self. He was a very little and a very sickly boy. He was subject to attacks of violent spasm which disabled him for any active exertion. He was never a good little cricket-player. He was never a first-rate hand at marbles, or peg-top, or prisoner's base. But he had great pleasure in watching the other boys, officers' sons for the most part, at these games, reading while they played; and he had always the belief that this early sickness had brought to himself one inestimable advantage, in the circumstance of his weak health having strongly inclined him to reading. It will not appear, as my narrative moves on, that he owed much to his parents, or was other than in his first letter to Washington Irving he described himself to have been, a "very small and not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy;" but he has frequently been heard to say that his first desire for knowledge, and his earliest passion for reading, were awakened by his mother, who taught him the first rudiments not only of English, but also, a little later, of Latin. She taught him regularly every day for a long time, and taught him, he was convinced, thoroughly well. I once put to him a question in connection

with this to which he replied in almost exactly the words he placed five years later in the mouth of David Copperfield: "I faintly remember her teaching me the alphabet; and when I look upon the fat black letters in the primer, the puzzling novelty of their shapes, and the easy good nature of O and S, always seem to present themselves before me as they used to do."

Then followed the preparatory day-school, a school for girls and boys to which he went with his sister Fanny, and which was in a place called Rome (pronounced Room) Lane. Revisiting Chatham in his manhood, and looking for the place, he found it had been pulled down to make a new street, "ages" before; but out of the distance of the ages arose nevertheless a not dim impression that it had been over a dyer's shop; that he went up steps to it; that he had frequently grazed his knees in doing so; and that in trying to scrape the mud off a very unsteady little shoe, he generally got his leg over the scraper. Other similar memories of childhood have dropped from him occasionally in his lesser writings; whose readers may remember how vividly portions of his boyhood are reproduced in his fancy of the Christmas-tree, and will hardly have forgotten what he says, in his thoughtful little paper on Nurses' stories, of the doubtful places and people to which children may be introduced before they are six years old, and forced, night after night, to go back to against their wills, by servants to whom they are intrusted. That childhood exaggerates what it sees, too, has he not tenderly told? How he thought the Rochester High Street must be at least as wide as Regent Street, which he afterwards discovered to be little better than a lane; how the public clock in it, supposed to be the finest clock in the world, turned out to be as moon-faced and weak a clock as a man's eyes ever saw; and how in its town-hall, which had appeared to him once so glorious a structure that he had set it up in his mind as the model on which the genie of the lamp built the palace for Aladdin, he had painfully to recognize a mere mean little heap of bricks, like a chapel gone demented. Yet not so painfully, either, when second thoughts wisely came. "Ah! who was I that I should quarrel with the town for being changed to me, when I myself had come back, so changed, to it? All my early readings and early imaginations dated from this place, and I took them away so full of innocent construction and guileless belief, and I brought them back so worn and torn, so much the wiser and so much the worse!"

And here I may at once expressly mention, what already has been hinted, that even as Fielding described himself and his belongings in Captain Booth and Amelia, and protested always that he had writ in his books nothing more than he had seen in life, so it may be said of Dickens in more especial relation to David Copperfield. Many guesses have been made since his death, connecting David's autobiography with his own; accounting, by means of such actual experiences, for the so frequent recurrence in his writings of the prison-life, its humor and pathos, described in them with such wonderful reality; and discovering in what David tells Steerforth at school of the stories he had read in his childhood, what it was that had given the bent to his own genius. There is not only truth in all this, but it will very shortly be seen that the identity went deeper than any had supposed, and covered experiences not less startling in the reality than they appear to be in the fiction.

Of the "readings" and "imaginations" which he describes as brought away from Chatham, this authority can tell us. It is one of the many passages in Copperfield which are literally true, and its proper place is here. "My father had left a small collection of books in a little room up-stairs to which I had access (for it adjoined my own), and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time,--they, and the Arabian Nights and the Tales of the Genii,--and did me no harm; for whatever harm was in some of them was not there for me; I knew nothing of it. It is astonishing to me now how I found time, in the midst of my porings and blunderings over heavier themes, to read those books as I did. It is curious to me how I could ever have

consoled myself under my small troubles (which were great troubles to me), by impersonating my favorite characters in them. . . . I have been Tom Jones (a child's Tom Jones, a harmless creature) for a week together. I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch, I verily believe. I had a greedy relish for a few volumes of voyages and travels--I forget what, now--that were on those shelves; and for days and days I can remember to have gone about my region of our house, armed with the centre-piece out of an old set of boot-trees: the perfect realization of Captain Somebody, of the royal British Navy, in danger of being beset by savages, and resolved to sell his life at a great price. . . . When I think of it, the picture always rises in my mind, of a summer evening, the boys at play in the churchyard, and I sitting on my bed, reading as if for life. Every barn in the neighborhood, every stone in the church, and every foot of the churchyard, had some association of its own, in my mind, connected with these books, and stood for some locality made famous in them. I have seen Tom Pipes go climbing up the church-steeple; I have watched Strap, with the knapsack on his back, stopping to rest himself upon the wicket-gate; and I know that Commodore Trunnion held that club with Mr. Pickle, in the parlor of our little village ale-house." Every word of this personal recollection had been written down as fact, some years before it found its way into David Copperfield; the only change in the fiction being his omission of the name of a cheap series of novelists then in course of publication, by which his father had become happily the owner of so large a lump of literary treasure in his small collection of books.

The usual result followed. The child took to writing, himself, and became famous in his childish circle for having written a tragedy called Misnar, the Sultan of India, founded (and very literally founded, no doubt) on one of the Tales of the Genii. Nor was this his only distinction. He told a story offhand so well, and sang small comic songs so especially well, that he used to be elevated on chairs and tables, both at home and abroad, for more effective display of these talents; and when he first told me of this, at one of the Twelfth-night parties on his eldest son's birthday, he said he never recalled it that his own shrill little voice of childhood did not again tingle in his ears, and he blushed to think what a horrible little nuisance he must have been to many unoffending grown-up people who were called upon to admire him.

His chief ally and encourager in these displays was a youth of some ability, much older than himself, named James Lamert, stepson to his mother's sister, and therefore a sort of cousin, who was his great patron and friend in his childish days. Mary, the eldest daughter of Charles Barrow, himself a lieutenant in the navy, had for her first husband a commander in the navy called Allen; on whose death by drowning at Rio Janeiro she had joined her sister, the navy-pay clerk's wife, at Chatham; in which place she subsequently took for her second husband Dr. Lamert, an army-surgeon, whose son James, even after he had been sent to Sandhurst for his education, continued still to visit Chatham from time to time. He had a turn for private theatricals; and as his father's quarters were in the ordnance hospital there, a great rambling place otherwise at that time almost uninhabited, he had plenty of room in which to get up his entertainments. The staff-doctor himself played his part, and his portrait will be found in Pickwick.

By Lamert, I have often heard him say, he was first taken to the theatre at the very tenderest age. He could hardly, however, have been younger than Charles Lamb, whose first experience was of having seen Artaxerxes when six years old; and certainly not younger than Walter Scott, who was only four when he saw As You Like It on the Bath stage, and remembered having screamed out, Ain't they brothers?_ when scandalized by Orlando and Oliver beginning to fight. But he was at any rate old enough to recollect how his young heart leaped with terror as the wicked king Richard, struggling for life against the virtuous Richmond, backed up and bumped against the box in which he was; and subsequent visits to the same sanctuary, as he tells us, revealed to him many wondrous secrets, "of which not the least terrific were, that the witches in Macbeth bore an awful resemblance to the thanes and other proper inhabitants of Scotland; and that the good king Duncan couldn't rest in his grave, but was constantly coming out of it and calling himself somebody else."

During the last two years of Charles's residence at Chatham, he was sent to a school kept in Clover Lane by the young Baptist minister already named, Mr. William Giles. I have the picture of him here, very strongly in my mind, as a sensitive, thoughtful, feeble-bodied little boy, with an unusual sort of knowledge and fancy for such a child, and with a dangerous kind of wandering intelligence that a teacher might turn to good or evil, happiness or misery, as he directed it. Nor does the influence of Mr. Giles, such as it was, seem to have been other than favorable. Charles had himself a not ungrateful sense in after-years that this first of his masters, in his little-cared-for childhood, had pronounced him to be a boy of capacity; and when, about half-way through the publication of Pickwick, his old teacher sent a silver snuff-box with admiring inscription to the "inimitable Boz," it reminded him of praise far more precious obtained by him at his first year's examination in the Clover Lane academy, when his recitation of a piece out of the Humorist's Miscellany about Doctor Bolus had received, unless his youthful vanity bewildered him, a double encore. A habit, the only bad one taught him by Mr. Giles, of taking for a time, in very moderate quantities, the snuff called Irish blackguard, was the result of this gift from his old master; but he abandoned it after some few years, and it was never resumed.

It was in the boys' playing-ground near Clover Lane in which the school stood, that, according to one of his youthful memories, he had been, in the hay-making time, delivered from the dungeons of Seringapatam, an immense pile "(of haycock)," by his countrymen the victorious British "(boy next door and his two cousins)," and had been recognized with ecstasy by his affianced one "(Miss Green)," who had come all the way from England "(second house in the terrace)" to ransom and marry him. It was in this playing-field, too, as he has himself recorded, he first heard in confidence from one whose father was greatly connected, "being under government," of the existence of a terrible banditti called the radicals, whose principles were that the prince-regent wore stays, that nobody had a right to any salary, and that the army and navy ought to be put down; horrors at which he trembled in his bed, after supplicating that the radicals might be speedily taken and hanged. Nor was it the least of the disappointments of his visit in after-life to the scenes of his boyhood that he found this play-field had been swallowed up by a railway station. It was gone, with its two beautiful trees of hawthorn; and where the hedge, the turf, and all the buttercups and daisies had been, there was nothing but the stoniest of jolting roads.

He was not much over nine years old when his father was recalled from Chatham to Somerset House, and he had to leave this good master, and the old place endeared to him by recollections that clung to him afterwards all his life long. It was here he had made the acquaintance not only of the famous books that David Copperfield specially names, of Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Robinson Crusoe, the Arabian Nights, and the Tales of the Genii, but also of the Spectator, the Tatler, the Idler, the Citizen of the World, and Mrs. Inchbald's Collection of Farces. These latter had been, as well, in the little library to which access was open to him; and of all of them his earliest remembrance was the having read them over and over at Chatham, not for the first, the second, or the third time. They were a host of friends when he had no single friend; and in leaving the place, I have often heard him say, he seemed to be leaving them too, and everything that had given his ailing little life its picturesqueness or sunshine. It was the birthplace of his fancy; and he hardly knew what store he had set by its busy varieties of change and scene, until he saw the falling cloud that was to hide its pictures from him forever. The gay bright regiments always going and coming, the continual paradings and firings, the successions of sham sieges and sham defenses, the plays got up by his cousin in the hospital, the navy-pay yacht in which he had sailed to Sheerness with his father, and the ships floating out in the Medway with their far visions of sea,--he was to lose them all. He was never to watch the boys at their games any more, or see them sham over again the sham sieges and sham defenses. He was to be taken to London inside the stage-coach

Commodore; and Kentish woods and fields, Cobham park and hall, Rochester cathedral and castle, and all the wonderful romance together, including the red-cheeked baby he had been wildly in love with, were to vanish like a dream. "On the night before we came away," he told me, "my good master came flitting in among the packing-cases to give me Goldsmith's Bee as a keepsake. Which I kept for his sake, and its own, a long time afterwards." A longer time afterwards he recollected the stage-coach journey, and said in one of his published papers that never had he forgotten, through all the intervening years, the smell of the damp straw in which he was packed and forwarded like game, carriage-paid. "There was no other inside passenger, and I consumed my sandwiches in solitude and dreariness, and it rained hard all the way, and I thought life sloppier than I expected to find it."

The earliest impressions received and retained by him in London were of his father's money involvements; and now first he heard mentioned "the deed," representing that crisis of his father's affairs in fact which is ascribed in fiction to Mr. Micawber's. He knew it in later days to have been a composition with creditors; though at this earlier date he was conscious of having confounded it with parchments of a much more demoniacal description. One result from the awful document soon showed itself in enforced retrenchment. The family had to take up its abode in a house in Bayham Street, Camden-town.

Bayham Street was about the poorest part of the London suburbs then, and the house was a mean small tenement, with a wretched little back-garden abutting on a squalid court. Here was no place for new acquaintances to him: no boys were near with whom he might hope to become in any way familiar. A washerwoman lived next door, and a Bow-Street officer lived over the way. Many, many times has he spoken to me of this, and how he seemed at once to fall into a solitary condition apart from all other boys of his own age, and to sink into a neglected state at home which had been always quite unaccountable to him. "As I thought," he said on one occasion very bitterly, "in the little back-garret in Bayham Street, of all I had lost in losing Chatham, what would I have given, if I had had anything to give, to have been sent back to any other school, to have been taught something anywhere!" He was at another school already, not knowing it. The self-education forced upon him was teaching him, all unconsciously as yet, what, for the future that awaited him, it most behooved him to know.

That he took, from the very beginning of this Bayham-Street life, his first impression of that struggling poverty which is nowhere more vividly shown than in the commoner streets of the ordinary London suburb, and which enriched his earliest writings with a freshness of original humor and quite unstudied pathos that gave them much of their sudden popularity, there cannot be a doubt. "I certainly understood it," he has often said to me, "quite as well then as I do now." But he was not conscious yet that he did so understand it, or of the influence it was exerting on his life even then. It seems almost too much to assert of a child, say at nine or ten years old, that his observation of everything was as close and good, or that he had as much intuitive understanding of the character and weaknesses of the grown-up people around him, as when the same keen and wonderful faculty had made him famous among men. But my experience of him led me to put implicit faith in the assertion he unvaryingly himself made, that he had never seen any cause to correct or change what in his boyhood was his own secret impression of anybody whom he had had, as a grown man, the opportunity of testing in later years.

How it came that, being what he was, he should now have fallen into the misery and neglect of the time about to be described, was a subject on which thoughts were frequently interchanged between us; and on one occasion he gave me a sketch of the character of his father, which, as I can here repeat it in the exact words employed by him, will be the best preface I can make to what I feel that I have no alternative but to tell. "I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in the world. Everything that I can remember of his conduct to his wife, or children, or friends, in sickness or affliction, is beyond all praise. By me, as a sick child, he has watched night and day, unweariedly and patiently,

many nights and days. He never undertook any business, charge, or trust, that he did not zealously, conscientiously, punctually, honorably discharge. His industry has always been untiring. He was proud of me, in his way, and had a great admiration of the comic singing. But, in the ease of his temper, and the straitness of his means, he appeared to have utterly lost at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him, in that regard, whatever. So I degenerated into cleaning his boots of a morning, and my own; and making myself useful in the work of the little house; and looking after my younger brothers and sisters (we were now six in all); and going on such poor errands as arose out of our poor way of living."

The cousin by marriage of whom I have spoken, James Lamert, who had lately completed his education at Sandhurst and was waiting in hopes of a commission, lived now with the family in Bayham Street, and had not lost his taste for the stage, or his ingenuities in connection with it. Taking pity on the solitary lad, he made and painted a little theatre for him. It was the only fanciful reality of his present life; but it could not supply what he missed most sorely, the companionship of boys of his own age, with whom he might share in the advantages of school and contend for its prizes. His sister Fanny was at about this time elected as a pupil to the Royal Academy of Music; and he has told me what a stab to his heart it was, thinking of his own disregarded condition, to see her go away to begin her education, amid the tearful good wishes of everybody in the house.

Nevertheless, as time went on, his own education still unconsciously went on as well, under the sternest and most potent of teachers; and, neglected and miserable as he was, he managed gradually to transfer to London all the dreaminess and all the romance with which he had invested Chatham. There were then at the top of Bayham Street some almshouses, and were still when he revisited it with me nearly twenty-seven years ago; and to go to this spot, he told me, and look from it over the dust-heaps and dock-leaves and fields (no longer there when we saw it together) at the cupola of St. Paul's looming through the smoke, was a treat that served him for hours of vague reflection afterwards. To be taken out for a walk into the real town, especially if it were anywhere about Covent Garden or the Strand, perfectly entranced him with pleasure. But most of all he had a profound attraction of repulsion to St. Giles's. If he could only induce whomsoever took him out to take him through Seven-Dials, he was supremely happy. "Good Heaven!" he would exclaim, "what wild visions of prodigies of wickedness, want, and beggary arose in my mind out of that place!" He was all this time, the reader will remember, still subject to continual attacks of illness, and, by reason of them, a very small boy even for his age.

That part of his boyhood is now very near of which, when the days of fame and prosperity came to him, he felt the weight upon his memory as a painful burden until he could lighten it by sharing it with a friend; and an accident I will presently mention led him first to reveal it. There is, however, an interval of some months still to be described, of which, from conversations or letters that passed between us, after or because of this confidence, and that already have yielded fruit to these pages, I can supply some vague and desultory notices. The use thus made of them, it is due to myself to remark, was contemplated then; for though, long before his death, I had ceased to believe it likely that I should survive to write about him, he had never withdrawn the wish at this early time strongly expressed, or the confidences, not only then but to the very eve of his death reposed in me, that were to enable me to fulfill it. The fulfillment indeed he had himself rendered more easy by partially uplifting the veil in David Copperfield.

The visits made from Bayham Street were chiefly to two connections of the family, his mother's elder brother and his godfather. The latter, who was a rigger, and mast-, oar-, and block-maker, lived at Limehouse in a substantial handsome sort of way, and was kind to his godchild. It was always a great treat to him to go to Mr. Huffham's; and the London night-sights as he returned were a perpetual joy and marvel. Here, too, the comic-singing accomplishment was brought into play so greatly to the admiration

of one of the godfather's guests, an honest boat-builder, that he pronounced the little lad to be a "progidy." The visits to the uncle who was at this time fellow-clerk with his father, in Somerset House, were nearer home. Mr. Thomas Barrow, the eldest of his mother's family, had broken his leg in a fall; and, while laid up with this illness, his lodging was in Gerrard Street, Soho, in the upper part of the house of a worthy gentleman then recently deceased, a bookseller named Manson, father to the partner in the celebrated firm of Christie & Manson, whose widow at this time carried on the business. Attracted by the look of the lad as he went up-stairs, these good people lent him books to amuse him; among them Miss Porter's Scottish Chiefs, Holbein's Dance of Death, and George Colman's Broad Grins. The latter seized his fancy very much; and he was so impressed by its description of Covent Garden, in the piece called "The Elder Brother," that he stole down to the market by himself to compare it with the book. He remembered, as he said in telling me this, snuffing up the flavor of the faded cabbage-leaves as if it were the very breath of comic fiction. Nor was he far wrong, as comic fiction then and for some time after was. It was reserved for himself to give sweeter and fresher breath to it. Many years were to pass first, but he was beginning already to make the trial.

His uncle was shaved by a very odd old barber out of Dean Street, Soho, who was never tired of reviewing the events of the last war, and especially of detecting Napoleon's mistakes, and rearranging his whole life for him on a plan of his own. The boy wrote a description of this old barber, but never had courage to show it. At about the same time, taking for his model the description of the canon's housekeeper in Gil Blas, he sketched a deaf old woman who waited on them in Bayham Street, and who made delicate hashes with walnut-ketchup. As little did he dare to show this, either; though he thought it, himself, extremely clever.

In Bayham Street, meanwhile, affairs were going on badly; the poor boy's visits to his uncle, while the latter was still kept a prisoner by his accident, were interrupted by another attack of fever; and on his recovery the mysterious "deed" had again come uppermost. His father's resources were so low, and all his expedients so thoroughly exhausted, that trial was to be made whether his mother might not come to the rescue. The time was arrived for her to exert herself, she said; and she "must do something." The godfather down at Limehouse was reported to have an Indian connection. People in the East Indies always sent their children home to be educated. She would set up a school. They would all grow rich by it. And then, thought the sick boy, "perhaps even I might go to school myself."

A house was soon found at number four, Gower Street north; a large brass plate on the door announced MRS. DICKENS'S ESTABLISHMENT; and the result I can give in the exact words of the then small actor in the comedy, whose hopes it had raised so high: "I left, at a great many other doors, a great many circulars calling attention to the merits of the establishment. Yet nobody ever came to school, nor do I recollect that anybody ever proposed to come, or that the least preparation was made to receive anybody. But I know that we got on very badly with the butcher and baker; that very often we had not too much for dinner; and that at last my father was arrested." The interval between the sponging-house and the prison was passed by the sorrowful lad in running errands and carrying messages for the prisoner, delivered with swollen eyes and through shining tears; and the last words said to him by his father before he was finally carried to the Marshalsea were to the effect that the sun was set upon him forever. "I really believed at the time," said Dickens to me, "that they had broken my heart." He took afterwards ample revenge for this false alarm by making all the world laugh at them in David Copperfield.

The readers of Mr. Micawber's history who remember David's first visit to the Marshalsea prison, and how upon seeing the turnkey he recalled the turnkey in the blanket in Roderick Random, will read with curious interest what follows, written as a personal experience of fact two or three years before the fiction had even entered into his thoughts:

"My father was waiting for me in the lodge, and we went up to his room (on the top story but one), and cried very much. And he told me, I remember, to take warning by the Marshalsea, and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year and spent nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence, he would be happy; but that a shilling spent the other way would make him wretched. I see the fire we sat before, now; with two bricks inside the rusted grate, one on each side, to prevent its burning too many coals. Some other debtor shared the room with him, who came in by-and-by; and, as the dinner was a joint-stock repast, I was sent up to 'Captain Porter' in the room overhead, with Mr. Dickens's compliments, and I was his son, and could he, Captain P., lend me a knife and fork?

"Captain Porter lent the knife and fork, with his compliments in return. There was a very dirty lady in his little room; and two wan girls, his daughters, with shock heads of hair. I thought I should not have liked to borrow Captain Porter's comb. The captain himself was in the last extremity of shabbiness; and if I could draw at all, I would draw an accurate portrait of the old, old, brown great-coat he wore, with no other coat below it. His whiskers were large. I saw his bed rolled up in a corner; and what plates, and dishes, and pots he had, on a shelf; and I knew (God knows how) that the two girls with the shock heads were Captain Porter's natural children, and that the dirty lady was not married to Captain P. My timid, wondering station on his threshold was not occupied more than a couple of minutes, I dare say; but I came down again to the room below with all this as surely in my knowledge as the knife and fork were in my hand."

How there was something agreeable and gipsy-like in the dinner after all, and how he took back the captain's knife and fork early in the afternoon, and how he went home to comfort his mother with an account of his visit, David Copperfield has also accurately told. Then, at home, came many miserable daily struggles that seemed to last an immense time, yet did not perhaps cover many weeks. Almost everything by degrees was sold or pawned, little Charles being the principal agent in those sorrowful transactions. Such of the books as had been brought from Chatham--Peregrine Pickle, Roderick Random, Tom Jones, Humphrey Clinker, and all the rest--went first. They were carried off from the little chiffonier, which his father called the library, to a bookseller in the Hampstead Road, the same that David Copperfield describes as in the City Road; and the account of the sales, as they actually occurred and were told to me long before David was born, was reproduced word for word in his imaginary narrative: "The keeper of this bookstall, who lived in a little house behind it, used to get tipsy every night, and to be violently scolded by his wife every morning. More than once, when I went there early, I had audience of him in a turn-up bedstead, with a cut in his forehead or a black eye bearing witness to his excesses overnight (I am afraid he was quarrelsome in his drink); and he, with a shaking hand, endeavoring to find the needful shillings in one or other of the pockets of his clothes, which lay upon the floor, while his wife, with a baby in her arms and her shoes down at heel, never left off rating him. Sometimes he had lost his money, and then he would ask me to call again; but his wife had always got some (had taken his, I dare say, while he was drunk), and secretly completed the bargain on the stairs, as we went down together."

The same pawnbroker's shop, too, which was so well known to David, became not less familiar to Charles; and a good deal of notice was here taken of him by the pawnbroker, or by his principal clerk who officiated behind the counter, and who, while making out the duplicate, liked of all things to hear the lad conjugate a Latin verb and translate or decline his musa and dominus. Everything to this accompaniment went gradually; until, at last, even of the furniture of Gower Street number four there was nothing left except a few chairs, a kitchen table, and some beds. Then they encamped, as it were, in the two parlors of the emptied house, and lived there night and day.

All which is but the prelude to what remains to be described.

Volume I, Chapter 2 (1822-1824): Hard Experiences in Boyhood

Hard Experiences in Boyhood

THE incidents to be told now would probably never have been known to me, or indeed any of the occurrences of his childhood and youth, but for the accident of a question which I put to him one day in the March or April of 1847.

I asked if he remembered ever having seen in his boyhood our friend the elder Mr. Dilke, his father's acquaintance and contemporary, who had been a clerk in the same office in Somerset House to which Mr. John Dickens belonged. Yes, he said, he recollected seeing him at a house in Gerrard Street, where his uncle Barrow lodged during an illness, and Mr. Dilke had visited him. Never at any other time. Upon which I told him that some one else had been intended in the mention made to me, for that the reference implied not merely his being met accidentally, but his having had some juvenile employment in a warehouse near the Strand; at which place Mr. Dilke, being with the elder Dickens one day, had noticed him, and received, in return for the gift of a half-crown, a very low bow. He was silent for several minutes; I felt that I had unintentionally touched a painful place in his memory; and to Mr. Dilke I never spoke of the subject again. It was not, however, then, but some weeks later, that Dickens made further allusion to my thus having struck unconsciously upon a time of which he never could lose the remembrance while he remembered anything, and the recollection of which, at intervals, haunted him and made him miserable, even to that hour.

Very shortly afterwards I learnt in all their detail the incidents that had been so painful to him, and what then was said to me or written respecting them revealed the story of his boyhood. The idea of David Copperfield, which was to take all the world into his confidence, had not at this time occurred to him; but what it had so startled me to know, his readers were afterwards told with only such change or addition as for the time might sufficiently disguise himself under cover of his hero. For the poor little lad, with good ability and a most sensitive nature, turned at the age of ten into a "laboring hind" in the service of "Murdstone and Grinby," and conscious already of what made it seem very strange to him that he could so easily have been thrown away at such an age, was indeed himself. His was the secret agony of soul at finding himself "companion to Mick Walker and Mealy Potatoes," and his the tears that mingled with the water in which he and they rinsed and washed out bottles. It had all been written, as fact, before he thought of any other use for it; and it was not until several months later, when the fancy of David Copperfield, itself suggested by what he had so written of his early troubles, began to take shape in his mind, that he abandoned his first intention of writing his own life. Those warehouse experiences fell then so aptly into the subject he had chosen, that he could not resist the temptation of immediately using them; and the manuscript recording them, which was but the first portion of what he had designed to write, was embodied in the substance of the eleventh and earlier chapters of his novel. What already had been sent to me, however, and proof-sheets of the novel interlined at the time, enable me now to separate the fact from the fiction, and to supply to the story of the author's childhood those passages, omitted from the book, which, apart from their illustration of the growth of his character, present to us a picture of tragical suffering, and of tender as well as humorous fancy, unsurpassed in even the wonders of his published writings.

The person indirectly responsible for the scenes to be described was the young relative James Lamert, the cousin by his aunt's marriage of whom I have made frequent mention, who got up the plays at Chatham, and after passing at Sandhurst had been living with the family in Bayham Street in the hope of

obtaining a commission in the army. This did not come until long afterwards, when, in consideration of his father's services, he received it, and relinquished it then in favor of a younger brother; but he had meanwhile, before the family removed from Camden-town, ceased to live with them. The husband of a sister of his (of the same name as himself, being indeed his cousin, George Lamert), a man of some property, had recently embarked in an odd sort of commercial speculation, and had taken him into his office and his house, to assist in it. I give now the fragment of the autobiography of Dickens:

"This speculation was a rivalry of 'Warren's Blacking, 30, Strand,'--at that time very famous. One Jonathan Warren (the famous one was Robert), living at 30, Hungerford Stairs, or Market, Strand (for I forget which it was called then), claimed to have been the original inventor or proprietor of the blacking-recipe, and to have been deposed and ill used by his renowned relation. At last he put himself in the way of selling his recipe, and his name, and his 30, Hungerford Stairs, Strand (30, Strand, very large, and the intermediate direction very small), for an annuity; and he set forth by his agents that a little capital would make a great business of it. The man of some property was found in George Lamert, the cousin and brother-in-law of James. He bought this right and title, and went into the blacking-business and the blacking-premises.

"--In an evil hour for me, as I often bitterly thought. Its chief manager, James Lamert, the relative who had lived with us in Bayham Street, seeing how I was employed from day to day, and knowing what our domestic circumstances then were, proposed that I should go into the blacking-warehouse, to be as useful as I could, at a salary, I think, of six shillings a week. I am not clear whether it was six or seven. I am inclined to believe, from my uncertainty on this head, that it was six at first, and seven afterwards. At any rate, the offer was accepted very willingly by my father and mother, and on a Monday morning I went down to the blacking-warehouse to begin my business life.

"It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me--a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally--to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. Our friends, I take it, were tired out. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar-school, and going to Cambridge.

"The blacking-warehouse was the last house on the left-hand side of the way, at old Hungerford Stairs. It was a crazy, tumble-down old house, abutting of course on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscoted rooms, and its rotten floors and staircase, and the old gray rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me, as if I were there again. The counting-house was on the first floor, looking over the coal-barges and the river. There was a recess in it, in which I was to sit and work. My work was to cover the pots of paste-blacking; first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat, all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop. When a certain number of grosses of pots had attained this pitch of perfection, I was to paste on each a printed label, and then go on again with more pots. Two or three other boys were kept at similar duty down-stairs on similar wages. One of them came up, in a ragged apron and a paper cap, on the first Monday morning, to show me the trick of using the string and tying the knot. His name was Bob Fagin; and I took the liberty of using his name, long afterwards, in Oliver Twist.

"Our relative had kindly arranged to teach me something in the dinner-hour; from twelve to one, I think it was; every day. But an arrangement so incompatible with counting-house business soon died away,

from no fault of his or mine; and, for the same reason, my small work-table, and my grosses of pots, my papers, string, scissors, paste-pot, and labels, by little and little, vanished out of the recess in the counting-house, and kept company with the other small work-tables, grosses of pots, papers, string, scissors, and paste-pots, down-stairs. It was not long before Bob Fagin and I, and another boy whose name was Paul Green, but who was currently believed to have been christened Poll (a belief which I transferred, long afterwards again, to Mr. Sweedlepipe, in Martin Chuzzlewit), worked generally, side by side. Bob Fagin was an orphan, and lived with his brother-in-law, a waterman. Poll Green's father had the additional distinction of being a fireman, and was employed at Drury Lane theatre; where another relation of Poll's, I think his little sister, did imps in the pantomimes.

"No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every-day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life.

"My mother and my brothers and sisters (excepting Fanny in the Royal Academy of Music) were still encamped, with a young servant-girl from Chatham workhouse, in the two parlors in the emptied house in Gower Street north. It was a long way to go and return within the dinner-hour, and usually I either carried my dinner with me, or went and bought it at some neighboring shop. In the latter case, it was commonly a saveloy and a penny loaf; sometimes, a fourpenny plate of beef from a cook's shop; sometimes, a plate of bread and cheese, and a glass of beer, from a miserable old public-house over the way: the Swan, if I remember right, or the Swan and something else that I have forgotten. Once, I remember tucking my own bread (which I had brought from home in the morning) under my arm, wrapped up in a piece of paper like a book, and going into the best dining-room in Johnson's alamode beef-house in Clare Court, Drury Lane, and magnificently ordering a small plate of alamode beef to eat with it. What the waiter thought of such a strange little apparition, coming in all alone, I don't know; but I can see him now, staring at me as I ate my dinner, and bringing up the other waiter to look. I gave him a halfpenny, and I wish, now, that he hadn't taken it."

I lose here for a little while the fragment of direct narrative, but I perfectly recollect that he used to describe Saturday night as his great treat. It was a grand thing to walk home with six shillings in his pocket, and to look in at the shop-windows and think what it would buy. Hunt's roasted corn, as a British and patriotic substitute for coffee, was in great vogue just then; and the little fellow used to buy it, and roast it on the Sunday. There was a cheap periodical of selected pieces called the Portfolio, which he had also a great fancy for taking home with him. The new proposed "deed," meanwhile, had failed to propitiate his father's creditors; all hope of arrangement passed away; and the end was that his mother and her encampment in Gower Street north broke up and went to live in the Marshalsea. I am able at this point to resume his own account:

"The key of the house was sent back to the landlord, who was very glad to get it; and I (small Cain that I was, except that I had never done harm to any one) was handed over as a lodger to a reduced old lady, long known to our family, in Little College Street, Camden-town, who took children in to board, and had once done so at Brighton; and who, with a few alterations and embellishments, unconsciously began to sit for Mrs. Pipchin in Dombey when she took in me.

"She had a little brother and sister under her care then; somebody's natural children, who were very irregularly paid for; and a widow's little son. The two boys and I slept in the same room. My own exclusive breakfast, of a penny cottage loaf and a penny-worth of milk, I provided for myself. I kept another small loaf, and a quarter of a pound of cheese, on a particular shelf of a particular cupboard; to make my supper on when I came back at night. They made a hole in the six or seven shillings, I know well; and I was out at the blacking-warehouse all day, and had to support myself upon that money all the week. I suppose my lodging was paid for, by my father. I certainly did not pay it myself; and I certainly had no other assistance whatever (the making of my clothes, I think, excepted), from Monday morning until Saturday night. No advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support, from any one that I can call to mind, so help me God.

"Sundays, Fanny and I passed in the prison. I was at the academy in Tenterden Street, Hanover Square, at nine o'clock in the morning, to fetch her; and we walked back there together, at night.

"I was so young and childish, and so little qualified--how could I be otherwise?--to undertake the whole charge of my own existence, that, in going to Hungerford Stairs of a morning, I could not resist the stale pastry put out at half-price on trays at the confectioners' doors in Tottenham Court Road; and I often spent in that the money I should have kept for my dinner. Then I went without my dinner, or bought a roll, or a slice of pudding. There were two pudding-shops between which I was divided, according to my finances. One was in a court close to St. Martin's Church (at the back of the church) which is now removed altogether. The pudding at that shop was made with currants, and was rather a special pudding, but was dear: two penn'orth not being larger than a penn'orth of more ordinary pudding. A good shop for the latter was in the Strand, somewhere near where the Lowther Arcade is now. It was a stout, hale pudding, heavy and flabby; with great raisins in it, stuck in whole, at great distances apart. It came up hot, at about noon every day; and many and many a day did I dine off it.

"We had half an hour, I think, for tea. When I had money enough, I used to go to a coffee-shop, and have half a pint of coffee, and a slice of bread-and-butter. When I had no money, I took a turn in Covent Garden market, and stared at the pineapples. The coffee-shops to which I most resorted were, one in Maiden Lane; one in a court (non-existent now) close to Hungerford market; and one in St. Martin's Lane, of which I only recollect that it stood near the church, and that in the door there was an oval glass plate, with COFFEE-ROOM painted on it, addressed towards the street. If I ever find myself in a very different kind of coffee-room now, but where there is such an inscription on glass, and read it backward on the wrong side MOOR-EEFFOC (as I often used to do then, in a dismal reverie,) a shock goes through my blood.

"I know I do not exaggerate, unconsciously and unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. I know that if a shilling or so were given me by any one, I spent it in a dinner or a tea. I know that I worked, from morning to night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and to make it last the week through; by putting it away in a drawer I had in the counting-house, wrapped into six little parcels, each parcel containing the same amount and labeled with a different day. I know that I have lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond.

"But I held some station at the blacking-warehouse too. Besides that my relative at the counting-house did what a man so occupied, and dealing with a thing so anomalous, could, to treat me as one upon a different footing from the rest, I never said, to man or boy, how it was that I came to be there, or gave the least indication of being sorry that I was there. That I suffered in secret, and that I suffered exquisitely, no one ever knew but I. How much I suffered, it is, as I have said already, utterly beyond my power to tell.

No man's imagination can overstep the reality. But I kept my own counsel, and I did my work. I knew from the first that, if I could not do my work as well as any of the rest, I could not hold myself above slight and contempt. I soon became at least as expeditious and as skillful with my hands as either of the other boys. Though perfectly familiar with them, my conduct and manners were different enough from theirs to place a space between us. They, and the men, always spoke of me as 'the young gentleman.' A certain man (a soldier once) named Thomas, who was the foreman, and another named Harry, who was the carman and wore a red jacket, used to call me 'Charles' sometimes, in speaking to me; but I think it was mostly when we were very confidential, and when I had made some efforts to entertain them over our work with the results of some of the old readings, which were fast perishing out of my mind. Poll Green uprose once, and rebelled against the 'young gentleman' usage; but Bob Fagin settled him speedily.

"My rescue from this kind of existence I considered quite hopeless, and abandoned as such, altogether; though I am solemnly convinced that I never, for one hour, was reconciled to it, or was otherwise than miserably unhappy. I felt keenly, however, the being so cut off from my parents, my brothers and sisters, and, when my day's work was done, going home to such a miserable blank; and that, I thought, might be corrected. One Sunday night I remonstrated with my father on this head, so pathetically, and with so many tears, that his kind nature gave way. He began to think that it was not quite right. I do believe he had never thought so before, or thought about it. It was the first remonstrance I had ever made about my lot, and perhaps it opened up a little more than I intended. A back-attic was found for me at the house of an insolvent-court agent, who lived in Lant Street in the borough, where Bob Sawyer lodged many years afterwards. A bed and bedding were sent over for me, and made up on the floor. The little window had a pleasant prospect of a timber-yard; and when I took possession of my new abode I thought it was a Paradise."

There is here another blank, which it is, however, not difficult to supply from letters and recollections of my own. What was to him of course the great pleasure of his paradise of a lodging was its bringing him again, though after a fashion sorry enough, within the circle of home. From this time he used to breakfast "at home,"--in other words, in the Marshalsea; going to it as early as the gates were open, and for the most part much earlier. They had no want of bodily comforts there. His father's income, still going on, was amply sufficient for that; and in every respect indeed but elbow-room, I have heard him say, the family lived more comfortably in prison than they had done for a long time out of it. They were waited on still by the maid-of-all-work from Bayham Street, the orphan girl of the Chatham workhouse, from whose sharp little worldly and also kindly ways he took his first impression of the Marchioness in the Old Curiosity Shop. She also had a lodging in the neighborhood, that she might be early on the scene of her duties; and when Charles met her, as he would do occasionally, in his lounging-place by London Bridge, he would occupy the time before the gates opened by telling her quite astonishing fictions about the wharves and the tower. "But I hope I believed them myself," he would say. Besides breakfast, he had supper also in the prison, and got to his lodging generally at nine o'clock. The gates closed always at ten.

I must not omit what he told me of the landlord of this little lodging. He was a fat, good-natured, kind old gentleman. He was lame, and had a quiet old wife; and he had a very innocent grown-up son, who was lame too. They were all very kind to the boy. He was taken with one of his old attacks of spasm one night, and the whole three of them were about his bed until morning. They were all dead when he told me this; but in another form they still live very pleasantly as the Garland family in the Old Curiosity Shop.

He had a similar illness one day in the warehouse, which I can describe in his own words: "Bob Fagin was very good to me on the occasion of a bad attack of my old disorder. I suffered such excruciating pain that time, that they made a temporary bed of straw in my old recess in the counting-house, and I

rolled about on the floor, and Bob filled empty blacking-bottles with hot water, and applied relays of them to my side, half the day. I got better, and quite easy towards evening; but Bob (who was much bigger and older than I) did not like the idea of my going home alone, and took me under his protection. I was too proud to let him know about the prison, and, after making several efforts to get rid of him, to all of which Bob Fagin in his goodness was deaf, shook hands with him on the steps of a house near Southwark Bridge on the Surrey side, making believe that I lived there. As a finishing piece of reality in case of his looking back, I knocked at the door, I recollect, and asked, when the woman opened it, if that was Mr. Robert Fagin's house."

The Saturday nights continued, as before, to be precious to him. "My usual way home was over Blackfriars Bridge, and down that turning in the Blackfriars Road which has Rowland Hill's chapel on one side, and the likeness of a golden dog licking a golden pot over a shop-door on the other. There are a good many little low-browed old shops in that street, of a wretched kind; and some are unchanged now. I looked into one a few weeks ago, where I used to buy boot-laces on Saturday nights, and saw the corner where I once sat down on a stool to have a pair of ready-made half-boots fitted on. I have been seduced more than once, in that street on a Saturday night, by a show-van at a corner; and have gone in, with a very motley assemblage, to see the Fat-pig, the Wild-indian, and the Little-lady. There were two or three hat-manufactories there then (I think they are there still); and among the things which, encountered anywhere or under any circumstances, will instantly recall that time, is the smell of hat-making."

His father's attempts to avoid going through the court having failed, all needful ceremonies had to be undertaken to obtain the benefit of the insolvent debtors' act; and in one of these little Charles had his part to play. One condition of the statute was that the wearing-apparel and personal matters retained were not to exceed twenty pounds sterling in value. "It was necessary, as a matter of form, that the clothes I wore should be seen by the official appraiser. I had a half-holiday to enable me to call upon him, at his own time, at a house somewhere beyond the Obelisk. I recollect his coming out to look at me with his mouth full, and a strong smell of beer upon him, and saying good-naturedly that 'that would do,' and 'it was all right.' Certainly the hardest creditor would not have been disposed (even if he had been legally entitled) to avail himself of my poor white hat, little jacket, or corduroy trowsers. But I had a fat old silver watch in my pocket, which had been given me by my grandmother before the blacking-days, and I had entertained my doubts as I went along whether that valuable possession might not bring me over the twenty pounds. So I was greatly relieved, and made him a bow of acknowledgment as I went out."

Still, the want felt most by him was the companionship of boys of his own age. He had no such acquaintance. Sometimes he remembered to have played on the coal-barges at dinner-time, with Poll Green and Bob Fagin; but those were rare occasions. He generally strolled alone, about the back streets of the Adelphi, or explored the Adelphi arches. One of his favorite localities was a little public-house by the water-side, called the Fox-under-the-hill, approached by an underground passage which we once missed in looking for it together; and he had a vision which he has mentioned in Copperfield of sitting eating something on a bench outside, one fine evening, and looking at some coal-heavers dancing before the house. "I wonder what they thought of me," says David. He had himself already said the same in his fragment of autobiography.

Another characteristic little incident he made afterwards one of David's experiences, but I am able to give it here without the disguises that adapt it to the fiction: "I was such a little fellow, with my poor white hat, little jacket, and corduroy trowsers, that frequently, when I went into the bar of a strange public-house for a glass of ale or porter to wash down the saveloy and the loaf I had eaten in the street, they didn't like to give it me. I remember, one evening (I had been somewhere for my father, and was going back to the borough over Westminster Bridge), that I went into a public-house in Parliament Street,--which is still

there, though altered,--at the corner of the short street leading into Cannon Row, and said to the landlord behind the bar, 'What is your very best--the VERY best--ale, a glass?' For the occasion was a festive one, for some reason: I forget why. It may have been my birthday, or somebody else's. 'Two-pence,' says he. 'Then,' says I, 'just draw me a glass of that, if you please, with a good head to it.' The landlord looked at me, in return, over the bar, from head to foot, with a strange smile on his face, and, instead of drawing the beer, looked round the screen and said something to his wife, who came out from behind it, with her work in her hand, and joined him in surveying me. Here we stand, all three, before me now, in my study in Devonshire Terrace. The landlord, in his shirt-sleeves, leaning against the bar window-frame; his wife, looking over the little half-door; and I, in some confusion, looking up at them from outside the partition. They asked me a good many questions, as what my name was, how old I was, where I lived, how I was employed, etc. etc. To all of which, that I might commit nobody, I invented appropriate answers. They served me with the ale, though I suspect it was not the strongest on the premises; and the landlord's wife, opening the little half-door and bending down, gave me a kiss that was half admiring and half compassionate, but all womanly and good, I am sure."

A later, and not less characteristic, incident of the true story of this time found also a place, three or four years after it was written, in his now famous fiction. It preceded but by a short time the discharge, from the Marshalsea, of the elder Dickens; to whom a rather considerable legacy from a relative had accrued not long before ("some hundreds," I understood), and had been paid into court during his imprisonment. The scene to be described arose on the occasion of a petition drawn up by him before he left, praying, not for the abolition of imprisonment for debt, as David Copperfield relates, but for the less dignified but more accessible boon of a bounty to the prisoners to drink his majesty's health on his majesty's forthcoming birthday.

"I mention the circumstance because it illustrates, to me, my early interest in observing people. When I went to the Marshalsea of a night, I was always delighted to hear from my mother what she knew about the histories of the different debtors in the prison; and when I heard of this approaching ceremony, I was so anxious to see them all come in, one after another (though I knew the greater part of them already, to speak to, and they me), that I got leave of absence on purpose, and established myself in a corner, near the petition. It was stretched out, I recollect, on a great ironing-board, under the window, which in another part of the room made a bedstead at night. The internal regulations of the place, for cleanliness and order, and for the government of a common room in the ale-house, where hot water and some means of cooking, and a good fire, were provided for all who paid a very small subscription, were excellently administered by a governing committee of debtors, of which my father was chairman for the time being. As many of the principal officers of this body as could be got into the small room without filling it up, supported him, in front of the petition; and my old friend Captain Porter (who had washed himself, to do honor to so solemn an occasion) stationed himself close to it, to read it to all who were unacquainted with its contents. The door was then thrown open, and they began to come in, in a long file; several waiting on the landing outside, while one entered, affixed his signature, and went out. To everybody in succession, Captain Porter said, 'Would you like to hear it read?' If he weakly showed the least disposition to hear it, Captain Porter, in a loud sonorous voice, gave him every word of it. I remember a certain luscious roll he gave to such words as 'Majesty--gracious Majesty--your gracious Majesty's unfortunate subjects--your Majesty's well-known munificence,'--as if the words were something real in his mouth, and delicious to taste; my poor father meanwhile listening with a little of an author's vanity, and contemplating (not severely) the spikes on the opposite wall. Whatever was comical in this scene, and whatever was pathetic, I sincerely believe I perceived in my corner, whether I demonstrated or not, quite as well as I should perceive it now. I made out my own little character and story for every man who put his name to the sheet of paper. I might be able to do that now, more truly: not more earnestly, or with a

closer interest. Their different peculiarities of dress, of face, of gait, of manner, were written indelibly upon my memory. I would rather have seen it than the best play ever played; and I thought about it afterwards, over the pots of paste-blacking, often and often. When I looked, with my mind's eye, into the Fleet prison during Mr. Pickwick's incarceration, I wonder whether half a dozen men were wanting from the Marshalsea crowd that came filing in again, to the sound of Captain Porter's voice!"

When the family left the Marshalsea they all went to lodge with the lady in Little College Street, a Mrs. Roylance, who has obtained unexpected immortality as Mrs. Pipchin; and they afterwards occupied a small house in Somers-town. But, before this time, Charles was present with some of them in Tenterden Street to see his sister. Fanny received one of the prizes given to the pupils of the Royal Academy of Music. "I could not bear to think of myself--beyond the reach of all such honorable emulation and success. The tears ran down my face. I felt as if my heart were rent. I prayed, when I went to bed that night, to be lifted out of the humiliation and neglect in which I was. I never had suffered so much before. There was no envy in this." There was little need that he should say so. Extreme enjoyment in witnessing the exercise of her talents, the utmost pride in every success obtained by them, he manifested always to a degree otherwise quite unusual with him; and on the day of her funeral, which we passed together, I had most affecting proof of his tender and grateful memory of her in these childish days. A few more sentences, certainly not less touching than any that have gone before, will bring the story of them to its close. They stand here exactly as written by him:

"I am not sure that it was before this time, or after it, that the blacking-warehouse was removed to Chandos Street, Covent Garden. It is no matter. Next to the shop at the corner of Bedford Street in Chandos Street are two rather old-fashioned houses and shops adjoining one another. They were one then, or thrown into one, for the blacking-business; and had been a butter-shop. Opposite to them was, and is, a public-house, where I got my ale, under these new circumstances. The stones in the street may be smoothed by my small feet going across to it at dinner-time, and back again. The establishment was larger now, and we had one or two new boys. Bob Fagin and I had attained to great dexterity in tying up the pots. I forget how many we could do in five minutes. We worked, for the light's sake, near the second window as you come from Bedford Street; and we were so brisk at it that the people used to stop and look in. Sometimes there would be quite a little crowd there. I saw my father coming in at the door one day when we were very busy, and I wondered how he could bear it.

"Now, I generally had my dinner in the warehouse. Sometimes I brought it from home, so I was better off. I see myself coming across Russell Square from Somers-town, one morning, with some cold hotch-potch in a small basin tied up in a handkerchief. I had the same wanderings about the streets as I used to have, and was just as solitary and self-dependent as before; but I had not the same difficulty in merely living. I never, however, heard a word of being taken away, or of being otherwise than quite provided for.

"At last, one day, my father, and the relative so often mentioned, quarreled; quarreled by letter, for I took the letter from my father to him which caused the explosion, but quarreled very fiercely. It was about me. It may have had some backward reference, in part, for anything I know, to my employment at the window. All I am certain of is, that, soon after I had given him the letter, my cousin (he was a sort of cousin, by marriage) told me he was very much insulted about me, and that it was impossible to keep me after that. I cried very much, partly because it was so sudden, and partly because in his anger he was violent about my father, though gentle to me. Thomas, the old soldier, comforted me, and said he was sure it was for the best. With a relief so strange that it was like oppression, I went home.

"My mother set herself to accommodate the quarrel, and did so next day. She brought home a request for me to return next morning, and a high character of me, which I am very sure I deserved. My father said I should go back no more, and should go to school. I do not write resentfully or angrily; for I know

how all these things have worked together to make me what I am; but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back.

"From that hour until this at which I write, no word of that part of my childhood which I have now gladly brought to a close has passed my lips to any human being. I have no idea how long it lasted; whether for a year, or much more, or less. From that hour until this my father and my mother have been stricken dumb upon it. I have never heard the least allusion to it, however far off and remote, from either of them. I have never, until I now impart it to this paper, in any burst of confidence with any one, my own wife not excepted, raised the curtain I then dropped, thank God.

"Until old Hungerford market was pulled down, until old Hungerford Stairs were destroyed, and the very nature of the ground changed, I never had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began. I never saw it. I could not endure to go near it. For many years, when I came near to Robert Warren's in the Strand, I crossed over to the opposite side of the way, to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking-corks, which reminded me of what I was once. It was a very long time before I liked to go up Chandos Street. My old way home by the borough made me cry, after my eldest child could speak.

"In my walks at night I have walked there often, since then, and by degrees I have come to write this. It does not seem a tithe of what I might have written, or of what I meant to write."

The substance of some after-talk explanatory of points in the narrative, of which a note was made at the time, may be briefly added. He could hardly have been more than twelve years old when he left the place, and was still unusually small for his age; much smaller, though two years older, than his own eldest son was at the time of these confidences. His mother had been in the blacking-warehouse many times; his father not more than once or twice. The rivalry of Robert Warren by Jonathan's representatives, the cousins George and James, was carried to wonderful extremes in the way of advertisement; and they were all very proud, he told me, of the cat scratching the boot, which was their house's device. The poets in the house's regular employ he remembered, too, and made his first study from one of them for the poet of Mrs. Jarley's wax-work. The whole enterprise, however, had the usual end of such things. The younger cousin tired of the concern; and a Mr. Wood, the proprietor who took James's share and became George's partner, sold it ultimately to Robert Warren. It continued to be his at the time Dickens and myself last spoke of it together, and he had made an excellent bargain of it.

Volume I, Chapter 3 (1824-1830): School-Days and Start in Life

School-Days and Start in Life

IN what way these strange experiences of his boyhood affected him afterwards, this narrative of his life must show; but there were influences that made themselves felt even on his way to manhood.

What at once he brought out of the humiliation that had impressed him so deeply, though scarcely as yet quite consciously, was a natural dread of the hardships that might still be in store for him, sharpened by what he had gone through; and this, though in its effect for the present imperfectly understood, became by degrees a passionate resolve, even while he was yielding to circumstances, not to be what circumstances were conspiring to make him. All that was involved in what he had suffered and sunk into, could not have been known to him at the time; but it was plain enough later, as we see; and in conversation with me after the revelation was made, he used to find, at extreme points in his life, the explanation of himself in those early trials. He had derived great good from them, but not without alloy. The fixed and eager determination, the restless and resistless energy, which opened to him opportunities of escape from many mean environments, not by turning off from any path of duty, but by resolutely rising to such excellence or distinction as might be attainable in it, brought with it some disadvantage among many noble advantages. Of this he was himself aware, but not to the full extent. What it was that in society made him often uneasy, shrinking, and over-sensitive, he knew; but all the danger he ran in bearing down and overmastering the feeling, he did not know. A too great confidence in himself, a sense that everything was possible to the will that would make it so, laid occasionally upon him self-imposed burdens greater than might be borne by any one with safety. In that direction there was in him, at such times, something even hard and aggressive; in his determinations a something that had almost the tone of fierceness; something in his nature that made his resolves insuperable, however hasty the opinions on which they had been formed. So rare were these manifestations, however, and so little did they prejudice a character as entirely open and generous as it was at all times ardent and impetuous, that only very infrequently, towards the close of the middle term of a friendship which lasted without the interruption of a day for more than three-and-thirty years, were they ever unfavorably presented to me. But there they were; and when I have seen strangely present, at such chance intervals, a stern and even cold isolation of self-reliance side by side with a susceptivity almost feminine and the most eager craving for sympathy, it has seemed to me as though his habitual impulses for everything kind and gentle had sunk, for the time, under a sudden hard and inexorable sense of what fate had dealt to him in those early years. On more than one occasion, indeed, I had confirmation of this. "I must entreat you," he wrote to me in June, 1862, "to pause for an instant, and go back to what you know of my childish days, and to ask yourself whether it is natural that something of the character formed in me then, and lost under happier circumstances, should have reappeared in the last five years. The never-to-be-forgotten misery of that old time bred a certain shrinking sensitiveness in a certain ill-clad ill-fed child, that I have found come back in the never-to-be-forgotten misery of this later time."

One good there was, however, altogether without drawback, and which claims simply to be mentioned before my narrative is resumed. The story of his childish misery has itself sufficiently shown that he never throughout it lost his precious gift of animal spirits, or his native capacity for humorous enjoyment; and there were positive gains to him from what he underwent, which were also rich and lasting. To what in the outset of his difficulties and trials gave the decisive bent to his genius, I have already made special reference; and we are to observe, of what followed, that with the very poor and unprosperous, out of

whose sufferings and strugglings, and the virtues as well as vices born of them, his not least splendid successes were wrought, his childish experiences had made him actually one. They were not his clients whose cause he pleaded with such pathos and humor, and on whose side he got the laughter and tears of all the world, but in some sort his very self. Nor was it a small part of this manifest advantage that he should have obtained his experience as a child and not as a man; that only the good part, the flower and fruit of it, was plucked by him; and that nothing of the evil part, none of the earth in which the seed was planted, remained to soil him.

His next move in life can also be given in his own language: "There was a school in the Hampstead Road kept by Mr. Jones, a Welshman, to which my father dispatched me to ask for a card of terms. The boys were at dinner, and Mr. Jones was carving for them with a pair of holland sleeves on, when I acquitted myself of this commission. He came out, and gave me what I wanted; and hoped I should become a pupil. I did. At seven o'clock one morning, very soon afterwards, I went as day-scholar to Mr. Jones's establishment, which was in Mornington Place, and had its school-room sliced away by the Birmingham Railway, when that change came about. The school-room, however, was not threatened by directors or civil engineers then, and there was a board over the door, graced with the words WELLINGTON HOUSE ACADEMY."

At Wellington House Academy he remained nearly two years, being a little over fourteen years of age when he quitted it. In his minor writings as well as in Copperfield will be found general allusions to it, and there is a paper among his pieces reprinted from Household Words which purports specifically to describe it. To the account therein given of himself when he went to the school, as advanced enough, so safely had his memory retained its poor fragments of early schooling, to be put into Virgil, as getting sundry prizes, and as attaining to the eminent position of its first boy, one of his two schoolfellows with whom I have had communication makes objection; but both admit that the general features of the place are reproduced with wonderful accuracy, and more especially in those points for which the school appears to have been much more notable than for anything connected with the scholarship of its pupils.

In the reprinted piece Dickens describes it as remarkable for white mice. He says that red-polls, linnets, and even canaries were kept by the boys in desks, drawers, hat-boxes, and other strange refuges for birds; but that white mice were the favorite stock, and that the boys trained the mice much better than the master trained the boys. He recalled in particular one white mouse who lived in the cover of a Latin dictionary, ran up ladders, drew Roman chariots, shouldered muskets, turned wheels, and even made a very creditable appearance on the stage as the dog of Montargis, who might have achieved greater things but for having had the misfortune to mistake his way in a triumphal procession to the Capitol, when he fell into a deep inkstand and was dyed black and drowned.

Nevertheless he mentions the school as one also of some celebrity in its neighborhood, though nobody could have said why; and adds that among the boys the master was supposed to know nothing, and one of the ushers was supposed to know everything. "We are still inclined to think the first-named supposition perfectly correct. We went to look at the place only this last midsummer, and found that the railway had cut it up, root and branch. A great trunk line had swallowed the playground, sliced away the school-room, and pared off the corner of the house. Which, thus curtailed of its proportions, presented itself in a green stage of stucco, profile-wise towards the road, like a forlorn flat-iron without a handle, standing on end."

One who knew him in those early days, Mr. Owen P. Thomas, thus writes to me (February, 1871): "I had the honor of being Mr. Dickens's schoolfellow for about two years (1824-1826), both being day-scholars, at Mr. Jones's 'Classical and Commercial Academy,' as then inscribed in front of the house, and which was situated at the corner of Granby Street and the Hampstead Road. The house stands now in its original state, but the school and large playground behind disappeared on the formation of the London

and Northwestern Railway, which at this point runs in a slanting direction from Euston Square underneath the Hampstead Road. We were all companions and playmates when out of school, as well as fellow-students therein." (Mr. Thomas includes in this remark the names of Henry Danson, now a physician in practice in London; of Daniel Tobin, whom I remember to have been frequently assisted by his old schoolfellow in later years; and of Richard Bray.) "You will find a graphic sketch of the school by Mr. Dickens himself in Household Words of 11th October, 1851. The article is entitled Our School. The names of course are feigned; but, allowing for slight coloring, the persons and incidents described are all true to life, and easily recognizable by any one who attended the school at the time. The Latin master was Mr. Manville, or Mandeville, who for many years was well known at the library of the British Museum. The academy, after the railroad overthrew it, was removed to another house in the neighborhood, but Mr. Jones and two at least of his assistant masters have long ago departed this life."

One of the latter was the usher believed to know everything, who was writing-master, mathematical master, English master, divided the little boys with the Latin master, made out the bills, mended the pens, and always called at parents' houses to inquire after sick boys, because he had gentlemanly manners. This picture my correspondent recognized; as well as those of the fat little dancing-master who taught them hornpipes, of the Latin master who stuffed his ears with onions for his deafness, of the gruff serving-man who nursed the boys in scarlet fever, and of the principal himself, who was always ruling ciphering-books with a bloated mahogany ruler, smiting the palms of offenders with the same diabolical instrument, or viciously drawing a pair of pantaloons tight with one of his large hands and caning the wearer with the other.

"My recollection of Dickens whilst at school," Mr. Thomas continues, "is that of a healthy-looking boy, small but well built, with a more than usual flow of spirits, inducing to harmless fun, seldom or never I think to mischief, to which so many lads at that age are prone. I cannot recall anything that then indicated he would hereafter become a literary celebrity; but perhaps he was too young then. He usually held his head more erect than lads ordinarily do, and there was a general smartness about him. His weekday dress of jacket and trowsers, I can clearly remember, was what is called pepper-and-salt; and, instead of the frill that most boys of his age wore then, he had a turn-down collar, so that he looked less youthful in consequence. He invented what we termed a 'lingo,' produced by the addition of a few letters of the same sound to every word; and it was our ambition, walking and talking thus along the street, to be considered foreigners. As an alternate amusement the present writer well remembers extemporizing tales of some sort, and reciting them offhand, with Dickens and Danson or Tobin walking on either side of him. I inclose you a copy of a note I received from him when he was between thirteen and fourteen years of age, perhaps one of the earliest productions of his pen. The Leg referred to was the Legend of something, a pamphlet romance I had lent him; the Clavis was of course the Latin school-book so named."

There is some underlying whim or fun in the "Leg" allusions which Mr. Thomas appears to have overlooked, and certainly fails to explain; but the note, which is here given in fac-simile, may be left to speak for itself; and in the signature the reader will be amused to see the first faint beginning of a flourish afterwards famous.

"After a lapse of years," Mr. Thomas continues, "I recognized the celebrated writer as the individual I had known so well as a boy, from having preserved this note; and upon Mr. Dickens visiting Reading in December, 1854, to give one of his earliest readings for the benefit of the literary institute, of which he had become president on Mr. Justice Talfourd's death, I took the opportunity of showing it to him, when he was much diverted therewith. On the same occasion we conversed about mutual schoolfellows, and among others Daniel Tobin was referred to, whom I remembered to have been Dickens's most intimate

companion in the school-days (1824 to 1826). His reply was that Tobin either was then, or had previously been, assisting him in the capacity of amanuensis; but there is a subsequent mystery about Tobin, in connection with his friend and patron, which I have never been able to comprehend; for I understood shortly afterwards that there was entire separation between them, and it must have been an offense of some gravity to have sundered an acquaintance formed in early youth, and which had endured, greatly to Tobin's advantage, so long. He resided in our school-days in one of the now old and grimy-looking stone-fronted houses in George Street, Euston Road, a few doors from the Orange-tree tavern. It is the opinion of the other schoolfellow with whom we were intimate, Doctor Danson, that upon leaving school Mr. Dickens and Tobin entered the same solicitor's office, and this he thinks was either in or near Lincoln's Inn Fields."

[Illustration: Handwritten note: Punctuation and capitalization, retained:

Tim/

I am quite ashamed I have not returned your Leg but you shall have it by Harry to-morrow If you would like to purchase my Clavis you shall have it at a very reduced price Cheaper in comparison than a Leg.

Yours &c C Dickens.

PS. I suppose all this time you have had a wooden leg. I have weighed yours every saturday Night

(No date, but was written in latter part of 1825.)]

The offense of Tobin went no deeper than the having at last worn out even Dickens's patience and kindness. His applications for relief were so incessantly repeated, that to cut him and them adrift altogether was the only way of escape from what had become an intolerable nuisance. To Mr. Thomas's letter the reader will thank me for adding one not less interesting with which Dr. Henry Danson has favored me. We have here, with the same fun and animal spirits, a little of the proneness to mischief which his other schoolfellow says he was free from; but the mischief is all of the harmless kind, and might perhaps have been better described as but part of an irrepressible vivacity:

"My impression is that I was a schoolfellow of Dickens for nearly two years: he left before me, I think at about fifteen years of age. Mr. Jones's school, called the Wellington Academy, was in the Hampstead Road, at the northeast corner of Granby Street. The school-house was afterwards removed for the London and Northwestern Railway. It was considered at the time a very superior sort of school,--one of the best, indeed, in that part of London; but it was most shamefully mismanaged, and the boys made but very little progress. The proprietor, Mr. Jones, was a Welshman; a most ignorant fellow, and a mere tyrant; whose chief employment was to scourge the boys. Dickens has given a very lively account of this place in his paper entitled Our School, but it is very mythical in many respects, and more especially in the compliment he pays in it to himself. I do not remember that Dickens distinguished himself in any way, or carried off any prizes. My belief is that he did not learn Greek or Latin there; and you will remember there is no allusion to the classics in any of his writings. He was a handsome, curly-headed lad, full of animation and animal spirits, and probably was connected with every mischievous prank in the school. I do not think he came in for any of Mr. Jones's scourging propensity: in fact, together with myself, he was only a day-pupil, and with these there was a wholesome fear of tales being carried home to the parents. His personal appearance at that time is vividly brought home to me in the portrait of him taken a few years later by Mr. Lawrence. He resided with his friends in a very small house in a street leading out of Seymour Street, north of Mr. Judkin's chapel.

"Depend on it, he was quite a self-made man, and his wonderful knowledge and command of the English language must have been acquired by long and patient study after leaving his last school.

"I have no recollection of the boy you name. His chief associates were, I think, Tobin, Mr. Thomas, Bray,

and myself. The first-named was his chief ally, and his acquaintance with him appears to have continued many years afterwards. At about that time Penny and Saturday Magazines were published weekly, and were greedily read by us. We kept bees, white mice, and other living things clandestinely in our desks; and the mechanical arts were a good deal cultivated, in the shape of coach-building, and making pumps and boats, the motive power of which was the white mice.

"I think at that time Dickens took to writing small tales, and we had a sort of club for lending and circulating them. Dickens was also very strong in using a sort of lingo, which made us quite unintelligible to bystanders. We were very strong, too, in theatricals. We mounted small theatres, and got up very gorgeous scenery to illustrate the Miller and his Men and Cherry and Fair Star. I remember the present Mr. Beverley, the scene-painter, assisted us in this. Dickens was always a leader at these plays, which were occasionally presented with much solemnity before an audience of boys and in the presence of the ushers. My brother, assisted by Dickens, got up the Miller and his Men, in a very gorgeous form. Master Beverley constructed the mill for us in such a way that it could tumble to pieces with the assistance of crackers. At one representation the fireworks in the last scene, ending with the destruction of the mill, were so very real that the police interfered and knocked violently at the doors. Dickens's after-taste for theatricals might have had its origin in these small affairs.

"I quite remember Dickens on one occasion heading us in Drummond Street in pretending to be poor boys, and asking the passers-by for charity,--especially old ladies, one of whom told us she 'had no money for beggar-boys.' On these adventures, when the old ladies were quite staggered by the impudence of the demand, Dickens would explode with laughter and take to his heels.

"I met him one Sunday morning shortly after he left the school, and we very piously attended the morning service at Seymour Street Chapel. I am sorry to say Master Dickens did not attend in the slightest degree to the service, but incited me to laughter by declaring his dinner was ready and the potatoes would be spoiled, and in fact behaved in such a manner that it was lucky for us we were not ejected from the chapel.

"I heard of him some time after from Tobin, whom I met carrying a foaming pot of London particular in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I then understood that Dickens was in the same or some neighboring office.

"Many years elapsed after this before I became aware, from accidentally reading Our School, that the brilliant and now famous Dickens was my old schoolfellow. I didn't like to intrude myself upon him; and it was not until three or four years ago, when he presided at the University College dinner at Willis's rooms, and made a most brilliant and effective speech, that I sent him a congratulatory note reminding him of our former fellowship. To this he sent me a kind note in reply, and which I value very much. I send you copies of these."

From Dickens himself I never heard much allusion to the school thus described; but I knew that, besides being the subject dealt with in Household Words, it had supplied some of the lighter traits of Salem House for Copperfield; and that to the fact of one of its tutors being afterwards engaged to teach a boy of Macready's, our common friend, Dickens used to point for one of the illustrations of his favorite theory as to the smallness of the world, and how things and persons apparently the most unlikely to meet were continually knocking up against each other. The employment as his amanuensis of his schoolfellow Tobin dates as early as his Doctors'-Commons days, but both my correspondents are mistaken in the impression they appear to have received that Tobin had been previously his fellow-clerk in the same attorney's office. I had thought him more likely to have been accompanied there by another of his boyish acquaintances who became afterwards a solicitor, Mr. Mitton, not recollected by either of my correspondents in connection with the school, but whom I frequently met with him in later years, and for whom he had the regard arising out of such early associations. In this, however, I have since discovered

my own mistake: the truth being that it was this gentleman's connection, not with the Wellington Academy, but with a school kept by Mr. Dawson in Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, where the brothers of Dickens were subsequently placed, which led to their early knowledge of each other. I fancy that they were together also, for a short time, at Mr. Molloy's in New Square, Lincoln's Inn; but, whether or not this was so, Dickens certainly had not quitted school many months before his father had made sufficient interest with an attorney of Gray's Inn, Mr. Edward Blackmore, to obtain him regular employment in his office. In this capacity of clerk, our only trustworthy glimpse of him we owe to the last-named gentleman, who has described briefly, and I do not doubt authentically, the services so rendered by him to the law. It cannot be said that they were noteworthy, though it might be difficult to find a more distinguished person who has borne the title, unless we make exception for the very father of literature himself, whom Chaucer, with amusing illustration of the way in which words change their meanings, calls "that conceited clerke Homere."

"I was well acquainted," writes Mr. Edward Blackmore of Alresford, "with his parents, and, being then in practice in Gray's Inn, they asked me if I could find employment for him. He was a bright, clever-looking youth, and I took him as a clerk. He came to me in May, 1827, and left in November, 1828; and I have now an account-book which he used to keep of petty disbursements in the office, in which he charged himself with the modest salary first of thirteen shillings and sixpence, and afterwards of fifteen shillings, a week. Several incidents took place in the office of which he must have been a keen observer, as I recognized some of them in his Pickwick and Nickleby; and I am much mistaken if some of his characters had not their originals in persons I well remember. His taste for theatricals was much promoted by a fellow-clerk named Potter, since dead, with whom he chiefly associated. They took every opportunity, then unknown to me, of going together to a minor theatre, where (I afterwards heard) they not unfrequently engaged in parts. After he left me I saw him at times in the lord chancellor's court, taking notes of cases as a reporter. I then lost sight of him until his Pickwick made its appearance." This letter indicates the position he held at Mr. Blackmore's; and we have but to turn to the passage in Pickwick which describes the several grades of attorney's clerk, to understand it more clearly. He was very far below the articled clerk, who has paid a premium and is attorney in perspective. He was not so high as the salaried clerk, with nearly the whole of his weekly thirty shillings spent on his personal pleasures. He was not even on the level with his middle-aged copying-clerk, always needy and uniformly shabby. He was simply among, however his own nature may have lifted him above, the "office-lads in their first surtouts, who feel a befitting contempt for boys at day-schools, club as they go home at night for saveloys and porter, and think there's nothing like life." Thus far, not more or less, had he now reached. He was one of the office-lads, and probably in his first surtout.

But, even thus, the process of education went on, defying what seemed to interrupt it; and in the amount of his present equipment for his needs of life, what he brought from the Wellington House Academy can have borne but the smallest proportion to his acquirement at Mr. Blackmore's. Yet to seek to identify, without help from himself, any passages in his books with those boyish law-experiences, would be idle and hopeless enough. In the earliest of his writings, and down to the very latest, he worked exhaustively the field which is opened by an attorney's office to a student of life and manners; but we have not now to deal with his numerous varieties of the genus clerk drawn thus for the amusement of others, but with the acquisitions which at present he was storing up for himself from the opportunities such offices opened to him. Nor would it be possible to have better illustrative comment on all these years than is furnished by his father's reply to a friend it was now hoped to interest on his behalf, which more than once I have heard him whimsically, but good-humoredly, imitate. "Pray, Mr. Dickens, where was your son educated?" "Why, indeed, sir--ha! ha!--he may be said to have educated himself!" Of the two kinds of education which Gibbon says that all men who rise above the common level receive,--the first, that of his teachers,

and the second, more personal and more important, his own,--he had the advantage only of the last. It nevertheless sufficed for him.

Very nearly another eighteen months were now to be spent mainly in practical preparation for what he was, at this time, led finally to choose as an employment from which a fair income was certain with such talents as he possessed; his father already having taken to it, in these latter years, in aid of the family resources. In his father's house, which was at Hampstead through the first portion of the Mornington Street school time, then in the house out of Seymour Street mentioned by Dr. Danson, and afterwards, upon the elder Dickens going into the gallery, in Bentinck Street, Manchester Square, Charles had continued to live; and, influenced doubtless by the example before him, he took sudden determination to qualify himself thoroughly for what his father was lately become, a newspaper parliamentary reporter. He set resolutely, therefore, to the study of short-hand; and, for the additional help of such general information about books as a fairly-educated youth might be expected to have, as well as to satisfy some higher personal cravings, he became an assiduous attendant in the British Museum reading-room. He would frequently refer to these days as decidedly the usefulest to himself he had ever passed; and, judging from the results, they must have been so. No man who knew him in later years, and talked to him familiarly of books and things, would have suspected his education in boyhood, almost entirely self-acquired as it was, to have been so rambling or hap-hazard as I have here described it. The secret consisted in this, that, whatever for the time he had to do, he lifted himself, there and then, to the level of, and at no time disregarded the rules that guided the hero of his novel. "Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. What I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely. Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self, and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was, I find now to have been my golden rules."

Of the difficulties that beset his short-hand studies, as well as of what first turned his mind to them, he has told also something in Copperfield. He had heard that many men distinguished in various pursuits had begun life by reporting the debates in parliament, and he was not deterred by a friend's warning that the mere mechanical accomplishment for excellence in it might take a few years to master thoroughly; "a perfect and entire command of the mystery of short-hand writing and reading being about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages." Undaunted, he plunged into it, self-teaching in this as in graver things, and, having bought Mr. Gurney's half-guinea book, worked steadily his way through its distractions. "The changes that were rung upon dots, which in such a position meant such a thing, and in such another position something else entirely different; the wonderful vagaries that were played by circles; the unaccountable consequences that resulted from marks like flies' legs; the tremendous effects of a curve in a wrong place; not only troubled my waking hours, but reappeared before me in my sleep. When I had groped my way, blindly, through these difficulties, and had mastered the alphabet, there then appeared a procession of new horrors, called arbitrary characters; the most despotic characters I have ever known; who insisted, for instance, that a thing like the beginning of a cobweb meant expectation, and that a pen-and-ink sky-rocket stood for disadvantageous. When I had fixed these wretches in my mind, I found that they had driven everything else out of it; then, beginning again, I forgot them; while I was picking them up, I dropped the other fragments of the system: in short, it was almost heart-breaking."

What it was that made it not quite heart-breaking to the hero of the fiction, its readers know; and something of the same kind was now to enter into the actual experience of its writer. First let me say, however, that after subduing to his wants in marvelously quick time this unruly and unaccommodating servant of stenography, what he most desired was still not open to him. "There never was such a short-hand writer," has been often said to me by Mr. Beard, the friend he first made in that line when he entered the gallery, and with whom to the close of his life he maintained the friendliest intercourse. But

there was no opening for him in the gallery yet. He had to pass nearly two years as a reporter for one of the offices in Doctors' Commons, practicing in this and the other law courts, before he became a sharer in parliamentary toils and triumphs; and what sustained his young hero through something of the same sort of trial was also his own support. He too had his Dora, at apparently the same hopeless elevation; striven for as the one only thing to be attained, and even more unattainable, for neither did he succeed nor happily did she die; but the one idol, like the other, supplying a motive to exertion for the time, and otherwise opening out to the idolater, both in fact and fiction, a highly unsubstantial, happy, foolish time. I used to laugh and tell him I had no belief in any but the book Dora, until the incident of a sudden reappearance of the real one in his life, nearly six years after Copperfield was written, convinced me there had been a more actual foundation for those chapters of his book than I was ready to suppose. Still, I would hardly admit it, and, that the matter could possibly affect him then, persisted in a stout refusal to believe. His reply (1855) throws a little light on this juvenile part of his career, and I therefore venture to preserve it:

"I don't quite apprehend what you mean by my overrating the strength of the feeling of five-and-twenty years ago. If you mean of my own feeling, and will only think what the desperate intensity of my nature is, and that this began when I was Charley's age; that it excluded every other idea from my mind for four years, at a time of life when four years are equal to four times four; and that I went at it with a determination to overcome all the difficulties, which fairly lifted me up into that newspaper life, and floated me away over a hundred men's heads; then you are wrong, because nothing can exaggerate that. I have positively stood amazed at myself ever since!--And so I suffered, and so worked, and so beat and hammered away at the maddest romances that ever got into any boy's head and stayed there, that to see the mere cause of it all, now, loosens my hold upon myself. Without for a moment sincerely believing that it would have been better if we had never got separated, I cannot see the occasion of so much emotion as I should see any one else. No one can imagine in the most distant degree what pain the recollection gave me in Copperfield. And, just as I can never open that book as I open any other book, I cannot see the face (even at four-and-forty), or hear the voice, without going wandering away over the ashes of all that youth and hope in the wildest manner." More and more plainly seen, however, in the light of four-and-forty, the romance glided visibly away, its work being fairly done; and at the close of the month following that in which this letter was written, during which he had very quietly made a formal call with his wife at his youthful Dora's house, and contemplated with a calm equanimity, in the hall, her stuffed favorite Jip, he began the fiction in which there was a Flora to set against its predecessor's Dora, both derived from the same original. The fancy had a comic humor in it he found it impossible to resist, but it was kindly and pleasant to the last; and if the later picture showed him plenty to laugh at in this retrospect of his youth, there was nothing he thought of more tenderly than the earlier, as long as he was conscious of anything.

Volume I, Chapter 4 (1831-1835): Reporters' Gallery and Newspaper Literature

Reporters' Gallery and Newspaper Literature

DICKENS was nineteen years old when at last he entered the gallery. His father, with whom he still lived in Bentinck Street, had already, as we have seen, joined the gallery as a reporter for one of the morning papers, and was now in the more comfortable circumstances derived from the addition to his official pension which this praiseworthy labor insured; but his own engagement on the Chronicle dates somewhat later. His first parliamentary service was given to the True Sun, a journal which had then on its editorial staff some dear friends of mine, through whom I became myself a contributor to it, and afterwards, in common with all concerned, whether in its writing, reporting, printing, or publishing, a sharer in its difficulties. The most formidable of these arrived one day in a general strike of the reporters; and I well remember noticing at this dread time, on the staircase of the magnificent mansion we were lodged in, a young man of my own age, whose keen animation of look would have arrested attention anywhere, and whose name, upon inquiry, I then for the first time heard. It was coupled with the fact, which gave it interest even then, that "young Dickens" had been spokesman for the recalcitrant reporters, and conducted their case triumphantly. He was afterwards during two sessions engaged for the Mirror of Parliament, which one of his uncles by the mother's side originated and conducted; and finally, in his twenty-third year, he became a reporter for the Morning Chronicle.

A step far more momentous to him (though then he did not know it) he had taken shortly before. In the December number for 1833 of what then was called the Old Monthly Magazine, his first published piece of writing had seen the light. He has described himself dropping this paper (Mr. Minns and his Cousin, as he afterwards entitled it, but which appeared in the magazine as A Dinner at Poplar Walk) stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box in a dark office up a dark court in Fleet Street; and he has told his agitation when it appeared in all the glory of print: "On which occasion I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half an hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." He had purchased the magazine at a shop in the Strand; and exactly two years afterwards, in the younger member of a publishing firm who had called, at the chambers in Furnival's Inn to which he had moved soon after entering the gallery, with the proposal that originated Pickwick, he recognized the person he had bought that magazine from, and whom before or since he had never seen.

This interval of two years more than comprised what remained of his career in the gallery and the engagements connected with it; but that this occupation was of the utmost importance in its influence on his life, in the discipline of his powers as well as of his character, there can be no doubt whatever. "To the wholesome training of severe newspaper work, when I was a very young man, I constantly refer my first successes," he said to the New York editors when he last took leave of them. It opened to him a wide and varied range of experience, which his wonderful observation, exact as it was humorous, made entirely his own. He saw the last of the old coaching-days, and of the old inns that were a part of them; but it will be long before the readers of his living page see the last of the life of either. "There never was," he once wrote to me (in 1845), "anybody connected with newspapers who, in the same space of time, had so much express and post-chaise experience as I. And what gentlemen they were to serve, in such things, at the old Morning Chronicle! Great or small it did not matter. I have had to charge for half a dozen break-downs in half a dozen times as many miles. I have had to charge for the damage of a great-coat from the drippings of a blazing wax candle, in writing through the smallest hours of the night in

a swift-flying carriage-and-pair. I have had to charge for all sorts of breakages fifty times in a journey without question, such being the ordinary results of the pace which we went at. I have charged for broken hats, broken luggage, broken chaises, broken harness--everything but a broken head, which is the only thing they would have grumbled to pay for."

Something to the same effect he said publicly twenty years later, on the occasion of his presiding, in May, 1865, at the second annual dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund, when he condensed within the compass of his speech a summary of the whole of his reporting life. "I am not here," he said, "advocating the case of a mere ordinary client of whom I have little or no knowledge. I hold a brief to-night for my brothers. I went into the gallery of the House of Commons as a parliamentary reporter when I was a boy, and I left it--I can hardly believe the inexorable truth--nigh thirty years ago. I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren here can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer, from my short-hand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark-lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle-yard there, to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once 'took,' as we used to call it, an election-speech of Lord John Russell at the Devon contest, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such a pelting rain that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my note-book, after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep,--kept in waiting, say, until the woolsack might want restuffing. Returning home from exciting political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been, in my time, belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken post-boys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr. Black, coming in the broadest of Scotch from the broadest of hearts I ever knew. These trivial things I mention as an assurance to you that I never have forgotten the fascination of that old pursuit. The pleasure that I used to feel in the rapidity and dexterity of its exercise has never faded out of my breast. Whatever little cunning of hand or head I took to it, or acquired in it, I have so retained as that I fully believe I could resume it to-morrow, very little the worse from long disuse. To this present year of my life, when I sit in this hall, or where not, hearing a dull speech (the phenomenon does occur), I sometimes beguile the tedium of the moment by mentally following the speaker in the old, old way; and sometimes, if you can believe me, I even find my hand going on the table-cloth, taking an imaginary note of it all." The latter I have known him do frequently. It was indeed a quite ordinary habit with him.

Mr. James Grant, a writer who was himself in the gallery with Dickens, and who states that among its eighty or ninety reporters he occupied the very highest rank, not merely for accuracy in reporting but for marvelous quickness in transcribing, has lately also told us that while there he was exceedingly reserved in his manners, and that, though showing the usual courtesies to all he was concerned with in his duties, the only personal intimacy he formed was with Mr. Thomas Beard, then too reporting for the Morning Chronicle. I have already mentioned the friendly and familiar relations maintained with this gentleman to the close of his life; and in confirmation of Mr. Grant's statement I can further say that the only other associate of these early reporting days to whom I ever heard him refer with special regard was the late

Mr. Vincent Dowling, many years editor of Bell's Life, with whom he did not continue much personal intercourse, but of whose character as well as talents he had formed a very high opinion. Nor is there anything to add to the notice of these days which the reader's fancy may not easily supply. A letter has been kept as written by him while engaged on one of his "expresses;" but it is less for its saying anything new, than for its confirming with a pleasant vividness what has been said already, that its contents will justify mention here.

He writes, on a "Tuesday morning" in May, 1835, from the Bush Inn, Bristol; the occasion that has taken him to the west, connected with a reporting party, being Lord John Russell's Devonshire contest above named, and his associate-chief being Mr. Beard, intrusted with command for the Chronicle in this particular express. He expects to forward "the conclusion of Russell's dinner" by Cooper's company's coach leaving the Bush at half-past six next morning; and by the first Ball's coach on Thursday morning he will forward the report of the Bath dinner, indorsing the parcel for immediate delivery, with extra rewards for the porter. Beard is to go over to Bath next morning. He is himself to come back by the mail from Marlborough; he has no doubt, if Lord John makes a speech of any ordinary dimensions, it can be done by the time Marlborough is reached; "and taking into consideration the immense importance of having the addition of saddle-horses from thence, it is, beyond all doubt, worth an effort. . . . I need not say," he continues, "that it will be sharp work and will require two of us; for we shall both be up the whole of the previous night, and shall have to sit up all night again to get it off in time." He adds that as soon as they have had a little sleep they will return to town as quickly as they can; but they have, if the express succeeds, to stop at sundry places along the road to pay money and notify satisfaction. And so, for himself and Beard, he is his editor's very sincerely.

Another anecdote of these reporting days, with its sequel, may be added from his own alleged relation, in which, however, mistakes occur that it seems strange he should have made. The story, as told, is that the late Lord Derby, when Mr. Stanley, had on some important occasion made a speech which all the reporters found it necessary greatly to abridge; that its essential points had nevertheless been so well given in the Chronicle that Mr. Stanley, having need of it for himself in greater detail, had sent a request to the reporter to meet him in Carlton House Terrace and take down the entire speech; that Dickens attended and did the work accordingly, much to Mr. Stanley's satisfaction; and that, on his dining with Mr. Gladstone in recent years, and finding the aspect of the dining-room strangely familiar, he discovered afterwards on inquiry that it was there he had taken the speech. The story, as it actually occurred, is connected with the brief life of the Mirror of Parliament. It was not at any special desire of Mr. Stanley's, but for that new record of the debates, which had been started by one of the uncles of Dickens and professed to excel Hansard in giving verbatim reports, that the famous speech against O'Connell was taken as described. The young reporter went to the room in Carlton Terrace because the work of his uncle Barrow's publication required to be done there; and if, in later years, the great author was in the same room as the guest of the prime minister, it must have been but a month or two before he died, when for the first time he visited and breakfasted with Mr. Gladstone.

The mention of his career in the gallery may close with the incident. I will only add that his observation while there had not led him to form any high opinion of the House of Commons or its heroes, and that of the Pickwickian sense which so often takes the place of common sense in our legislature he omitted no opportunity of declaring his contempt at every part of his life.

The other occupation had meanwhile not been lost sight of, and for this we are to go back a little. Since the first sketch appeared in the Monthly Magazine, nine others have enlivened the pages of later numbers of the same magazine, the last in February, 1835, and that which appeared in the preceding August having first had the signature of Boz. This was the nickname of a pet child, his youngest brother

Augustus, whom in honor of the Vicar of Wakefield he had dubbed Moses, which being facetiously pronounced through the nose became Boses, and being shortened became Boz. "Boz was a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author, and so I came to adopt it." Thus had he fully invented his Sketches by Boz before they were even so called, or any one was ready to give much attention to them; and the next invention needful to himself was some kind of payment in return for them. The magazine was owned as well as conducted at this time by a Mr. Holland, who had come back from Bolivar's South American campaigns with the rank of captain, and had hoped to make it a popular mouthpiece for his ardent liberalism. But this hope, as well as his own health, quite failed; and he had sorrowfully to decline receiving any more of the sketches when they had to cease as voluntary offerings. I do not think that either he or the magazine lived many weeks after an evening I passed with him in Doughty Street in 1837, when he spoke in a very touching way of the failure of this and other enterprises of his life, and of the help that Dickens had been to him.

Nothing thus being forthcoming from the Monthly, it was of course but natural the sketches too should cease to be forthcoming; and, even before the above-named February number appeared, a new opening had been found for them. An evening offshoot to the Morning Chronicle had been lately in hand; and to a countryman of Black's engaged in the preparations for it, Mr. George Hogarth, Dickens was communicating from his rooms in Furnival's Inn, on the evening of Tuesday, the 20th of January, 1835, certain hopes and fancies he had formed. This was the beginning of his knowledge of an accomplished and kindly man, with whose family his relations were soon to become so intimate as to have an influence on all his future career. Mr. Hogarth had asked him, as a favor to himself, to write an original sketch for the first number of the enterprise, and in writing back to say with what readiness he should comply, and how anxiously he should desire to do his best for the person who had made the request, he mentioned what had arisen in his mind. It had occurred to him that he might not be unreasonably or improperly trespassing farther on Mr. Hogarth if, trusting to his kindness to refer the application to the proper quarter, he begged to ask whether it was probable, if he commenced a regular series of articles under some attractive title for the Evening Chronicle, its conductors would think he had any claim to some additional remuneration (of course, of no great amount) for doing so. In short, he wished to put it to the proprietors--first, whether a continuation of some chapters of light papers in the style of his street-sketches would be considered of use to the new journal; and secondly, if so, whether they would not think it fair and reasonable that, taking his share of the ordinary reporting business of the Chronicle besides, he should receive something for the papers beyond his ordinary salary as a reporter. The request was thought fair, he began the sketches, and his salary was raised from five to seven guineas a week.

They went on, with undiminished spirit and freshness, throughout the year; and, much as they were talked of outside as well as in the world of newspapers, nothing in connection with them delighted the writer half so much as the hearty praise of his own editor. Mr. Black is one of the men who has passed without recognition out of a world his labors largely benefited, but with those who knew him no man was so popular, as well for his broad kindly humor as for his honest great-hearted enjoyment of whatever was excellent in others. Dickens to the last remembered that it was most of all the cordial help of this good old mirth-loving man which had started him joyfully on his career of letters. "It was John Black that flung the slipper after me," he would often say. "Dear old Black! my first hearty out-and-out appreciator," is an expression in one of his letters written to me in the year he died.

Volume I, Chapter 5 (1836): First Book, and Origin of Pickwick

First Book, and Origin of Pickwick

THE opening of 1836 found him collecting into two volumes the first series of Sketches by Boz, of which he had sold the copyright for a conditional payment of (I think) a hundred and fifty pounds to a young publisher named Macrone, whose acquaintance he had made through Mr. Ainsworth a few weeks before. At this time also, we are told in a letter before quoted, the editorship of the Monthly Magazine having come into Mr. James Grant's hands, this gentleman, applying to him through its previous editor to know if he would again contribute to it, learned two things: the first, that he was going to be married; and the second, that, having entered into an arrangement to write a monthly serial, his duties in future would leave him small spare time. Both pieces of news were soon confirmed. The Times of the 26th of March, 1836, gave notice that on the 31st would be published the first shilling number of the Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, edited by Boz; and the same journal of a few days later announced that on the 2d of April Mr. Charles Dickens had married Catherine, the eldest daughter of Mr. George Hogarth, whom already we have met as his fellow-worker on the Chronicle. The honeymoon was passed in the neighborhood to which at all times of interest in his life he turned with a strange recurring fondness; and while the young couple are at the quiet little village of Chalk, on the road between Gravesend and Rochester, I will relate exactly the origin of the ever-memorable Mr. Pickwick.

A young publishing-house had started recently, among other enterprises ingenious rather than important, a Library of Fiction; among the authors they wished to enlist in it was the writer of the sketches in the Monthly; and, to the extent of one paper during the past year, they had effected this through their editor, Mr. Charles Whitehead, a very ingenious and very unfortunate man. "I was not aware," wrote the elder member of the firm to Dickens, thirteen years later, in a letter to which reference was made in the preface to Pickwick in one of his later editions, "that you were writing in the Chronicle, or what your name was; but Whitehead, who was an old Monthly man, recollected it, and got you to write The Tuggs's at Ramsgate."

And now comes another person on the scene. "In November, 1835," continues Mr. Chapman, "we published a little book called the Squib Annual, with plates by Seymour; and it was during my visit to him to see after them that he said he should like to do a series of cockney-sporting plates of a superior sort to those he had already published. I said I thought they might do, if accompanied by letter-press and published in monthly parts; and, this being agreed to, we wrote to the author of Three Courses and a Dessert, and proposed it; but, receiving no answer, the scheme dropped for some months, till Seymour said he wished us to decide, as another job had offered which would fully occupy his time; and it was on this we decided to ask you to do it. Having opened already a connection with you for our Library of Fiction, we naturally applied to you to do the Pickwick; but I do not think we even mentioned our intention to Mr. Seymour, and I am quite sure that from the beginning to the end nobody but yourself had anything whatever to do with it. Our prospectus was out at the end of February, and it had all been arranged before that date."

The member of the firm who carried the application to him in Furnival's Inn was not the writer of this letter, but Mr. Hall, who had sold him two years before, not knowing that he was the purchaser, the magazine in which his first effusion was printed; and he has himself described what passed at the interview: "The idea propounded to me was that the monthly something should be a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr. Seymour; and there was a notion, either on the part of that admirable

humorous artist, or of my visitor, that a NIMROD CLUB, the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these. I objected, on consideration that, although born and partly bred in the country, I was no great sportsman, except in regard to all kinds of locomotion; that the idea was not novel, and had already been much used; that it would be infinitely better for the plates to arise naturally out of the text; and that I would like to take my own way, with a freer range of English scenes and people, and was afraid I should ultimately do so in any case, whatever course I might prescribe to myself at starting. My views being deferred to, I thought of Mr. Pickwick, and wrote the first number; from the proof-sheets of which Mr. Seymour made his drawing of the club and his happy portrait of its founder. I connected Mr. Pickwick with a club, because of the original suggestion; and I put in Mr. Winkle expressly for the use of Mr. Seymour."

Mr. Hall was dead when this statement was first made, in the preface to the cheap edition in 1847; but Mr. Chapman clearly recollected his partner's account of the interview, and confirmed every part of it, in his letter of 1849, with one exception. In giving Mr. Seymour credit for the figure by which all the habitable globe knows Mr. Pickwick, and which certainly at the outset helped to make him a reality, it had given the artist too much. The reader will hardly be so startled as I was on coming to the closing line of Mr. Chapman's confirmatory letter: "As this letter is to be historical, I may as well claim what little belongs to me in the matter, and that is the figure of Pickwick. Seymour's first sketch was of a long, thin man. The present immortal one he made from my description of a friend of mine at Richmond, a fat old beau, who would wear, in spite of the ladies' protests, drab tights and black gaiters. His name was John Foster."

On the coincidences, resemblances, and surprises of life, Dickens liked especially to dwell, and few things moved his fancy so pleasantly. The world, he would say, was so much smaller than we thought it; we were all so connected by fate without knowing it; people supposed to be far apart were so constantly elbowing each other; and to-morrow bore so close a resemblance to nothing half so much as to yesterday. Here were the only two leading incidents of his own life before I knew him, his marriage and the first appearance of his Pickwick; and it turned out after all that I had some shadowy association with both. He was married on the anniversary of my birthday, and the original of the figure of Mr. Pickwick bore my name.

The first number had not yet appeared when his Sketches by Boz, Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People, came forth in two duodecimos with some capital cuts by Cruikshank, and with a preface in which he spoke of the nervousness he should have had in venturing alone before the public, and of his delight in getting the help of Cruikshank, who had frequently contributed to the success, though his well-earned reputation rendered it impossible for him ever to have shared the hazard, of similar undertakings. It very soon became apparent that there was no hazard here. The Sketches were much more talked about than the first two or three numbers of Pickwick, and I remember still with what hearty praise the book was first named to me by my dear friend Albany Fonblanque, as keen and clear a judge as ever lived either of books or men. Richly did it merit all the praise it had, and more, I will add, than he was ever disposed to give to it himself. He decidedly underrated it. He gave, in subsequent writings, so much more perfect form and fullness to everything it contained, that he did not care to credit himself with the marvel of having yet so early anticipated so much. But the first sprightly runnings of his genius are undoubtedly here. Mr. Bumble is in the parish sketches, and Mr. Dawkins the dodger in the Old Bailey scenes. There is laughter and fun to excess, never misapplied; there are the minute points and shades of character, with all the discrimination and nicety of detail, afterwards so famous; there is everywhere the most perfect ease and skill of handling. The observation shown throughout is nothing short of wonderful. Things are painted literally as they are, and, whatever the picture, whether of every-day vulgar, shabby-genteel, or downright low, with neither the condescending air which is

affectation, nor the too familiar one which is slang. The book altogether is a perfectly unaffected, unpretentious, honest performance. Under its manly, sensible, straightforward vein of talk there is running at the same time a natural flow of sentiment never sentimental, of humor always easy and unforced, and of pathos for the most part dramatic or picturesque, under which lay the germ of what his mature genius took afterwards most delight in. Of course there are inequalities in it, and some things that would have been better away; but it is a book that might have stood its ground, even if it had stood alone, as containing unusually truthful observation of a sort of life between the middle class and the low, which, having few attractions for bookish observers, was quite unhackneyed ground. It had otherwise also the very special merit of being in no respect bookish or commonplace in its descriptions of the old city with which its writer was so familiar. It was a picture of every-day London at its best and worst, in its humors and enjoyments as well as its sufferings and sins, pervaded everywhere not only with the absolute reality of the things depicted, but also with that subtle sense and mastery of feeling which gives to the reader's sympathies invariably right direction, and awakens consideration, tenderness, and kindness precisely for those who most need such help.

Between the first and the second numbers of Pickwick, the artist, Mr. Seymour, died by his own hand; and the number came out with three instead of four illustrations. Dickens had seen the unhappy man only once, forty-eight hours before his death; when he went to Furnival's Inn with an etching for the "stroller's tale" in that number, which, altered at Dickens's suggestion, he brought away again for the few further touches that occupied him to a late hour of the night before he destroyed himself. A notice attached to the number informed the public of this latter fact. There was at first a little difficulty in replacing him, and for a single number Mr. Buss was interposed. But before the fourth number a choice had been made, which as time went on was so thoroughly justified, that through the greater part of the wonderful career which was then beginning the connection was kept up, and Mr. Hablot Browne's name is not unworthily associated with the masterpieces of Dickens's genius. An incident which I heard related by Mr. Thackeray at one of the Royal Academy dinners belongs to this time: "I can remember when Mr. Dickens was a very young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works in covers which were colored light green and came out once a month, that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writings; and I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn, with two or three drawings in my hand, which, strange to say, he did not find suitable." Dickens has himself described another change now made in the publication: "We started with a number of twenty-four pages and four illustrations. Mr. Seymour's sudden and lamented death before the second number was published, brought about a quick decision upon a point already in agitation: the number became one of thirty-two pages with only two illustrations, and remained so to the end."

The Session of 1836 terminated his connection with the gallery, and some fruits of his increased leisure showed themselves before the close of the year. His eldest sister's musical attainments and connections had introduced him to many cultivators and professors of that art; he was led to take much interest in Mr. Braham's enterprise at the St. James's theatre; and in aid of it he wrote a farce for Mr. Harley, founded upon one of his sketches, and the story and songs for an opera composed by his friend Mr. Hullah. Both the Strange Gentleman, acted in September, and the Village Coquettes, produced in December, 1836, had a good success; and the last is memorable to me for having brought me first into personal communication with Dickens.

Volume I, Chapter 6 (1837): Writing the Pickwick Papers

Writing the Pickwick Papers

THE first letter I had from him was at the close of 1836, from Furnival's Inn, when he sent me the book of his opera of the Village Coquettes, which had been published by Mr. Bentley; and this was followed, two months later, by his collected Sketches, both first and second series; which he desired me to receive "as a very small testimony of the donor's regard and obligations, as well as of his desire to cultivate and avail himself of a friendship which has been so pleasantly thrown in his way. . . . In short, if you will receive them for my sake and not for their own, you will very greatly oblige me." I had met him in the interval at the house of our common friend Mr. Ainsworth, and I remember vividly the impression then made upon me.

Very different was his face in those days from that which photography has made familiar to the present generation. A look of youthfulness first attracted you, and then a candor and openness of expression which made you sure of the qualities within. The features were very good. He had a capital forehead, a firm nose with full wide nostril, eyes wonderfully beaming with intellect and running over with humor and cheerfulness, and a rather prominent mouth strongly marked with sensibility. The head was altogether well formed and symmetrical, and the air and carriage of it were extremely spirited. The hair so scant and grizzled in later days was then of a rich brown and most luxuriant abundance, and the bearded face of his last two decades had hardly a vestige of hair or whisker; but there was that in the face as I first recollect it which no time could change, and which remained implanted on it unalterably to the last. This was the quickness, keenness, and practical power, the eager, restless, energetic outlook on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books, and so much of a man of action and business in the world. Light and motion flashed from every part of it. It was as if made of steel, was said of it, four or five years after the time to which I am referring, by a most original and delicate observer, the late Mrs. Carlyle. "What a face is his to meet in a drawing-room!" wrote Leigh Hunt to me, the morning after I made them known to each other. "It has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings." In such sayings are expressed not alone the restless and resistless vivacity and force of which I have spoken, but that also which lay beneath them of steadiness and hard endurance.

Several unsuccessful efforts were made by each to get the other to his house before the door of either was opened at last. A son had been born to him on Twelfth-day (the 6th January, 1837), and before the close of the following month he and his wife were in the lodgings at Chalk they had occupied after their marriage. Early in March there is a letter from him accounting for the failure of a promise to call on me because of "a crew of house-agents and attorneys" through whom he had nearly missed his conveyance to Chalk, and been made "more than half wild besides." This was his last letter from Furnival's Inn. In that same month he went to 48, Doughty Street; and in his first letter to me from that address, dated at the close of the month, there is this passage: "We only called upon you a second time in the hope of getting you to dine with us, and were much disappointed not to find you. I have delayed writing a reply to your note, meaning to call upon you. I have been so much engaged, however, in the pleasant occupation of 'moving' that I have not had time; and I am obliged at last to write and say that I have been long engaged to the Pickwick publishers to a dinner in honor of that hero which comes off to-morrow. I am consequently unable to accept your kind invite, which I frankly own I should have liked much better."

That Saturday's celebration of his twelfth number, the anniversary of the birth of Pickwick, preceded by but a few weeks a personal sorrow which profoundly moved him. His wife's next younger sister, Mary, who lived with them, and by sweetness of nature even more than by graces of person had made herself the ideal of his life, died with a terrible suddenness that for the time completely bore him down. His grief

and suffering were intense, and affected him, as will be seen, through many after-years. The publication of Pickwick was interrupted for two months, the effort of writing it not being possible to him. He moved for change of scene to Hampstead, and here, at the close of May, I visited him, and became first his guest. More than ordinarily susceptible at the moment to all kindliest impressions, his heart opened itself to mine. I left him as much his friend, and as entirely in his confidence, as if I had known him for years. Nor had many weeks passed before he addressed to me from Doughty Street words which it is my sorrowful pride to remember have had literal fulfillment: "I look back with unmingled pleasure to every link which each ensuing week has added to the chain of our attachment. It shall go hard, I hope, ere anything but Death impairs the toughness of a bond now so firmly riveted." It remained unweakened till death came.

There were circumstances that drew us at once into frequent and close communication. What the sudden popularity of his writings implied, was known to others some time before it was known to himself; and he was only now becoming gradually conscious of all the disadvantage this had placed him at. He would have laughed if, at this outset of his wonderful fortune in literature, his genius acknowledged by all without misgiving, young, popular, and prosperous, any one had compared him to the luckless men of letters of former days, whose common fate was to be sold into a slavery which their later lives were passed in vain endeavors to escape from. Not so was his fate to be, yet something of it he was doomed to experience. He had unwittingly sold himself into a quasi-bondage, and had to purchase his liberty at a heavy cost, after considerable suffering.

It was not until the fourth or fifth number of Pickwick (in the latter Sam Weller made his first appearance) that its importance began to be understood by "the trade," and on the eve of the issue of its sixth number, the 22d August, 1836, he had signed an agreement with Mr. Bentley to undertake the editorship of a monthly magazine to be started the following January, to which he was to supply a serial story; and soon afterwards he had agreed with the same publisher to write two other tales, the first at a specified early date; the expressed remuneration in each case being certainly quite inadequate to the claims of a writer of any marked popularity. Under these Bentley agreements he was now writing, month by month, the first half of Oliver Twist, and, under his Chapman & Hall agreement, the last half of Pickwick, not even by a week in advance of the printer with either; when a circumstance became known to him of which he thus wrote to me:

"I heard half an hour ago, on authority which leaves me in no doubt about the matter (from the binder of Pickwick, in fact), that Macrone intends publishing a new issue of my Sketches in monthly parts of nearly the same size and in just the same form as the Pickwick Papers. I need not tell you that this is calculated to injure me most seriously, or that I have a very natural and most decided objection to being supposed to presume upon the success of the Pickwick, and thus foist this old work upon the public in its new dress for the mere purpose of putting money in my own pocket. Neither need I say that the fact of my name being before the town, attached to three publications at the same time, must prove seriously prejudicial to my reputation. As you are acquainted with the circumstances under which these copyrights were disposed of, and as I know I may rely on your kind help, may I beg you to see Macrone, and to state in the strongest and most emphatic manner my feeling on this point? I wish him to be reminded of the sums he paid for those books; of the sale he has had for them; of the extent to which he has already pushed them; and of the very great profits he must necessarily have acquired from them. I wish him also to be reminded that no intention of publishing them in this form was in the remotest manner hinted to me, by him or on his behalf, when he obtained possession of the copyright. I then wish you to put it to his feelings of common honesty and fair dealing whether after this communication he will persevere in his intention." What else the letter contained need not be quoted, but it strongly moved me to do my best.

I found Mr. Macrone inaccessible to all arguments of persuasion, however. That he had bought the book

for a small sum at a time when the smallest was not unimportant to the writer, shortly before his marriage, and that he had since made very considerable profits by it, in no way disturbed his position that he had a right to make as much as he could of what was his, without regard to how it had become so. There was nothing for it but to change front, and, admitting it might be a less evil to the unlucky author to repurchase than to let the monthly issue proceed, to ask what further gain was looked for; but so wide a mouth was opened at this that I would have no part in the costly process of filling it. I told Dickens so, and strongly counseled him to keep quiet for a time.

But the worry and vexation were too great with all the work he had in hand, and I was hardly surprised next day to receive the letter sent me; which yet should be prefaced with the remark that suspense of any kind was at all times intolerable to the writer. The interval between the accomplishment of anything, and "its first motion," Dickens never could endure, and he was too ready to make any sacrifice to abridge or end it. This did not belong to the strong side of his character, and advantage was frequently taken of the fact. "I sent down just now to know whether you were at home (two o'clock), as Chapman & Hall were with me, and, the case being urgent, I wished to have the further benefit of your kind advice and assistance. Macrone and H---- (arcades ambo) waited on them this morning, and after a long discussion peremptorily refused to take one farthing less than the two thousand pounds. H---- repeated the statement of figures which he made to you yesterday, and put it to Hall whether he could say from his knowledge of such matters that the estimate of probable profit was exorbitant. Hall, whose judgment may be relied on in such matters, could not dispute the justice of the calculation. And so the matter stood. In this dilemma it occurred to them (my Pickwick men), whether, if the Sketches must appear in monthly numbers, it would not be better for them to appear for their benefit and mine conjointly than for Macrone's sole use and behoof; whether they, having all the Pickwick machinery in full operation, could not obtain for them a much larger sale than Macrone could ever get; and whether, even at this large price of two thousand pounds, we might not, besides retaining the copyright, reasonably hope for a good profit on the outlay. These suggestions having presented themselves, they came straight to me (having obtained a few hours' respite) and proposed that we should purchase the copyrights between us for the two thousand pounds, and publish them in monthly parts. I need not say that no other form of publication would repay the expenditure; and they wish me to explain by an address that they, who may be fairly put forward as the parties, have been driven into that mode of publication, or the copyrights would have been lost. I considered the matter in every possible way. I sent for you, but you were out. I thought of"--what need not be repeated, now that all is past and gone--"and consented. Was I right? I think you will say yes." I could not say no, though I was glad to have been no party to a price so exorbitant; which yet profited extremely little the person who received it. He died in hardly more than two years; and if Dickens had enjoyed the most liberal treatment at his hands, he could not have exerted himself more generously for the widow and children.

His new story was now beginning largely to share attention with his Pickwick Papers, and it was delightful to see how real all its people became to him. What I had most, indeed, to notice in him, at the very outset of his career, was his indifference to any praise of his performances on the merely literary side, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life, with the meaning and purpose on their part, and the responsibility on his, of realities rather than creatures of fancy. The exception that might be drawn from Pickwick is rather in seeming than substance. A first book has its immunities, and the distinction of this from the rest of the writings appears in what has been said of its origin. The plan of it was simply to amuse. It was to string together whimsical sketches of the pencil by entertaining sketches of the pen; and, at its beginning, where or how it was to end was as little known to himself as to any of its readers. But genius is a master as well as a servant, and when the laughter and fun were at their highest something graver made its appearance. He had to defend himself for this; and he said that,

though the mere oddity of a new acquaintance was apt to impress one at first, the more serious qualities were discovered when we became friends with the man. In other words he might have said that the change was become necessary for his own satisfaction. The book itself, in teaching him what his power was, had made him more conscious of what would be expected from its use; and this never afterwards quitted him. In what he was to do hereafter, as in all he was doing now, with Pickwick still to finish and Oliver only beginning, it constantly attended him. Nor could it well be otherwise, with all those fanciful creations so real, to a nature in itself so practical and earnest; and in this spirit I had well understood the letter accompanying what had been published of Oliver since its commencement the preceding February, which reached me the day after I visited him. Something to the effect of what has just been said, I had remarked publicly of the portion of the story sent to me; and his instant warm-hearted acknowledgment, of which I permit myself to quote a line or two, showed me in what perfect agreement we were: "How can I thank you? Can I do better than by saying that the sense of poor Oliver's reality, which I know you have had from the first, has been the highest of all praise to me? None that has been lavished upon me have I felt half so much as that appreciation of my intent and meaning. You know I have ever done so, for it was your feeling for me and mine for you that first brought us together, and I hope will keep us so till death do us part. Your notices make me grateful, but very proud: so have a care of them."

There was nothing written by him after this date which I did not see before the world did, either in manuscript or proofs; and in connection with the latter I shortly began to give him the help which he publicly mentioned twenty years later in dedicating his collected writings to me. One of his letters reminds me when these corrections began, and they were continued very nearly to the last. They lightened for him a labor of which he had more than enough imposed upon him at this time by others, and they were never anything but an enjoyment to me. "I have," he wrote, "so many sheets of the Miscellany to correct before I can begin Oliver, that I fear I shall not be able to leave home this morning. I therefore send your revise of the Pickwick by Fred, who is on his way with it to the printers. You will see that my alterations are very slight, but I think for the better." This was the fourteenth number of the Pickwick Papers. Fred was his next younger brother, who lived with him at the time.

The number following this was the famous one in which the hero finds himself in the Fleet; and another of his letters will show what enjoyment the writing of it had given to himself. I had sent to ask him where we were to meet for a proposed ride that day. "HERE," was his reply. "I am slippered and jacketed, and, like that same starling who is so very seldom quoted, can't get out. I am getting on, thank Heaven, like 'a house o' fire,' and think the next Pickwick will bang all the others. I shall expect you at one, and we will walk to the stable together. If you know anybody at Saint Paul's, I wish you'd send round and ask them not to ring the bell so. I can hardly hear my own ideas as they come into my head, and say what they mean."

The exulting tone of confidence in what he had thus been writing was indeed well justified. He had as yet done nothing so remarkable, in blending humor with tragedy, as his picture of what the poor side of a debtors' prison was in the days of which we have seen that he had himself had bitter experience; and we have but to recall, as it rises sharply to the memory, what is contained in this portion of a work that was not only among his earliest but his least considered as to plan, to understand what it was that not alone had given him his fame so early, but that in itself held the germ of the future that awaited him. Every point was a telling one, and the truthfulness of the whole unerring. The dreadful restlessness of the place, undefined yet unceasing, unsatisfying and terrible, was pictured throughout with De Foe's minute reality; while points of character were handled in that greater style which connects with the richest oddities of humor an insight into principles of character universal as nature itself. When he resolved that Sam Weller should be occupant of the prison with Mr. Pickwick, he was perhaps thinking of his favorite

Smollett, and how, when Peregrine Pickle was inmate of the Fleet, Hatchway and Pipes refused to leave him; but Fielding himself might have envied his way of setting about it. Nor is any portion of his picture less admirable than this. The comedy gradually deepening into tragedy; the shabby vagabonds who are the growth of debtors' prisons, contrasting with the poor simple creatures who are their sacrifices and victims; Mr. Mivins and Mr. Smangle side by side with the cobbler ruined by his legacy, who sleeps under the table to remind himself of his old four-poster; Mr. Pickwick's first night in the marshal's room, Sam Weller entertaining Stiggins in the snuggery, Jingle in decline, and the chancery prisoner dying; in all these scenes there was writing of the first order, a deep feeling of character, that delicate form of humor which has a quaintly pathetic turn in it as well, comedy of the richest and broadest kind, and the easy handling throughout of a master in his art. We place the picture by the side of those of the great writers of this style, of fiction in our language, and it does not fall by the comparison.

Of what the reception of the book had been up to this time, and of the popularity Dickens had won as its author, this also will be the proper place to speak. For its kind, its extent, and the absence of everything unreal or factitious in the causes that contributed to it, it is unexampled in literature. Here was a series of sketches, without the pretense to such interest as attends a well-constructed story; put forth in a form apparently ephemeral as its purpose; having none that seemed higher than to exhibit some studies of cockney manners with help from a comic artist; and after four or five parts had appeared, without newspaper notice or puffing, and itself not subserving in the public anything false or unworthy, it sprang into a popularity that each part carried higher and higher, until people at this time talked of nothing else, tradesmen recommended their goods by using its name, and its sale, outstripping at a bound that of all the most famous books of the century, had reached to an almost fabulous number. Of part one, the binder prepared four hundred; and of part fifteen, his order was for more than forty thousand. Every class, the high equally with the low, was attracted to it. The charm of its gayety and good humor, its inexhaustible fun, its riotous overflow of animal spirits, its brightness and keenness of observation, and, above all, the incomparable ease of its many varieties of enjoyment, fascinated everybody. Judges on the bench and boys in the street, gravity and folly, the young and the old, those who were entering life and those who were quitting it, alike found it to be irresistible. "An archdeacon," wrote Mr. Carlyle afterwards to me, "with his own venerable lips, repeated to me, the other night, a strange profane story: of a solemn clergyman who had been administering ghostly consolation to a sick person; having finished, satisfactorily as he thought, and got out of the room, he heard the sick person ejaculate, 'Well, thank God, Pickwick will be out in ten days any way!'--This is dreadful."

Let me add that there was something more in it all than the gratification of mere fun and laughter, more even than the rarer pleasure that underlies the outbreak of all forms of genuine humor. Another chord had been struck. Over and above the lively painting of manners which at first had been so attractive, there was something that left deeper mark. Genial and irrepressible enjoyment, affectionate heartiness of tone, unrestrained exuberance of mirth, these are not more delightful than they are fleeting and perishable qualities; but the attention eagerly excited by the charm of them in Pickwick found itself retained by something more permanent. We had all become suddenly conscious, in the very thick of the extravaganza of adventure and fun set before us, that here were real people. It was not somebody talking humorously about them, but they were there themselves. That a number of persons belonging to the middle and lower ranks of life (Wardles, Winkles, Wellers, Tupmans, Bardells, Snubbinses, Perkers, Bob Sawyers, Dodsons, and Foggs) had been somehow added to his intimate and familiar acquaintance, the ordinary reader knew before half a dozen numbers were out; and it took not many more to make clear to the intelligent reader that a new and original genius in the walk of Smollett and Fielding had arisen in England.

I do not, for reasons to be hereafter stated, think the Pickwick Papers comparable to the later books; but,

apart from the new vein of humor it opened, its wonderful freshness and its unflagging animal spirits, it has two characters that will probably continue to attract to it an unfading popularity. Its pre-eminent achievement is of course Sam Weller,--one of those people that take their place among the supreme successes of fiction, as one that nobody ever saw but everybody recognizes, at once perfectly natural and intensely original. Who is there that has ever thought him tedious? Who is so familiar with him as not still to be finding something new in him? Who is so amazed by his inexhaustible resources, or so amused by his inextinguishable laughter, as to doubt of his being as ordinary and perfect a reality, nevertheless, as anything in the London streets? When indeed the relish has been dulled that makes such humor natural and appreciable, and not his native fun only, his ready and rich illustration, his imperturbable self-possession, but his devotion to his master, his chivalry and his gallantry, are no longer discovered, or believed no longer to exist, in the ranks of life to which he belongs, it will be worse for all of us than for the fame of his creator. Nor, when faith is lost in that possible combination of eccentricities and benevolences, shrewdness and simplicity, good sense and folly, all that suggests the ludicrous and nothing that suggests contempt for it, which form the delightful oddity of Pickwick, will the mistake committed be one merely of critical misjudgment. But of this there is small fear. Sam Weller and Mr. Pickwick are the Sancho and the Quixote of Londoners, and as little likely to pass away as the old city itself.

Dickens was very fond of riding in these early years, and there was no recreation he so much indulged, or with such profit to himself, in the intervals of his hardest work. I was his companion oftener than I could well afford the time for, the distances being great and nothing else to be done for the day; but when a note would unexpectedly arrive while I knew him to be hunted hard by one of his printers, telling me he had been sticking to work so closely that he must have rest, and, by way of getting it, proposing we should start together that morning at eleven o'clock for "a fifteen-mile ride out, ditto in, and a lunch on the road" with a wind-up of six o'clock dinner in Doughty Street, I could not resist the good fellowship. His notion of finding rest from mental exertion in as much bodily exertion of equal severity, continued with him to the last; taking in the later years what I always thought the too great strain of as many miles in walking as he now took in the saddle, and too often indulging it at night; for, though he was always passionately fond of walking, he observed as yet a moderation in it, even accepting as sufficient my seven or eight miles' companionship. "What a brilliant morning for a country walk!" he would write, with not another word in his dispatch. Or, "Is it possible that you can't, oughtn't, shouldn't, mustn't, won't be tempted, this gorgeous day?" Or, "I start precisely--precisely, mind--at half-past one. Come, come, come, and walk in the green lanes. You will work the better for it all the week. Come! I shall expect you." Or, "You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath? I knows a good 'ous there where we can have a red-hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine:" which led to our first experience of Jack Straw's Castle, memorable for many happy meetings in coming years. But the rides were most popular and frequent. "I think," he would write, "Richmond and Twickenham, thro' the park, out at Knightsbridge, and over Barnes Common, would make a beautiful ride." Or, "Do you know, I shouldn't object to an early chop at some village inn?" Or, "Not knowing whether my head was off or on, it became so addled with work, I have gone riding the old road, and should be truly delighted to meet or be overtaken by you." Or, "Where shall it be--oh, where--Hampstead, Greenwich, Windsor? WHERE?????? while the day is bright, not when it has dwindled away to nothing! For who can be of any use whatsomdever such a day as this, excepting out of doors?" Or it might be interrogatory summons to "A hard trot of three hours?" or intimation as laconic "To be heard of at Eel-pie House, Twickenham!" When first I knew him, I may add, his carriage for his wife's use was a small chaise with a smaller pair of ponies, which, having a habit of making sudden rushes up by-streets in the day and peremptory standstills in ditches by night, were changed in the following year

for a more suitable equipage.

To this mention of his habits while at work when our friendship began, I have to add what will complete the relation already given, in connection with his Sketches, of the uneasy sense accompanying his labor that it was yielding insufficient for himself while it enriched others, which is a needful part of his story at this time. At midsummer, 1837, replying to some inquiries, and sending his agreement with Mr. Bentley for the Miscellany under which he was writing Oliver, he went on: "It is a very extraordinary fact (I forgot it on Sunday) that I have NEVER HAD from him a copy of the agreement respecting the novel, which I never saw before or since I signed it at his house one morning long ago. Shall I ask him for a copy or no? I have looked at some memoranda I made at the time, and I fear he has my second novel on the same terms, under the same agreement. This is a bad lookout, but we must try and mend it. You will tell me you are very much surprised at my doing business in this way. So am I, for in most matters of labor and application I am punctuality itself. The truth is (though you do not need I should explain the matter to you, my dear fellow), that if I had allowed myself to be worried by these things, I could never have done as much as I have. But I much fear, in my desire to avoid present vexations, I have laid up a bitter store for the future." The second novel, which he had promised in a complete form for a very early date, and had already selected subject and title for, was published four years later as Barnaby Rudge; but of the third he at present knew nothing but that he was expected to begin it, if not in the magazine, somewhere or other independently within a specified time.

The first appeal made, in taking action upon his letter, had reference to the immediate pressure of the Barnaby novel; but it also opened up the question of the great change of circumstances since these various agreements had been precipitately signed by him, the very different situation brought about by the extraordinary increase in the popularity of his writings, and the advantage it would be to both Mr. Bentley and himself to make more equitable adjustment of their relations. Some misunderstandings followed, but were closed by a compromise in September, 1837; by which the third novel was abandoned on certain conditions, and Barnaby was undertaken to be finished by November, 1838. This involved a completion of the new story during the progress of Oliver, whatever might be required to follow on the close of Pickwick; and I doubted its wisdom. But it was accepted for the time.

He had meanwhile taken his wife abroad for a ten days' summer holiday, accompanied by the shrewd observant young artist, Mr. Hablot Browne, whose admirable illustrations to Pickwick had more than supplied Mr. Seymour's loss; and I had a letter from him on their landing at Calais on the 2d of July:

"We have arranged for a post-coach to take us to Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, and a hundred other places, that I cannot recollect now and couldn't spell if I did. We went this afternoon in a barouche to some gardens where the people dance, and where they were footing it most heartily,--especially the women, who in their short petticoats and light caps look uncommonly agreeable. A gentleman in a blue surtout and silken berlins accompanied us from the hotel, and acted as curator. He even waltzed with a very smart lady (just to show us, condescendingly, how it ought to be done), and waltzed elegantly, too. We rang for slippers after we came back, and it turned out that this gentleman was the Boots."

His later sea-side holiday was passed at Broadstairs, as were those of many subsequent years, and the little watering-place has been made memorable by his pleasant sketch of it. From his letters to myself a few lines may be given of his first doings and impressions there.

Writing on the 3d of September, he reports himself just risen from an attack of illness. "I am much better, and hope to begin Pickwick No. 18_ to-morrow. You will imagine how queer I must have been when I tell you that I have been compelled for four-and-twenty mortal hours to abstain from porter or other malt liquor!!! I have done it though--really. . . . I have discovered that the landlord of the Albion has delicious hollands (but what is that to you? for you cannot sympathize with my feelings), and that a cobbler who

lives opposite to my bedroom window is a Roman Catholic, and gives an hour and a half to his devotions every morning behind his counter. I have walked upon the sands at low-water from this place to Ramsgate, and sat upon the same at high-ditto till I have been flayed with the cold. I have seen ladies and gentlemen walking upon the earth in slippers of buff, and pickling themselves in the sea in complete suits of the same. I have seen stout gentlemen looking at nothing through powerful telescopes for hours, and, when at last they saw a cloud of smoke, fancying a steamer behind it, and going home comfortable and happy. I have found out that our next neighbor has a wife and something else under the same roof with the rest of his furniture,--the wife deaf and blind, and the something else given to drinking. And if you ever get to the end of this letter you will find out that I subscribe myself on paper, as on everything else (some atonement perhaps for its length and absurdity)," etc. etc.

In his next letter (from 12, High Street, Broadstairs, on the 7th) there is allusion to one of the many piracies of Pickwick, which had distinguished itself beyond the rest by a preface abusive of the writer plundered: "I recollect this 'member of the Dramatic Authors' Society' bringing an action once against Chapman who rented the City theatre, in which it was proved that he had undertaken to write under special agreement seven melodramas for five pounds, to enable him to do which a room had been hired in a gin-shop close by. The defendant's plea was that the plaintiff was always drunk, and had not fulfilled his contract. Well, if the Pickwick has been the means of putting a few shillings in the vermin-eaten pockets of so miserable a creature, and has saved him from a workhouse or a jail, let him empty out his little pot of filth and welcome. I am quite content to have been the means of relieving him. Besides, he seems to have suffered by agreements!"

His own troubles in that way were compromised for the time, as already hinted, at the close of this September month; and at the end of the month following, after finishing Pickwick and resuming Oliver, the latter having been suspended by him during the recent disputes, he made his first visit to Brighton. The opening of his letter of Friday the 3d of November is full of regrets that I had been unable to join them there: "It is a beautiful day, and we have been taking advantage of it, but the wind until to-day has been so high and the weather so stormy that Kate has been scarcely able to peep out of doors. On Wednesday it blew a perfect hurricane, breaking windows, knocking down shutters, carrying people off their legs, blowing the fires out, and causing universal consternation. The air was for some hours darkened with a shower of black hats (second-hand), which are supposed to have been blown off the heads of unwary passengers in remote parts of the town, and have been industriously picked up by the fishermen. Charles Kean was advertised for Othello 'for the benefit of Mrs. Sefton, having most kindly postponed for this one day his departure for London.' I have not heard whether he got to the theatre, but I am sure nobody else did. They do The Honeymoon to-night, on which occasion I mean to patronize the drayma. We have a beautiful bay-windowed sitting-room here, fronting the sea, but I have seen nothing of B.'s brother who was to have shown me the lions, and my notions of the place are consequently somewhat confined: being limited to the pavilion, the chain-pier, and the sea. The last is quite enough for me, and, unless I am joined by some male companion (do you think I shall be?_), is most probably all I shall make acquaintance with. I am glad you like Oliver this month: especially glad that you particularize the first chapter. I hope to do great things with Nancy. If I can only work out the idea I have formed of her, and of the female who is to contrast with her, I think I may defy Mr. ---- and all his works. I have had great difficulty in keeping my hands off Fagin and the rest of them in the evenings; but, as I came down for rest, I have resisted the temptation, and steadily applied myself to the labor of being idle. Did you ever read (of course you have, though) De Foe's History of the Devil? What a capital thing it is! I bought it for a couple of shillings yesterday morning, and have been quite absorbed in it ever since. We must have been jolter-headed geniuses not to have anticipated M.'s reply. My best remembrances to him. I see H. at this moment. I must be present at a rehearsal of that opera. It will be better than any comedy

that was ever played. Talking of comedies, I still see NO THOROUGHFARE staring me in the face, every time I look down that road. I have taken places for Tuesday next. We shall be at home at six o'clock, and I shall hope at least to see you that evening. I am afraid you will find this letter extremely dear at eightpence, but if the warmest assurances of friendship and attachment, and anxious lookings-forward to the pleasure of your society, be worth anything, throw them into the balance, together with a hundred good wishes and one hearty assurance that I am," etc. etc. "CHARLES DICKENS. No room for the flourish--I'll finish it the next time I write to you."

The flourish that accompanied his signature is familiar to every one. The allusion to the comedy expresses a fancy he at this time had of being able to contribute some such achievement in aid of Macready's gallant efforts at Covent Garden to bring back to the stage its higher associations of good literature and intellectual enjoyment. It connects curiously now that unrealized hope with the exact title of the only story he ever helped himself to dramatize, and which Mr. Fechter played at the Adelphi three years before his death.

Volume I, Chapter 7 (1837-1838): Between Pickwick and Nickleby

Between Pickwick and Nickleby

NOT remotely bearing on the stage, nevertheless, was the employment on which I found him busy at his return from Brighton; one result of his more satisfactory relations with Mr. Bentley having led to a promise to edit for him a life of the celebrated clown Grimaldi. The manuscript had been prepared from autobiographical notes by a Mr. Egerton Wilks, and contained one or two stories told so badly, and so well worth better telling, that the hope of enlivening their dullness at the cost of very little labor constituted a sort of attraction for him. Except the preface, he did not write a line of this biography, such modifications or additions as he made having been dictated by him to his father; whom I found often in the supreme enjoyment of the office of amanuensis. He had also a most indifferent opinion of the mass of material which in general composed it, describing it to me as "twaddle," and his own modest estimate of the book, on its completion, may be guessed from the number of notes of admiration (no less than thirty) which accompanied his written mention to me of the sale with which it started in the first week of its publication: "Seventeen hundred Grimaldis have been already sold, and the demand increases daily!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

It was not to have all its own way, however. A great many critical faults were found; and one point in particular was urged against his handling such a subject, that he could never himself even have seen Grimaldi. To this last objection he was moved to reply, and had prepared a letter for the Miscellany, "from editor to sub-editor," which it was thought best to suppress, but of which the opening remark may now be not unamusing: "I understand that a gentleman unknown is going about this town privately informing all ladies and gentlemen of discontented natures, that, on a comparison of dates and putting together of many little circumstances which occur to his great sagacity, he has made the profound discovery that I can never have seen Grimaldi whose life I have edited, and that the book must therefore of necessity be bad. Now, sir, although I was brought up from remote country parts in the dark ages of 1819 and 1820 to behold the splendor of Christmas pantomimes and the humor of Joe, in whose honor I am informed I clapped my hands with great precocity, and although I even saw him act in the remote times of 1823, yet as I had not then aspired to the dignity of a tail-coat, though forced by a relentless parent into my first pair of boots, I am willing, with the view of saving this honest gentleman further time and trouble, to concede that I had not arrived at man's estate when Grimaldi left the stage, and that my recollections of his acting are, to my loss, but shadowy and imperfect. Which confession I now make publickly, and without mental qualification or reserve, to all whom it may concern. But the deduction of this pleasant gentleman that therefore the Grimaldi book must be bad, I must take leave to doubt. I don't think that to edit a man's biography from his own notes it is essential you should have known him, and I don't believe that Lord Braybrooke had more than the very slightest acquaintance with Mr. Pepys, whose memoirs he edited two centuries after he died."

Enormous meanwhile, and without objection audible on any side, had been the success of the completed Pickwick, which we celebrated by a dinner, with himself in the chair and Talfourd in the vice-chair, everybody in hearty good humor with every other body; and a copy of which I received from him on the 11th of December in the most luxurious of Hayday's bindings, with a note worth preserving for its closing allusion. The passage referred to in it was a comment, in delicately chosen words, that Leigh Hunt had made on the inscription at the grave in Kensal Green: "Chapman & Hall have just sent me, with a copy of our deed, three 'extra-super' bound copies of Pickwick, as per specimen inclosed. The first I forward to

you, the second I have presented to our good friend Ainsworth, and the third Kate has retained for herself. Accept your copy with one sincere and most comprehensive expression of my warmest friendship and esteem; and a hearty renewal, if there need be any renewal when there has been no interruption, of all those assurances of affectionate regard which our close friendship and communion for a long time back has every day implied. . . . That beautiful passage you were so kind and considerate as to send me, has given me the only feeling akin to pleasure (sorrowful pleasure it is) that I have yet had, connected with the loss of my dear young friend and companion; for whom my love and attachment will never diminish, and by whose side, if it please God to leave me in possession of sense to signify my wishes, my bones, whenever or wherever I die, will one day be laid. Tell Leigh Hunt when you have an opportunity how much he has affected me, and how deeply I thank him for what he has done. You cannot say it too strongly."

The "deed" mentioned was one executed in the previous month to restore to him a third ownership in the book which had thus far enriched all concerned but himself. The original understanding respecting it Mr. Edward Chapman thus describes for me: "There was no agreement about Pickwick except a verbal one. Each number was to consist of a sheet and a half, for which we were to pay fifteen guineas; and we paid him for the first two numbers at once, as he required the money to go and get married with. We were also to pay more according to the sale, and I think Pickwick altogether cost us three thousand pounds." Adjustment to the sale would have cost four times as much, and of the actual payments I have myself no note; but, as far as my memory serves, they are overstated by Mr. Chapman. My impression is that, above and beyond the first sum due for each of the twenty numbers (making no allowance for their extension after the first to thirty-two pages), successive checks were given, as the work went steadily on to the enormous sale it reached, which brought up the entire sum received to two thousand five hundred pounds. I had, however, always pressed so strongly the importance to him of some share in the copyright, that this at last was conceded in the deed above mentioned, though five years were to elapse before the right should accrue; and it was only yielded as part consideration for a further agreement entered into at the same date (the 19th of November, 1837), whereby Dickens engaged to "write a new work, the title whereof shall be determined by him, of a similar character and of the same extent as the Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club," the first number of which was to be delivered on the 15th of the following March, and each of the numbers on the same day of each of the successive nineteen months; which was also to be the date of the payment to him, by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, of twenty several sums of one hundred and fifty pounds each for five years' use of the copyright, the entire ownership in which was then to revert to Dickens. The name of this new book, as all the world knows, was The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby; and between April, 1838, and October, 1839, it was begun and finished accordingly.

All through the interval of these arrangements Oliver Twist had been steadily continued. Month by month, for many months, it had run its opening course with the close of Pickwick, as we shall see it close with the opening of Nickleby; and the expectations of those who had built most confidently on the young novelist were more than confirmed. Here was the interest of a story simply but well constructed; and characters with the same impress of reality upon them, but more carefully and skillfully drawn. Nothing could be meaner than the subject, the progress of a parish or workhouse boy, nothing less so than its treatment. As each number appeared, his readers generally became more and more conscious of what already, as we have seen, had revealed itself amid even the riotous fun of Pickwick, that the purpose was not solely to amuse; and, far more decisively than its predecessor, the new story further showed what were the not least potent elements in the still increasing popularity that was gathering around the writer. His qualities could be appreciated as well as felt in an almost equal degree by all classes of his various readers. Thousands were attracted to him because he placed them in the midst of scenes and

characters with which they were already themselves acquainted; and thousands were reading him with no less avidity because he introduced them to passages of nature and life of which they before knew nothing, but of the truth of which their own habits and senses sufficed to assure them. Only to genius are so revealed the affinities and sympathies of high and low, in regard to the customs and usages of life; and only a writer of the first rank can bear the application of such a test. For it is by the alliance of common habits, quite as much as by the bonds of a common humanity, that we are all of us linked together; and the result of being above the necessity of depending on other people's opinions, and that of being below it, are pretty much the same. It would equally startle both high and low to be conscious of the whole that is implied in this close approximation; but for the common enjoyment of which I speak such consciousness is not required; and for the present Fagin may be left undisturbed in his school of practical ethics with only the Dodger, Charley Bates, and his other promising scholars.

With such work as this in hand, it will hardly seem surprising that as the time for beginning Nickleby came on, and as he thought of his promise for November, he should have the sense of "something hanging over him like a hideous nightmare." He felt that he could not complete the Barnaby Rudge novel by the November of that year, as promised, and that the engagement he would have to break was unfitting him for engagements he might otherwise fulfill. He had undertaken what, in truth, was impossible. The labor of at once editing the Miscellany and supplying it with monthly portions of Oliver more than occupied all the time left him by other labors absolutely necessary. "I no sooner get myself up," he wrote, "high and dry, to attack Oliver manfully, than up come the waves of each month's work, and drive me back again into a sea of manuscript." There was nothing for it but that he should make further appeal to Mr. Bentley. "I have recently," he wrote to him on the 11th of February, 1838, "been thinking a great deal about Barnaby Rudge. Grimaldi has occupied so much of the short interval I had between the completion of the Pickwick and the commencement of the new work, that I see it will be wholly impossible for me to produce it by the time I had hoped, with justice to myself or profit to you. What I wish you to consider is this: would it not be far more to your interest, as well as within the scope of my ability, if Barnaby Rudge began in the Miscellany immediately on the conclusion of Oliver Twist, and were continued there for the same time, and then published in three volumes? Take these simple facts into consideration. If the Miscellany is to keep its ground, it must have some continuous tale from me when Oliver stops. If I sat down to Barnaby Rudge, writing a little of it when I could (and with all my other engagements it would necessarily be a very long time before I could hope to finish it that way), it would be clearly impossible for me to begin a new series of papers in the Miscellany. The conduct of three different stories at the same time, and the production of a large portion of each, every month, would have been beyond Scott himself. Whereas, having Barnaby for the Miscellany, we could at once supply the gap which the cessation of Oliver must create, and you would have all the advantage of that prestige in favor of the work which is certain to enhance the value of Oliver Twist considerably. Just think of this at your leisure. I am really anxious to do the best I can for you as well as for myself, and in this case the pecuniary advantage must be all on your side." This letter nevertheless, which had also requested an overdue account of the sales of the Miscellany, led to differences which were only adjusted after six months' wrangling; and I was party to the understanding then arrived at, by which, among other things, Barnaby was placed upon the footing desired, and was to begin when Oliver closed.

Of the progress of his Oliver, and his habits of writing at the time, it may perhaps be worth giving some additional glimpses from his letters of 1838. "I was thinking about Oliver till dinner-time yesterday," he wrote on the 9th of March, "and, just as I had fallen upon him tooth and nail, was called away to sit with Kate. I did eight slips, however, and hope to make them fifteen this morning." Three days before, a little daughter had been born to him, who became a little god-daughter to me; on which occasion (having closed his announcement with a postscript of "I can do nothing this morning. What time will you ride?

The sooner the better, for a good long spell"), we rode out fifteen miles on the great north road, and, after dining at the Red Lion in Barnet on our way home, distinguished the already memorable day by bringing in both hacks dead lame.

On that day week, Monday, the 13th, after describing himself "sitting patiently at home waiting for Oliver Twist who has not yet arrived," which was his pleasant form of saying that his fancy had fallen into sluggishness that morning, he made addition not less pleasant as to some piece of painful news I had sent him, now forgotten: "I have not yet seen the paper, and you throw me into a fever. The comfort is, that all the strange and terrible things come uppermost, and that the good and pleasant things are mixed up with every moment of our existence so plentifully that we scarcely heed them." At the close of the month Mrs. Dickens was well enough to accompany him to Richmond, for now the time was come to start Nickleby; and, having been away from town when Pickwick's first number came out, he made it a superstition to be absent at all future similar times. The magazine-day of that April month, I remember, fell upon a Saturday, and the previous evening had brought me a peremptory summons: "Meet me at the Shakspeare on Saturday night at eight; order your horse at midnight, and ride back with me." Which was done accordingly. The smallest hour was sounding from St. Paul's into the night before we started, and the night was none of the pleasantest; but we carried news that lightened every part of the road, for the sale of Nickleby had reached that day the astonishing number of nearly fifty thousand! I left him working with unusual cheerfulness at Oliver Twist when I left the Star and Garter on the next day but one, after celebrating with both friends on the previous evening an anniversary which concerned us all (their second and my twenty-sixth), and which we kept always in future at the same place, except when they were living out of England, for twenty successive years. It was a part of his love of regularity and order, as well as of his kindliness of nature, to place such friendly meetings as these under rules of habit and continuance.

Volume I, Chapter 8 (1838): Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist

THE whole of his time not occupied by Nickleby was now given to Oliver, and as the story shaped itself to its close it took extraordinary hold of him. I never knew him work so frequently after dinner, or to such late hours (a practice he afterwards abhorred), as during the final months of this task; which it was now his hope to complete before October, though its close in the magazine would not be due until the following March. "I worked pretty well last night," he writes, referring to it in May, "very well indeed; but, although I did eleven close slips before half-past twelve, I have four to write to complete the chapter; and, as I foolishly left them till this morning, have the steam to get up afresh." A month later he writes, "I got to the sixteenth slip last night, and shall try hard to get to the thirtieth before I go to bed." Then, on a "Tuesday night," at the opening of August, he wrote, "Hard at work still. Nancy is no more. I showed what I have done to Kate last night, who was in an unspeakable 'state:' from which and my own impression I augur well. When I have sent Sikes to the devil, I must have yours." "No, no," he wrote, in the following month: "don't, don't let us ride till to-morrow, not having yet disposed of the Jew, who is such an out-and-outer that I don't know what to make of him." No small difficulty to an inventor, where the creatures of his invention are found to be as real as himself; but this also was mastered; and then there remained but the closing quiet chapter to tell the fortunes of those who had figured in the tale. To this he summoned me in the first week of September, replying to a request of mine that he'd give me a call that day: "Come and give me a call, and let us have 'a bit o' talk' before we have a bit o' som'at else. My missis is going out to dinner, and I ought to go, but I have got a bad cold. So do you come, and sit here, and read, or work, or do something, while I write the LAST chapter of Oliver, which will be arter a lamb chop." How well I remember that evening! and our talk of what should be the fate of Charley Bates, on behalf of whom (as indeed for the Dodger too) Talfourd had pleaded as earnestly in mitigation of judgment as ever at the bar for any client he had most respected.

The publication had been announced for October, but the third-volume illustrations intercepted it a little. This part of the story, as we have seen, had been written in anticipation of the magazine, and the designs for it, having to be executed "in a lump," were necessarily done somewhat hastily. The matter supplied in advance of the monthly portions in the magazine formed the bulk of the last volume as published in the book; and for this the plates had to be prepared by Cruikshank also in advance of the magazine, to furnish them in time for the separate publication: Sikes and his dog, Fagin in the cell, and Rose Maylie and Oliver, being the three last. None of these Dickens had seen until he saw them in the book on the eve of its publication; when he so strongly objected to one of them that it had to be canceled. "I returned suddenly to town yesterday afternoon," he wrote to the artist at the end of October, "to look at the latter pages of Oliver Twist before it was delivered to the booksellers, when I saw the majority of the plates in the last volume for the first time. With reference to the last one,--Rose Maylie and Oliver,--without entering into the question of great haste, or any other cause, which may have led to its being what it is, I am quite sure there can be little difference of opinion between us with respect to the result. May I ask you whether you will object to designing this plate afresh, and doing so at once, in order that as few impressions as possible of the present one may go forth? I feel confident you know me too well to feel hurt by this inquiry, and with equal confidence in you I have lost no time in preferring it." This letter, printed from a copy in Dickens's handwriting fortunately committed to my keeping, entirely disposes of a wonderful story originally promulgated in America with a minute particularity of detail that might have raised the reputation of Sir Benjamin Backbite himself. Whether all Sir Benjamin's laurels, however, should fall to the person by whom the tale is told, or whether any part belongs to the authority

alleged for it, is unfortunately not quite clear. There would hardly have been a doubt, if the fable had been confined to the other side of the Atlantic; but it has been reproduced and widely circulated on this side also; and the distinguished artist whom it calumniates by attributing the invention to him has been left undefended from its slander. Dickens's letter spares me the necessity of characterizing, by the only word which would have been applicable to it, a tale of such incredible and monstrous absurdity as that one of the masterpieces of its author's genius had been merely an illustration of etchings by Mr. Cruikshank!

The completed Oliver Twist found a circle of admirers, not so wide in its range as those of others of his books, but of a character and mark that made their honest liking for it, and steady advocacy of it, important to his fame; and the book has held its ground in the first class of his writings. It deserves that place. The admitted exaggerations in Pickwick are incident to its club's extravaganza of adventure, of which they are part, and are easily separable from the reality of its wit and humor, and its incomparable freshness; but no such allowances were needed here. Make what deduction the too scrupulous reader of Oliver might please for "lowness" in the subject, the precision and the unexaggerated force of the delineation were not to be disputed. The art of copying from nature as it really exists in the common walks had not been carried by any one to greater perfection, or to better results in the way of combination. Such was his handling of the piece of solid, existing, every-day life, which he made here the groundwork of his wit and tenderness, that the book which did much to help out of the world the social evils it portrayed will probably preserve longest the picture of them as they then were. Thus far, indeed, he had written nothing to which in a greater or less degree this felicity did not belong. At the time of which I am speaking, the debtors' prisons described in Pickwick, the parochial management denounced in Oliver, and the Yorkshire schools exposed in Nickleby, were all actual existences,--which now have no vivider existence than in the forms he thus gave to them. With wiser purposes, he superseded the old petrifying process of the magician in the Arabian tale, and struck the prisons and parish abuses of his country, and its schools of neglect and crime, into palpable life forever. A portion of the truth of the past, of the character and very history of the moral abuses of his time, will thus remain always in his writings; and it will be remembered that with only the light arms of humor and laughter, and the gentle ones of pathos and sadness, he carried cleansing and reform into those Augean stables.

Not that such intentions are in any degree ever intruded by this least didactic of writers. It is the fact that teaches, and not any sermonizing drawn from it. Oliver Twist is the history of a child born in a workhouse and brought up by parish overseers, and there is nothing introduced that is out of keeping with the design. It is a series of pictures from the tragi-comedy of lower life, worked out by perfectly natural agencies, from the dying mother and the starved wretches of the first volume, through the scenes and gradations of crime, careless or deliberate, which have a frightful consummation in the last volume, but are never without the reliefs and self-assertions of humanity even in scenes and among characters so debased. It is indeed the primary purpose of the tale to show its little hero, jostled as he is in the miserable crowd, preserved everywhere from the vice of its pollution by an exquisite delicacy of natural sentiment which clings to him under every disadvantage. There is not a more masterly touch in fiction, and it is by such that this delightful fancy is consistently worked out to the last, than Oliver's agony of childish grief on being brought away from the branch-workhouse, the wretched home associated only with suffering and starvation, and with no kind word or look, but containing still his little companions in misery.

Of the figures the book has made familiar to every one it is not my purpose to speak. To name one or two will be enough. Bumble and his wife; Charley Bates and the Artful Dodger; the cowardly charity-boy, Noah Claypole, whose Such agony, please, sir, puts the whole of a school-life into one phrase; the so-called merry old Jew, supple and black-hearted Fagin; and Bill Sikes, the bolder-faced bulky-legged

ruffian, with his white hat and white shaggy dog,--who does not know them all, even to the least points of dress, look, and walk, and all the small peculiarities that express great points of character? I have omitted poor wretched Nancy; yet it is to be said of her, with such honest truthfulness her strength and weakness are shown, in the virtue that lies neighbored in her nature so closely by vice, that the people meant to be entirely virtuous show poorly beside her. But, though Rose and her lover are trivial enough beside Bill and his mistress, being indeed the weak part of the story, it is the book's pre-eminent merit that vice is nowhere made attractive in it. Crime is not more intensely odious, all through, than it is also most wretched and most unhappy. Not merely when its exposure comes, when the latent recesses of guilt are laid bare, and all the agonies of remorse are witnessed; not in the great scenes only, but in those lighter passages where no such aim might seem to have guided the apparently careless hand, this is emphatically so. Whether it be the comedy or the tragedy of crime, terror and retribution dog closely at its heels. They are as plainly visible when Fagin is first shown in his den, boiling the coffee in the saucepan and stopping every now and then to listen when there is the least noise below,--the villainous confidence of habit never extinguishing in him the anxious watchings and listenings of crime,--as when we see him at the last in the condemned cell, like a poisoned human rat in a hole.

A word may be added upon the attacks directed against the subject of the book, to which Dickens made reply in one of his later editions, declaring his belief that he had tried to do a service to society, and had certainly done no disservice, in depicting a knot of such associates in crime in all their deformity and squalid wretchedness, skulking uneasily through a miserable life to a painful and shameful death. It is, indeed, never the subject that can be objectionable, if the treatment is not so, as we may see by much popular writing since, where subjects unimpeachably high are brought low by degrading sensualism. When the object of a writer is to exhibit the vulgarity of vice, and not its pretensions to heroism or cravings for sympathy, he may measure his subject with the highest. We meet with a succession of swindlers and thieves in Gil Blas; we shake hands with highwaymen and housebreakers all round in the Beggars' Opera; we pack cards with La Ruse or pick pockets with Jonathan in Fielding's Mr. Wild the Great; we follow cruelty and vice from its least beginning to its grossest ends in the prints of Hogarth; but our morals stand none the looser for any of them. As the spirit of the Frenchman was pure enjoyment, the strength of the Englishmen lay in wisdom and satire. The low was set forth to pull down the false pretensions of the high. And though for the most part they differ in manner and design from Dickens in this tale, desiring less to discover the soul of goodness in things evil than to brand the stamp of evil on things apt to pass for good, their objects and results are substantially the same. Familiar with the lowest kind of abasement of life, the knowledge is used, by both him and them, to teach what constitutes its essential elevation; and by the very coarseness and vulgarity of the materials employed we measure the gentlemanliness and beauty of the work that is done. The quack in morality will always call such writing immoral, and the impostors will continue to complain of its treatment of imposture, but for the rest of the world it will still teach the invaluable lesson of what men ought to be from what they are. We cannot learn it more than enough. We cannot too often be told that as the pride and grandeur of mere external circumstance is the falsest of earthly things, so the truth of virtue in the heart is the most lovely and lasting; and from the pages of Oliver Twist this teaching is once again to be taken by all who will look for it there.

And now, while Oliver was running a great career of popularity and success, the shadow of the tale of Barnaby Rudge, which he was to write on similar terms, and to begin in the Miscellany when the other should have ended, began to darken everything around him. We had much discussion respecting it, and I had no small difficulty in restraining him from throwing up the agreement altogether; but the real hardship of his position, and the considerate construction to be placed on every effort made by him to escape from obligations incurred in ignorance of the sacrifices implied by them, will be best understood

from his own frank and honest statement. On the 21st of January, 1839, inclosing me the copy of a letter which he proposed to send to Mr. Bentley the following morning, he thus wrote: "From what I have already said to you, you will have been led to expect that I entertained some such intention. I know you will not endeavor to dissuade me from sending it. Go it MUST. It is no fiction to say that at present I cannot write this tale. The immense profits which Oliver has realized to its publisher and is still realizing; the paltry, wretched, miserable sum it brought to me (not equal to what is every day paid for a novel that sells fifteen hundred copies at most); the recollection of this, and the consciousness that I have still the slavery and drudgery of another work on the same journeyman-terms; the consciousness that my books are enriching everybody connected with them but myself, and that I, with such a popularity as I have acquired, am struggling in old toils, and wasting my energies in the very height and freshness of my fame, and the best part of my life, to fill the pockets of others, while for those who are nearest and dearest to me I can realize little more than a genteel subsistence: all this puts me out of heart and spirits. And I cannot--cannot and will not--under such circumstances that keep me down with an iron hand, distress myself by beginning this tale until I have had time to breathe, and until the intervention of the summer, and some cheerful days in the country, shall have restored me to a more genial and composed state of feeling. There--for six months Barnaby Rudge stands over. And but for you, it should stand over altogether. For I do most solemnly declare that morally, before God and man, I hold myself released from such hard bargains as these, after I have done so much for those who drove them. This net that has been wound about me so chafes me, so exasperates and irritates my mind, that to break it at whatever cost--that I should care nothing for--is my constant impulse. But I have not yielded to it. I merely declare that I must have a postponement very common in all literary agreements; and for the time I have mentioned--six months from the conclusion of Oliver in the Miscellany--I wash my hands of any fresh accumulation of labor, and resolve to proceed as cheerfully as I can with that which already presses upon me."

To describe what followed upon this is not necessary. It will suffice to state the results. Upon the appearance in the Miscellany, in the early months of 1839, of the last portion of Oliver Twist, its author, having been relieved altogether from his engagement to the magazine, handed over, in a familiar epistle from a parent to his child, the editorship to Mr. Ainsworth; and the still subsisting agreement to write Barnaby Rudge was, upon the overture of Mr. Bentley himself in June of the following year, 1840, also put an end to, on payment by Dickens, for the copyright of Oliver Twist and such printed stock as remained of the edition then on hand, of two thousand two hundred and fifty pounds. What was further incident to this transaction will be told hereafter; and a few words may meanwhile be taken, not without significance in regard to it, from the parent's familiar epistle. It describes the child as aged two years and two months (so long had he watched over it); gives sundry pieces of advice concerning its circulation, and the importance thereto of light and pleasant articles of food; and concludes, after some general moralizing on the shiftings and changes of this world having taken so wonderful a turn that mail-coach guards were become no longer judges of horse-flesh, "I reap no gain or profit by parting from you, nor will any conveyance of your property be required, for in this respect you have always been literally Bentley's Miscellany and never mine."

Volume I, Chapter 9 (1838-1839): Nicholas Nickleby

Nicholas Nickleby

I WELL recollect the doubt there was, mixed with the eager expectation which the announcement of his second serial story had awakened, whether the event would justify all that interest, and if indeed it were possible that the young writer could continue to walk steadily under the burden of the popularity laid upon him. The first number dispersed this cloud of a question in a burst of sunshine; and as much of the gayety of nations as had been eclipsed by old Mr. Pickwick's voluntary exile to Dulwich was restored by the cheerful confidence with which young Mr. Nicholas Nickleby stepped into his shoes. Everything that had given charm to the first book was here, with more attention to the important requisite of a story, and more wealth as well as truth of character.

How this was poured forth in each successive number, it hardly needs that I should tell. To recall it now, is to talk of what since has so interwoven itself with common speech and thought as to have become almost part of the daily life of us all. It was well said of him, soon after his death, in mentioning how largely his compositions had furnished one of the chief sources of intellectual enjoyment to this generation, that his language had become part of the language of every class and rank of his countrymen, and his characters were a portion of our contemporaries. "It seems scarcely possible," continued this otherwise not too indulgent commentator, "to believe that there never were any such persons as Mr. Pickwick and Mrs. Nickleby and Mrs. Gamp. They are to us not only types of English life, but types actually existing. They at once revealed the existence of such people, and made them thoroughly comprehensible. They were not studies of persons, but persons. And yet they were idealized in the sense that the reader did not think that they were drawn from the life. They were alive; they were themselves." The writer might have added that this is proper to all true masters of fiction who work in the higher regions of their calling.

Nothing certainly could express better what the new book was at this time making manifest to its thousands of readers; not simply an astonishing variety in the creations of character, but what it was that made these creations so real; not merely the writer's wealth of genius, but the secret and form of his art. There never was any one who had less need to talk about his characters, because never were characters so surely revealed by themselves; and it was thus their reality made itself felt at once. They talked so well that everybody took to repeating what they said, as the writer just quoted has pointed out; and the sayings being the constituent elements of the characters, these also of themselves became part of the public. This, which must always be a novelist's highest achievement, was the art carried to exquisite perfection on a more limited stage by Miss Austen; and, under widely different conditions both of art and work, it was pre-eminently that of Dickens. I told him, on reading the first dialogue of Mrs. Nickleby and Miss Knag, that he had been lately reading Miss Bates in Emma, but I found that he had not at this time made the acquaintance of that fine writer.

Who that recollects the numbers of Nickleby as they appeared can have forgotten how each number added to the general enjoyment? All that had given Pickwick its vast popularity, the overflowing mirth, hearty exuberance of humor, and genial kindliness of satire, had here the advantage of a better-laid design, more connected incidents, and greater precision of character. Everybody seemed immediately to know the Nickleby family as well as his own. Dotheboys, with all that rendered it, like a piece by Hogarth, both ludicrous and terrible, became a household word. Successive groups of Mantalinis, Kenwigses, Crummleses, introduced each its little world of reality, lighted up everywhere with truth and life, with capital observation, the quaintest drollery, and quite boundless mirth and fun. The brothers Cheeryble brought with them all the charities. With Smike came the first of those pathetic pictures that filled the

world with pity for what cruelty, ignorance, or neglect may inflict upon the young. And Newman Noggs ushered in that class of the creatures of his fancy in which he took himself perhaps the most delight, and which the oftener he dealt with the more he seemed to know how to vary and render attractive: gentlemen by nature, however shocking bad their hats or ungenteel their dialects; philosophers of modest endurance, and needy but most respectable coats; a sort of humble angels of sympathy and self-denial, though without a particle of splendor or even good looks about them, except what an eye as fine as their own feelings might discern. "My friends," wrote Sydney Smith, describing to Dickens the anxiety of some ladies of his acquaintance to meet him at dinner, "have not the smallest objection to be put into a number, but on the contrary would be proud of the distinction; and Lady Charlotte, in particular, you may marry to Newman Noggs." Lady Charlotte was not a more real person to Sydney than Newman Noggs; and all the world that Dickens attracted to his books could draw from them the same advantage as the man of wit and genius. It has been lately objected that humanity is not seen in them in its highest or noblest types, and the assertion may hereafter be worth considering; but what is very certain is, that they have inculcated humanity in familiar and engaging forms to thousands and tens of thousands of their readers, who can hardly have failed each to make his little world around him somewhat the better for their teaching. From first to last they were never for a moment alien to either the sympathies or the understandings of any class; and there were crowds of people at this time that could not have told you what imagination meant, who were adding month by month to their limited stores the boundless gains of imagination.

One other kindliest product of humor in Nickleby, not to be passed over in even thus briefly recalling a few first impressions of it, was the good little miniature-painter Miss La Creevy, living by herself, overflowing with affections she has nobody to bestow on, but always cheerful by dint of industry and good-heartedness. When she is disappointed in the character of a woman she has been to see, she eases her mind by saying a very cutting thing at her expense in a soliloquy: and thereby illustrates one of the advantages of having lived alone so long, that she made always a confidante of herself; was as sarcastic as she could be, by herself, on people who offended her; pleased herself, and did no harm. Here was one of those touches, made afterwards familiar to the readers of Dickens by innumerable similar fancies, which added affection to their admiration for the writer, and enabled them to anticipate the feeling with which posterity would regard him as indeed the worthy companion of the Goldsmiths and Fieldings. There was a piece of writing, too, within not many pages of it, of which Leigh Hunt exclaimed on reading it that it surpassed the best things of the kind in Smollett that he was able to call to mind. This was the letter of Miss Squeers to Ralph Nickleby, giving him her version of the chastisement inflicted by Nicholas on the schoolmaster: "My pa requests me to write to you, the doctors considering it doubtful whether he will ever recuvver the use of his legs which prevents his holding a pen. We are in a state of mind beyond everything, and my pa is one mask of brooses both blue and green likewise two forms are steepled in his Goar. . . . Me and my brother were then the victims of his feury since which we have suffered very much which leads us to the arrowing belief that we have received some injury in our insides, especially as no marks of violence are visible externally. I am screaming out loud all the time I write and so is my brother which takes off my attention rather and I hope will excuse mistakes". . . .

Thus rapidly may be indicated some elements that contributed to the sudden and astonishingly wide popularity of these books. I purposely reserve from my present notices of them, which are biographical rather than critical, any statement of the reasons for which I think them inferior in imagination and fancy to some of the later works; but there was continued and steady growth in them on the side of humor, observation, and character, while freshness and raciness of style continued to be an important help. There are faults of occasional exaggeration in the writing, but none that do not spring from animal spirits and good humor, or a pardonable excess, here and there, on the side of earnestness; and it has the rare

virtue, whether gay or grave, of being always thoroughly intelligible and for the most part thoroughly natural, of suiting itself without effort to every change of mood, as quick, warm, and comprehensive as the sympathies it is taxed to express. The tone also is excellent. We are never repelled by egotism or conceit, and misplaced ridicule never disgusts us. When good is going on, we are sure to see all the beauty of it; and when there is evil, we are in no danger of mistaking it for good. No one can paint more picturesquely by an apposite epithet, or illustrate more happily by a choice allusion. Whatever he knows or feels, too, is always at his fingers' ends, and is present through whatever he is doing. What Rebecca says to Ivanhoe of the black knight's mode of fighting would not be wholly inapplicable to Dickens's manner of writing: "There is more than mere strength, there seems as if the whole soul and spirit of the champion were given to every blow he deals." This, when a man deals his blows with a pen, is the sort of handling that freshens with new life the oldest facts, and breathes into thoughts the most familiar an emotion not felt before. There seemed to be not much to add to our knowledge of London until his books came upon us, but each in this respect outstripped the other in its marvels. In Nickleby the old city reappears under every aspect; and whether warmth and light are playing over what is good and cheerful in it, or the veil is uplifted from its darker scenes, it is at all times our privilege to see and feel it as it absolutely is. Its interior hidden life becomes familiar as its commonest outward forms, and we discover that we hardly knew anything of the places we supposed that we knew the best.

Of such notices as his letters give of his progress with Nickleby, which occupied him from February, 1838, to October, 1839, something may now be said. Soon after the agreement for it was signed, before the Christmas of 1837 was over, he went down into Yorkshire with Mr. Hablot Browne to look up the Cheap Schools in that county to which public attention had been painfully drawn by a law-case in the previous year; which had before been notorious for cruelties committed in them, whereof he had heard as early as in his childish days; and which he was bent upon destroying if he could. I soon heard the result of his journey; and the substance of that letter, returned to him for the purpose, is in his preface to the story written for the collected edition. He came back confirmed in his design, and in February set to work upon his first chapter. On his birthday he wrote to me, "I have begun! I wrote four slips last night, so you see the beginning is made. And what is more, I can go on: so I hope the book is in training at last." "The first chapter of Nicholas is done," he wrote two days later. "It took time, but I think answers the purpose as well as it could." Then, after a dozen days more, "I wrote twenty slips of Nicholas yesterday, left only four to do this morning (up at 8 o'clock too!), and have ordered my horse at one." I joined him as he expected, and we read together at dinner that day the first number of Nicholas Nickleby.

In the following number there was a difficulty which it was marvelous should not oftener have occurred to him in this form of publication. "I could not write a line till three o'clock," he says, describing the close of that number, "and have yet five slips to finish, and don't know what to put in them, for I have reached the point I meant to leave off with." He found easy remedy for such a miscalculation at his outset, and it was nearly his last as well as first misadventure of the kind: his difficulty in Pickwick, as he once told me, having always been, not the running short, but the running over: not the whip, but the drag, that was wanted. Sufflaminandus erat, as Ben Jonson said of Shakspeare. And in future works, with such marvelous nicety could he do always what he had planned, strictly within the space available, that only another similar instance is remembered by me. The third number introduced the school; and "I remain dissatisfied until you have seen and read number three," was his way of announcing to me his own satisfaction with that first handling of Dotheboys Hall. Nor had it the least part in my admiration of his powers at this time that he never wrote without the printer at his heels; that, always in his later works two or three numbers in advance, he was never a single number in advance with this story; that the more urgent the call upon him the more readily he rose to it; and that his astonishing animal spirits never failed him. As late in the November month of 1838 as the 20th, he thus wrote to me: "I have just begun my

second chapter; cannot go out to-night; must get on; think there will be a Nickleby at the end of this month now (I doubted it before); and want to make a start towards it if I possibly can." That was on Tuesday; and on Friday morning in the same week, explaining to me the failure of something that had been promised the previous day, he tells me, "I was writing incessantly until it was time to dress; and have not yet got the subject of my last chapter, which must be finished to-night."

But this was not all. Between that Tuesday and Friday an indecent assault had been committed on his book by a theatrical adapter named Stirling, who seized upon it without leave while yet only a third of it was written; hacked, cut, and garbled its dialogue to the shape of one or two farcical actors; invented for it a plot and an ending of his own, and produced it at the Adelphi; where the outraged author, hard pressed as he was with an unfinished number, had seen it in the interval between the two letters I have quoted. He would not have run such a risk in later years, but he threw off lightly at present even such offenses to his art; and though I was with him at a representation of his Oliver Twist the following month at the Surrey theatre, when in the middle of the first scene he laid himself down upon the floor in a corner of the box and never rose from it until the drop-scene fell, he had been able to sit through Nickleby and to see a kind of merit in some of the actors. Mr. Yates had a sufficiently humorous meaning in his wildest extravagance, and Mr. O. Smith could put into his queer angular oddities enough of a hard dry pathos, to conjure up shadows at least of Mantalini and Newman Noggs; of Ralph Nickleby there was indeed nothing visible save a wig, a spencer, and a pair of boots; but there was a quaint actor named Wilkinson who proved equal to the drollery though not to the fierce brutality of Squeers; and even Dickens, in the letter that amazed me by telling me of his visit to the theatre, was able to praise "the skillful management and dressing of the boys, the capital manner and speech of Fanny Squeers, the dramatic representation of her card-party in Squeers's parlor, the careful making-up of all the people, and the exceedingly good tableaux formed from Browne's sketches. . . . Mrs. Keeley's first appearance beside the fire (see wollum), and all the rest of Smike, was excellent; bating sundry choice sentiments and rubbish regarding the little robins in the fields which have been put in the boy's mouth by Mr. Stirling the adapter." His toleration could hardly be extended to the robins, and their author he very properly punished by introducing and denouncing him at Mr. Crummles's farewell supper.

The story was well in hand at the next letter to be quoted, for I limit myself to those only with allusions that are characteristic or illustrative. "I must be alone in my glory to-day," he wrote, "and see what I can do. I perpetrated a great amount of work yesterday, and have every day indeed since Monday, but I must buckle-to again and endeavor to get the steam up. If this were to go on long, I should 'bust' the boiler. I think Mrs. Nickleby's love-scene will come out rather unique." The steam doubtless rose dangerously high when such happy inspiration came. It was but a few numbers earlier than this, while that eccentric lady was imparting her confidences to Miss Knag, that Sydney Smith confessed himself vanquished by a humor against which his own had long striven to hold out. "Nickleby is very good," he wrote to Sir George Phillips after the sixth number. "I stood out against Mr. Dickens as long as I could, but he has conquered me."

The close of the story was written at Broadstairs, from which (he had taken a house "two doors from the Albion Hotel, where we had that merry night two years ago") he wrote to me on the 9th September, 1839, "I am hard at it, but these windings-up wind slowly, and I shall think I have done great things if I have entirely finished by the 20th. Chapman & Hall came down yesterday with Browne's sketches, and dined here. They imparted their intentions as to a Nicklebeian fete which will make you laugh heartily--so I reserve them till you come. It has been blowing great guns for the last three days, and last night (I wish you could have seen it!) there was such a sea! I staggered down to the pier, and, creeping under the lee of a large boat which was high and dry, watched it breaking for nearly an hour. Of course I came back wet through." On the afternoon of Wednesday, the 18th, he wrote again: "I shall not finish entirely before

Friday, sending Hicks the last twenty pages of manuscript by the night-coach. I have had pretty stiff work, as you may suppose, and I have taken great pains. The discovery is made, Ralph is dead, the loves have come all right, Tim Linkinwater has proposed, and I have now only to break up Dotheboys and the book together. I am very anxious that you should see this conclusion before it leaves my hands, and I plainly see therefore that I must come to town myself on Saturday if I would not endanger the appearance of the number. So I have written to Hicks to send proofs to your chambers as soon as he can that evening; and, if you don't object, I will dine with you any time after five, and we will devote the night to a careful reading. I have not written to Macready, for they have not yet sent me the title-page of dedication, which is merely 'To W. C. Macready, Esq., the following pages are inscribed, as a slight token of admiration and regard, by his friend the Author.' Meanwhile will you let him know that I have fixed the Nickleby dinner for Saturday, the 5th of October? Place, the Albion in Aldersgate Street. Time, six for half-past exactly. . . . I shall be more glad than I can tell you to see you again, and I look forward to Saturday, and the evenings that are to follow it, with most joyful anticipation. I have had a good notion for Barnaby, of which more anon."

The shadow from the old quarter, we see, the unwritten Barnaby tale, intrudes itself still; though hardly, as of old, making other pleasanter anticipations less joyful. Such, indeed, at this time was his buoyancy of spirit that it cost him little, compared with the suffering it gave him at all subsequent similar times, to separate from the people who for twenty months had been a part of himself. The increased success they had achieved left no present room but for gladness and well-won pride; and so, to welcome them into the immortal family of the English novel, and open cheerily to their author "fresh woods and pastures new," we had the dinner celebration. But there is small need now to speak of what has left, to one of the few survivors, only the sadness of remembering that all who made the happiness of it are passed away. There was Talfourd, facile and fluent of kindliest speech, with whom we were in constant and cordial intercourse, and to whom, grateful for his copyright exertions in the House of Commons, he had dedicated Pickwick; there was Maclise, dear and familiar friend to us both, whose lately-painted portrait of Dickens hung in the room; and there was the painter of the Rent-day, who made a speech as good as his pictures, rich in color and quaint with homely allusion, all about the reality of Dickens's genius, and how there had been nothing like him issuing his novels part by part since Richardson issued his novels volume by volume, and how in both cases people talked about the characters as if they were next-door neighbors or friends; and as many letters were written to the author of Nickleby to implore him not to kill poor Smike, as had been sent by young ladies to the author of Clarissa to "save Lovelace's soul alive." These and others are gone. Of those who survive, only three arise to my memory,--Macready, who spoke his sense of the honor done him by the dedication in English as good as his delivery of it, Mr. Edward Chapman, and Mr. Thomas Beard.

Volume I, Chapter 10 (1838-1839): During and After Nickleby

During and After Nickleby

THE name of his old gallery-companion may carry me back from the days to which the close of Nickleby had led me to those when it was only beginning. "This snow will take away the cold weather," he had written, in that birthday letter of 1838 already quoted, "and then for Twickenham." Here a cottage was taken, nearly all the summer was passed, and a familiar face there was Mr. Beard's. There, with Talfourd and with Thackeray and Jerrold, we had many friendly days, too; and the social charm of Maclise was seldom wanting. Nor was there anything that exercised a greater fascination over Dickens than the grand enjoyment of idleness, the ready self-abandonment to the luxury of laziness, which we both so laughed at in Maclise, under whose easy swing of indifference, always the most amusing at the most aggravating events and times, we knew that there was artist-work as eager, energy as unwearying, and observation almost as penetrating as Dickens's own. A greater enjoyment than the fellowship of Maclise at this period it would indeed be difficult to imagine. Dickens hardly saw more than he did, while yet he seemed to be seeing nothing; and the small esteem in which this rare faculty was held by himself, a quaint oddity that gave to shrewdness itself in him an air of Irish simplicity, his unquestionable turn for literature, and a varied knowledge of it not always connected with such intense love and such unwearied practice of one special and absorbing art, combined to render him attractive far beyond the common. His fine genius and his handsome person, of neither of which at any time he seemed himself to be in the slightest degree conscious, completed the charm. Edwin Landseer, all the world's favorite, and the excellent Stanfield, came a few months later, in the Devonshire-Terrace days; but another painter-friend was George Cattermole, who had then enough and to spare of fun as well as fancy to supply ordinary artists and humorists by the dozen, and wanted only a little more ballast and steadiness to have had all that could give attraction to good-fellowship. A friend now especially welcome, too, was the novelist Mr. Ainsworth, who shared with us incessantly for the three following years in the companionship which began at his house; with whom we visited, during two of those years, friends of art and letters in his native Manchester, from among whom Dickens brought away his Brothers Cheeryble, and to whose sympathy in tastes and pursuits, accomplishments in literature, open-hearted generous ways, and cordial hospitality, many of the pleasures of later years were due. Frederick Dickens, to whom soon after this a treasury clerkship was handsomely given, on Dickens's application, by Mr. Stanley of Alderley, known in and before those Manchester days, was for the present again living with his father, but passed much time in his brother's home; and another familiar face was that of Mr. Thomas Mitton, who had known him when himself a law-clerk in Lincoln's Inn, through whom there was introduction of the relatives of a friend and partner, Mr. Smithson, the gentleman connected with Yorkshire mentioned in his preface to Nickleby, who became very intimate in his house. These, his father and mother and their two younger sons, with members of his wife's family, and his married sisters and their husbands, Mr. and Mrs. Burnett and Mr. and Mrs. Austin, are figures that all associate themselves prominently with the days of Doughty Street and the cottages of Twickenham and Petersham as remembered by me in the summers of 1838 and 1839.

In the former of these years the sports were necessarily quieter than at Petersham, where extensive garden-grounds admitted of much athletic competition, from the more difficult forms of which I in general modestly retired, but where Dickens for the most part held his own against even such accomplished athletes as Maclise and Mr. Beard. Bar-leaping, bowling, and quoits were among the games carried on with the greatest ardor; and in sustained energy, what is called keeping it up, Dickens certainly distanced every competitor. Even the lighter recreations of battledoor and bagatelle were pursued with relentless

activity; and at such amusements as the Petersham races, in those days rather celebrated, and which he visited daily while they lasted, he worked much harder himself than the running horses did.

What else his letters of these years enable me to recall, that could possess any interest now, may be told in a dozen sentences. He wrote a farce by way of helping the Covent Garden manager which the actors could not agree about, and which he turned afterwards into a story called The Lamplighter. He entered his name among the students at the inn of the Middle Temple, though he did not eat dinners there until many years later. We made together a circuit of nearly all the London prisons, and, in coming to the prisoners under remand while going over Newgate, accompanied by Macready and Mr. Hablot Browne, were startled by a sudden tragic cry of "My God! there's Wainewright!" In the shabby-genteel creature, with sandy disordered hair and dirty moustache, who had turned quickly round with a defiant stare at our entrance, looking at once mean and fierce, and quite capable of the cowardly murders he had committed, Macready had been horrified to recognize a man familiarly known to him in former years, and at whose table he had dined. Between the completion of Oliver and its publication, Dickens went to see something of North Wales; and, joining him at Liverpool, I returned with him. Soon after his arrival he had pleasant communication with Lockhart, dining with him at Cruikshank's a little later; and this was the prelude to a Quarterly notice of Oliver by Mr. Ford, written at the instance of Lockhart, but without the raciness he would have put into it, in which amende was made for previous less favorable remarks in that review. Dickens had not, however, waited for this to express publicly his hearty sympathy with Lockhart's handling of some passages in his admirable Life of Scott that had drawn down upon him the wrath of the Ballantynes. This he did in the Examiner; where also I find him noticing a book by Thomas Hood: "rather poor, but I have not said so, because Hood is too, and ill besides." In the course of the year he was taken into Devonshire to select a home for his father, on the removal of the latter (who had long given up his reporting duties) from his London residence; and this he found in a cottage at Alphington, near Exeter, where he placed the elder Dickens with his wife and their youngest son. The same year closed Macready's Covent Garden management, and at the dinner to the retiring manager, when the Duke of Cambridge took the chair, Dickens spoke with that wonderful instinct of knowing what to abstain from saying, as well as what to say, which made his after-dinner speeches quite unique. Nor should mention be omitted of the Shakspeare Society, now diligently attended, of which Procter, Talfourd, Macready, Thackeray, Henry Davison, Blanchard, Charles Knight, John Bell, Douglas Jerrold, Maclise, Stanfield, George Cattermole, the good Tom Landseer, Frank Stone, and other old friends were members, and where, out of much enjoyment and many disputings, there arose, from Dickens and all of us, plenty of after-dinner oratory. The closing months of this year of 1839 had special interest for him. At the end of October another daughter was born to him, who bears the name of that dear friend of his and mine, Macready, whom he asked to be her godfather; and before the close of the year he had moved out of Doughty Street into Devonshire Terrace, a handsome house with a garden of considerable size, shut out from the New Road by a high brick wall facing the York Gate into Regent's Park. These various matters, and his attempts at the Barnaby novel on the conclusion of Nickleby, are the subject of his letters between October and December.

"Thank God, all goes famously. I have worked at Barnaby all day, and moreover seen a beautiful (and reasonable) house in Kent Terrace, where Macready once lived, but larger than his." Again (this having gone off): "Barnaby has suffered so much from the house-hunting, that I mustn't chop to-day." Then (for the matter of the Middle Temple), "I return the form. It's the right temple, I take for granted. Barnaby moves, not at race-horse speed, but yet as fast (I think) as under these unsettled circumstances could possibly be expected." Or again: "All well. Barnaby has reached his tenth page. I have just turned lazy, and have passed into Christabel, and thence to Wallenstein." At last the choice was made. "A house of great promise (and great premium), 'undeniable' situation, and excessive splendor, is in view. Mitton is in

treaty, and I am in ecstatic restlessness. Kate wants to know whether you have any books to send her, so please to shoot here any literary rubbish on hand." To these I will only add a couple of extracts from his letters while in Exeter arranging his father's and mother's new home. They are very humorous; and the vividness with which everything, once seen, was photographed in his mind and memory, is pleasantly shown in them.

"I took a little house for them this morning" (5th March, 1839: from the New London Inn), "and if they are not pleased with it I shall be grievously disappointed. Exactly a mile beyond the city on the Plymouth road there are two white cottages: one is theirs and the other belongs to their landlady. I almost forget the number of rooms, but there is an excellent parlor with two other rooms on the ground floor, there is really a beautiful little room over the parlor which I am furnishing as a drawing-room, and there is a splendid garden. The paint and paper throughout is new and fresh and cheerful-looking, the place is clean beyond all description, and the neighborhood I suppose the most beautiful in this most beautiful of English counties. Of the landlady, a Devonshire widow with whom I had the honor of taking lunch to-day, I must make most especial mention. She is a fat, infirm, splendidly-fresh-faced country dame, rising sixty and recovering from an attack 'on the nerves'--I thought they never went off the stones, but I find they try country air with the best of us. In the event of my mother's being ill at any time, I really think the vicinity of this good dame, the very picture of respectability and good humor, will be the greatest possible comfort. Her furniture and domestic arrangements are a capital picture, but that I reserve till I see you, when I anticipate a hearty laugh. She bears the highest character with the bankers and the clergyman (who formerly lived in my cottage himself), and is a kind-hearted worthy capital specimen of the sort of life, or I have no eye for the real and no idea of finding it out.

"This good lady's brother and his wife live in the next nearest cottage, and the brother transacts the good lady's business, the nerves not admitting of her transacting it herself, although they leave her in her debilitated state something sharper than the finest lancet. Now, the brother having coughed all night till he coughed himself into such a perspiration that you might have 'wringed his hair,' according to the asseveration of eye-witnesses, his wife was sent for to negotiate with me; and if you could have seen me sitting in the kitchen with the two old women, endeavoring to make them comprehend that I had no evil intentions or covert designs, and that I had come down all that way to take some cottage and had happened to walk down that road and see that particular one, you would never have forgotten it. Then, to see the servant-girl run backwards and forwards to the sick man, and when the sick man had signed one agreement which I drew up and the old woman instantly put away in a disused tea-caddy, to see the trouble and the number of messages it took before the sick man could be brought to sign another (a duplicate) that we might have one apiece, was one of the richest scraps of genuine drollery I ever saw in all my days. How, when the business was over, we became conversational; how I was facetious, and at the same time virtuous and domestic; how I drank toasts in the beer, and stated on interrogatory that I was a married man and the father of two blessed infants; how the ladies marveled thereat; how one of the ladies, having been in London, inquired where I lived, and, being told, remembered that Doughty Street and the Foundling Hospital were in the Old Kent Road, which I didn't contradict,--all this and a great deal more must make us laugh when I return, as it makes me laugh now to think of. Of my subsequent visit to the upholsterer recommended by the landlady; of the absence of the upholsterer's wife, and the timidity of the upholsterer fearful of acting in her absence; of my sitting behind a high desk in a little dark shop, calling over the articles in requisition and checking off the prices as the upholsterer exhibited the goods and called them out; of my coming over the upholsterer's daughter with many virtuous endearments, to propitiate the establishment and reduce the bill; of these matters I say nothing, either, for the same reason as that just mentioned. The discovery of the cottage I seriously regard as a blessing (not to speak it profanely) upon our efforts in this cause. I had heard nothing from the bank, and

walked straight there, by some strange impulse, directly after breakfast. I am sure they may be happy there; for if I were older, and my course of activity were run, I am sure I could, with God's blessing, for many and many a year.". . .

"The theatre is open here, and Charles Kean is to-night playing for his last night. If it had been the 'rig'lar' drama I should have gone, but I was afraid Sir Giles Overreach might upset me, so I stayed away. My quarters are excellent, and the head-waiter is such a waiter! Knowles (not Sheridan Knowles, but Knowles of the Cheetham Hill Road) is an ass to him. This sounds bold, but truth is stranger than fiction. By-the-by, not the least comical thing that has occurred was the visit of the upholsterer (with some further calculations) since I began this letter. I think they took me here at the New London for the Wonderful Being I am; they were amazingly sedulous; and no doubt they looked for my being visited by the nobility and gentry of the neighborhood. My first and only visitor came to-night: a ruddy-faced man in faded black, with extracts from a feather-bed all over him; an extraordinary and quite miraculously dirty face; a thick stick; and the personal appearance altogether of an amiable bailiff in a green old age. I have not seen the proper waiter since, and more than suspect I shall not recover this blow. He was announced (by the waiter) as 'a person.' I expect my bill every minute. . . .

"The waiter is laughing outside the door with another waiter--this is the latest intelligence of my condition."

Volume I, Chapter 11 (1839): New Literary Project

New Literary Project

THE time was now come for him seriously to busy himself with a successor to Pickwick and Nickleby, which he had not, however, waited thus long before turning over thoroughly in his mind. Nickleby's success had so far outgone even the expectation raised by Pickwick's, that, without some handsome practical admission of this fact at the close, its publishers could hardly hope to retain him. This had been frequently discussed by us, and was well understood. But, apart from the question of his resuming with them at all, he had persuaded himself it might be unsafe to resume in the old way, believing the public likely to tire of the same twenty numbers over again. There was also another and more sufficient reason for change which naturally had great weight with him, and this was the hope that, by invention of a new mode as well as kind of serial publication, he might be able for a time to discontinue the writing of a long story with all its strain on his fancy, in any case to shorten and vary the length of the stories written by himself, and perhaps ultimately to retain all the profits of a continuous publication without necessarily himself contributing every line that was to be written for it. These considerations had been discussed still more anxiously; and for several months some such project had been taking form in his thoughts.

While he was at Petersham (July, 1839) he thus wrote to me: "I have been thinking that subject over. Indeed, I have been doing so to the great stoppage of Nickleby and the great worrying and fidgeting of myself. I have been thinking that if Chapman & Hall were to admit you into their confidence with respect to what they mean to do at the conclusion of Nickleby, without admitting me, it would help us very much. You know that I am well disposed towards them, and that if they do something handsome, even handsomer perhaps than they dreamt of doing, they will find it their interest, and will find me tractable. You know also that I have had straightforward offers from responsible men to publish anything for me at a percentage on the profits and take all the risk; but that I am unwilling to leave them, and have declared to you that if they behave with liberality to me I will not on any consideration, although to a certain extent I certainly and surely must gain by it. Knowing all this, I feel sure that if you were to put before them the glories of our new project, and, reminding them that when Barnaby is published I am clear of all engagements, were to tell them that if they wish to secure me and perpetuate our connection now is the time for them to step gallantly forward and make such proposals as will produce that result,--I feel quite sure that if this should be done by you, as you only can do it, the result will be of the most vital importance to me and mine, and that a very great deal may be effected, thus, to recompense your friend for very small profits and very large work as yet. I shall see you, please God, on Tuesday night; and if they wait upon you on Wednesday, I shall remain in town until that evening."

They came; and the tenor of the interview was so favorable that I wished him to put in writing what from time to time had been discussed in connection with the new project. This led to the very interesting letter I shall now quote, written also in the same month from Petersham. I did not remember, until I lately read it, that the notion of a possible visit to America had been in his thoughts so early.

"I should be willing to commence on the thirty-first of March, 1840, a new publication, consisting entirely of original matter, of which one number, price threepence, should be published every week, and of which a certain amount of numbers should form a volume, to be published at regular intervals. The best general idea of the plan of the work might be given, perhaps, by reference to the Spectator, the Tatler, and Goldsmith's Bee; but it would be far more popular both in the subjects of which it treats and its mode of treating them.

"I should propose to start, as the Spectator does, with some pleasant fiction relative to the origin of the

publication; to introduce a little club or knot of characters and to carry their personal histories and proceedings through the work; to introduce fresh characters constantly; to reintroduce Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, the latter of whom might furnish an occasional communication with great effect; to write amusing essays on the various foibles of the day as they arise; to take advantage of all passing events; and to vary the form of the papers by throwing them into sketches, essays, tales, adventures, letters from imaginary correspondents, and so forth, so as to diversify the contents as much as possible.

"In addition to this general description of the contents, I may add that under particular heads I should strive to establish certain features in the work, which should be so many veins of interest and amusement running through the whole. Thus the Chapters on Chambers, which I have long thought and spoken of, might be very well incorporated with it; and a series of papers has occurred to me containing stories and descriptions of London as it was many years ago, as it is now, and as it will be many years hence, to which I would give some such title as The Relaxations of Gog and Magog, dividing them into portions like the Arabian Nights, and supposing Gog and Magog to entertain each other with such narrations in Guildhall all night long, and to break off every morning at daylight. An almost inexhaustible field of fun, raillery, and interest would be laid open by pursuing this idea.

"I would also commence, and continue from time to time, a series of satirical papers purporting to be translated from some Savage Chronicles, and to describe the administration of justice in some country that never existed, and record the proceedings of its wise men. The object of this series (which if I can compare it with anything would be something between Gulliver's Travels and the Citizen of the World) would be to keep a special lookout upon the magistrates in town and country, and never to leave those worthies alone.

"The quantity of each number that should be written by myself would be a matter for discussion and arrangement. Of course I should pledge and bind myself upon that head. Nobody but myself would ever pursue these ideas, but I must have assistance of course, and there must be some contents of a different kind. Their general nature might be agreed upon beforehand, but I should stipulate that this assistance is chosen solely by myself, and that the contents of every number are as much under my own control, and subject to as little interference, as those of a number of Pickwick or Nickleby.

"In order to give fresh novelty and interest to this undertaking, I should be ready to contract to go at any specified time (say in the midsummer or autumn of the year, when a sufficient quantity of matter in advance should have been prepared, or earlier if it were thought fit) either to Ireland or to America, and to write from thence a series of papers descriptive of the places and people I see, introducing local tales, traditions, and legends, something after the plan of Washington Irving's Alhambra. I should wish the republication of these papers in a separate form, with others to render the subject complete (if we should deem it advisable), to form part of the arrangement for the work; and I should wish the same provision to be made for the republication of the Gog and Magog series, or indeed any that I undertook.

"This is a very rough and slight outline of the project I have in view. I am ready to talk the matter over, to give any further explanations, to consider any suggestions, or to go into the details of the subject immediately. I say nothing of the novelty of such a publication nowadays, or its chances of success. Of course I think them very great, very great indeed,--almost beyond calculation,--or I should not seek to bind myself to anything so extensive.

"The heads of the terms upon which I should be prepared to go into this undertaking would be--That I be made a proprietor in the work and a sharer in the profits. That when I bind myself to write a certain portion of every number, I am insured, for that writing in every number, a certain sum of money. That those who assist me, and contribute the remainder of every number, shall be paid by the publishers immediately after its appearance, according to a scale to be calculated and agreed upon, on presenting

my order for the amount to which they may be respectively entitled. Or, if the publishers prefer it, that they agree to pay me a certain sum for the whole of every number, and leave me to make such arrangements for that part which I may not write, as I think best. Of course I should require that for these payments, or any other outlay connected with the work, I am not held accountable in any way; and that no portion of them is to be considered as received by me on account of the profits. I need not add that some arrangement would have to be made, if I undertake my Travels, relative to the expenses of traveling.

"Now, I want our publishing friends to take these things into consideration, and to give me the views and proposals they would be disposed to entertain when they have maturely considered the matter."

The result of their consideration was, on the whole, satisfactory. An additional fifteen hundred pounds was to be paid at the close of Nickleby, the new adventure was to be undertaken, and Cattermole was to be joined with Browne as its illustrator. Nor was its plan much modified before starting, though it was felt by us all that, for the opening numbers at least, Dickens would have to be sole contributor, and that, whatever otherwise might be its attraction, or the success of the detached papers proposed by him, some reinforcement of them from time to time, by means of a story with his name continued at reasonable if not regular intervals, would be found absolutely necessary. Without any such planned story, however, the work did actually begin, its course afterwards being determined by circumstances stronger than any project he had formed. The agreement, drawn up in contemplation of a mere miscellany of detached papers or essays, and in which no mention of any story appeared, was signed at the end of March; and its terms were such as to place him in his only proper and legitimate position in regard to all such contracts, of being necessarily a gainer in any case, and, in the event of success, the greatest gainer of all concerned in the undertaking. All the risk of every kind was to be undergone by the publishers; and, as part of the expenses to be defrayed by them of each weekly number, he was to receive fifty pounds. Whatever the success or failure, this was always to be paid. The numbers were then to be accounted for separately, and half the realized profits paid to him, the other half going to the publishers; each number being held strictly responsible for itself, and the loss upon it, supposing any, not carried to the general account. The work was to be continued for twelve months certain, with leave to the publishers then to close it; but if they elected to go on, he was himself bound to the enterprise for five years, and the ultimate copyright as well as profit was to be equally divided.

Six weeks before signature of this agreement, while a title was still undetermined, I had this letter from him: "I will dine with you. I intended to spend the evening in strict meditation (as I did last night); but perhaps I had better go out, lest all work and no play should make me a dull boy. I have a list of titles too, but the final title I have determined on--or something very near it. I have a notion of this old file in the queer house, opening the book by an account of himself, and, among other peculiarities, of his affection for an old quaint queer-cased clock; showing how that when they have sat alone together in the long evenings, he has got accustomed to its voice, and come to consider it as the voice of a friend; how its striking, in the night, has seemed like an assurance to him that it was still, a cheerful watcher at his chamber-door; and now its very face has seemed to have something of welcome in its dusty features, and to relax from its grimness when he has looked at it from his chimney-corner. Then I mean to tell how that he has kept odd manuscripts in the old, deep, dark, silent closet where the weights are; and taken them from thence to read (mixing up his enjoyments with some notion of his clock); and how, when the club came to be formed, they, by reason of their punctuality and his regard for this dumb servant, took their name from it. And thus I shall call the book either Old Humphrey's Clock, or Master Humphrey's Clock; beginning with a woodcut of old Humphrey and his clock, and explaining the why and wherefore. All Humphrey's own papers will be dated then From my clock-side, and I have divers thoughts about the best means of introducing the others. I thought about this all day yesterday and all last night till I went to

bed. I am sure I can make a good thing of this opening, which I have thoroughly warmed up to in consequence."

A few days later: "I incline rather more to Master Humphrey's Clock than Old Humphrey's--if so be that there is no danger of the pensive confounding master with a boy." After two days more: "I was thinking all yesterday, and have begun at Master Humphrey to-day." Then, a week later: "I have finished the first number, but have not been able to do more in the space than lead up to the Giants, who are just on the scene."

Volume I, Chapter 12 (1840-1841): The Old Curiosity Shop

The Old Curiosity Shop

A DAY or two after the date of the last letter quoted, Dickens and his wife, with Maclise and myself, visited Landor in Bath, and it was during three happy days we passed together there that the fancy which was shortly to take the form of Little Nell first occurred to its author,--but as yet with the intention only of making out of it a tale of a few chapters. On the 1st of March we returned from Bath; and on the 4th I had this letter: "If you can manage to give me a call in the course of the day or evening, I wish you would. I am laboriously turning over in my mind how I can best effect the improvement we spoke of last night, which I will certainly make by hook or by crook, and which I would like you to see before it goes finally to the printer's. I have determined not to put that witch-story into number 3, for I am by no means satisfied of the effect of its contrast with Humphrey. I think of lengthening Humphrey, finishing the description of the society, and closing with the little child-story, which is SURE to be effective, especially after the old man's quiet way." Then there came hard upon this: "What do you think of the following double title for the beginning of that little tale? 'PERSONAL ADVENTURES OF MASTER HUMPHREY: The Old Curiosity Shop.' I have thought of Master Humphrey's Tale, Master Humphrey's Narrative, A Passage in Master Humphrey's Life--but I don't think any does as well as this. I have also thought of The Old Curiosity Dealer and the Child instead of The Old Curiosity Shop. Perpend. Topping waits."----And thus was taking gradual form, with less direct consciousness of design on his own part than I can remember in any other instance of all his career, a story which was to add largely to his popularity, more than any other of his works to make the bond between himself and his readers one of personal attachment, and very widely to increase the sense entertained of his powers as a pathetic as well as humorous writer.

He had not written more than two or three chapters, when the capability of the subject for more extended treatment than he had at first proposed to give to it pressed itself upon him, and he resolved to throw everything else aside, devoting himself to the one story only. There were other strong reasons for this. Of the first number of the Clock nearly seventy thousand were sold; but with the discovery that there was no continuous tale the orders at once diminished, and a change must have been made even if the material and means for it had not been ready. There had been an interval of three numbers between the first and second chapters, which the society of Mr. Pickwick and the two Wellers made pleasant enough; but after the introduction of Dick Swiveller there were three consecutive chapters; and in the continued progress of the tale to its close there were only two more breaks, one between the fourth and fifth chapters and one between the eighth and ninth, pardonable and enjoyable now for the sake of Sam and his father. The reintroduction of these old favorites, it will have been seen, formed part of his original plan; of his abandonment of which his own description may be added, from his preface to the collected edition: "The first chapter of this tale appeared in the fourth number of Master Humphrey's Clock, when I had already been made uneasy by the desultory character of that work, and when, I believe, my readers had thoroughly participated in the feeling. The commencement of a story was a great satisfaction to me, and I had reason to believe that my readers participated in this feeling too. Hence, being pledged to some interruptions and some pursuit of the original design, I set cheerfully about disentangling myself from those impediments as fast as I could; and, this done, from that time until its completion The Old Curiosity Shop was written and published from week to week, in weekly parts."

He had very early himself become greatly taken with it. "I am very glad indeed," he wrote to me after the first half-dozen chapters, "that you think so well of the Curiosity Shop, and especially that what may be got out of Dick strikes you. I mean to make much of him. I feel the story extremely myself, which I take to be a good sign; and am already warmly interested in it. I shall run it on now for four whole numbers

together, to give it a fair chance." Every step lightened the road as it became more and more real with each character that appeared in it, and I still recall the glee with which he told me what he intended to do not only with Dick Swiveller, but with Septimus Brass, changed afterwards to Sampson. Undoubtedly, however, Dick was his favorite. "Dick's behavior in the matter of Miss Wackles will, I hope, give you satisfaction," is the remark of another of his letters. "I cannot yet discover that his aunt has any belief in him, or is in the least degree likely to send him a remittance, so that he will probably continue to be the sport of destiny." His difficulties were the quickly recurring times of publication, the confined space in each number that yet had to contribute its individual effect, and (from the suddenness with which he had begun) the impossibility of getting in advance. "I was obliged to cramp most dreadfully what I thought a pretty idea in the last chapter. I hadn't room to turn:" to this or a similar effect his complaints are frequent, and of the vexations named it was by far the worst. But he steadily bore up against all, and made a triumph of the little story.

To help his work he went twice to Broadstairs, in June and in September. From this he wrote to me (17th June), "It's now four o'clock, and I have been at work since half-past eight. I have really dried myself up into a condition which would almost justify me in pitching off the cliff, head first--but I must get richer before I indulge in a crowning luxury. Number 15, which I began to-day, I anticipate great things from. There is a description of getting gradually out of town, and passing through neighborhoods of distinct and various characters, with which, if I had read it as anybody else's writing, I think I should have been very much struck. The child and the old man are on their journey of course, and the subject is a very pretty one." Between these two Broadstairs visits he wrote to me, "I intended calling on you this morning on my way back from Bevis Marks, whither I went to look at a house for Sampson Brass. But I got mingled up in a kind of social paste with the Jews of Houndsditch, and roamed about among them till I came out in Moorfields, quite unexpectedly. So I got into a cab, and came home again, very tired, by way of the City Road." At the opening of September he was again at Broadstairs. The residence he most desired there, Fort House, stood prominently at the top of a breezy hill on the road to Kingsgate, with a corn-field between it and the sea, and this in many subsequent years he always occupied; but he was fain to be content, as yet, with Lawn House, a smaller villa between the hill and the corn-field, from which he now wrote of his attentions to Mr. Sampson Brass's sister: "I have been at work of course" (2d September), "and have just finished a number. I have effected a reform by virtue of which we breakfast at a quarter-before eight, so that I get to work at half-past, and am commonly free by one o'clock or so, which is a great happiness. Dick is now Sampson's clerk, and I have touched Miss Brass in Number 25, lightly, but effectively I hope."

At this point it became necessary to close the first volume of the Clock, which was issued accordingly with a dedication to Rogers, and a preface to which allusion will be made hereafter. "I have opened the second volume," he wrote to me on the 9th of September, "with Kit; and I saw this morning looking out at the sea, as if a veil had been lifted up, an affecting thing that I can do with him by-and-by. Nous verrons." "I am glad you like that Kit number," he wrote twelve days later; "I thought you would. I have altered that about the opera-going. Of course I had no intention to delude the many-headed into a false belief concerning opera-nights, but merely to specify a class of senators. I needn't have done it, however, for God knows they're pretty well all alike." This referred to an objection made by me to something he had written of "opera-going senators on Wednesday nights;" and, of another change made in compliance with some other objection of mine, he wrote on the 4th of October, "You will receive the proof herewith. I have altered it. You must let it stand now. I really think the dead mankind a million fathoms deep, the best thing in the sentence. I have a notion of the dreadful silence down there, and of the stars shining down upon their drowned eyes,--the fruit, let me tell you, of a solitary walk by starlight on the cliffs. As to the child-image, I have made a note of it for alteration. In number thirty there will be some cutting

needed, I think. I have, however, something in my eye near the beginning which I can easily take out. You will recognize a description of the road we traveled between Birmingham and Wolverhampton; but I had conceived it so well in my mind that the execution doesn't please me quite as well as I expected. I shall be curious to know whether you think there's anything in the notion of the man and his furnace-fire. It would have been a good thing to have opened a new story with, I have been thinking since."

In the middle of October he returned to town, and by the end of the month he had so far advanced that the close of the story began to be not far distant. "Tell me what you think," he had written just before his return, "of 36 and 37? The way is clear for Kit now, and for a great effect at the last with the Marchioness." The last allusion I could not in the least understand, until I found, in the numbers just sent me, those exquisite chapters of the tale, the 57th and 58th, in which Dick Swiveller realizes his threat to Miss Wackles, discovers the small creature that his destiny is expressly saving up for him, dubs her Marchioness, and teaches her the delights of hot purl and cribbage. This is comedy of the purest kind; its great charm being the good-hearted fellow's kindness to the poor desolate child hiding itself under cover of what seems only mirth and fun. Altogether, and because of rather than in spite of his weakness, Dick is a captivating person. His gayety and good humor survive such accumulations of "staggerers," he makes such discoveries of the "rosy" in the very smallest of drinks, and becomes himself by his solacements of verse such a "perpetual grand Apollo," that his failings are all forgiven, and hearts resolutely shut against victims of destiny in general open themselves freely to Dick Swiveller.

At the opening of November, there seems to have been a wish on Maclise's part to try his hand at an illustration for the story; but I do not remember that it bore other fruit than a very pleasant day at Jack Straw's Castle, where Dickens read one of the later numbers to us. "Maclise and myself (alone in the carriage)," he wrote, "will be with you at two exactly. We propose driving out to Hampstead and walking there, if it don't rain in buckets'-full. I sha'n't send Bradburys' the MS. of next number till to-morrow, for it contains the shadow of the number after that, and I want to read it to Mac, as, if he likes the subject, it will furnish him with one, I think. You can't imagine (gravely I write and speak) how exhausted I am to-day with yesterday's labors. I went to bed last night utterly dispirited and done up. All night I have been pursued by the child; and this morning I am unrefreshed and miserable. I don't know what to do with myself. . . . I think the close of the story will be great." Connected with the same design on Maclise's part there was another reading, this time at my house, and of the number shadowed forth by what had been read at Hampstead. "I will bring the MS.," he writes on the 12th of November, "and, for Mac's information if needful, the number before it. I have only this moment put the finishing touch to it. The difficulty has been tremendous--the anguish unspeakable. I didn't say six. Therefore dine at half-past five like a Christian. I shall bring Mac at that hour."

He had sent me, shortly before, the chapters in which the Marchioness nurses Dick in his fever, and puts his favorite philosophy to the hard test of asking him whether he has ever put pieces of orange-peel into cold water and made believe it was wine. "If you make believe very much, it's quite nice; but if you don't, you know, it hasn't much flavor:" so it stood originally, and to the latter word in the little creature's mouth I seem to have objected. Replying (on the 16th of December) he writes, "'If you make believe very much, it's quite nice; but if you don't, you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning, certainly.' I think that's better. Flavor is a common word in cookery, and among cooks, and so I used it. The part you cut out in the other number, which was sent me this morning, I had put in with a view to Quilp's last appearance on any stage, which is casting its shadow upon my mind; but it will come well enough without such a preparation, so I made no change. I mean to shirk Sir Robert Inglis, and work to-night. I have been solemnly revolving the general story all this morning. The forty-fifth number will certainly close. Perhaps this forty-first, which I am now at work on, had better contain the announcement of Barnaby? I am glad you like Dick and the Marchioness in that sixty-fourth chapter. I thought you would."

Fast shortening as the life of little Nell was now, the dying year might have seen it pass away; but I never knew him wind up any tale with such a sorrowful reluctance as this. He caught at any excuse to hold his hand from it, and stretched to the utmost limit the time left to complete it in. Christmas interposed its delays too, so that Twelfth-night had come and gone when I wrote to him in the belief that he was nearly done. "Done!" he wrote back to me on Friday, the 7th; "Done!!! Why, bless you, I shall not be done till Wednesday night. I only began yesterday, and this part of the story is not to be galloped over, I can tell you. I think it will come famously--but I am the wretchedest of the wretched. It casts the most horrible shadow upon me, and it is as much as I can do to keep moving at all. I tremble to approach the place a great deal more than Kit; a great deal more than Mr. Garland; a great deal more than the Single Gentleman. I sha'n't recover it for a long time. Nobody will miss her like I shall. It is such a very painful thing to me, that I really cannot express my sorrow. Old wounds bleed afresh when I only think of the way of doing it: what the actual doing it will be, God knows. I can't preach to myself the schoolmaster's consolation, though I try. Dear Mary died yesterday, when I think of this sad story. I don't know what to say about dining to-morrow--perhaps you'll send up to-morrow morning for news? That'll be the best way. I have refused several invitations for this week and next, determining to go nowhere till I had done. I am afraid of disturbing the state I have been trying to get into, and having to fetch it all back again." He had finished, all but the last chapter, on the Wednesday named; that was the 12th of January; and on the following night he read to me the two chapters of Nell's death, the seventy-first and seventy-second, with the result described in a letter to me of the following Monday, the 17th January, 1841:

"I can't help letting you know how much your yesterday's letter pleased me. I felt sure you liked the chapters when we read them on Thursday night, but it was a great delight to have my impression so strongly and heartily confirmed. You know how little value I should set on what I had done, if all the world cried out that it was good, and those whose good opinion and approbation I value most were silent. The assurance that this little closing of the scene touches and is felt by you so strongly, is better to me than a thousand most sweet voices out of doors. When I first began, on your valued suggestion, to keep my thoughts upon this ending of the tale, I resolved to try and do something which might be read by people about whom Death had been, with a softened feeling, and with consolation. . . . After you left last night, I took my desk up-stairs, and, writing until four o'clock this morning, finished the old story. It makes me very melancholy to think that all these people are lost to me forever, and I feel as if I never could become attached to any new set of characters." The words printed in italics, as underlined by himself, give me my share in the story which had gone so closely to his heart. I was responsible for its tragic ending. He had not thought of killing her, when, about half-way through, I asked him to consider whether it did not necessarily belong even to his own conception, after taking so mere a child through such a tragedy of sorrow, to lift her also out of the commonplace of ordinary happy endings so that the gentle pure little figure and form should never change to the fancy. All that I meant he seized at once, and never turned aside from it again.

The published book was an extraordinary success, and, in America more especially, very greatly increased the writer's fame. The pathetic vein it had opened was perhaps mainly the cause of this, but opinion at home continued still to turn on the old characteristics,--the freshness of humor of which the pathos was but another form and product, the grasp of reality with which character had again been seized, the discernment of good under its least attractive forms and of evil in its most captivating disguises, the cordial wisdom and sound heart, the enjoyment and fun, luxuriant yet under proper control. No falling-off was found in these; and I doubt if any of his people have been more widely liked than Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness. The characters generally, indeed, work out their share in the purpose of the tale; the extravagances of some of them help to intensify its meaning; and the sayings and doings of the worst and the best alike have their point and applicability. Many an oversuspicious

person will find advantage in remembering what a too liberal application of Foxey's principle of suspecting everybody brought Mr. Sampson Brass to; and many an overhasty judgment of poor human nature will unconsciously be checked, when it is remembered that Mr. Christopher Nubbles did come back to work out that shilling.

But the main idea and chief figure of the piece constitute its interest for most people, and give it rank upon the whole with the most attractive productions of English fiction. I am not acquainted with any story in the language more adapted to strengthen in the heart what most needs help and encouragement, to sustain kindly and innocent impulses, and to awaken everywhere the sleeping germs of good. It includes necessarily much pain, much uninterrupted sadness; and yet the brightness and sunshine quite overtop the gloom. The humor is so benevolent; the view of errors that have no depravity of heart in them is so indulgent; the quiet courage under calamity, the purity that nothing impure can soil, are so full of tender teaching. Its effect as a mere piece of art, too, considering the circumstances in which I have shown it to be written, I think very noteworthy. It began with a plan for but a short half-dozen chapters; it grew into a full-proportioned story under the warmth of the feeling it had inspired its writer with; its very incidents created a necessity at first not seen; and it was carried to a close only contemplated after a full half of it had been written. Yet, from the opening of the tale to that undesigned ending,--from the image of little Nell asleep amid the quaint grotesque figures of the old curiosity warehouse to that other final sleep she takes among the grim forms and carvings of the old church aisle,--the main purpose seems to be always present. The characters and incidents that at first appear most foreign to it are found to have had with it a close relation. The hideous lumber and rottenness that surround the child in her grandfather's home take shape again in Quilp and his filthy gang. In the first still picture of Nell's innocence in the midst of strange and alien forms, we have the forecast of her after-wanderings, her patient miseries, her sad maturity of experience before its time. Without the show-people and their blended fictions and realities, their wax-works, dwarfs, giants, and performing dogs, the picture would have wanted some part of its significance. Nor could the genius of Hogarth himself have given it higher expression than in the scenes by the cottage door, the furnace-fire, and the burial-place of the old church, over whose tombs and gravestones hang the puppets of Mr. Punch's show while the exhibitors are mending and repairing them. And when, at last, Nell sits within the quiet old church where all her wanderings end, and gazes on those silent monumental groups of warriors,--helmets, swords, and gauntlets wasting away around them,--the associations among which her life had opened seem to have come crowding on the scene again, to be present at its close,--but stripped of their strangeness; deepened into solemn shapes by the suffering she has undergone; gently fusing every feeling of a life past into hopeful and familiar anticipation of a life to come; and already imperceptibly lifting her, without grief or pain, from the earth she loves, yet whose grosser paths her light steps only touched to show the track through them to heaven. This is genuine art, and such as all cannot fail to recognize who read the book in a right sympathy with the conception that pervades it. Nor, great as the discomfort was of reading it in brief weekly snatches, can I be wholly certain that the discomfort of so writing it involved nothing but disadvantage. With so much in every portion to do, and so little space to do it in, the opportunities to a writer for mere self-indulgence were necessarily rare.

Of the innumerable tributes the story has received, and to none other by Dickens have more or more various been paid, there is one, the very last, which has much affected me. Not many months before my friend's death, he had sent me two Overland Monthlies containing two sketches by a young American writer far away in California, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," in which he had found such subtle strokes of character as he had not anywhere else in late years discovered; the manner resembling himself, but the matter fresh to a degree that had surprised him; the painting in all respects masterly, and the wild rude thing painted a quite wonderful reality. I have rarely known him

more honestly moved. A few months passed; telegraph-wires flashed over the world that he had passed away on the 9th of June; and the young writer of whom he had then written to me, all unconscious of that praise, put his tribute of gratefulness and sorrow into the form of a poem called Dickens in Camp. It embodies the same kind of incident which had so affected the master himself, in the papers to which I have referred; it shows the gentler influences which, in even those Californian wilds, can restore outlawed "roaring camps" to silence and humanity; and there is hardly any form of posthumous tribute which I can imagine likely to have better satisfied his desire of fame than one which should thus connect, with the special favorite among all his heroines, the restraints and authority exerted by his genius over the rudest and least civilized of competitors in that far fierce race for wealth.

"Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting, The river sang below; The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting Their minarets of snow:

"The roaring camp-fire, with rude humor, painted The ruddy tints of health On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted In the fierce race for wealth;

"Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure A hoarded volume drew, And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure To hear the tale anew;

"And then, while round them shadows gathered faster, And as the fire-light fell, He read aloud the book wherein the Master Had writ of 'Little Nell:'

"Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy,--for the reader Was youngest of them all,-- But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar A silence seemed to fall;

"The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows, Listened in every spray, While the whole camp with 'Nell' on English meadows Wandered and lost their way.

"And so in mountain solitudes--o'ertaken As by some spell divine-- Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken From out the gusty pine.

"Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire; And he who wrought that spell?-- Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire, Ye have one tale to tell!

"Lost is that camp! but let its fragrant story Blend with the breath that thrills With hop-vines' incense all the pensive glory That fills the Kentish hills.

"And on that grave where English oak and holly And laurel wreaths entwine, Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,-- This spray of Western pine!

"July, 1870."

Volume I, Chapter 13 (1840): Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs

Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs

IT was an excellent saying of the first Lord Shaftesbury, that, seeing every man of any capacity holds within himself two men, the wise and the foolish, each of them ought freely to be allowed his turn; and it was one of the secrets of Dickens's social charm that he could, in strict accordance with this saying, allow each part of him its turn; could afford thoroughly to give rest and relief to what was serious in him, and, when the time came to play his gambols, could surrender himself wholly to the enjoyment of the time, and become the very genius and embodiment of one of his own most whimsical fancies.

Turning back from the narrative of his last piece of writing to recall a few occurrences of the year during which it had occupied him, I find him at its opening in one of these humorous moods, and another friend, with myself, enslaved by its influence. "What on earth does it all mean?" wrote poor puzzled Mr. Landor to me, inclosing a letter from him of the date of the 11th of February, the day after the royal nuptials of that year. In this he had related to our old friend a wonderful hallucination arising out of that event, which had then taken entire possession of him. "Society is unhinged here," thus ran the letter, "by her majesty's marriage, and I am sorry to add that I have fallen hopelessly in love with the Queen, and wander up and down with vague and dismal thoughts of running away to some uninhabited island with a maid of honor, to be entrapped by conspiracy for that purpose. Can you suggest any particular young person, serving in such a capacity, who would suit me? It is too much perhaps to ask you to join the band of noble youths (Forster is in it, and Maclise) who are to assist me in this great enterprise, but a man of your energy would be invaluable. I have my eye upon Lady . . . , principally because she is very beautiful and has no strong brothers. Upon this, and other points of the scheme, however, we will confer more at large when we meet; and meanwhile burn this document, that no suspicion may arise or rumor get abroad."

The maid of honor and the uninhabited island were flights of fancy, but the other daring delusion was for a time encouraged to such whimsical lengths, not alone by him, but (under his influence) by the two friends named, that it took the wildest forms of humorous extravagance; and of the private confidences much interchanged, as well as of the style of open speech in which our joke of despairing unfitness for any further use or enjoyment of life was unflaggingly kept up, to the amazement of bystanders knowing nothing of what it meant, and believing we had half lost our senses, I permit myself to give from his letters one further illustration. "I am utterly lost in misery," he writes to me on the 12th of February, "and can do nothing. I have been reading Oliver, Pickwick, and Nickleby to get my thoughts together for the new effort, but all in vain:

"My heart is at Windsor, My heart isn't here; My heart is at Windsor. A following my dear.

I saw the Responsibilities this morning, and burst into tears. The presence of my wife aggravates me. I loathe my parents. I detest my house. I begin to have thoughts of the Serpentine, of the Regent's Canal, of the razors up-stairs, of the chemist's down the street, of poisoning myself at Mrs. ----'s table, of hanging myself upon the pear-tree in the garden, of abstaining from food and starving myself to death, of being bled for my cold and tearing off the bandage, of falling under the feet of cab-horses in the New Road, of murdering Chapman & Hall and becoming great in story (SHE must hear something of me then--perhaps sign the warrant: or is that a fable?), of turning Chartist, of heading some bloody assault upon the palace and saving Her by my single hand--of being anything but what I have been, and doing anything but what I have done. Your distracted friend, C. D." The wild derangement of asterisks in every shape and form, with which this incoherence closed, cannot here be given.

Some ailments which dated from an earlier period in his life made themselves felt in the spring of the year, as I remember, and increased horse-exercise was strongly recommended to him. "I find it will be positively necessary to go, for five days in the week, at least," he wrote to me in March, "on a perfect regimen of diet and exercise, and am anxious therefore not to delay treating for a horse." We were now in consequence, when he was not at the sea-side, much on horseback in suburban lanes and roads; and the spacious garden of his new house was also turned to healthful use at even his busiest times of work. I mark this, too, as the time when the first of his ravens took up residence there; and as the beginning of disputes with two of his neighbors about the smoking of the stable-chimney, which his groom Topping, a highly absurd little man with flaming red hair, so complicated by secret devices of his own, meant to conciliate each complainant alternately and having the effect of aggravating both, that law-proceedings were only barely avoided. "I shall give you," he writes, "my latest report of the chimney in the form of an address from Topping, made to me on our way from little Hall's at Norwood the other night, where he and Chapman and I had been walking all day, while Topping drove Kate, Mrs. Hall, and her sisters, to Dulwich. Topping had been regaled upon the premises, and was just drunk enough to be confidential. 'Beggin' your pardon, sir, but the genelman next door sir, seems to be gettin' quite comfortable and pleasant about the chimley.'--'I don't think he is, Topping.'--'Yes he is sir I think. He comes out in the yard this morning and says, Coachman he says' (observe the vision of a great large fat man called up by the word) is that your raven he says, Coachman? or is it Mr. Dickens's raven?_ he says. My master's sir, I says. Well, he says, It's a fine bird. I think the chimley 'ill do now Coachman,--now the jint's taken off the pipe he says. I hope it will sir, I says; my master's a genelman as wouldn't annoy no genelman if he could help it, I'm sure; and my missis is so afraid of havin' a bit o' fire that o' Sundays our little bit o' weal or wot not, goes to the baker's a purpose.--Damn the chimley, Coachman, he says, it's a smokin' now.--It ain't a smokin' your way sir, I says; Well he says no more it is, Coachman, and as long as it smokes anybody else's way, it's all right and I'm agreeable.' Of course I shall now have the man from the other side upon me, and very likely with an action of nuisance for smoking into his conservatory."

A graver incident, which occurred to him also among his earliest experiences as tenant of Devonshire Terrace, illustrates too well the always practical turn of his kindness and humanity not to deserve relation here. He has himself described it in one of his minor writings, in setting down what he remembered as the only good that ever came of a beadle. Of that great parish functionary, he says, "having newly taken the lease of a house in a certain distinguished metropolitan parish, a house which then appeared to me to be a frightfully first-class family mansion involving awful responsibilities, I became the prey." In other words, he was summoned, and obliged to sit, as juryman at an inquest on the body of a little child alleged to have been murdered by its mother; of which the result was, that, by his persevering exertion, seconded by the humane help of the coroner, Mr. Wakley, the verdict of himself and his fellow-jurymen charged her only with concealment of the birth. "The poor desolate creature dropped upon her knees before us with protestations that we were right (protestations among the most affecting that I have ever heard in my life), and was carried away insensible. I caused some extra care to be taken of her in the prison, and counsel to be retained for her defense when she was tried at the Old Bailey; and her sentence was lenient, and her history and conduct proved that it was right." How much he felt the little incident, at the actual time of its occurrence, may be judged from the few lines written to me next morning: "Whether it was the poor baby, or its poor mother, or the coffin, or my fellow-jurymen, or what not, I can't say, but last night I had a most violent attack of sickness and indigestion, which not only prevented me from sleeping, but even from lying down. Accordingly Kate and I sat up through the dreary watches."

The day of the first publication of Master Humphrey (Saturday, 4th April) had by this time come, and, according to the rule observed in his two other great ventures, he left town with Mrs. Dickens on Friday,

the 3d. With Maclise we had been together at Richmond the previous night; and I joined him at Birmingham the day following with news of the sale of the whole sixty thousand copies to which the first working had been limited, and of orders already in hand for ten thousand more! The excitement of the success somewhat lengthened our holiday; and, after visiting Shakspeare's house at Stratford and Johnson's at Lichfield, we found our resources so straitened in returning, that, employing as our messenger of need his younger brother Alfred, who had joined us from Tamworth, where he was a student-engineer, we had to pawn our gold watches at Birmingham.

At the end of the following month he went to Broadstairs, and not many days before (on the 20th of May) a note from Mr. Jordan on behalf of Mr. Bentley opened the negotiations formerly referred to, which transferred to Messrs. Chapman & Hall the agreement for Barnaby Rudge. I was myself absent when he left, and in a letter announcing his departure he had written, "I don't know of a word of news in all London, but there will be plenty next week, for I am going away, and I hope you'll send me an account of it. I am doubtful whether it will be a murder, a fire, a vast robbery, or the escape of Gould, but it will be something remarkable no doubt. I almost blame myself for the death of that poor girl who leaped off the monument upon my leaving town last year. She would not have done it if I had remained, neither would the two men have found the skeleton in the sewers." His prediction was quite accurate, for I had to tell him, after not many days, of the potboy who shot at the queen. "It's a great pity," he replied, very sensibly, "they couldn't suffocate that boy, Master Oxford, and say no more about it. To have put him quietly between two feather beds would have stopped his heroic speeches, and dulled the sound of his glory very much. As it is, she will have to run the gauntlet of many a fool and madman, some of whom may perchance be better shots and use other than Brummagem firearms." How much of this actually came to pass, the reader knows.

From the letters of his present Broadstairs visit, there is little further to add to their account of his progress with his story; but a couple more lines may be given for their characteristic expression of his invariable habit upon entering any new abode, whether to stay in it for days or for years. On a Monday night he arrived, and on the Tuesday (2d of June) wrote to me, "Before I tasted bit or drop yesterday, I set out my writing-table with extreme taste and neatness, and improved the disposition of the furniture generally." He stayed till the end of June; when Maclise and myself joined him for the pleasure of posting back home with him and Mrs. Dickens, by way of his favorite Chatham and Rochester and Cobham, where we passed two agreeable days in revisiting well-remembered scenes. I had meanwhile brought to a close the treaty for repurchase of Oliver and surrender of Barnaby, upon terms which are succinctly stated in a letter written by him to Messrs. Chapman & Hall on the 2d of July, the day after our return:

"The terms upon which you advance the money to-day for the purchase of the copyright and stock of Oliver on my behalf are understood between us to be these. That this 2250l._ is to be deducted from the purchase-money of a work by me entitled Barnaby Rudge, of which two chapters are now in your hands, and of which the whole is to be written within some convenient time to be agreed upon between us. But if it should not be written (which God forbid!) within five years, you are to have a lien to this amount on the property belonging to me that is now in your hands, namely, my shares in the stock and copyright of Sketches by Boz, The Pickwick Papers, Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist, and Master Humphrey's Clock; in which we do not include any share of the current profits of the last-named work, which I shall remain at liberty to draw at the times stated in our agreement. Your purchase of Barnaby Rudge is made upon the following terms. It is to consist of matter sufficient for ten monthly numbers of the size of Pickwick and Nickleby, which you are, however, at liberty to divide and publish in fifteen smaller numbers if you think fit. The terms for the purchase of this edition in numbers, and for the copyright of the whole book for six months after the publication of the last number, are 3000l._ At the expiration of the six months the whole copyright reverts to me." The sequel was, as all the world knows, that Barnaby became successor to

Little Nell, the money being repaid by the profits of the Clock; but I ought to mention also the more generous sequel that my own small service had, on my receiving from him, after not many days, an antique silver-mounted jug of great beauty of form and workmanship, but with a wealth far beyond jeweler's chasing or artist's design in the written words that accompanied it. I accepted them to commemorate, not the help they would have far overpaid, but the gladness of his own escape from the last of the agreements that had hampered the opening of his career, and the better future that was now before him.

At the opening of August he was with Mrs. Dickens for some days in Devonshire, on a visit to his father, but he had to take his work with him; and, as he wrote to me, they had only one real holiday, when Dawlish, Teignmouth, Babbicombe, and Torquay were explored, returning to Exeter at night. In the beginning of September he was again at Broadstairs.

"I was just going to work," he wrote on the 9th, "when I got this letter, and the story of the man who went to Chapman & Hall's knocked me down flat. I wrote until now (a quarter to one) against the grain, and have at last given it up for one day. Upon my word it is intolerable. I have been grinding my teeth all the morning. I think I could say in two lines something about the general report with propriety. I'll add them to the proof" (the preface to the first volume of the Clock was at this time in preparation), "giving you full power to cut them out if you should think differently from me, and from C. and H., who in such a matter must be admitted judges." He refers here to a report, rather extensively circulated at the time, and which through various channels had reached his publishers, that he was suffering from loss of reason and was under treatment in an asylum. I would have withheld from him the mention of it, as an absurdity that must quickly pass away, but against my wish it had been communicated to him, and I had difficulty in keeping within judicious bounds his extreme and very natural wrath.

A few days later (the 15th) he wrote, "I have been rather surprised of late to have applications from Roman Catholic clergymen, demanding (rather pastorally, and with a kind of grave authority) assistance, literary employment, and so forth. At length it struck me that, through some channel or other, I must have been represented as belonging to that religion. Would you believe that in a letter from Lamert, at Cork, to my mother, which I saw last night, he says, 'What do the papers mean by saying that Charles is demented, and, further, that he has turned Roman Catholic?'--!" Of the begging-letter-writers, hinted at here, I ought earlier to have said something. In one of his detached essays he has described, without a particle of exaggeration, the extent to which he was made a victim by this class of swindler, and the extravagance of the devices practiced on him; but he has not confessed, as he might, that for much of what he suffered he was himself responsible, by giving so largely, as at first he did, to almost every one who applied to him. What at last brought him to his senses in this respect, I think, was the request made by the adventurer who had exhausted every other expedient, and who desired finally, after describing himself reduced to the condition of a traveling Cheap Jack in the smallest way of crockery, that a donkey might be left out for him next day, which he would duly call for. This I perfectly remember, and I much fear that the applicant was the Daniel Tobin before mentioned.

Many and delightful were other letters written from Broadstairs at this date, filled with whimsical talk and humorous description relating chiefly to an eccentric friend who stayed with him most of the time, and is sketched in one of his published papers as Mr. Kindheart; but all too private for reproduction now. He returned in the middle of October, when we resumed our almost daily ridings, foregatherings with Maclise at Hampstead and elsewhere, and social entertainments with Macready, Talfourd, Procter, Stanfield, Fonblanque, Elliotson, Tennent, D'Orsay, Quin, Harness, Wilkie, Edwin Landseer, Rogers, Sydney Smith, and Bulwer. Of the genius of the author of Pelham and Eugene Aram he had, early and late, the highest admiration, and he took occasion to express it during the present year in a new preface

which he published to Oliver Twist. Other friends became familiar in later years; but, disinclined as he was to the dinner-invitations that reached him from every quarter, all such meetings with those whom I have named, and in an especial manner the marked attentions shown him by Miss Coutts which began with the very beginning of his career, were invariably welcome.

To speak here of the pleasure his society afforded, would anticipate the fitter mention to be made hereafter. But what in this respect distinguishes nearly all original men, he possessed eminently. His place was not to be filled up by any other. To the most trivial talk he gave the attraction of his own character. It might be a small matter,--something he had read or observed during the day, some quaint odd fancy from a book, a vivid little out-door picture, the laughing exposure of some imposture, or a burst of sheer mirthful enjoyment,--but of its kind it would be something unique, because genuinely part of himself. This, and his unwearying animal spirits, made him the most delightful of companions; no claim on good-fellowship ever found him wanting; and no one so constantly recalled to his friends the description Johnson gave of Garrick, as the cheerfulest man of his age.

Of what occupied him in the way of literary labor in the autumn and winter months of the year, some description has been given; and, apart from what has already thus been said of his work at the closing chapters of The Old Curiosity Shop, nothing now calls for more special allusion, except that in his town-walks in November, impelled thereto by specimens recently discovered in his country-walks between Broadstairs and Ramsgate, he thoroughly explored the ballad literature of Seven-Dials, and took to singing himself, with an effect that justified his reputation for comic singing in his childhood, not a few of these wonderful productions. His last successful labor of the year was the reconciliation of two friends; and his motive, as well as the principle that guided him, as they are described by himself, I think worth preserving. For the first: "In the midst of this child's death, I, over whom something of the bitterness of death has passed, not lightly perhaps, was reminded of many old kindnesses, and was sorry in my heart that men who really liked each other should waste life at arm's length." For the last: "I have laid it down as a rule in my judgment of men, to observe narrowly whether some (of whom one is disposed to think badly) don't carry all their faults upon the surface, and others (of whom one is disposed to think well) don't carry many more beneath it. I have long ago made sure that our friend is in the first class; and when I know all the foibles a man has, with little trouble in the discovery, I begin to think he is worth liking." His latest letter of the year, dated the day following, closed with the hope that we might, he and I, enjoy together "fifty more Christmases, at least, in this world, and eternal summers in another." Alas!

Volume I, Chapter 14 (1841): Barnaby Rudge

Barnaby Rudge

THE letters of 1841 yield similar fruit as to his doings and sayings, and may in like manner first be consulted for the literary work he had in hand.

He had the advantage of beginning Barnaby Rudge with a fair amount of story in advance, which he had only to make suitable, by occasional readjustment of chapters, to publication in weekly portions; and on this he was engaged before the end of January. "I am at present" (22d January, 1841) "in what Leigh Hunt would call a kind of impossible state,--thinking what on earth Master Humphrey can think of through four mortal pages. I added, here and there, to the last chapter of the Curiosity Shop yesterday, and it leaves me only four pages to write." (They were filled by a paper from Humphrey introductory of the new tale, in which will be found a striking picture of London from midnight to the break of day.) "I also made up, and wrote the needful insertions for, the second number of Barnaby,--so that I came back to the mill a little." Hardly yet; for after four days he writes, having meanwhile done nothing, "I have been looking (three o'clock) with an appearance of extraordinary interest and study at one leaf of the Curiosities of Literature ever since half-past ten this morning--I haven't the heart to turn over." Then on Friday the 29th better news came. "I didn't stir out yesterday, but sat and thought all day; not writing a line; not so much as the cross of a t or dot of an i. I imaged forth a good deal of Barnaby by keeping my mind steadily upon him; and am happy to say I have gone to work this morning in good twig, strong hope, and cheerful spirits. Last night I was unutterably and impossible-to-form-an-idea-of-ably miserable. . . . By-the-by, don't engage yourself otherwise than to me for Sunday week, because it's my birthday. I have no doubt we shall have got over our troubles here by that time, and I purpose having a snug dinner in the study." We had the dinner, though the troubles were not over; but the next day another son was born to him. "Thank God," he wrote on the 9th, "quite well. I am thinking hard, and have just written to Browne inquiring when he will come and confer about the raven." He had by this time resolved to make that bird, whose accomplishments had been daily ripening and enlarging for the last twelve months to the increasing mirth and delight of all of us, a prominent figure in Barnaby; and the invitation to the artist was for a conference how best to introduce him graphically.

The next letter mentioning Barnaby was from Brighton (25th February), whither he had flown for a week's quiet labor: "I have (it's four o'clock) done a very fair morning's work, at which I have sat very close, and been blessed besides with a clear view of the end of the volume. As the contents of one number usually require a day's thought at the very least, and often more, this puts me in great spirits. I think--that is, I hope--the story takes a great stride at this point, and takes it WELL. Nous verrons. Grip will be strong, and I build greatly on the Varden household."

Upon his return he had to lament a domestic calamity, which, for its connection with that famous personage in Barnaby, must be mentioned here. The raven had for some days been ailing, and Topping had reported of him, as Shakspeare of Hamlet, that he had lost his mirth and foregone all customary exercises; but Dickens paid no great heed, remembering his recovery from an illness of the previous summer when he swallowed some white paint; so that the graver report which led him to send for the doctor came upon him unexpectedly, and nothing but his own language can worthily describe the result. Unable from the state of his feelings to write two letters, he sent the narrative to Maclise, under an enormous black seal, for transmission to me; and thus it befell that this fortunate bird receives a double passport to fame, so great a humorist having celebrated his farewell to the present world, and so great a painter his welcome to another.

"You will be greatly shocked" (the letter is dated Friday evening, March 12, 1841) "and grieved to hear that the Raven is no more. He expired to-day at a few minutes after twelve o'clock at noon. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, conjecturing that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals without having any serious effect upon his constitution. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman (Mr. Herring), who promptly attended, and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine, he recovered so far as to be able at eight o'clock P.M. to bite Topping. His night was peaceful. This morning at daybreak he appeared better; received (agreeably to the doctor's directions) another dose of castor oil; and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavor of which he appeared to relish. Towards eleven o'clock he was so much worse that it was found necessary to muffle the stable-knocker. At half-past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution, or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property: consisting chiefly of half-pence which he had buried in different parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered, walked twice or thrice along the coach-house, stopped to bark, staggered, exclaimed Halloa old girl!_ (his favorite expression), and died.

"He behaved throughout with a decent fortitude, equanimity, and self-possession, which cannot be too much admired. I deeply regret that being in ignorance of his danger I did not attend to receive his last instructions. Something remarkable about his eyes occasioned Topping to run for the doctor at twelve. When they returned together our friend was gone. It was the medical gentleman who informed me of his decease. He did it with great caution and delicacy, preparing me by the remark that 'a jolly queer start had taken place;' but the shock was very great notwithstanding. I am not wholly free from suspicions of poison. A malicious butcher has been heard to say that he would 'do' for him: his plea was that he would not be molested in taking orders down the mews, by any bird that wore a tail. Other persons have also been heard to threaten: among others, Charles Knight, who has just started a weekly publication price fourpence: Barnaby being, as you know, threepence. I have directed a post-mortem examination, and the body has been removed to Mr. Herring's school of anatomy for that purpose.

"I could wish, if you can take the trouble, that you could inclose this to Forster immediately after you have read it. I cannot discharge the painful task of communication more than once. Were they ravens who took manna to somebody in the wilderness? At times I hope they were, and at others I fear they were not, or they would certainly have stolen it by the way. In profound sorrow, I am ever your bereaved friend C. D. Kate is as well as can be expected, but terribly low, as you may suppose. The children seem rather glad of it. He bit their ankles. But that was play."

[Illustration: [Sideways text: apotheosis] My dear Forster

Dickens desires me transmit to you the enclosed announcement of the Raven's decease - which took place in Devonshire Terrace

March 1841

HIC DM]

Maclise's covering letter was an apotheosis, to be rendered only in fac-simile.

In what way the loss was replaced, so that Barnaby should have the fruit of continued study of the habits of the family of birds which Grip had so nobly represented, Dickens has told in the preface to the story; and another, older, and larger Grip, obtained through Mr. Smithson, was installed in the stable, almost before the stuffed remains of his honored predecessor had been sent home in a glass case, by way of ornament to his master's study.

I resume our correspondence on what he was writing: "I see there is yet room for a few lines" (25th March), "and you are quite right in wishing what I cut out to be restored. I did not want Joe to be so short about Dolly, and really wrote his references to that young lady carefully,--as natural things with a meaning in them. Chigwell, my dear fellow, is the greatest place in the world. Name your day for going. Such a delicious old inn opposite the churchyard,--such a lovely ride,--such beautiful forest scenery,--such an out-of-the-way, rural place,--such a sexton! I say again, name your day." The day was named at once; and the whitest of stones marks it, in now sorrowful memory. His promise was exceeded by our enjoyment; and his delight in the double recognition, of himself and of Barnaby, by the landlord of the nice old inn, far exceeded any pride he would have taken in what the world thinks the highest sort of honor.

"I have shut myself up" (26th March) "by myself to-day, and mean to try and 'go it' at the Clock; Kate being out, and the house peacefully dismal. I don't remember altering the exact part you object to, but if there be anything here you object to, knock it out ruthlessly." "Don't fail" (April the 5th) "to erase anything that seems to you too strong. It is difficult for me to judge what tells too much, and what does not. I am trying a very quiet number to set against this necessary one. I hope it will be good, but I am in very sad condition for work. Glad you think this powerful. What I have put in is more relief, from the raven." Two days later: "I have done that number, and am now going to work on another. I am bent (please Heaven) on finishing the first chapter by Friday night. I hope to look in upon you to-night, when we'll dispose of the toasts for Saturday. Still bilious--but a good number, I hope, notwithstanding. Jeffrey has come to town, and was here yesterday." The toasts to be disposed of were those to be given at the dinner on the 10th to celebrate the second volume of Master Humphrey: when Talfourd presided, when there was much jollity, and, according to the memorandum drawn up that Saturday night now lying before me, we all in the greatest good humor glorified each other: Talfourd proposing the Clock, Macready Mrs. Dickens, Dickens the publishers, and myself the artists; Macready giving Talfourd, Talfourd Macready, Dickens myself, and myself the comedian Mr. Harley, whose humorous songs had been the not least considerable element in the mirth of the evening.

Five days later he writes, "I finished the number yesterday, and, although I dined with Jeffrey, and was obliged to go to Lord Denman's afterwards (which made me late), have done eight slips of the Lamplighter for Mrs. Macrone, this morning. When I have got that off my mind, I shall try to go on steadily, fetching up the Clock lee-way." The Lamplighter was his old farce, which he now turned into a comic tale; and this, with other contributions given him by friends and edited by him as Pic Nic Papers, enabled him to help the widow of his old publisher in her straitened means by a gift of L300. He had finished his work of charity before he next wrote of Barnaby Rudge, but he was fetching up his lee-way lazily. "I am getting on" (29th of April) "very slowly. I want to stick to the story; and the fear of committing myself, because of the impossibility of trying back or altering a syllable, makes it much harder than it looks. It was too bad of me to give you the trouble of cutting the number, but I knew so well you would do it in the right places. For what Harley would call the 'onward work' I really think I have some famous thoughts." There is an interval of a month before the next allusion: "Solomon's expression" (3d of June) "I meant to be one of those strong ones to which strong circumstances give birth in the commonest minds. Deal with it as you like. . . . Say what you please of Gordon" (I had objected to some points in his view of this madman, stated much too favorably as I thought), "he must have been at heart a kind man, and a lover of the despised and rejected, after his own fashion. He lived upon a small income, and always within it; was known to relieve the necessities of many people; exposed in his place the corrupt attempt of a minister to buy him out of Parliament; and did great charities in Newgate. He always spoke on the people's side, and tried against his muddled brains to expose the profligacy of both parties. He never got anything by his madness, and never sought it. The wildest and most raging attacks of the time allow him

these merits: and not to let him have 'em in their full extent, remembering in what a (politically) wicked time he lived, would lie upon my conscience heavily. The libel he was imprisoned for when he died, was on the Queen of France; and the French government interested themselves warmly to procure his release,--which I think they might have done, but for Lord Grenville." I was more successful in the counsel I gave against a fancy he had at this part of the story, that he would introduce as actors in the Gordon riots three splendid fellows who should order, lead, control, and be obeyed as natural guides of the crowd in that delirious time, and who should turn out, when all was over, to have broken out from Bedlam; but, though he saw the unsoundness of this, he could not so readily see, in Gordon's case, the danger of taxing ingenuity to ascribe a reasonable motive to acts of sheer insanity. The feeblest parts of the book are those in which Lord George and his secretary appear.

He left for Scotland after the middle of June, but he took work with him. "You may suppose," he wrote from Edinburgh on the 30th, "I have not done much work; but by Friday night's post from here I hope to send the first long chapter of a number and both the illustrations; from Loch Earn on Tuesday night, the closing chapter of that number; from the same place on Thursday night, the first long chapter of another, with both the illustrations; and, from some place which no man ever spelt but which sounds like Ballyhoolish, on Saturday, the closing chapter of that number, which will leave us all safe till I return to town." Nine days later he wrote from "Ballechelish," "I have done all I can or need do in the way of Barnaby until I come home, and the story is progressing (I hope you will think) to good strong interest. I have left it, I think, at an exciting point, with a good dawning of the riots. In the first of the two numbers I have written since I have been away, I forget whether the blind man, in speaking to Barnaby about riches, tells him they are to be found in crowds. If I have not actually used that word, will you introduce it? A perusal of the proof of the following number (70) will show you how, and why." "Have you," he wrote shortly after his return (29th July), "seen No. 71? I thought there was a good glimpse of a crowd, from a window--eh?" He had now taken thoroughly to the interest of his closing chapters, and felt more than ever the constraints of his form of publication. "I am warming up very much" (on the 5th August from Broadstairs) "about Barnaby. Oh! if I only had him, from this time to the end, in monthly numbers. N'importe!_ I hope the interest will be pretty strong,--and, in every number, stronger." Six days later, from the same place: "I was always sure I could make a good thing of Barnaby, and I think you'll find that it comes out strong to the last word. I have another number ready, all but two slips. Don't fear for young Chester. The time hasn't come----there we go again, you see, with the weekly delays. I am in great heart and spirits with the story, and with the prospect of having time to think before I go on again." A month's interval followed, and what occupied it will be described shortly. On the 11th September he wrote, "I have just burnt into Newgate, and am going in the next number to tear the prisoners out by the hair of their heads. The number which gets into the jail you'll have in proof by Tuesday." This was followed up a week later: "I have let all the prisoners out of Newgate, burnt down Lord Mansfield's, and played the very devil. Another number will finish the fires, and help us on towards the end. I feel quite smoky when I am at work. I want elbow-room terribly." To this trouble, graver supervened at his return, a serious personal sickness not the least; but he bore up gallantly, and I had never better occasion than now to observe his quiet endurance of pain, how little he thought of himself where the sense of self is commonly supreme, and the manful duty with which everything was done that, ailing as he was, he felt it necessary to do. He was still in his sick-room (22d October) when he wrote, "I hope I sha'n't leave off any more, now, until I have finished Barnaby." Three days after that, he was busying himself eagerly for others; and on the 2d of November the printers received the close of Barnaby Rudge.

This tale was Dickens's first attempt out of the sphere of the life of the day and its actual manners. Begun during the progress of Oliver Twist, it had been for some time laid aside; the form it ultimately took had been comprised only partially within its first design; and the story in its finished shape presented

strongly a special purpose, the characteristic of all but his very earliest writings. Its scene is laid at the time when the incessant execution of men and women, comparatively innocent, disgraced every part of the country; demoralizing thousands, whom it also prepared for the scaffold. In those days the theft of a few rags from a bleaching-ground, or the abstraction of a roll of ribbons from a counter, was visited with the penalty of blood; and such laws brutalized both their ministers and victims. It was the time, too, when a false religious outcry brought with it appalling guilt and misery. These are vices that leave more behind them than the first forms assumed, and they involve a lesson sufficiently required to justify a writer in dealing with them. There were also others grafted on them. In Barnaby himself it was desired to show what sources of comfort there might be, for the patient and cheerful heart, in even the worst of all human afflictions; and in the hunted life of his outcast father, whose crime had entailed not that affliction only but other more fearful wretchedness, we have as powerful a picture as any in his writings of the inevitable and unfathomable consequences of sin. But, as the story went on, it was incident to these designs that what had been accomplished in its predecessor could hardly be attained here, in singleness of purpose, unity of idea, or harmony of treatment; and other defects supervened in the management of the plot. The interest with which the tale begins has ceased to be its interest before the close; and what has chiefly taken the reader's fancy at the outset almost wholly disappears in the power and passion with which, in the later chapters, the great riots are described. So admirable is this description, however, that it would be hard to have to surrender it even for a more perfect structure of fable.

There are few things more masterly in any of his books. From the first low mutterings of the storm to its last terrible explosion, this frantic outbreak of popular ignorance and rage is depicted with unabated power. The aimlessness of idle mischief by which the ranks of the rioters are swelled at the beginning; the recklessness induced by the monstrous impunity allowed to the early excesses; the sudden spread of this drunken guilt into every haunt of poverty, ignorance, or mischief in the wicked old city, where the rich materials of crime lie festering; the wild action of its poison on all, without scheme or plan of any kind, who come within its reach; the horrors that are more bewildering for this complete absence of purpose in them; and, when all is done, the misery found to have been self-inflicted in every cranny and corner of London, as if a plague had swept over the streets: these are features in the picture of an actual occurrence, to which the manner of the treatment gives extraordinary force and meaning. Nor, in the sequel, is there anything displayed with more profitable vividness than the law's indiscriminate cruelty at last, in contrast with its cowardly indifference at first; while, among the casual touches lighting up the scene with flashes of reality that illumine every part of it, may be instanced the discovery, in the quarter from which screams for succor are loudest when Newgate is supposed to be accidentally on fire, of four men who were certain in any case to have perished on the drop next day.

The story, which has unusually careful writing in it, and much manly upright thinking, has not so many people eagerly adopted as of kin by everybody, as its predecessors are famous for; but it has yet a fair proportion of such as take solid form within the mind and keep hold of the memory. To these belong in an especial degree Gabriel Varden and his household, on whom are lavished all the writer's fondness and not a little of his keenest humor. The honest locksmith with his jovial jug, and the tink-tink-tink of his pleasant nature making cheerful music out of steel and iron; the buxom wife, with her plaguy tongue that makes every one wretched whom her kindly disposition would desire to make happy; the good-hearted plump little Dolly, coquettish minx of a daughter, with all she suffers and inflicts by her fickle winning ways and her small self-admiring vanities; and Miggs the vicious and slippery, acid, amatory, and of uncomfortable figure, sower of family discontents and discords, who swears all the while she wouldn't make or meddle with 'em "not for a annual gold-mine and found in tea and sugar:" there is not much social painting anywhere with a better domestic moral than in all these; and a nice propriety of feeling and thought regulates the use of such satire throughout. No one knows more exactly how far to go with

that formidable weapon, or understands better that what satirizes everything, in effect satirizes nothing.

Another excellent group is that which the story opens with, in the quaint old kitchen of the Maypole; John Willett and his friends, genuinely comic creations all of them. Then we have Barnaby and his raven: the light-hearted idiot, as unconscious of guilt as of suffering, and happy with no sense but of the influences of nature; and the grave sly bird, with sufficient sense to make himself as unhappy as rascally habits will make the human animal. There is poor brutish Hugh, too, loitering lazily outside the Maypole door, with a storm of passions in him raging to be let loose; already the scaffold's withered fruit, as he is doomed to be its ripe offering; and though with all the worst instincts of the savage, yet not without also some of the best. Still farther out of kindly nature's pitying reach lurks the worst villain of the scene: with this sole claim to consideration, that it was by constant contact with the filthiest instrument of law and state he had become the mass of moral filth he is. Mr. Dennis the hangman is a portrait that Hogarth would have painted with the same wholesome severity of satire which is employed upon it in Barnaby Rudge.

Volume I, Chapter 15 (1841): Public Dinner in Edinburgh

Public Dinner in Edinburgh

AMONG the occurrences of the year, apart from the tale he was writing, the birth of his fourth child and second son has been briefly mentioned. "I mean to call the boy Edgar," he wrote, the day after he was born (9th February), "a good honest Saxon name, I think." He changed his mind in a few days, however, on resolving to ask Landor to be godfather. This intention, as soon as formed, he announced to our excellent old friend, telling him it would give the child something to boast of, to be called Walter Landor, and that to call him so would do his own heart good. For, as to himself, whatever realities had gone out of the ceremony of christening, the meaning still remained in it of enabling him to form a relationship with friends he most loved; and as to the boy, he held that to give him a name to be proud of was to give him also another reason for doing nothing unworthy or untrue when he came to be a man. Walter, alas! only lived to manhood. He obtained a military cadetship through the kindness of Miss Coutts, and died at Calcutta on the last day of 1863, in his twenty-third year.

The interest taken by this distinguished lady in him and in his had begun, as I have said, at an earlier date than even this; and I remember, while Oliver Twist was going on, his pleasure because of her father's mention of him in a speech at Birmingham, for his advocacy of the cause of the poor. Whether to the new poor-law Sir Francis Burdett objected as strongly as we have seen that Dickens did, as well as many other excellent men, who forgot the atrocities of the system it displaced in their indignation at the needless and cruel harshness with which it was worked at the outset, I have not at hand the means of knowing. But certainly this continued to be strongly the feeling of Dickens, who exulted in nothing so much as at any misadventure to the Whigs in connection with it. "How often used Black and I," he wrote to me in April, "to quarrel about the effect of the poor-law bill! Walter comes in upon the cry. See whether the Whigs go out upon it." It was the strong desire he had to make himself heard upon it, even in Parliament, that led him not immediately to turn aside from a proposal, now privately made by some of the magnates of Reading, to bring him in for that borough; but the notion was soon dismissed, as, on its revival more than once in later times, it continued very wisely to be. His opinions otherwise were extremely radical at present, as will be apparent shortly; and he did not at all relish Peel's majority of one when it came soon after, and unseated the Whigs. It was just now, I may add, he greatly enjoyed a quiet setting-down of Moore by Rogers at Sir Francis Burdett's table, for talking exaggerated toryism. So debased was the House of Commons by reform, said Moore, that a Burke, if you could find him, would not be listened to. "No such thing, Tommy," said Rogers; "find yourself, and they'd listen even to you."

This was not many days before he hinted to me an intention soon to be carried out in a rather memorable manner: "I have done nothing to-day" (18th March: we had bought books together, the day before, at Tom Hill's sale) "but cut the Swift, looking into it with a delicious laziness in all manner of delightful places, and put poor Tom's books away. I had a letter from Edinburgh this morning, announcing that Jeffrey's visit to London will be the week after next; telling me that he drives about Edinburgh declaring there has been 'nothing so good as Nell since Cordelia,' which he writes also to all manner of people; and informing me of a desire in that romantic town to give me greeting and welcome. For this and other reasons I am disposed to make Scotland my destination in June rather than Ireland. Think, do think, meantime (here are ten good weeks), whether you couldn't, by some effort worthy of the owner of the gigantic helmet, go with us. Think of such a fortnight,--York, Carlisle, Berwick, your own Borders, Edinburgh, Rob Roy's country, railroads, cathedrals, country inns, Arthur's Seat, lochs, glens, and home by sea. DO think of this, seriously, at leisure." It was very tempting, but not to be.

Early in April Jeffrey came, many feasts and entertainments welcoming him, of which he very sparingly

partook; and before he left, the visit to Scotland in June was all duly arranged, to be initiated by the splendid welcome of a public dinner in Edinburgh, with Lord Jeffrey himself in the chair. Allan the painter had come up meanwhile, with increasing note of preparation; and it was while we were all regretting Wilkie's absence abroad, and Dickens with warrantable pride was saying how surely the great painter would have gone to this dinner, that the shock of his sudden death came, and there was left but the sorrowful satisfaction of honoring his memory. There was one other change before the day. "I heard from Edinburgh this morning," he wrote on the 15th of June. "Jeffrey is not well enough to take the chair, so Wilson does. I think under all circumstances of politics, acquaintance, and Edinburgh Review, that it's much better as it is--Don't you?"

His first letter from Edinburgh, where he and Mrs. Dickens had taken up quarters at the Royal Hotel on their arrival the previous night, is dated the 23d of June: "I have been this morning to the Parliament House, and am now introduced (I hope) to everybody in Edinburgh. The hotel is perfectly besieged, and I have been forced to take refuge in a sequestered apartment at the end of a long passage, wherein I write this letter. They talk of 300 at the dinner. We are very well off in point of rooms, having a handsome sitting-room, another next to it for Clock purposes, a spacious bedroom, and large dressing-room adjoining. The castle is in front of the windows, and the view noble. There was a supper ready last night which would have been a dinner anywhere." This was his first practical experience of the honors his fame had won for him, and it found him as eager to receive as all were eager to give. Very interesting still, too, are those who took leading part in the celebration; and in his pleasant sketches of them there are some once famous and familiar figures not so well known to the present generation. Here, among the first, are Wilson and Robertson.

"The renowned Peter Robertson is a large, portly, full-faced man, with a merry eye, and a queer way of looking under his spectacles which is characteristic and pleasant. He seems a very warm-hearted earnest man too, and I felt quite at home with him forthwith. Walking up and down the hall of the courts of law (which was full of advocates, writers to the signet, clerks, and idlers) was a tall, burly, handsome man of eight-and-fifty, with a gait like O'Connell's, the bluest eye you can imagine, and long hair--longer than mine--falling down in a wild way under the broad brim of his hat. He had on a surtout coat, a blue checked shirt; the collar standing up, and kept in its place with a wisp of black neckerchief; no waistcoat; and a large pocket-handkerchief thrust into his breast, which was all broad and open. At his heels followed a wiry, sharp-eyed, shaggy devil of a terrier, dogging his steps as he went slashing up and down, now with one man beside him, now with another, and now quite alone, but always at a fast, rolling pace, with his head in the air, and his eyes as wide open as he could get them. I guessed it was Wilson, and it was. A bright, clear-complexioned, mountain-looking fellow, he looks as though he had just come down from the Highlands, and had never in his life taken pen in hand. But he has had an attack of paralysis in his right arm, within this month. He winced when I shook hands with him; and once or twice, when we were walking up and down, slipped as if he had stumbled on a piece of orange-peel. He is a great fellow to look at, and to talk to; and, if you could divest your mind of the actual Scott, is just the figure you would put in his place."

Nor have the most ordinary incidents of the visit any lack of interest for us now, in so far as they help to complete the picture of himself: "Allan has been squiring me about, all the morning. He and Fletcher have gone to a meeting of the dinner-stewards, and I take the opportunity of writing to you. They dine with us to-day, and we are going to-night to the theatre. M'Ian is playing there. I mean to leave a card for him before evening. We are engaged for every day of our stay, already; but the people I have seen are so very hearty and warm in their manner that much of the horrors of lionization gives way before it. I am glad to find that they propose giving me for a toast on Friday the Memory of Wilkie. I should have liked it better than anything, if I could have made my choice. Communicate all particulars to Mac. I would to God

you were both here. Do dine together at the Gray's Inn on Friday, and think of me. If I don't drink my first glass of wine to you, may my pistols miss fire, and my mare slip her shoulder. All sorts of regard from Kate. She has gone with Miss Allan to see the house she was born in, etc. Write me soon, and long, etc."

His next letter was written the morning after the dinner, on Saturday, the 26th June: "The great event is over; and, being gone, I am a man again. It was the most brilliant affair you can conceive; the completest success possible, from first to last. The room was crammed, and more than seventy applicants for tickets were of necessity refused yesterday. Wilson was ill, but plucked up like a lion, and spoke famously. I send you a paper herewith, but the report is dismal in the extreme. They say there will be a better one--I don't know where or when. Should there be, I will send it to you. I think (ahem!) that I spoke rather well. It was an excellent room, and both the subjects (Wilson and Scottish Literature, and the Memory of Wilkie) were good to go upon. There were nearly two hundred ladies present. The place is so contrived that the cross table is raised enormously: much above the heads of people sitting below: and the effect on first coming in (on me, I mean) was rather tremendous. I was quite self-possessed, however, and, notwithstanding the enthoosemoosy, which was very startling, as cool as a cucumber. I wish to God you had been there, as it is impossible for the 'distinguished guest' to describe the scene. It beat all natur.". . .

Here was the close of his letter: "I have been expecting every day to hear from you, and not hearing mean to make this the briefest epistle possible. We start next Sunday (that's to-morrow week). We are going out to Jeffrey's to-day (he is very unwell), and return here to-morrow evening. If I don't find a letter from you when I come back, expect no Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life from your indignant correspondent. Murray the manager made very excellent, tasteful, and gentlemanly mention of Macready, about whom Wilson had been asking me divers questions during dinner." "A hundred thanks for your letter," he writes four days later. "I read it this morning with the greatest pleasure and delight, and answer it with ditto, ditto. Where shall I begin--about my darlings? I am delighted with Charley's precocity. He takes arter his father, he does. God bless them, you can't imagine (you!_ how can you?) how much I long to see them. It makes me quite sorrowful to think of them. . . . Yesterday, sir, the lord provost, council, and magistrates voted me by acclamation the freedom of the city, in testimony (I quote the letter just received from 'James Forrest, lord provost') 'of the sense entertained by them of your distinguished abilities as an author.' I acknowledged this morning in appropriate terms the honor they had done me, and through me the pursuit to which I was devoted. It is handsome, is it not?"

The parchment scroll of the city-freedom, recording the grounds on which it was voted, hung framed in his study to the last, and was one of his valued possessions. Answering some question of mine, he told me further as to the speakers, and gave some amusing glimpses of the party-spirit which still at that time ran high in the capital of the north.

"The men who spoke at the dinner were all the most rising men here, and chiefly at the Bar. They were all, alternately, Whigs and Tories; with some few Radicals, such as Gordon, who gave the memory of Burns. He is Wilson's son-in-law and the lord-advocate's nephew--a very masterly speaker indeed, who ought to become a distinguished man. Neaves, who gave the other poets, a little too lawyer-like for my taste, is a great gun in the courts. Mr. Primrose is Lord Rosebery's son. Adam Black, the publisher as you know. Dr. Alison, a very popular friend of the poor. Robertson you know. Allan you know. Colquhoun is an advocate. All these men were selected for the toasts as being crack speakers, known men, and opposed to each other very strongly in politics. For this reason, the professors and so forth who sat upon the platform about me made no speeches and had none assigned them. I felt it was very remarkable to see such a number of gray-headed men gathered about my brown flowing locks; and it struck most of those who were present very forcibly. The judges, solicitor-general, lord-advocate, and so forth, were all here to call, the day after our arrival. The judges never go to public dinners in Scotland. Lord

Meadowbank alone broke through the custom, and none of his successors have imitated him. It will give you a good notion of party to hear that the solicitor-general and lord-advocate refused to go, though they had previously engaged, unless the croupier or the chairman were a Whig. Both (Wilson and Robertson) were Tories, simply because, Jeffrey excepted, no Whig could be found who was adapted to the office. The solicitor laid strict injunctions on Napier not to go if a Whig were not in office. No Whig was, and he stayed away. I think this is good?--bearing in mind that all the old Whigs of Edinburgh were cracking their throats in the room. They gave out that they were ill, and the lord-advocate did actually lie in bed all the afternoon; but this is the real truth, and one of the judges told it me with great glee. It seems they couldn't quite trust Wilson or Robertson, as they thought; and feared some Tory demonstration. Nothing of the kind took place; and ever since, these men have been the loudest in their praises of the whole affair."

The close of his letter tells us all his engagements, and completes his graceful picture of the hearty Scottish welcome given him. It has also some personal touches that may be thought worth preserving. "A threat reached me last night (they have been hammering at it in their papers, it seems, for some time) of a dinner at Glasgow. But I hope, having circulated false rumors of my movements, to get away before they send to me; and only to stop there on my way home, to change horses and send to the post-office. . . . You will like to know how we have been living. Here's a list of engagements, past and present. Wednesday, we dined at home, and went incog. to the theatre at night, to Murray's box; the pieces admirably done, and M'Ian in the Two Drovers quite wonderful and most affecting. Thursday, to Lord Murray's; dinner and evening party. Friday, the dinner. Saturday, to Jeffrey's, a beautiful place about three miles off" (Craigcrook, which at Lord Jeffrey's invitation I afterwards visited with him), "stop there all night, dine on Sunday, and home at eleven. Monday, dine at Dr. Alison's, four miles off. Tuesday, dinner and evening party at Allan's. Wednesday, breakfast with Napier, dine with Blackwood's seven miles off, evening party at the treasurer's of the town-council, supper with all the artists (!!). Thursday, lunch at the solicitor-general's, dine at Lord Gillies's, evening party at Joseph Gordon's, one of Brougham's earliest supporters. Friday, dinner and evening party at Robertson's. Saturday, dine again at Jeffrey's; back to the theatre, at half-past nine to the moment, for public appearance; places all let, etc. etc. etc. Sunday, off at seven o'clock in the morning to Stirling, and then to Callender, a stage further. Next day, to Loch Earn, and pull up there for three days, to rest and work. The moral of all this is, that there is no place like home; and that I thank God most heartily for having given me a quiet spirit, and a heart that won't hold many people. I sigh for Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs, for battledoor and shuttlecock; I want to dine in a blouse with you and Mac; and I feel Topping's merits more acutely than I have ever done in my life. On Sunday evening, the 17th of July, I shall revisit my household gods, please Heaven. I wish the day were here. For God's sake be in waiting. I wish you and Mac would dine in Devonshire Terrace that day with Fred. He has the key of the cellar. Do._ We shall be at Inverary in the Highlands on Tuesday week, getting to it through the Pass of Glencoe, of which you may have heard! On Thursday following we shall be at Glasgow, where I shall hope to receive your last letter before we meet. At Inverary, too, I shall make sure of finding at least one, at the post-office. . . . Little Allan is trying hard for the post of queen's limner for Scotland, vacant by poor Wilkie's death. Every one is in his favor but ----, who is jobbing for some one else. Appoint him, will you, and I'll give up the premiership.--How I breakfasted to-day in the house where Scott lived seven-and-twenty years; how I have made solemn pledges to write about missing children in the Edinburgh Review, and will do my best to keep them; how I have declined to be brought in, free gratis for nothing and qualified to boot, for a Scotch county that's going a-begging, lest I should be thought to have dined on Friday under false pretenses; these, with other marvels, shall be yours anon. . . . I must leave off sharp, to get dressed and off upon the seven miles' dinner-trip. Kate's affectionate regards. My hearty loves to Mac and Grim." Grim was another great artist having the same beginning to his name, whose tragic studies had suggested an epithet quite inapplicable to any of his

personal qualities.

The narrative of the trip to the Highlands must have a chapter to itself and its incidents of adventure and comedy. The latter chiefly were due to the guide who accompanied him, a quasi-Highlander himself, named a few pages back as Mr. Kindheart, whose real name was Mr. Angus Fletcher, and to whom it hardly needs that I should give other mention than will be supplied by such future notices of him as my friend's letters may contain. He had a wayward kind of talent, which he could never concentrate on a settled pursuit; and though at the time we knew him first he had taken up the profession of a sculptor, he abandoned it soon afterwards. His mother, a woman distinguished by many remarkable qualities, lived now in the English lake-country; and it was no fault of hers that this home was no longer her son's. But what mainly had closed it to him was undoubtedly not less the secret of such liking for him as Dickens had. Fletcher's eccentricities and absurdities, often divided by the thinnest partition from the most foolish extravagance, but occasionally clever, and always the genuine though whimsical outgrowth of the life he led, had a curious sort of charm for Dickens. He enjoyed the oddity and humor; tolerated all the rest; and to none more freely than to Kindheart during the next few years, both in Italy and in England, opened his house and hospitality. The close of the poor fellow's life, alas! was in only too sad agreement with all the previous course of it; but this will have mention hereafter. He is waiting now to introduce Dickens to the Highlands.

Volume I, Chapter 16 (1841): Adventures in the Highlands

Adventures in the Highlands

FROM Loch Earn Head Dickens wrote on Monday, the 5th of July, having reached it, "wet through," at four that afternoon: "Having had a great deal to do in a crowded house on Saturday night at the theatre, we left Edinburgh yesterday morning at half-past seven, and traveled, with Fletcher for our guide, to a place called Stewart's Hotel, nine miles further than Callender. We had neglected to order rooms, and were obliged to make a sitting-room of our own bed-chamber; in which my genius for stowing furniture away was of the very greatest service. Fletcher slept in a kennel with three panes of glass in it, which formed part and parcel of a window; the other three panes whereof belonged to a man who slept on the other side of the partition. He told me this morning that he had had a nightmare all night, and had screamed horribly, he knew. The stranger, as you may suppose, hired a gig and went off at full gallop with the first glimpse of daylight. Being very tired (for we had not had more than three hours' sleep on the previous night) we lay till ten this morning, and at half-past eleven went through the Trossachs to Loch Katrine, where I walked from the hotel after tea last night. It is impossible to say what a glorious scene it was. It rained as it never does rain anywhere but here. We conveyed Kate up a rocky pass to go and see the island of the Lady of the Lake, but she gave in after the first five minutes, and we left her, very picturesque and uncomfortable, with Tom" (the servant they had brought with them from Devonshire Terrace) "holding an umbrella over her head, while we climbed on. When we came back, she had gone into the carriage. We were wet through to the skin, and came on in that state four-and-twenty miles. Fletcher is very good-natured, and of extraordinary use in these outlandish parts. His habit of going into kitchens and bars, disconcerting at Broadstairs, is here of great service. Not expecting us till six, they hadn't lighted our fires when we arrived here; and if you had seen him (with whom the responsibility of the omission rested) running in and out of the sitting-room and the two bedrooms with a great pair of bellows, with which he distractedly blew each of the fires out in turn, you would have died of laughing. He had on his head a great Highland cap, on his back a white coat, and cut such a figure as even the inimitable can't depicter. . . .

"The inns, inside and out, are the queerest places imaginable. From the road, this one," at Loch Earn Head, "looks like a white wall, with windows in it by mistake. We have a good sitting-room, though, on the first floor: as large (but not as lofty) as my study. The bedrooms are of that size which renders it impossible for you to move, after you have taken your boots off, without chipping pieces out of your legs. There isn't a basin in the Highlands which will hold my face; not a drawer which will open, after you have put your clothes in it; not a water-bottle capacious enough to wet your toothbrush. The huts are wretched and miserable beyond all description. The food (for those who can pay for it) 'not bad,' as M. would say: oat-cake, mutton, hotch-potch, trout from the loch, small beer bottled, marmalade, and whiskey. Of the last-named article I have taken about a pint to-day. The weather is what they call 'soft'--which means that the sky is a vast water-spout that never leaves off emptying itself; and the liquor has no more effect than water. . . . I am going to work to-morrow, and hope before leaving here to write you again. The elections have been sad work indeed. That they should return Sibthorp and reject Bulwer, is, by Heaven, a national disgrace. . . . I don't wonder the devil flew over Lincoln. The people were far too addle-headed, even for him. . . . I don't bore you with accounts of Ben this and that, and Lochs of all sorts of names, but this is a wonderful region. The way the mists were stalking about to-day, and the clouds lying down upon the hills; the deep glens, the high rocks, the rushing waterfalls, and the roaring rivers down in deep gulfs below; were all stupendous. This house is wedged round by great heights that are lost in the clouds; and the loch, twelve miles long, stretches out its dreary length before the windows. In my next I shall soar to

the sublime, perhaps; in this here present writing I confine myself to the ridiculous. But I am always," etc. etc.

His next letter bore the date of "Ballechelish, Friday evening, ninth July, 1841, half-past nine, P.M.," and described what we had often longed to see together, the Pass of Glencoe. . . . "I can't go to bed without writing to you from here, though the post will not leave this place until we have left it and arrived at another. On looking over the route which Lord Murray made out for me, I found he had put down Thursday next for Abbotsford and Dryburgh Abbey, and a journey of seventy miles besides! Therefore, and as I was happily able to steal a march upon myself at Loch Earn Head, and to finish in two days what I thought would take me three, we shall leave here to-morrow morning; and, by being a day earlier than we intended at all the places between this and Melrose (which we propose to reach by Wednesday night), we shall have a whole day for Scott's house and tomb, and still be at York on Saturday evening, and home, God willing, on Sunday. . . . We left Loch Earn Head last night, and went to a place called Killin, eight miles from it, where we slept. I walked some six miles with Fletcher after we got there, to see a waterfall; and truly it was a magnificent sight, foaming and crashing down three great steeps of riven rock; leaping over the first as far off as you could carry your eye, and rumbling and foaming down into a dizzy pool below you, with a deafening roar. To-day we have had a journey of between 50 and 60 miles, through the bleakest and most desolate part of Scotland, where the hill-tops are still covered with great patches of snow, and the road winds over steep mountain-passes, and on the brink of deep brooks and precipices. The cold all day has been intense, and the rain sometimes most violent. It has been impossible to keep warm, by any means; even whiskey failed; the wind was too piercing even for that. One stage of ten miles, over a place called the Black Mount, took us two hours and a half to do; and when we came to a lone public called the King's House, at the entrance to Glencoe,--this was about three o'clock,--we were wellnigh frozen. We got a fire directly, and in twenty minutes they served us up some famous kippered salmon, broiled; a broiled fowl; hot mutton ham and poached eggs; pancakes; oat-cake; wheaten bread; butter; bottled porter; hot water, lump sugar, and whiskey; of which we made a very hearty meal. All the way, the road had been among moors and mountains, with huge masses of rock, which fell down God knows where, sprinkling the ground in every direction, and giving it the aspect of the burial-place of a race of giants. Now and then we passed a hut or two, with neither window nor chimney, and the smoke of the peat fire rolling out at the door. But there were not six of these dwellings in a dozen miles; and anything so bleak and wild, and mighty in its loneliness, as the whole country, it is impossible to conceive. Glencoe itself is perfectly terrible. The pass is an awful place. It is shut in on each side by enormous rocks from which great torrents come rushing down in all directions. In amongst these rocks on one side of the pass (the left as we came) there are scores of glens, high up, which form such haunts as you might imagine yourself wandering in, in the very height and madness of a fever. They will live in my dreams for years--I was going to say as long as I live, and I seriously think so. The very recollection of them makes me shudder. . . . Well, I will not bore you with my impressions of these tremendous wilds, but they really are fearful in their grandeur and amazing solitude. Wales is a mere toy compared with them."

The further mention of his guide's whimsical ways may stand, for it cannot now be the possible occasion of pain or annoyance, or of anything but very innocent laughter:

"We are now in a bare white house on the banks of Loch Leven, but in a comfortably-furnished room on the top of the house,--that is, on the first floor,--with the rain pattering against the window as though it were December, the wind howling dismally, a cold damp mist on everything without, a blazing fire within half way up the chimney, and a most infernal Piper practicing under the window for a competition of pipers which is to come off shortly. . . . The store of anecdotes of Fletcher with which we shall return will last a long time. It seems that the F.'s are an extensive clan, and that his father was a Highlander.

Accordingly, wherever he goes, he finds out some cotter or small farmer who is his cousin. I wish you could see him walking into his cousins' curds and cream, and into their dairies generally! Yesterday morning, between eight and nine, I was sitting writing at the open window, when the postman came to the inn (which at Loch Earn Head is the post-office) for the letters. He is going away, when Fletcher, who has been writing somewhere below-stairs, rushes out, and cries, 'Halloa there! Is that the Post?' 'Yes!' somebody answers. 'Call him back!' says Fletcher: 'Just sit down till I've done, and don't go away till I tell you.'--Fancy! The General Post, with the letters of forty villages in a leathern bag! . . . To-morrow at Oban. Sunday at Inverary. Monday at Tarbet. Tuesday at Glasgow (and that night at Hamilton). Wednesday at Melrose. Thursday at ditto. Friday I don't know where. Saturday at York. Sunday--how glad I shall be to shake hands with you! My love to Mac. I thought he'd have written once. Ditto to Macready. I had a very nice and welcome letter from him, and a most hearty one from Elliotson. . . . P.S. Half asleep. So excuse drowsiness of matter and composition. I shall be full of joy to meet another letter from you! . . . P.P.S. They speak Gaelic here, of course, and many of the common people understand very little English. Since I wrote this letter, I rang the girl up-stairs, and gave elaborate directions (you know my way) for a pint of sherry to be made into boiling negus; mentioning all the ingredients one by one, and particularly nutmeg. When I had quite finished, seeing her obviously bewildered, I said, with great gravity, 'Now you know what you're going to order?' 'Oh, yes. Sure.' 'What?'--a pause--'Just'--another pause--'Just plenty of nutbergs!'"

The impression made upon him by the Pass of Glencoe was not overstated in this letter. It continued with him as he there expressed it; and as we shall see hereafter, even where he expected to find Nature in her most desolate grandeur on the dreary waste of an American prairie, his imagination went back with a higher satisfaction to Glencoe. But his experience of it is not yet completely told. The sequel was in a letter of two days' later date, from "Dalmally, Sunday, July the eleventh, 1841:"

"As there was no place of this name in our route, you will be surprised to see it at the head of this present writing. But our being here is a part of such moving accidents by flood and field as will astonish you. If you should happen to have your hat on, take it off, that your hair may stand on end without any interruption. To get from Ballyhoolish (as I am obliged to spell it when Fletcher is not in the way; and he is out at this moment) to Oban, it is necessary to cross two ferries, one of which is an arm of the sea, eight or ten miles broad. Into this ferry-boat, passengers, carriages, horses, and all, get bodily, and are got across by hook or by crook if the weather be reasonably fine. Yesterday morning, however, it blew such a strong gale that the landlord of the inn, where we had paid for horses all the way to Oban (thirty miles), honestly came up-stairs just as we were starting, with the money in his hand, and told us it would be impossible to cross. There was nothing to be done but to come back five-and-thirty miles, through Glencoe and Inverouran, to a place called Tyndrum, whence a road twelve miles long crosses to Dalmally, which is sixteen miles from Inverary. Accordingly we turned back, and in a great storm of wind and rain began to retrace the dreary road we had come the day before. . . . I was not at all ill pleased to have to come again through that awful Glencoe. If it had been tremendous on the previous day, yesterday it was perfectly horrific. It had rained all night, and was raining then, as it only does in these parts. Through the whole glen, which is ten miles long, torrents were boiling and foaming, and sending up in every direction spray like the smoke of great fires. They were rushing down every hill and mountain side, and tearing like devils across the path, and down into the depths of the rocks. Some of the hills looked as if they were full of silver, and had cracked in a hundred places. Others as if they were frightened, and had broken out into a deadly sweat. In others there was no compromise or division of streams, but one great torrent came roaring down with a deafening noise, and a rushing of water that was quite appalling. Such a spaet, in short (that's the country word), has not been known for many years, and the sights and sounds were beyond description. The post-boy was not at all at his ease, and the

horses were very much frightened (as well they might be) by the perpetual raging and roaring; one of them started as we came down a steep place, and we were within that much (----) of tumbling over a precipice; just then, too, the drag broke, and we were obliged to go on as we best could, without it: getting out every now and then, and hanging on at the back of the carriage to prevent its rolling down too fast, and going Heaven knows where. Well, in this pleasant state of things we came to King's House again, having been four hours doing the sixteen miles. The rumble where Tom sat was by this time so full of water that he was obliged to borrow a gimlet and bore holes in the bottom to let it run out. The horses that were to take us on were out upon the hills, somewhere within ten miles round; and three or four bare-legged fellows went out to look for 'em, while we sat by the fire and tried to dry ourselves. At last we got off again (without the drag and with a broken spring, no smith living within ten miles), and went limping on to Inverouran. In the first three miles we were in a ditch and out again, and lost a horse's shoe. All this time it never once left off raining; and was very windy, very cold, very misty, and most intensely dismal. So we crossed the Black Mount, and came to a place we had passed the day before, where a rapid river runs over a bed of broken rock. Now, this river, sir, had a bridge last winter, but the bridge broke down when the thaw came, and has never since been mended; so travelers cross upon a little platform, made of rough deal planks stretching from rock to rock; and carriages and horses ford the water, at a certain point. As the platform is the reverse of steady (we had proved this the day before), is very slippery, and affords anything but a pleasant footing, having only a trembling little rail on one side, and on the other nothing between it and the foaming stream, Kate decided to remain in the carriage, and trust herself to the wheels rather than to her feet. Fletcher and I had got out, and it was going away, when I advised her, as I had done several times before, to come with us; for I saw that the water was very high, the current being greatly swollen by the rain, and that the post-boy had been eyeing it in a very disconcerted manner for the last half-hour. This decided her to come out; and Fletcher, she, Tom, and I, began to cross, while the carriage went about a quarter of a mile down the bank, in search of a shallow place. The platform shook so much that we could only come across two at a time, and then it felt as if it were hung on springs. As to the wind and rain! . . . well, put into one gust all the wind and rain you ever saw and heard, and you'll have some faint notion of it! When we got safely to the opposite bank, there came riding up a wild Highlander, in a great plaid, whom we recognized as the landlord of the inn, and who, without taking the least notice of us, went dashing on,--with the plaid he was wrapped in, streaming in the wind,--screeching in Gaelic to the post-boy on the opposite bank, and making the most frantic gestures you ever saw, in which he was joined by some other wild man on foot, who had come across by a short cut, knee-deep in mire and water. As we began to see what this meant, we (that is, Fletcher and I) scrambled on after them, while the boy, horses, and carriage were plunging in the water, which left only the horses' heads and the boy's body visible. By the time we got up to them, the man on horseback and the men on foot were perfectly mad with pantomime; for as to any of their shouts being heard by the boy, the water made such a great noise that they might as well have been dumb. It made me quite sick to think how I should have felt if Kate had been inside. The carriage went round and round like a great stone, the boy was as pale as death, the horses were struggling and plashing and snorting like sea-animals, and we were all roaring to the driver to throw himself off and let them and the coach go to the devil, when suddenly it came all right (having got into shallow water), and, all tumbling and dripping and jogging from side to side, climbed up to the dry land. I assure you we looked rather queer, as we wiped our faces and stared at each other in a little cluster round about it. It seemed that the man on horseback had been looking at us through a telescope as we came to the track, and knowing that the place was very dangerous, and seeing that we meant to bring the carriage, had come on at a great gallop to show the driver the only place where he could cross. By the time he came up, the man had taken the water at a wrong place, and in a word was as nearly drowned (with carriage, horses, luggage,

and all) as ever man was. Was this a good adventure?

"We all went on to the inn,--the wild man galloping on first, to get a fire lighted,--and there we dined on eggs and bacon, oat-cake, and whiskey; and changed and dried ourselves. The place was a mere knot of little outhouses, and in one of these there were fifty Highlanders all drunk. . . . Some were drovers, some pipers, and some workmen engaged to build a hunting-lodge for Lord Breadalbane hard by, who had been driven in by stress of weather. One was a paper-hanger. He had come out three days before to paper the inn's best room, a chamber almost large enough to keep a Newfoundland dog in, and, from the first half-hour after his arrival to that moment, had been hopelessly and irreclaimably drunk. They were lying about in all directions: on forms, on the ground, about a loft overhead, round the turf-fire wrapped in plaids, on the tables, and under them. We paid our bill, thanked our host very heartily, gave some money to his children, and after an hour's rest came on again. At ten o'clock at night we reached this place, and were overjoyed to find quite an English inn, with good beds (those we have slept on, yet, have always been of straw), and every possible comfort. We breakfasted this morning at half-past ten, and at three go on to Inverary to dinner. I believe the very rough part of the journey is over, and I am really glad of it. Kate sends all kind of regards. I shall hope to find a letter from you at Inverary when the post reaches there, to-morrow. I wrote to Oban yesterday, desiring the post-office keeper to send any he might have for us, over to that place. Love to Mac."

One more letter, brief, but overflowing at every word with his generous nature, must close the delightful series written from Scotland. It was dated from Inverary the day following his exciting adventure; promised me another from Melrose (which has unfortunately not been kept with the rest); and inclosed the invitation to a public dinner at Glasgow. "I have returned for answer that I am on my way home, on pressing business connected with my weekly publication, and can't stop. But I have offered to come down any day in September or October, and accept the honor then. Now, I shall come and return per mail; and, if this suits them, enter into a solemn league and covenant to come with me. Do._ You must. I am sure you will. . . . Till my next, and always afterwards, God bless you. I got your welcome letter this morning, and have read it a hundred times. What a pleasure it is! Kate's best regards. I am dying for Sunday, and wouldn't stop now for twenty dinners of twenty thousand each.

[Illustration: 'Always your affectionate friend

'Doz.]

"Will Lord John meet the Parliament, or resign first?" I agreed to accompany him to Glasgow; but illness intercepted that celebration.

Volume I, Chapter 17 (1841): Again at Broadstairs

Again at Broadstairs

SOON after his return, at the opening of August, he went to Broadstairs; and the direction in which that last question shows his thoughts to have been busy was that to which he turned his first holiday leisure. He sent me some rhymed squibs as his anonymous contribution to the fight the Liberals were then making against what was believed to be intended by the return to office of the Tories; ignorant as we were how much wiser than his party the statesman then at the head of it was, or how greatly what we all most desired would be advanced by the very success that had been most disheartening. There will be no harm now in giving one of these pieces, which will sufficiently show the tone of all of them, and with what a hearty relish they were written. I doubt indeed if he ever enjoyed anything more than the power of thus taking part occasionally, unknown to outsiders, in the sharp conflict the press was waging at the time. "By Jove, how radical I am getting!" he wrote to me (13th August). "I wax stronger and stronger in the true principles every day. I don't know whether it's the sea, or no, but so it is." He would at times even talk, in moments of sudden indignation at the political outlook, of carrying off himself and his household gods, like Coriolanus, to a world elsewhere! "Thank God there is a Van Diemen's Land. That's my comfort. Now, I wonder if I should make a good settler! I wonder, if I went to a new colony with my head, hands, legs, and health, I should force myself to the top of the social milk-pot and live upon the cream! What do you think? Upon my word, I believe I should."

His political squibs during the Tory interregnum comprised some capital subjects for pictures after the manner of Peter Pindar; but that which I select has no touch of personal satire in it, and he would himself, for that reason, have least objected to its revival. Thus ran his new version of "The Fine Old English Gentleman, to be said or sung at all conservative dinners:"

I'll sing you a new ballad, and I'll warrant it first-rate, Of the days of that old gentleman who had that old estate; When they spent the public money at a bountiful old rate On ev'ry mistress, pimp, and scamp, at ev'ry noble gate. In the fine old English Tory times; Soon may they come again!

The good old laws were garnished well with gibbets, whips, and chains, With fine old English penalties, and fine old English pains, With rebel heads and seas of blood once hot in rebel veins; For all these things were requisite to guard the rich old gains Of the fine old English Tory times; Soon may they come again!

This brave old code, like Argus, had a hundred watchful eyes, And ev'ry English peasant had his good old English spies, To tempt his starving discontent with fine old English lies, Then call the good old Yeomanry to stop his peevish cries, In the fine old English Tory times; Soon may they come again!

The good old times for cutting throats that cried out in their need, The good old times for hunting men who held their fathers' creed, The good old times when William Pitt, as all good men agreed, Came down direct from Paradise at more than railroad speed. . . . Oh, the fine old English Tory times; When will they come again?

In those rare days, the press was seldom known to snarl or bark, But sweetly sang of men in pow'r, like any tuneful lark; Grave judges, too, to all their evil deeds were in the dark; And not a man in twenty score knew how to make his mark. Oh, the fine old English Tory times; Soon may they come again! . . .

But tolerance, though slow in flight, is strong-wing'd in the main; That night must come on these fine days, in course of time was plain; The pure old spirit struggled, but its struggles were in vain; A nation's grip was on it, and it died in choking pain, With the fine old English Tory days, All of the olden time.

The bright old day now dawns again; the cry runs through the land, In England there shall be--dear bread! in Ireland--sword and brand! And poverty, and ignorance, shall swell the rich and grand, So, rally round the rulers with the gentle iron hand Of the fine old English Tory days; Hail to the coming time!

Of matters in which he had been specially interested before he quitted London, one or two may properly be named. He had always sympathized, almost as strongly as Archbishop Whately did, with Dr. Elliotson's mesmeric investigations; and, reinforced as these were in the present year by the displays of a Belgian youth whom another friend, Mr. Chauncy Hare Townshend, brought over to England, the subject, which to the last had an attraction for him, was for the time rather ardently followed up. The improvement during the last few years in the London prisons was another matter of eager and pleased inquiry with him; and he took frequent means of stating what in this respect had been done, since even the date when his Sketches were written, by two most efficient public officers at Clerkenwell and Tothill Fields, Mr. Chesterton and Lieutenant Tracey, whom the course of these inquiries turned into private friends. His last letter to me before he quitted town sufficiently explains itself. "Slow rises worth by poverty deprest" was the thought in his mind at every part of his career, and he never for a moment was unmindful of the duty it imposed upon him: "I subscribed for a couple of copies" (31st July) "of this little book. I knew nothing of the man, but he wrote me a very modest letter of two lines, some weeks ago. I have been much affected by the little biography at the beginning, and I thought you would like to share the emotion it had raised in me. I wish we were all in Eden again--for the sake of these toiling creatures."

In the middle of August (Monday, 16th) I had announcement that he was coming up for special purposes: "I sit down to write to you without an atom of news to communicate. Yes, I have,--something that will surprise you, who are pent up in dark and dismal Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is the brightest day you ever saw. The sun is sparkling on the water so that I can hardly bear to look at it. The tide is in, and the fishing-boats are dancing like mad. Upon the green-topped cliffs the corn is cut and piled in shocks; and thousands of butterflies are fluttering about, taking the bright little red flags at the mast-heads for flowers, and panting with delight accordingly. [Here the Inimitable, unable to resist the brilliancy out of doors, breaketh off, rusheth to the machines, and plungeth into the sea. Returning, he proceedeth:] Jeffrey is just as he was when he wrote the letter I sent you. No better, and no worse. I had a letter from Napier on Saturday, urging the children's-labor subject upon me. But, as I hear from Southwood Smith that the report cannot be printed until the new Parliament has sat at the least six weeks, it will be impossible to produce it before the January number. I shall be in town on Saturday morning and go straight to you. A letter has come from little Hall begging that when I do come to town I will dine there, as they wish to talk about the new story. I have written to say that I will do so on Saturday, and we will go together; but I shall be by no means good company. . . . I have more than half a mind to start a bookseller of my own. I could; with good capital too, as you know; and ready to spend it. G. Varden beware!_"

Small causes of displeasure had been growing out of the Clock, and were almost unavoidably incident to the position in which he found himself respecting it. Its discontinuance had become necessary, the strain upon himself being too great without the help from others which experience had shown to be impracticable; but I thought he had not met the difficulty wisely by undertaking, which already he had done, to begin a new story so early as the following March. On his arrival, therefore, we decided on another plan, with which we went armed that Saturday afternoon to his publishers, and of which the result will be best told by himself. He had returned to Broadstairs the following morning, and next day (Monday, the 23d of August) he wrote to me in very enthusiastic terms of the share I had taken in what he calls "the development on Saturday afternoon; when I thought Chapman very manly and sensible, Hall morally and physically feeble though perfectly well intentioned, and both the statement and reception of the project quite triumphant. Didn't you think so too?" A fortnight later, Tuesday, the 7th of September, the agreement was signed in my chambers, and its terms were to the effect following. The

Clock was to cease with the close of Barnaby Rudge, the respective ownerships continuing as provided; and the new work in twenty numbers, similar to those of Pickwick and Nickleby, was not to begin until after an interval of twelve months, in November, 1842. During its publication he was to receive two hundred pounds monthly, to be accounted as part of the expenses; for all which, and all risks incident, the publishers made themselves responsible, under conditions the same as in the Clock agreement; except that out of the profits of each number they were to have only a fourth, three-fourths going to him, and this arrangement was to hold good until the termination of six months from the completed book, when, upon payment to him of a fourth of the value of all existing stock, they were to have half the future interest. During the twelve months' interval before the book began, he was to be paid one hundred and fifty pounds each month; but this was to be drawn from his three-fourths of the profits, and in no way to interfere with the monthly payments of two hundred pounds while the publication was going on. Such was the "project," excepting only a provision to be mentioned hereafter against the improbable event of the profits being inadequate to the repayment; and my only drawback from the satisfaction of my own share in it arose from my fear of the use he was likely to make of the leisure it afforded him.

That this fear was not ill founded appeared at the close of the next note I had from him: "There's no news" (13th September) "since my last. We are going to dine with Rogers to-day, and with Lady Essex, who is also here. Rogers is much pleased with Lord Ashley, who was offered by Peel a post in the government, but resolutely refused to take office unless Peel pledged himself to factory-improvement. Peel 'hadn't made up his mind,' and Lord Ashley was deaf to all other inducements, though they must have been very tempting. Much do I honor him for it. I am in an exquisitely lazy state, bathing, walking, reading, lying in the sun, doing everything but working. This frame of mind is superinduced by the prospect of rest, and the promising arrangements which I owe to you. I am still haunted by visions of America night and day. To miss this opportunity would be a sad thing. Kate cries dismally if I mention the subject. But, God willing, I think it must be managed somehow!"

Volume I, Chapter 18 (1841): Eve of the Visit to America

Eve of the Visit to America

THE notion of America was in his mind, as we have seen, when he first projected the Clock; and a very hearty letter from Washington Irving about Little Nell and the Curiosity Shop, expressing the delight with his writings and the yearnings to himself which had indeed been pouring in upon him for some time from every part of the States, had very strongly revived it. He answered Irving with more than his own warmth: unable to thank him enough for his cordial and generous praise, or to tell him what lasting gratification it had given. "I wish I could find in your welcome letter," he added, "some hint of an intention to visit England. I should love to go with you, as I have gone, God knows how often, into Little Britain, and Eastcheap, and Green Arbor Court, and Westminster Abbey. . . . It would gladden my heart to compare notes with you about all those delightful places and people that I used to walk about and dream of in the daytime, when a very small and not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy." After interchange of these letters the subject was frequently revived; upon his return from Scotland it began to take shape as a thing that somehow or other, at no very distant date, must be; and at last, near the end of a letter filled with many unimportant things, the announcement, doubly underlined, came to me.

The decision once taken, he was in his usual fever until its difficulties were disposed of. The objections to separation from the children led at first to the notion of taking them, but this was as quickly abandoned; and what remained to be overcome yielded readily to the kind offices of Macready, the offer of whose home to the little ones during the time of absence, though not accepted to the full extent, gave yet the assurance needed to quiet natural apprehensions. All this, including an arrangement for publication of such notes as might occur to him on the journey, took but a few days; and I was reading in my chambers a letter he had written the previous day from Broadstairs, when a note from him reached me, written that morning in London, to tell me he was on his way to take share of my breakfast. He had come overland by Canterbury after posting his first letter, had seen Macready the previous night, and had completed some part of the arrangements. This mode of rapid procedure was characteristic of him at all similar times, and will appear in the few following extracts from his letters:

"Now" (19th September) "to astonish you. After balancing, considering, and weighing the matter in every point of view, I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND (WITH GOD'S LEAVE) TO GO TO AMERICA--AND TO START AS SOON AFTER CHRISTMAS AS IT WILL BE SAFE TO GO." Further information was promised immediately; and a request followed, characteristic as any he could have added to his design of traveling so far away, that we should visit once more together the scenes of his boyhood. "On the ninth of October we leave here. It's a Saturday. If it should be fine dry weather, or anything like it, will you meet us at Rochester, and stop there two or three days to see all the lions in the surrounding country? Think of this. . . . If you'll arrange to come, I'll have the carriage down, and Topping; and, supposing news from Glasgow don't interfere with us, which I fervently hope it will not, I will insure that we have much enjoyment."

Three days later than that which announced his resolve, the subject was resumed: "I wrote to Chapman & Hall asking them what they thought of it, and saying I meant to keep a note-book, and publish it for half a guinea or thereabouts, on my return. They instantly sent the warmest possible reply, and said they had taken it for granted I would go, and had been speaking of it only the day before. I have begged them to make every inquiry about the fares, cabins, berths, and times of sailing; and I shall make a great effort to take Kate and the children. In that case I shall try to let the house furnished, for six months (for I shall remain that time in America); and if I succeed, the rent will nearly pay the expenses out, and home. I have heard of family cabins at L100; and I think one of these is large enough to hold us all. A single fare,

I think, is forty guineas. I fear I could not be happy if we had the Atlantic between us; but leaving them in New York while I ran off a thousand miles or so, would be quite another thing. If I can arrange all my plans before publishing the Clock address, I shall state therein that I am going: which will be no unimportant consideration, as affording the best possible reason for a long delay. How I am to get on without you for seven or eight months, I cannot, upon my soul, conceive. I dread to think of breaking up all our old happy habits for so long a time. The advantages of going, however, appear by steady looking-at so great, that I have come to persuade myself it is a matter of imperative necessity. Kate weeps whenever it is spoken of. Washington Irving has got a nasty low fever. I heard from him a day or two ago."

His next letter was the unexpected arrival which came by hand from Devonshire Terrace, when I thought him still by the sea: "This is to give you notice that I am coming to breakfast with you this morning on my way to Broadstairs. I repeat it, sir,--on my way to Broadstairs. For, directly I got Macready's note yesterday I went to Canterbury, and came on by day-coach for the express purpose of talking with him; which I did between 11 and 12 last night in Clarence Terrace. The American preliminaries are necessarily startling, and, to a gentleman of my temperament, destroy rest, sleep, appetite, and work, unless definitely arranged. Macready has quite decided me in respect of time and so forth. The instant I have wrung a reluctant consent from Kate, I shall take our joint passage in the mail-packet for next January. I never loved my friends so well as now." We had all discountenanced his first thought of taking the children; and, upon this and other points, the experience of our friend who had himself traveled over the States was very valuable. His next letter, two days later from Broadstairs, informed me of the result of the Macready conference: "Only a word. Kate is quite reconciled. 'Anne' (her maid) goes, and is amazingly cheerful and light of heart upon it. And I think, at present, that it's a greater trial to me than anybody. The 4th of January is the day. Macready's note to Kate was received and acted upon with a perfect response. She talks about it quite gayly, and is satisfied to have nobody in the house but Fred, of whom, as you know, they are all fond. He has got his promotion, and they give him the increased salary from the day on which the minute was made by Baring, I feel so amiable, so meek, so fond of people, so full of gratitudes and reliances, that I am like a sick man. And I am already counting the days between this and coming home again."

He was soon, alas! to be what he compared himself to. I met him at Rochester at the end of September, as arranged; we passed a day and night there; a day and night in Cobham and its neighborhood, sleeping at the Leather Bottle; and a day and night at Gravesend. But we were hardly returned when some slight symptoms of bodily trouble took suddenly graver form, and an illness followed involving the necessity of surgical attendance. This, which with mention of the helpful courage displayed by him has before been alluded to, put off necessarily the Glasgow dinner; and he had scarcely left his bedroom when a trouble arose near home which touched him to the depths of the greatest sorrow of his life, and, in the need of exerting himself for others, what remained of his own illness seemed to pass away.

His wife's younger brother had died with the same unexpected suddenness that attended her younger sister's death; and the event had followed close upon the decease of Mrs. Hogarth's mother while on a visit to her daughter and Mr. Hogarth. "As no steps had been taken towards the funeral," he wrote (25th October) in reply to my offer of such service as I could render, "I thought it best at once to bestir myself; and not even you could have saved my going to the cemetery. It is a great trial to me to give up Mary's grave; greater than I can possibly express. I thought of moving her to the catacombs and saying nothing about it; but then I remembered that the poor old lady is buried next her at her own desire, and could not find it in my heart, directly she is laid in the earth, to take her grandchild away. The desire to be buried next her is as strong upon me now as it was five years ago; and I know (for I don't think there ever was love like that I bear her) that it will never diminish. I fear I can do nothing. Do you think I can? They would

move her on Wednesday, if I resolved to have it done. I cannot bear the thought of being excluded from her dust; and yet I feel that her brothers and sisters, and her mother, have a better right than I to be placed beside her. It is but an idea. I neither think nor hope (God forbid) that our spirits would ever mingle there. I ought to get the better of it, but it is very hard. I never contemplated this--and coming so suddenly, and after being ill, it disturbs me more than it ought. It seems like losing her a second time. . . ." "No," he wrote the morning after, "I tried that. No, there is no ground on either side to be had. I must give it up. I shall drive over there, please God, on Thursday morning, before they get there; and look at her coffin."

He suffered more than he let any one perceive, and was obliged again to keep his room for some days. On the 2d of November he reported himself as progressing and ordered to Richmond, which, after a week or so, he changed to the White Hart at Windsor, where I passed some days with him, Mrs. Dickens, and her younger sister Georgina; but it was not till near the close of that month he could describe himself as thoroughly on his legs again, in the ordinary state on which he was wont to pride himself, bolt upright, staunch at the knees, a deep sleeper, a hearty eater, a good laugher, and nowhere a bit the worse, "bating a little weakness now and then, and a slight nervousness at times."

We had some days of much enjoyment at the end of the year, when Landor came up from Bath for the christening of his godson; and the "Britannia," which was to take the travelers from us in January, brought over to them in December all sorts of cordialities, anticipations, and stretchings-forth of palms, in token of the welcome awaiting them. On New Year's Eve they dined with me, and I with them on New Year's Day; when (his house having been taken for the period of his absence by General Sir John Wilson) we sealed up his wine-cellar, after opening therein some sparkling Moselle in honor of the ceremony, and drinking it then and there to his happy return. Next morning (it was a Sunday) I accompanied them to Liverpool, Maclise having been suddenly stayed by his mother's death; the intervening day and its occupations have been humorously sketched in his American book; and on the 4th they sailed. I never saw the Britannia after I stepped from her deck back to the small steamer that had taken us to her. "How little I thought" (were the last lines of his first American letter), "the first time you mounted the shapeless coat, that I should have such a sad association with its back as when I saw it by the paddle-box of that small steamer!"

Volume I, Chapter 19 (1842): First Impressions of America

First Impressions of America

THE first lines of that letter were written as soon as he got sight of earth again, from the banks of Newfoundland, on Monday, the 17th of January, the fourteenth day from their departure: even then so far from Halifax that they could not expect to make it before Wednesday night, or to reach Boston until Saturday or Sunday. They had not been fortunate in the passage. During the whole voyage the weather had been unprecedentedly bad, the wind for the most part dead against them, the wet intolerable, the sea horribly disturbed, the days dark, and the nights fearful. On the previous Monday night it had blown a hurricane, beginning at five in the afternoon and raging all night. His description of the storm is published, and the peculiarities of a steamer's behavior in such circumstances are hit off as if he had been all his life a sailor. Any but so extraordinary an observer would have described a steamer in a storm as he would have described a sailing-ship in a storm. But any description of the latter would be as inapplicable to my friend's account of the other as the ways of a jackass to those of a mad bull. In the letter from which it was taken, however, there were some things addressed to myself alone: "For two or three hours we gave it up as a lost thing; and with many thoughts of you, and the children, and those others who are dearest to us, waited quietly for the worst. I never expected to see the day again, and resigned myself to God as well as I could. It was a great comfort to think of the earnest and devoted friends we had left behind, and to know that the darlings would not want."

This was not the exaggerated apprehension of a landsman merely. The head engineer, who had been in one or other of the Cunard vessels since they began running, had never seen such stress of weather; and I heard Captain Hewitt himself say afterwards that nothing but a steamer, and one of that strength, could have kept her course and stood it out. A sailing-vessel must have beaten off and driven where she could; while through all the fury of that gale they actually made fifty-four miles headlong through the tempest, straight on end, not varying their track in the least.

He stood out against sickness only for the day following that on which they sailed. For the three following days he kept his bed, miserable enough, and had not, until the eighth day of the voyage, six days before the date of his letter, been able to get to work at the dinner-table. What he then observed of his fellow-travelers, and had to tell of their life on board, has been set forth in his Notes with delightful humor; but in its first freshness I received it in this letter, and some whimsical passages, then suppressed, there will be no harm in printing now:

"We have 86 passengers; and such a strange collection of beasts never was got together upon the sea, since the days of the Ark. I have never been in the saloon since the first day; the noise, the smell, and the closeness being quite intolerable. I have only been on deck once!--and then I was surprised and disappointed at the smallness of the panorama. The sea, running as it does and has done, is very stupendous, and viewed from the air or some great height would be grand no doubt. But seen from the wet and rolling decks, in this weather and these circumstances, it only impresses one giddily and painfully. I was very glad to turn away, and come below again.

"I have established myself, from the first, in the ladies' cabin--you remember it? I'll describe its other occupants, and our way of passing the time, to you.

"First, for the occupants. Kate and I, and Anne--when she is out of bed, which is not often. A queer little Scotch body, a Mrs. P--, whose husband is a silversmith in New York. He married her at Glasgow three years ago, and bolted the day after the wedding; being (which he had not told her) heavily in debt. Since then she has been living with her mother; and she is now going out under the protection of a male

cousin, to give him a year's trial. If she is not comfortable at the expiration of that time, she means to go back to Scotland again. A Mrs. B--, about 20 years old, whose husband is on board with her. He is a young Englishman domiciled in New York, and by trade (as well as I can make out) a woolen-draper. They have been married a fortnight. A Mr. and Mrs. C--, marvelously fond of each other, complete the catalogue. Mrs. C--, I have settled, is a publican's daughter, and Mr. C-- is running away with her, the till, the time-piece off the bar mantel-shelf, the mother's gold watch from the pocket at the head of the bed; and other miscellaneous property. The women are all pretty; unusually pretty. I never saw such good faces together, anywhere."

Their "way of passing the time" will be found in the Notes much as it was written to me; except that there was one point connected with the card-playing which he feared might overtax the credulity of his readers, but which he protested had occurred more than once: "Apropos of rolling, I have forgotten to mention that in playing whist we are obliged to put the tricks in our pockets, to keep them from disappearing altogether; and that five or six times in the course of every rubber we are all flung from our seats, roll out at different doors, and keep on rolling until we are picked up by stewards. This has become such a matter of course, that we go through it with perfect gravity, and, when we are bolstered up on our sofas again, resume our conversation or our game at the point where it was interrupted." The news that excited them from day to day, too, of which little more than a hint appears in the Notes, is worth giving as originally written:

"As for news, we have more of that than you would think for. One man lost fourteen pounds at vingt-un in the saloon yesterday, or another got drunk before dinner was over, or another was blinded with lobster-sauce spilt over him by the steward, or another had a fall on deck and fainted. The ship's cook was drunk yesterday morning (having got at some salt-water-damaged whiskey), and the captain ordered the boatswain to play upon him with the hose of the fire-engine until he roared for mercy--which he didn't get: for he was sentenced to look out, for four hours at a stretch for four nights running, without a great-coat, and to have his grog stopped. Four dozen plates were broken at dinner. One steward fell down the cabin stairs with a round of beef, and injured his foot severely. Another steward fell down after him and cut his eye open. The baker's taken ill; so is the pastry-cook. A new man, sick to death, has been required to fill the place of the latter officer, and has been dragged out of bed and propped up in a little house upon deck, between two casks, and ordered (the captain standing over him) to make and roll out pie-crust; which he protests, with tears in his eyes, it is death to him in his bilious state to look at. Twelve dozen of bottled porter has got loose upon deck, and the bottles are rolling about distractedly, overhead. Lord Mulgrave (a handsome fellow, by-the-by, to look at, and nothing but a good 'un to go) laid a wager with twenty-five other men last night, whose berths, like his, are in the fore-cabin, which can only be got at by crossing the deck, that he would reach his cabin first. Watches were set by the captain's, and they sallied forth, wrapped up in coats and storm caps. The sea broke over the ship so violently, that they were five-and-twenty minutes holding on by the handrail at the starboard paddle-box, drenched to the skin by every wave, and not daring to go on or come back, lest they should be washed overboard. News! A dozen murders in town wouldn't interest us half as much."

Nevertheless their excitements were not over. At the very end of the voyage came an incident very lightly touched in the Notes, but more freely told to me under date of the 21st January: "We were running into Halifax harbor on Wednesday night, with little wind and a bright moon; had made the light at its outer entrance, and given the ship in charge to the pilot; were playing our rubber, all in good spirits (for it had been comparatively smooth for some days, with tolerably dry decks and other unusual comforts), when suddenly the ship STRUCK! A rush upon deck followed, of course. The men (I mean the crew! think of this) were kicking off their shoes and throwing off their jackets preparatory to swimming ashore; the pilot was beside himself; the passengers dismayed; and everything in the most intolerable confusion and

hurry. Breakers were roaring ahead; the land within a couple of hundred yards; and the vessel driving upon the surf, although her paddles were worked backwards, and everything done to stay her course. It is not the custom of steamers, it seems, to have an anchor ready. An accident occurred in getting ours over the side; and for half an hour we were throwing up rockets, burning blue-lights, and firing signals of distress, all of which remained unanswered, though we were so close to the shore that we could see the waving branches of the trees. All this time, as we veered about, a man was heaving the lead every two minutes; the depths of water constantly decreasing; and nobody self-possessed but Hewitt. They let go the anchor at last, got out a boat, and sent her ashore with the fourth officer, the pilot, and four men aboard, to try and find out where we were. The pilot had no idea; but Hewitt put his little finger upon a certain part of the chart, and was as confident of the exact spot (though he had never been there in his life) as if he had lived there from infancy. The boat's return about an hour afterwards proved him to be quite right. We had got into a place called the Eastern Passage, in a sudden fog and through the pilot's folly. We had struck upon a mud-bank, and driven into a perfect little pond, surrounded by banks and rocks and shoals of all kinds: the only safe speck in the place. Eased by this report, and the assurance that the tide was past the ebb, we turned in at three o'clock in the morning, to lie there all night."

The next day's landing at Halifax, and delivery of the mails, are sketched in the Notes; but not his personal part in what followed: "Then, sir, comes a breathless man who has been already into the ship and out again, shouting my name as he tears along. I stop, arm in arm with the little doctor whom I have taken ashore for oysters. The breathless man introduces himself as The Speaker of the House of Assembly; will drag me away to his house; and will have a carriage and his wife sent down for Kate, who is laid up with a hideously swoln face. Then he drags me up to the Governor's house (Lord Falkland is the governor), and then Heaven knows where; concluding with both houses of parliament, which happen to meet for the session that very day, and are opened by a mock speech from the throne delivered by the governor, with one of Lord Grey's sons for his aide-de-camp, and a great host of officers about him. I wish you could have seen the crowds cheering the inimitable in the streets. I wish you could have seen judges, law-officers, bishops, and law-makers welcoming the inimitable. I wish you could have seen the inimitable shown to a great elbow-chair by the Speaker's throne, and sitting alone in the middle of the floor of the House of Commons, the observed of all observers, listening with exemplary gravity to the queerest speaking possible, and breaking in spite of himself into a smile as he thought of this commencement to the Thousand and One stories in reserve for home and Lincoln's Inn Fields and Jack Straw's Castle.--Ah, Forster! when I do come back again!----"

He resumed his letter at Tremont House on Saturday, the 28th of January, having reached Boston that day week at five in the afternoon; and, as his first American experience is very lightly glanced at in the Notes, a fuller picture will perhaps be welcome. "As the Cunard boats have a wharf of their own at the custom-house, and that a narrow one, we were a long time (an hour at least) working in. I was standing in full fig on the paddle-box beside the captain, staring about me, when suddenly, long before we were moored to the wharf, a dozen men came leaping on board at the peril of their lives, with great bundles of newspapers under their arms; worsted comforters (very much the worse for wear) round their necks; and so forth. 'Aha!' says I, 'this is like our London Bridge;' believing of course that these visitors were news-boys. But what do you think of their being EDITORS? And what do you think of their tearing violently up to me and beginning to shake hands like madmen? Oh! if you could have seen how I wrung their wrists! And if you could but know how I hated one man in very dirty gaiters, and with very protruding upper teeth, who said to all comers after him, 'So you've been introduced to our friend Dickens--eh?' There was one among them, though, who really was of use; a Doctor S., editor of the ----. He ran off here (two miles at least), and ordered rooms and dinner. And in course of time Kate, and I, and Lord Mulgrave (who was going back to his regiment at Montreal on Monday, and had agreed to live with us in the mean

while) sat down in a spacious and handsome room to a very handsome dinner, bating peculiarities of putting on table, and had forgotten the ship entirely. A Mr. Alexander, to whom I had written from England promising to sit for a portrait, was on board directly we touched the land, and brought us here in his carriage. Then, after sending a present of most beautiful flowers, he left us to ourselves, and we thanked him for it."

What further he had to say of that week's experience finds its first public utterance here. "How can I tell you," he continues, "what has happened since that first day? How can I give you the faintest notion of my reception here; of the crowds that pour in and out the whole day; of the people that line the streets when I go out; of the cheering when I went to the theatre; of the copies of verses, letters of congratulation, welcomes of all kinds, balls, dinners, assemblies without end? There is to be a public dinner to me here in Boston, next Tuesday, and great dissatisfaction has been given to the many by the high price (three pounds sterling each) of the tickets. There is to be a ball next Monday week at New York, and 150 names appear on the list of the committee. There is to be a dinner in the same place, in the same week, to which I have had an invitation with every known name in America appended to it. But what can I tell you about any of these things which will give you the slightest notion of the enthusiastic greeting they give me, or the cry that runs through the whole country? I have had deputations from the Far West, who have come from more than two thousand miles' distance: from the lakes, the rivers, the back-woods, the log houses, the cities, factories, villages, and towns. Authorities from nearly all the States have written to me. I have heard from the universities, Congress, Senate, and bodies, public and private, of every sort and kind. 'It is no-nonsense, and no common feeling,' wrote Dr. Channing to me yesterday. 'It is all heart. There never was, and never will be, such a triumph.' And it is a good thing, is it not, . . . to find those fancies it has given me and you the greatest satisfaction to think of, at the core of it all? It makes my heart quieter, and me a more retiring, sober, tranquil man, to watch the effect of those thoughts in all this noise and hurry, even than if I sat, pen in hand, to put them down for the first time. I feel, in the best aspects of this welcome, something of the presence and influence of that spirit which directs my life, and through a heavy sorrow has pointed upwards with unchanging finger for more than four years past. And if I know my heart, not twenty times this praise would move me to an act of folly.". . .

There were but two days more before the post left for England, and the close of this part of his letter sketched the engagements that awaited him on leaving Boston: "We leave here next Saturday. We go to a place called Worcester, about 75 miles off, to the house of the governor of this place; and stay with him all Sunday. On Monday we go on by railroad about 50 miles further to a town called Springfield, where I am met by a 'reception committee' from Hartford 20 miles further, and carried on by the multitude: I am sure I don't know how, but I shouldn't wonder if they appear with a triumphal car. On Wednesday I have a public dinner there. On Friday I shall be obliged to present myself in public again, at a place called New Haven, about 30 miles further. On Saturday evening I hope to be at New York; and there I shall stay ten days or a fortnight. You will suppose that I have enough to do. I am sitting for a portrait and for a bust. I have the correspondence of a secretary of state, and the engagements of a fashionable physician. I have a secretary whom I take on with me. He is a young man of the name of Q.; was strongly recommended to me; is most modest, obliging, silent, and willing; and does his work well. He boards and lodges at my expense when we travel; and his salary is ten dollars per month--about two pounds five of our English money. There will be dinners and balls at Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and I believe everywhere. In Canada, I have promised to play at the theatre with the officers, for the benefit of a charity. We are already weary, at times, past all expression; and I finish this by means of a pious fraud. We were engaged to a party, and have written to say we are both desperately ill. . . . 'Well,' I can fancy you saying, 'but about his impressions of Boston and the Americans?'--Of the latter, I will not say a word until I have seen more of them, and have gone into the interior. I will only say, now, that we have never

yet been required to dine at a table-d'hote; that, thus far, our rooms are as much our own here as they would be at the Clarendon; that but for an odd phrase now and then--such as Snap of cold weather; a tongue-y man for a talkative fellow; Possible?_ as a solitary interrogation; and Yes?_ for indeed--I should have marked, so far, no difference whatever between the parties here and those I have left behind. The women are very beautiful, but they soon fade; the general breeding is neither stiff nor forward; the good nature, universal. If you ask the way to a place--of some common water-side man, who don't know you from Adam--he turns and goes with you. Universal deference is paid to ladies; and they walk about at all seasons, wholly unprotected. . . . This hotel is a trifle smaller than Finsbury Square; and is made so infernally hot (I use the expression advisedly) by means of a furnace with pipes running through the passages, that we can hardly bear it. There are no curtains to the beds, or to the bedroom windows. I am told there never are, hardly, all through America. The bedrooms are indeed very bare of furniture. Ours is nearly as large as your great room, and has a wardrobe in it of painted wood not larger (I appeal to K.) than an English watch-box. I slept in this room for two nights, quite satisfied with the belief that it was a shower-bath."

The last addition made to this letter, from which many vividest pages of the Notes (among them the bright quaint picture of Boston streets) were taken with small alteration, bore date the 29th of January: "I hardly know what to add to all this long and unconnected history. Dana, the author of that Two Years before the Mast" (a book which I had praised much to him, thinking it like De Foe), "is a very nice fellow indeed; and in appearance not at all the man you would expect. He is short, mild-looking, and has a care-worn face. His father is exactly like George Cruikshank after a night's jollity--only shorter. The professors at the Cambridge university, Longfellow, Felton, Jared Sparks, are noble fellows. So is Kenyon's friend, Ticknor. Bancroft is a famous man; a straightforward, manly, earnest heart; and talks much of you, which is a great comfort. Doctor Channing I will tell you more of, after I have breakfasted alone with him next Wednesday. . . . Sumner is of great service to me. . . . The president of the Senate here presides at my dinner on Tuesday. Lord Mulgrave lingered with us till last Tuesday (we had our little captain to dinner on the Monday), and then went on to Canada. Kate is quite well, and so is Anne, whose smartness surpasses belief. They yearn for home, and so do I.

"Of course you will not see in the papers any true account of our voyage, for they keep the dangers of the passage, when there are any, very quiet. I observed so many perils peculiar to steamers that I am still undecided whether we shall not return by one of the New York liners. On the night of the storm, I was wondering within myself where we should be, if the chimney were blown overboard; in which case, it needs no great observation to discover that the vessel must be instantly on fire from stem to stern. When I went on deck next day, I saw that it was held up by a perfect forest of chains and ropes, which had been rigged in the night. Hewitt told me (when we were on shore, not before) that they had men lashed, hoisted up, and swinging there, all through the gale, getting these stays about it. This is not agreeable--is it?

"I wonder whether you will remember that next Tuesday is my birthday! This letter will leave here that morning.

"On looking back through these sheets, I am astonished to find how little I have told you, and how much I have, even now, in store which shall be yours by word of mouth. The American poor, the American factories, the institutions of all kinds--I have a book, already. There is no man in this town, or in this State of New England, who has not a blazing fire and a meat dinner every day of his life. A flaming sword in the air would not attract so much attention as a beggar in the streets. There are no charity uniforms, no wearisome repetition of the same dull ugly dress, in that blind school. All are attired after their own tastes, and every boy and girl has his or her individuality as distinct and unimpaired as you would find it

in their own homes. At the theatres, all the ladies sit in the fronts of the boxes. The gallery are as quiet as the dress circle at dear Drury Lane. A man with seven heads would be no sight at all, compared with one who couldn't read and write.

"I won't speak (I say 'speak'! I wish I could) about the dear precious children, because I know how much we shall hear about them when we receive those letters from home for which we long so ardently."

Unmistakably to be seen, in this earliest of his letters, is the quite fresh and unalloyed impression first received by him at this memorable visit; and it is due, as well to himself as to the great country which welcomed him, that this should be considered independently of any modification it afterwards underwent. Of the fervency and universality of the welcome there could indeed be no doubt, and as little that it sprang from feelings honorable both to giver and receiver. The sources of Dickens's popularity in England were in truth multiplied many-fold in America. The hearty, cordial, and humane side of his genius had fascinated them quite as much; but there was also something beyond this. The cheerful temper that had given new beauty to the commonest forms of life, the abounding humor which had added largely to all innocent enjoyment, the honorable and in those days rare distinction of America which left no home in the Union inaccessible to such advantages, had made Dickens the object everywhere of grateful admiration, for the most part of personal affection. But even this was not all. I do not say it either to lessen or to increase the value of the tribute, but to express simply what it was; and there cannot be a question that the young English author, whom by his language they claimed equally for their own, was almost universally regarded by the Americans as a kind of embodied protest against what they believed to be worst in the institutions of England, depressing and overshadowing in a social sense, and adverse to purely intellectual influences. In all the papers of every grade in the Union, of which many were sent to me at the time, the feeling of triumph over the mother-country in this particular is everywhere predominant. You worship titles, they said, and military heroes, and millionaires, and we of the New World want to show you, by extending the kind of homage that the Old World reserves for kings and conquerors, to a young man with nothing to distinguish him but his heart and his genius, what it is we think in these parts worthier of honor, than birth, or wealth, a title, or a sword. Well, there was something in this too, apart from a mere crowing over the mother-country. The Americans had honestly more than a common share in the triumphs of a genius which in more than one sense had made the deserts and wildernesses of life to blossom like the rose. They were entitled to select for a welcome, as emphatic as they might please to render it, the writer who pre-eminently in his generation had busied himself to "detect and save," in human creatures, such sparks of virtue as misery or vice had not availed to extinguish; to discover what is beautiful and comely under what commonly passes for the ungainly and the deformed; to draw happiness and hopefulness from despair itself; and, above all, so to have made known to his own countrymen the wants and sufferings of the poor, the ignorant, and the neglected, that they could be left in absolute neglect no more. "A triumph has been prepared for him," wrote Mr. Ticknor to our dear friend Kenyon, "in which the whole country will join. He will have a progress through the States unequaled since Lafayette's." Daniel Webster told the Americans that Dickens had done more already to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen Great Britain had sent into Parliament. His sympathies are such, exclaimed Dr. Channing, as to recommend him in an especial manner to us. He seeks out that class, in order to benefit them, with whom American institutions and laws sympathize most strongly; and it is in the passions, sufferings, and virtues of the mass that he has found his subjects of most thrilling interest. "He shows that life in its rudest form may wear a tragic grandeur; that amidst follies and excesses, provoking laughter or scorn, the moral feelings do not wholly die; and that the haunts of the blackest crime are sometimes lighted up by the presence and influence of the noblest souls. His pictures have a tendency to awaken sympathy with our race, and to change the unfeeling indifference which has prevailed towards the depressed multitude, into a sorrowful and

indignant sensibility to their wrongs and woes."

Whatever may be the turn which we are to see the welcome take, by dissatisfaction that arose on both sides, it is well that we should thus understand what in its first manifestations was honorable to both. Dickens had his disappointments, and the Americans had theirs; but what was really genuine in the first enthusiasm remained without grave alloy from either; and the letters, as I proceed to give them, will so naturally explain and illustrate the misunderstanding as to require little further comment. I am happy to be able here to place on record fac-similes of the invitations to the public entertainments in New York which reached him before he quitted Boston. The mere signatures suffice to show how universal the welcome was from that great city of the Union.

Volume I, Chapter 20 (1842): Second Impressions of America

Second Impressions of America

HIS second letter, radiant with the same kindly warmth that gave always pre-eminent charm to his genius, was dated from the Carlton Hotel, New York, on the 14th February, but its only allusion of any public interest was to the beginning of his agitation of the question of international copyright. He went to America with no express intention of starting this question in any way, and certainly with no belief that such remark upon it as a person in his position could alone be expected to make would be resented strongly by any sections of the American people. But he was not long left in doubt on this head. He had spoken upon it twice publicly, "to the great indignation of some of the editors here, who are attacking me for so doing, right and left." On the other hand, all the best men had assured him that, if only at once followed up in England, the blow struck might bring about a change in the law; and, yielding to the pleasant hope that the best men could be a match for the worst, he urged me to enlist on his side what force I could, and in particular, as he had made Scott's claim his war-cry, to bring Lockhart into the field. I could not do much, but I did what I could.

Three days later he began another letter; and, as this will be entirely new to the reader, I shall print it as it reached me, with only such omission of matter concerning myself as I think it my duty, however reluctantly, to make throughout these extracts. There was nothing in its personal details, or in those relating to international copyright, available for his Notes; from which they were excluded by the two rules he observed in that book,--the first to be altogether silent as to the copyright discussion, and the second to abstain from all mention of individuals. But there can be no harm here in violating either rule, for, as Sydney Smith said with his humorous sadness, "We are all dead now."

"Carlton House, New York: Thursday, February Seventeenth, 1842. . . . As there is a sailing-packet from here to England to-morrow which is warranted (by the owners) to be a marvelous fast sailer, and as it appears most probable that she will reach home (I write the word with a pang) before the Cunard steamer of next month, I indite this letter. And lest this letter should reach you before another letter which I dispatched from here last Monday, let me say in the first place that I did dispatch a brief epistle to you on that day, together with a newspaper, and a pamphlet touching the Boz ball; and that I put in the post-office at Boston another newspaper for you containing an account of the dinner, which was just about to come off, you remember, when I wrote to you from that city.

"It was a most superb affair; and the speaking admirable. Indeed, the general talent for public speaking here is one of the most striking of the things that force themselves upon an Englishman's notice. As every man looks on to being a member of Congress, every man prepares himself for it; and the result is quite surprising. You will observe one odd custom,--the drinking of sentiments. It is quite extinct with us, but here everybody is expected to be prepared with an epigram as a matter of course.

"We left Boston on the fifth, and went away with the governor of the city to stay till Monday at his house at Worcester. He married a sister of Bancroft's, and another sister of Bancroft's went down with us. The village of Worcester is one of the prettiest in New England. . . . On Monday morning at nine o'clock we started again by railroad and went on to Springfield, where a deputation of two were waiting, and everything was in readiness that the utmost attention could suggest. Owing to the mildness of the weather, the Connecticut river was 'open,' videlicet not frozen, and they had a steamboat ready to carry us on to Hartford; thus saving a land-journey of only twenty-five miles, but on such roads at this time of year that it takes nearly twelve hours to accomplish! The boat was very small, the river full of floating blocks of ice, and the depth where we went (to avoid the ice and the current) not more than a few inches.

After two hours and a half of this queer traveling, we got to Hartford. There, there was quite an English inn; except in respect of the bedrooms, which are always uncomfortable; and the best committee of management that has yet presented itself. They kept us more quiet, and were more considerate and thoughtful, even to their own exclusion, than any I have yet had to deal with. Kate's face being horribly bad, I determined to give her a rest here; and accordingly wrote to get rid of my engagement at New Haven, on that plea. We remained in this town until the eleventh: holding a formal levee every day for two hours, and receiving on each from two hundred to three hundred people. At five o'clock on the afternoon of the eleventh, we set off (still by railroad) for New Haven, which we reached about eight o'clock. The moment we had had tea, we were forced to open another levee for the students and professors of the college (the largest in the States), and the townspeople. I suppose we shook hands, before going to bed, with considerably more than five hundred people; and I stood, as a matter of course, the whole time. . . .

"Now, the deputation of two had come on with us from Hartford; and at New Haven there was another committee; and the immense fatigue and worry of all this, no words can exaggerate. We had been in the morning over jails and deaf and dumb asylums; had stopped on the journey at a place called Wallingford, where a whole town had turned out to see me, and to gratify whose curiosity the train stopped expressly; had had a day of great excitement and exertion on the Thursday (this being Friday); and were inexpressibly worn out. And when at last we got to bed and were 'going' to fall asleep, the choristers of the college turned out in a body, under the window, and serenaded us! We had had, by-the-by, another serenade at Hartford, from a Mr. Adams (a nephew of John Quincy Adams) and a German friend. They were most beautiful singers: and when they began, in the dead of the night, in a long, musical, echoing passage outside our chamber door; singing, in low voices to guitars, about home and absent friends and other topics that they knew would interest us; we were more moved than I can tell you. In the midst of my sentimentality, though, a thought occurred to me which made me laugh so immoderately that I was obliged to cover my face with the bedclothes. 'Good Heavens!' I said to Kate, 'what a monstrously ridiculous and commonplace appearance my boots must have, outside the door!' I never was so impressed with a sense of the absurdity of boots, in all my life.

"The New Haven serenade was not so good; though there were a great many voices, and a 'reg'lar' band. It hadn't the heart of the other. Before it was six hours old, we were dressing with might and main, and making ready for our departure; it being a drive of twenty minutes to the steamboat, and the hour of sailing nine o'clock. After a hasty breakfast we started off; and after another levee on the deck (actually on the deck), and 'three times three for Dickens,' moved towards New York.

"I was delighted to find on board a Mr. Felton whom I had known at Boston. He is the Greek professor at Cambridge, and was going on to the ball and dinner. Like most men of his class whom I have seen, he is a most delightful fellow,--unaffected, hearty, genial, jolly; quite an Englishman of the best sort. We drank all the porter on board, ate all the cold pork and cheese, and were very merry indeed. I should have told you, in its proper place, that both at Hartford and New Haven a regular bank was subscribed, by these committees, for all my expenses. No bill was to be got at the bar, and everything was paid for. But as I would on no account suffer this to be done, I stoutly and positively refused to budge an inch until Mr. Q. should have received the bills from the landlord's own hands, and paid them to the last farthing. Finding it impossible to move me, they suffered me, most unwillingly, to carry the point.

"About half-past 2 we arrived here. In half an hour more, we reached this hotel, where a very splendid suite of rooms was prepared for us; and where everything is very comfortable, and no doubt (as at Boston) enormously dear. Just as we sat down to dinner, David Colden made his appearance; and when he had gone, and we were taking our wine, Washington Irving came in alone, with open arms. And here

he stopped, until ten o'clock at night." (Through Lord Jeffrey, with whom he was connected by marriage, and Macready, of whom he was the cordial friend, we already knew Mr. Colden; and his subsequent visits to Europe led to many years' intimate intercourse, greatly enjoyed by us both.) "Having got so far, I shall divide my discourse into four points. First, the ball. Secondly, some slight specimens of a certain phase of character in the Americans. Thirdly, international copyright. Fourthly, my life here, and projects to be carried out while I remain.

"Firstly, the ball. It came off last Monday (vide pamphlet.) 'At a quarter-past 9, exactly' (I quote the printed order of proceeding), we were waited upon by 'David Colden, Esquire, and General George Morris;' habited, the former in full ball costume, the latter in the full dress uniform of Heaven knows what regiment of militia. The general took Kate, Colden gave his arm to me, and we proceeded downstairs to a carriage at the door, which took us to the stage-door of the theatre, greatly to the disappointment of an enormous crowd who were besetting the main door and making a most tremendous hullaballoo. The scene on our entrance was very striking. There were three thousand people present in full dress; from the roof to the floor, the theatre was decorated magnificently; and the light, glitter, glare, show, noise, and cheering, baffle my descriptive powers. We were walked in through the centre of the centre dress-box, the front whereof was taken out for the occasion; so to the back of the stage, where the mayor and other dignitaries received us; and we were then paraded all round the enormous ball-room, twice, for the gratification of the many-headed. That done, we began to dance--Heaven knows how we did it, for there was no room. And we continued dancing until, being no longer able even to stand, we slipped away quietly, and came back to the hotel. All the documents connected with this extraordinary festival (quite unparalleled here) we have preserved; so you may suppose that on this head alone we shall have enough to show you when we come home. The bill of fare for supper is, in its amount and extent, quite a curiosity.

"Now, the phase of character in the Americans which amuses me most was put before me in its most amusing shape by the circumstances attending this affair. I had noticed it before, and have since; but I cannot better illustrate it than by reference to this theme. Of course I can do nothing but in some shape or other it gets into the newspapers. All manner of lies get there, and occasionally a truth so twisted and distorted that it has as much resemblance to the real fact as Quilp's leg to Taglioni's. But with this ball to come off, the newspapers were if possible unusually loquacious; and in their accounts of me, and my seeings, sayings, and doings on the Saturday night and Sunday before, they describe my manner, mode of speaking, dressing, and so forth. In doing this, they report that I am a very charming fellow (of course), and have a very free and easy way with me; 'which,' say they, 'at first amused a few fashionables;' but soon pleased them exceedingly. Another paper, coming after the ball, dwells upon its splendor and brilliancy; hugs itself and its readers upon all that Dickens saw, and winds up by gravely expressing its conviction that Dickens was never in such society in England as he has seen in New York, and that its high and striking tone cannot fail to make an indelible impression on his mind! For the same reason I am always represented, whenever I appear in public, as being 'very pale;' 'apparently thunderstruck;' and utterly confounded by all I see. . . . You recognize the queer vanity which is at the root of all this? I have plenty of stories in connection with it to amuse you with when I return."

"Twenty-fourth February._

"It is unnecessary to say . . . that this letter didn't come by the sailing packet, and will come by the Cunard boat. After the ball I was laid up with a very bad sore throat, which confined me to the house four whole days; and as I was unable to write, or indeed to do anything but doze and drink lemonade, I missed the ship. . . . I have still a horrible cold, and so has Kate, but in other respects we are all right. I proceed to my third head: the international copyright question.

"I believe there is no country on the face of the earth where there is less freedom of opinion on any subject in reference to which there is a broad difference of opinion, than in this.--There!--I write the words with reluctance, disappointment, and sorrow; but I believe it from the bottom of my soul. I spoke, as you know, of international copyright, at Boston; and I spoke of it again at Hartford. My friends were paralyzed with wonder at such audacious daring. The notion that I, a man alone by himself, in America, should venture to suggest to the Americans that there was one point on which they were neither just to their own countrymen nor to us, actually struck the boldest dumb! Washington Irving, Prescott, Hoffman, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Washington Allston--every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them dares to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law. It is nothing that of all men living I am the greatest loser by it. It is nothing that I have a claim to speak and be heard. The wonder is that a breathing man can be found with temerity enough to suggest to the Americans the possibility of their having done wrong. I wish you could have seen the faces that I saw, down both sides of the table at Hartford, when I began to talk about Scott. I wish you could have heard how I gave it out. My blood so boiled as I thought of the monstrous injustice that I felt as if I were twelve feet high when I thrust it down their throats.

"I had no sooner made that second speech than such an outcry began (for the purpose of deterring me from doing the like in this city) as an Englishman can form no notion of. Anonymous letters, verbal dissuasions; newspaper attacks making Colt (a murderer who is attracting great attention here) an angel by comparison with me; assertions that I was no gentleman, but a mere mercenary scoundrel; coupled with the most monstrous misrepresentations relative to my design and purpose in visiting the United States; came pouring in upon me every day. The dinner committee here (composed of the first gentlemen in America, remember that) were so dismayed, that they besought me not to pursue the subject, although they every one agreed with me. I answered that I would. That nothing should deter me. . . . That the shame was theirs, not mine; and that as I would not spare them when I got home, I would not be silenced here. Accordingly, when the night came, I asserted my right, with all the means I could command to give it dignity, in face, manner, or words; and I believe that if you could have seen and heard me, you would have loved me better for it than ever you did in your life.

"The New York Herald, which you will receive with this, is the Satirist of America; but having a great circulation (on account of its commercial intelligence and early news) it can afford to secure the best reporters. . . . My speech is done, upon the whole, with remarkable accuracy. There are a great many typographical errors in it; and by the omission of one or two words, or the substitution of one word for another, it is often materially weakened. Thus, I did not say that I 'claimed' my right, but that I 'asserted' it; and I did not say that I had 'some claim,' but that I had 'a most righteous claim,' to speak. But altogether it is very correct."

Washington Irving was chairman of this dinner, and, having from the first a dread that he should break down in his speech, the catastrophe came accordingly. Near him sat the Cambridge professor who had come with Dickens by boat from New Haven, with whom already a warm friendship had been formed that lasted for life, and who has pleasantly sketched what happened. Mr. Felton saw Irving constantly in the interval of preparation, and could not but despond at his daily iterated foreboding of I shall certainly break down; though besides the real dread there was a sly humor which heightened its whimsical horror with an irresistible drollery. But the professor plucked up hope a little when the night came and he saw that Irving had laid under his plate the manuscript of his speech. During dinner, nevertheless, his old foreboding cry was still heard, and "at last the moment arrived; Mr. Irving rose; and the deafening and long-continued applause by no means lessened his apprehension. He began in his pleasant voice; got through two or three sentences pretty easily, but in the next hesitated; and, after one or two attempts to go on, gave it up, with a graceful allusion to the tournament and the troop of knights all armed and eager

for the fray; and ended with the toast CHARLES DICKENS, THE GUEST OF THE NATION. There!_ said he, as he resumed his seat amid applause as great as had greeted his rising, There! I told you I should break down, and I've done it!_" He was in London a few months later, on his way to Spain; and I heard Thomas Moore describe at Rogers's table the difficulty there had been to overcome his reluctance, because of this break-down, to go to the dinner of the Literary Fund on the occasion of Prince Albert's presiding. "However," said Moore, "I told him only to attempt a few words, and I suggested what they should be, and he said he'd never thought of anything so easy, and he went, and did famously." I knew very well, as I listened, that this had not been the result; but as the distinguished American had found himself, on this second occasion, not among orators as in New York, but among men as unable as himself to speak in public, and equally able to do better things, he was doubtless more reconciled to his own failure. I have been led to this digression by Dickens's silence on his friend's break-down. He had so great a love for Irving that it was painful to speak of him as at any disadvantage, and of the New York dinner he wrote only in its connection with his own copyright speeches.

"The effect of all this copyright agitation at least has been to awaken a great sensation on both sides of the subject; the respectable newspapers and reviews taking up the cudgels as strongly in my favor, as the others have done against me. Some of the vagabonds take great credit to themselves (grant us patience!) for having made me popular by publishing my books in newspapers: as if there were no England, no Scotland, no Germany, no place but America in the whole world. A splendid satire upon this kind of trash has just occurred. A man came here yesterday, and demanded, not besought but demanded, pecuniary assistance; and fairly bullied Mr. Q. for money. When I came home, I dictated a letter to this effect,--that such applications reached me in vast numbers every day; that if I were a man of fortune, I could not render assistance to all who sought it; and that, depending on my own exertion for all the help I could give, I regretted to say I could afford him none. Upon this, my gentleman sits down and writes me that he is an itinerant bookseller; that he is the first man who sold my books in New York; that he is distressed in the city where I am reveling in luxury; that he thinks it rather strange that the man who wrote Nickleby should be utterly destitute of feeling; and that he would have me 'take care I don't repent it.' What do you think of that?--as Mac would say. I thought it such a good commentary, that I dispatched the letter to the editor of the only English newspaper here, and told him he might print it if he liked.

"I will tell you what I should like, my dear friend, always supposing that your judgment concurs with mine, and that you would take the trouble to get such a document. I should like to have a short letter addressed to me by the principal English authors who signed the international copyright petition, expressive of their sense that I have done my duty to the cause. I am sure I deserve it, but I don't wish it on that ground. It is because its publication in the best journals here would unquestionably do great good. As the gauntlet is down, let us go on. Clay has already sent a gentleman to me express from Washington (where I shall be on the 6th or 7th of next month) to declare his strong interest in the matter, his cordial approval of the 'manly' course I have held in reference to it, and his desire to stir in it if possible. I have lighted up such a blaze that a meeting of the foremost people on the other side (very respectfully and properly conducted in reference to me, personally, I am bound to say) was held in this town t'other night. And it would be a thousand pities if we did not strike as hard as we can, now that the iron is so hot.

"I have come at last, and it is time I did, to my life here, and intentions for the future. I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see. If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. If I visit a public institution, with only one friend, the directors come down incontinently, waylay me in the yard, and address me in a long speech. I go to a party in the evening, and am so inclosed and hemmed about by people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted for want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything, to everybody. I go to church for quiet, and there is a violent rush to the neighborhood of the

pew I sit in, and the clergyman preaches at me. I take my seat in a railroad-car, and the very conductor won't leave me alone. I get out at a station, and can't drink a glass of water, without having a hundred people looking down my throat when I open my mouth to swallow. Conceive what all this is! Then by every post, letters on letters arrive, all about nothing, and all demanding an immediate answer. This man is offended because I won't live in his house; and that man is thoroughly disgusted because I won't go out more than four times in one evening. I have no rest or peace, and am in a perpetual worry.

"Under these febrile circumstances, which this climate especially favors, I have come to the resolution that I will not (so far as my will has anything to do with the matter) accept any more public entertainments or public recognitions of any kind, during my stay in the United States; and in pursuance of this determination I have refused invitations from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Virginia, Albany, and Providence. Heaven knows whether this will be effectual, but I shall soon see, for on Monday morning, the 28th, we leave for Philadelphia. There I shall only stay three days. Thence we go to Baltimore, and there I shall only stay three days. Thence to Washington, where we may stay perhaps ten days; perhaps not so long. Thence to Virginia, where we may halt for one day; and thence to Charleston, where we may pass a week perhaps, and where we shall very likely remain until your March letters reach us, through David Colden. I had a design of going from Charleston to Columbia in South Carolina, and there engaging a carriage, a baggage-tender and negro boy to guard the same, and a saddle-horse for myself,--with which caravan I intended going 'right away,' as they say here, into the West, through the wilds of Kentucky and Tennessee, across the Alleghany Mountains, and so on until we should strike the lakes and could get to Canada. But it has been represented to me that this is a track only known to traveling merchants; that the roads are bad, the country a tremendous waste, the inns log houses, and the journey one that would play the very devil with Kate. I am staggered, but not deterred. If I find it possible to be done in the time, I mean to do it; being quite satisfied that without some such dash I can never be a free agent, or see anything worth the telling.

"We mean to return home in a packet-ship,--not a steamer. Her name is the George Washington, and she will sail from here, for Liverpool, on the seventh of June. At that season of the year they are seldom more than three weeks making the voyage; and I never will trust myself upon the wide ocean, if it please Heaven, in a steamer again. When I tell you all that I observed on board that Britannia, I shall astonish you. Meanwhile, consider two of their dangers. First, that if the funnel were blown overboard the vessel must instantly be on fire, from stem to stern; to comprehend which consequence, you have only to understand that the funnel is more than 40 feet high, and that at night you see the solid fire two or three feet above its top. Imagine this swept down by a strong wind, and picture to yourself the amount of flame on deck; and that a strong wind is likely to sweep it down you soon learn, from the precautions taken to keep it up in a storm, when it is the first thing thought of. Secondly, each of these boats consumes between London and Halifax 700 tons of coals; and it is pretty clear, from this enormous difference of weight in a ship of only 1200 tons burden in all, that she must either be too heavy when she comes out of port, or too light when she goes in. The daily difference in her rolling, as she burns the coals out, is something absolutely fearful. Add to all this, that by day and night she is full of fire and people, that she has no boats, and that the struggling of that enormous machinery in a heavy sea seems as though it would rend her into fragments--and you may have a pretty con-sid-erable damned good sort of a feeble notion that it don't fit nohow; and that it a'n't calculated to make you smart, overmuch; and that you don't feel 'special bright; and by no means first-rate; and not at all tonguey (or disposed for conversation); and that however rowdy you may be by natur', it does use you up com-plete, and that's a fact; and makes you quake considerable, and disposed toe damn the []e]ngin[]e]!--All of which phrases, I beg to add, are pure Americanisms of the first water.

"When we reach Baltimore, we are in the regions of slavery. It exists there, in its least shocking and most

mitigated form; but there it is. They whisper, here (they dare only whisper, you know, and that below their breaths), that on that place, and all through the South, there is a dull gloomy cloud on which the very word seems written. I shall be able to say, one of these days, that I accepted no public mark of respect in any place where slavery was;--and that's something.

"The ladies of America are decidedly and unquestionably beautiful. Their complexions are not so good as those of Englishwomen; their beauty does not last so long; and their figures are very inferior. But they are most beautiful. I still reserve my opinion of the national character,--just whispering that I tremble for a radical coming here, unless he is a radical on principle, by reason and reflection, and from the sense of right. I fear that if he were anything else, he would return home a Tory. . . . I say no more on that head for two months from this time, save that I do fear that the heaviest blow ever dealt at liberty will be dealt by this country, in the failure of its example to the earth. The scenes that are passing in Congress now, all tending to the separation of the States, fill one with such a deep disgust that I dislike the very name of Washington (meaning the place, not the man), and am repelled by the mere thought of approaching it."

"Twenty-seventh February. Sunday._

"There begins to be great consternation here, in reference to the Cunard packet which (we suppose) left Liverpool on the fourth. She has not yet arrived. We scarcely know what to do with ourselves in our extreme anxiety to get letters from home. I have really had serious thoughts of going back to Boston, alone, to be nearer news. We have determined to remain here until Tuesday afternoon, if she should not arrive before, and to send Mr. Q. and the luggage on to Philadelphia to-morrow morning. God grant she may not have gone down! but every ship that comes in brings intelligence of a terrible gale (which indeed was felt ashore here) on the night of the fourteenth; and the sea-captains swear (not without some prejudice, of course) that no steamer could have lived through it, supposing her to have been in its full fury. As there is no steam-packet to go to England, supposing the Caledonia not to arrive, we are obliged to send our letters by the Garrick ship, which sails early to-morrow morning. Consequently I must huddle this up, and dispatch it to the post-office with all speed. I have so much to say that I could fill quires of paper, which renders this sudden pull-up the more provoking.

"I have in my portmanteau a petition for an international copyright law, signed by all the best American writers, with Washington Irving at their head. They have requested me to hand it to Clay for presentation, and to back it with any remarks I may think proper to offer. So 'Hoo-roar for the principle, as the money-lender said ven he vouldn't renoo the bill.'

"God bless you. . . . You know what I would say about home and the darlings. A hundred times God bless you. . . . Fears are entertained for Lord Ashburton also. Nothing has been heard of him."

A brief letter, sent me next day by the minister's bag, was in effect a postscript to the foregoing, and expressed still more strongly the doubts and apprehensions his voyage out had impressed him with, and which, though he afterwards saw reason greatly to modify his misgivings, were not so strange at that time as they appear to us now:

"Carlton House, New York, February twenty-eighth, 1842. . . . The Caledonia, I grieve and regret to say, has not arrived. If she left England to her time, she has been four-and-twenty days at sea. There is no news of her; and on the nights of the fourteenth and eighteenth it blew a terrible gale, which almost justifies the worst suspicions. For myself, I have hardly any hope of her; having seen enough, in our passage out, to convince me that steaming across the ocean in heavy weather is as yet an experiment of the utmost hazard.

"As it was supposed that there would be no steamer whatever for England this month (since in ordinary course the Caledonia would have returned with the mails on the 2d of March), I hastily got the letters

ready yesterday and sent them by the Garrick; which may perhaps be three weeks out, but is not very likely to be longer. But belonging to the Cunard company is a boat called the Unicorn, which in the summertime plies up the St. Lawrence, and brings passengers from Canada to join the British and North American steamers at Halifax. In the winter she lies at the last-mentioned place; from which news has come this morning that they have sent her on to Boston for the mails, and, rather than interrupt the communication, mean to dispatch her to England in lieu of the poor Caledonia. This in itself, by the way, is a daring deed; for she was originally built to run between Liverpool and Glasgow, and is no more designed for the Atlantic than a Calais packet-boat; though she once crossed it, in the summer season.

"You may judge, therefore, what the owners think of the probability of the Caledonia's arrival. How slight an alteration in our plans would have made us passengers on board of her!

"It would be difficult to tell you, my dear fellow, what an impression this has made upon our minds, or with what intense anxiety and suspense we have been waiting for your letters from home. We were to have gone South to-day, but linger here until to-morrow afternoon (having sent the secretary and luggage forward) for one more chance of news. Love to dear Macready, and to dear Mac, and every one we care for. It's useless to speak of the dear children. It seems now as though we should never hear of them. . . .

"P.S. Washington Irving is a great fellow. We have laughed most heartily together. He is just the man he ought to be. So is Doctor Channing, with whom I have had an interesting correspondence since I saw him last at Boston. Halleck is a merry little man. Bryant a sad one, and very reserved. Washington Allston the painter (who wrote Monaldi) is a fine specimen of a glorious old genius. Longfellow, whose volume of poems I have got for you, is a frank accomplished man as well as a fine writer, and will be in town 'next fall.' Tell Macready that I suspect prices here must have rather altered since his time. I paid our fortnight's bill here, last night. We have dined out every day (except when I was laid up with a sore throat), and only had in all four bottles of wine. The bill was 70l._ English!!!

"You will see, by my other letter, how we have been feted and feasted; and how there is war to the knife about the international copyright; and how I will speak about it, and decline to be put down. . . .

"Oh for news from home! I think of your letters so full of heart and friendship, with perhaps a little scrawl of Charley's or Mamey's, lying at the bottom of the deep sea; and am as full of sorrow as if they had once been living creatures.--Well! they may come, yet."

They did reach him, but not by the Caledonia. His fears as to that vessel were but too well founded. On the very day when she was due in Boston (the 18th of February) it was learned in London that she had undergone misadventure; that, her decks having been swept and her rudder torn away, though happily no lives were lost, she had returned disabled to Cork; and that the Acadia, having received her passengers and mails, was to sail with them from Liverpool next day.

Of the main subject of that letter written on the day preceding,--of the quite unpremeditated impulse, out of which sprang his advocacy of claims which he felt to be represented in his person,--of the injustice done by his entertainers to their guest in ascribing such advocacy to selfishness,--and of the graver wrong done by them to their own highest interests, nay, even to their commonest and most vulgar interests, in continuing to reject those claims, I will add nothing now to what all those years ago I labored very hard to lay before many readers. It will be enough if I here print, from the authors' letters I sent out to him by the next following mail, in compliance with his wish, this which follows from a very dear friend of his and mine. I fortunately had it transcribed before I posted it to him; Mr. Carlyle having in some haste written from "Templand, 26 March, 1842," and taken no copy.

"We learn by the newspapers that you everywhere in America stir up the question of international

copyright, and thereby awaken huge dissonance where all else were triumphant unison for you. I am asked my opinion of the matter, and requested to write it down in words.

"Several years ago, if memory err not, I was one of many English writers who, under the auspices of Miss Martineau, did already sign a petition to congress praying for an international copyright between the two Nations,--which properly are not two Nations, but one; indivisible by parliament, congress, or any kind of human law or diplomacy, being already united by Heaven's Act of Parliament, and the everlasting law of Nature and Fact. To that opinion I still adhere, and am like to continue adhering.

"In discussion of the matter before any congress or parliament, manifold considerations and argumentations will necessarily arise; which to me are not interesting, nor essential for helping me to a decision. They respect the time and manner in which the thing should be; not at all whether the thing should be or not. In an ancient book, reverenced I should hope on both sides of the Ocean, it was thousands of years ago written down in the most decisive and explicit manner, 'Thou shalt not steal.' That thou belongest to a different 'Nation,' and canst steal without being certainly hanged for it, gives thee no permission to steal! Thou shalt not in anywise steal at all! So it is written down, for Nations and for Men, in the Law-Book of the Maker of this Universe. Nay, poor Jeremy Bentham and others step in here, and will demonstrate that it is actually our true convenience and expediency not to steal; which I for my share, on the great scale and on the small, and in all conceivable scales and shapes, do also firmly believe it to be. For example, if Nations abstained from stealing, what need were there of fighting,--with its butcherings and burnings, decidedly the most expensive thing in this world? How much more two Nations, which, as I said, are but one Nation; knit in a thousand ways by Nature and Practical Intercourse; indivisible brother elements of the same great SAXONDOM, to which in all honorable ways be long life!

"When Mr. Robert Roy M'Gregor lived in the district of Menteith on the Highland border two centuries ago, he for his part found it more convenient to supply himself with beef by stealing it alive from the adjacent glens, than by buying it killed in the Stirling butchers' market. It was Mr. Roy's plan of supplying himself with beef in those days, this of stealing it. In many a little 'Congress' in the district of Menteith, there was debating, doubt it not, and much specious argumentation this way and that, before they could ascertain that, really and truly, buying was the best way to get your beef; which, however, in the long run they did with one assent find it indisputably to be: and accordingly they hold by it to this day."

This brave letter was an important service rendered at a critical time, and Dickens was very grateful for it. But, as time went on, he had other and higher causes for gratitude to its writer. Admiration of Carlyle increased in him with his years; and there was no one whom in later life he honored so much, or had a more profound regard for.

Volume I, Chapter 21 (1842): Philadelphia, Washington, and the South

Philadelphia, Washington, and the South

DICKENS'S next letter was begun in the "United States Hotel, Philadelphia," and bore date "Sunday, sixth March, 1842." It treated of much dealt with afterwards at greater length in the Notes, but the freshness and vivacity of the first impressions in it have surprised me. I do not, however, print any passage here which has not its own interest independently of anything contained in that book. The rule will be continued, as in the portions of letters already given, of not transcribing anything before printed, or anything having even but a near resemblance to descriptions that appear in the Notes.

". . . . . As this is likely to be the only quiet day I shall have for a long time, I devote it to writing to you. We have heard nothing from you yet, and only have for our consolation the reflection that the Columbia is now on her way out. No news had been heard of the Caledonia yesterday afternoon, when we left New York. We were to have quitted that place last Tuesday, but have been detained there all the week by Kate having so bad a sore throat that she was obliged to keep her bed. We left yesterday afternoon at five o'clock, and arrived here at eleven last night. Let me say, by the way, that this is a very trying climate.

"I have often asked Americans in London which were the better railroads,--ours or theirs? They have taken time for reflection, and generally replied on mature consideration that they rather thought we excelled; in respect of the punctuality with which we arrived at our stations, and the smoothness of our traveling. I wish you could see what an American railroad is, in some parts where I now have seen them. I won't say I wish you could feel what it is, because that would be an unchristian and savage aspiration. It is never inclosed, or warded off. You walk down the main street of a large town; and, slap-dash, headlong, pell-mell, down the middle of the street, with pigs burrowing, and boys flying kites and playing marbles, and men smoking, and women talking, and children crawling, close to the very rails, there comes tearing along a mad locomotive with its train of cars, scattering a red-hot shower of sparks (from its wood fire) in all directions; screeching, hissing, yelling, and panting; and nobody one atom more concerned than if it were a hundred miles away. You cross a turnpike-road; and there is no gate, no policeman, no signal--nothing to keep the wayfarer or quiet traveler out of the way, but a wooden arch on which is written, in great letters, 'Look out for the locomotive.' And if any man, woman, or child don't look out, why, it's his or her fault, and there's an end of it.

"The cars are like very shabby omnibuses,--only larger; holding sixty or seventy people. The seats, instead of being placed long ways, are put cross-wise, back to front. Each holds two. There is a long row of these on each side of the caravan, and a narrow passage up the centre. The windows are usually all closed, and there is very often, in addition, a hot, close, most intolerable charcoal stove in a red-hot glow. The heat and closeness are quite insupportable. But this is the characteristic of all American houses, of all the public institutions, chapels, theatres, and prisons. From the constant use of the hard anthracite coal in these beastly furnaces, a perfectly new class of diseases is springing up in the country. Their effect upon an Englishman is briefly told. He is always very sick and very faint; and has an intolerable headache, morning, noon, and night.

"In the ladies' car, there is no smoking of tobacco allowed. All gentlemen who have ladies with them sit in this car; and it is usually very full. Before it, is the gentlemen's car; which is something narrower. As I had a window close to me yesterday which commanded this gentlemen's car, I looked at it pretty often, perforce. The flashes of saliva flew so perpetually and incessantly out of the windows all the way, that it

looked as though they were ripping open feather-beds inside, and letting the wind dispose of the feathers. But this spitting is universal. In the courts of law, the judge has his spittoon on the bench, the counsel have theirs, the witness has his, the prisoner his, and the crier his. The jury are accommodated at the rate of three men to a spittoon (or spit-box as they call it here); and the spectators in the gallery are provided for, as so many men who in the course of nature expectorate without cessation. There are spit-boxes in every steamboat, bar-room, public dining-room, house of office, and place of general resort, no matter what it be. In the hospitals, the students are requested, by placard, to use the boxes provided for them, and not to spit upon the stairs. I have twice seen gentlemen, at evening parties in New York, turn aside when they were not engaged in conversation, and spit upon the drawing-room carpet. And in every bar-room and hotel passage the stone floor looks as if it were paved with open oysters--from the quantity of this kind of deposit which tessellates it all over. . . .

"The institutions at Boston, and at Hartford, are most admirable. It would be very difficult indeed to improve upon them. But this is not so at New York; where there is an ill-managed lunatic asylum, a bad jail, a dismal workhouse, and a perfectly intolerable place of police-imprisonment. A man is found drunk in the streets, and is thrown into a cell below the surface of the earth; profoundly dark; so full of noisome vapors that when you enter it with a candle you see a ring about the light, like that which surrounds the moon in wet and cloudy weather; and so offensive and disgusting in its filthy odors that you cannot bear its stench. He is shut up within an iron door, in a series of vaulted passages where no one stays; has no drop of water, or ray of light, or visitor, or help of any kind; and there he remains until the magistrate's arrival. If he die (as one man did not long ago), he is half eaten by the rats in an hour's time (as this man was). I expressed, on seeing these places the other night, the disgust I felt, and which it would be impossible to repress. 'Well, I don't know,' said the night constable--that's a national answer, by-the-by,--'well, I don't know. I've had six-and-twenty young women locked up here together, and beautiful ones too, and that's a fact.' The cell was certainly no larger than the wine-cellar in Devonshire Terrace; at least three feet lower; and stunk like a common sewer. There was one woman in it then. The magistrate begins his examinations at five o'clock in the morning; the watch is set at seven at night; if the prisoners have been given in charge by an officer, they are not taken out before nine or ten; and in the interval they remain in these places, where they could no more be heard to cry for help, in case of a fit or swoon among them, than a man's voice could be heard after he was coffined up in his grave.

"There is a prison in this same city, and indeed in the same building, where prisoners for grave offenses await their trial, and to which they are sent back when under remand. It sometimes happens that a man or woman will remain here for twelve months, waiting the result of motions for new trial, and in arrest of judgment, and what not. I went into it the other day: without any notice or preparation, otherwise I find it difficult to catch them in their work-a-day aspect. I stood in a long, high, narrow building, consisting of four galleries one above the other, with a bridge across each, on which sat a turnkey, sleeping or reading as the case might be. From the roof, a couple of wind-sails dangled and drooped, limp and useless; the sky-light being fast closed, and they only designed for summer use. In the centre of the building was the eternal stove; and along both sides of every gallery was a long row of iron doors--looking like furnace-doors, being very small, but black and cold as if the fires within had gone out.

"A man with keys appears, to show us round. A good-looking fellow, and, in his way, civil and obliging." (I omit a dialogue of which the substance has been printed, and give only that which appears for the first time here.)

"'Suppose a man's here for twelve months. Do you mean to say he never comes out at that little iron door?'

"'He may walk some, perhaps--not much.'

'"Will you show me a few of them?'

'"Ah! All, if you like.'

"He threw open a door, and I looked in. An old man was sitting on his bed, reading. The light came in through a small chink, very high up in the wall. Across the room ran a thick iron pipe to carry off filth; this was bored for the reception of something like a big funnel in shape; and over the funnel was a watercock. This was his washing apparatus and water-closet. It was not savory, but not very offensive. He looked up at me; gave himself an odd, dogged kind of shake; and fixed his eyes on his book again. I came out, and the door was shut and locked. He had been there a month, and would have to wait another month for his trial. 'Has he ever walked out now, for instance?' 'No.'. . .

'"In England, if a man is under sentence of death even, he has a yard to walk in at certain times.'

'"Possible?'

". . . Making me this answer with a coolness which is perfectly untranslatable and inexpressible, and which is quite peculiar to the soil, he took me to the women's side, telling me, upon the way, all about this man, who, it seems, murdered his wife, and will certainly be hanged. The women's doors have a small square aperture in them; I looked through one, and saw a pretty boy about ten or twelve years old, who seemed lonely and miserable enough--as well he might. 'What's he been doing?' says I. 'Nothing,' says my friend. 'Nothing!' says I. 'No,' says he. 'He's here for safe keeping. He saw his father kill his mother, and is detained to give evidence against him--that was his father you saw just now.' 'But that's rather hard treatment for a witness, isn't it?' 'Well, I don't know. It a'n't a very rowdy life, and that's a fact.' So my friend, who was an excellent fellow in his way, and very obliging, and a handsome young man to boot, took me off to show me some more curiosities; and I was very much obliged to him, for the place was so hot, and I so giddy, that I could scarcely stand. . . .

"When a man is hanged in New York, he is walked out of one of these cells, without any condemned sermon or other religious formalities, straight into the narrow jail-yard, which may be about the width of Cranbourn Alley. There, a gibbet is erected, which is of curious construction; for the culprit stands on the earth with the rope about his neck, which passes through a pulley in the top of the 'Tree' (see Newgate Calendar passim), and is attached to a weight something heavier than the man. This weight, being suddenly let go, drags the rope down with it, and sends the criminal flying up fourteen feet into the air; while the judge, and jury, and five-and-twenty citizens (whose presence is required by the law), stand by, that they may afterwards certify to the fact. This yard is a very dismal place; and when I looked at it, I thought the practice infinitely superior to ours: much more solemn, and far less degrading and indecent.

"There is another prison near New York which is a house of correction. The convicts labor in stone-quarries near at hand, but the jail has no covered yards or shops, so that when the weather is wet (as it was when I was there) each man is shut up in his own little cell, all the live-long day. These cells, in all the correction-houses I have seen, are on one uniform plan,--thus: A, B, C, and D, are the walls of the building with windows in them, high up in the wall. The shaded place in the centre represents four tiers of cells, one above the other, with doors of grated iron, and a light grated gallery to each tier. Four tiers front to B, and four to D, so that by this means you may be said, in walking round, to see eight tiers in all. The intermediate blank space you walk in, looking up at these galleries; so that, coming in at the door E, and going either to the right or left till you come back to the door again, you see all the cells under one roof and in one high room. Imagine them in number 400, and in every one a man locked up; this one with his hands through the bars of his grate, this one in bed (in the middle of the day, remember), and this one flung down in a heap upon the ground with his head against the bars like a wild beast. Make the rain pour down in torrents outside. Put the everlasting stove in the midst; hot, suffocating, and vaporous, as a

witch's cauldron. Add a smell like that of a thousand old mildewed umbrellas wet through, and a thousand dirty-clothes-bags musty, moist, and fusty, and you will have some idea--a very feeble one, my dear friend, on my word--of this place yesterday week. You know of course that we adopted our improvements in prison-discipline from the American pattern; but I am confident that the writers who have the most lustily lauded the American prisons have never seen Chesterton's domain or Tracey's. There is no more comparison between these two prisons of ours, and any I have seen here YET, than there is between the keepers here, and those two gentlemen. Putting out of sight the difficulty we have in England of finding useful labor for the prisoners (which of course arises from our being an older country and having vast numbers of artisans unemployed), our system is more complete, more impressive, and more satisfactory in every respect. It is very possible that I have not come to the best, not having yet seen Mount Auburn. I will tell you when I have. And also when I have come to those inns, mentioned--vaguely rather--by Miss Martineau, where they undercharge literary people for the love the landlords bear them. My experience, so far, has been of establishments where (perhaps for the same reason) they very monstrously and violently overcharge a man whose position forbids remonstrance.

"WASHINGTON, Sunday, March the Thirteenth, 1842.

"In allusion to the last sentence, my dear friend, I must tell you a slight experience I had in Philadelphia. My rooms had been ordered for a week, but, in consequence of Kate's illness, only Mr. Q. and the luggage had gone on. Mr. Q. always lives at the table-d'hote, so that while we were in New York our rooms were empty. The landlord not only charged me half the full rent for the time during which the rooms were reserved for us (which was quite right), but charged me also for board for myself and Kate and Anne, at the rate of nine dollars per day for the same period, when we were actually living, at the same expense, in New York!!! I did remonstrate upon this head, but was coolly told it was the custom (which I have since been assured is a lie), and had nothing for it but to pay the amount. What else could I do? I was going away by the steamboat at five o'clock in the morning; and the landlord knew perfectly well that my disputing an item of his bill would draw down upon me the sacred wrath of the newspapers, which would one and all demand in capitals if THIS was the gratitude of the man whom America had received as she had never received any other man but La Fayette?

"I went last Tuesday to the Eastern Penitentiary near Philadelphia, which is the only prison in the States, or I believe in the world, on the principle of hopeless, strict, and unrelaxed solitary confinement, during the whole term of the sentence. It is wonderfully kept, but a most dreadful, fearful place. The inspectors, immediately on my arrival in Philadelphia, invited me to pass the day in the jail, and to dine with them when I had finished my inspection, that they might hear my opinion of the system. Accordingly I passed the whole day in going from cell to cell, and conversing with the prisoners. Every facility was given me, and no constraint whatever imposed upon any man's free speech. If I were to write you a letter of twenty sheets, I could not tell you this one day's work; so I will reserve it until that happy time when we shall sit round the table a Jack Straw's--you, and I, and Mac--and go over my diary. I never shall be able to dismiss from my mind the impressions of that day. Making notes of them, as I have done, is an absurdity, for they are written, beyond all power of erasure, in my brain. I saw men who had been there, five years, six years, eleven years, two years, two months, two days; some whose term was nearly over, and some whose term had only just begun. Women too, under the same variety of circumstances. Every prisoner who comes into the jail comes at night; is put into a bath, and dressed in the prison-garb; and then a black hood is drawn over his face and head, and he is led to the cell from which he never stirs again until his whole period of confinement has expired. I looked at some of them with the same awe as I should have looked at men who had been buried alive and dug up again.

"We dined in the jail: and I told them after dinner how much the sight had affected me, and what an awful

punishment it was. I dwelt upon this; for, although the inspectors are extremely kind and benevolent men, I question whether they are sufficiently acquainted with the human mind to know what it is they are doing. Indeed, I am sure they do not know. I bore testimony, as every one who sees it must, to the admirable government of the institution (Stanfield is the keeper: grown a little younger, that's all); but added that nothing could justify such a punishment but its working a reformation in the prisoners. That for short terms--say two years for the maximum--I conceived, especially after what they had told me of its good effects in certain cases, it might perhaps be highly beneficial; but that, carried to so great an extent, I thought it cruel and unjustifiable; and, further, that their sentences for small offenses were very rigorous, not to say savage. All this they took like men who were really anxious to have one's free opinion and to do right. And we were very much pleased with each other, and parted in the friendliest way.

"They sent me back to Philadelphia in a carriage they had sent for me in the morning; and then I had to dress in a hurry, and follow Kate to Carey's the bookseller's, where there was a party. He married a sister of Leslie's. There are three Miss Leslies here, very accomplished; and one of them has copied all her brother's principal pictures. These copies hang about the room. We got away from this as soon as we could; and next morning had to turn out at five. In the morning I had received and shaken hands with five hundred people, so you may suppose that I was pretty well tired. Indeed, I am obliged to be very careful of myself; to avoid smoking and drinking; to get to bed soon; and to be particular in respect of what I eat. . . . You cannot think how bilious and trying the climate is. One day it is hot summer, without a breath of air; the next, twenty degrees below freezing, with a wind blowing that cuts your skin like steel. These changes have occurred here several times since last Wednesday night.

"I have altered my route, and don't mean to go to Charleston. The country, all the way from here, is nothing but a dismal swamp; there is a bad night of sea-coasting in the journey; the equinoctial gales are blowing hard; and Clay (a most charming fellow, by-the-by), whom I have consulted, strongly dissuades me. The weather is intensely hot there; the spring fever is coming on; and there is very little to see, after all. We therefore go next Wednesday night to Richmond, which we shall reach on Thursday. There we shall stop three days; my object being to see some tobacco-plantations. Then we shall go by James River back to Baltimore, which we have already passed through, and where we shall stay two days. Then we shall go West at once, straight through the most gigantic part of this continent: across the Alleghany Mountains, and over a prairie.

"STILL AT WASHINGTON, Fifteenth March, 1842. . . . It is impossible, my dear friend, to tell you what we felt when Mr. Q. (who is a fearfully sentimental genius, but heartily interested in all that concerns us) came to where we were dining last Sunday, and sent in a note to the effect that the Caledonia had arrived! Being really assured of her safety, we felt as if the distance between us and home were diminished by at least one-half. There was great joy everywhere here, for she had been quite despaired of, but our joy was beyond all telling. This news came on by express. Last night your letters reached us. I was dining with a club (for I can't avoid a dinner of that sort, now and then), and Kate sent me a note about nine o'clock to say they were here. But she didn't open them--which I consider heroic--until I came home. That was about half-past ten; and we read them until nearly two in the morning.

"I won't say a word about your letters; except that Kate and I have come to a conclusion which makes me tremble in my shoes, for we decide that humorous narrative is your forte, and not statesmen of the commonwealth. I won't say a word about your news; for how could I in that case, while you want to hear what we are doing, resist the temptation of expending pages on those darling children? . . .

"I have the privilege of appearing on the floor of both Houses here, and go to them every day. They are very handsome and commodious. There is a great deal of bad speaking, but there are a great many very

remarkable men, in the legislature: such as John Quincy Adams, Clay, Preston, Calhoun, and others: with whom I need scarcely add I have been placed in the friendliest relations. Adams is a fine old fellow--seventy-six years old, but with most surprising vigor, memory, readiness, and pluck. Clay is perfectly enchanting; an irresistible man. There are some very notable specimens, too, out of the West. Splendid men to look at, hard to deceive, prompt to act, lions in energy, Crichtons in varied accomplishments, Indians in quickness of eye and gesture, Americans in affectionate and generous impulse. It would be difficult to exaggerate the nobility of some of these glorious fellows.

"When Clay retires, as he does this month, Preston will become the leader of the Whig party. He so solemnly assures me that the international copyright shall and will be passed, that I almost begin to hope; and I shall be entitled to say, if it be, that I have brought it about. You have no idea how universal the discussion of its merits and demerits has become, or how eager for the change I have made a portion of the people.

"You remember what ---- was, in England. If you could but see him here! If you could only have seen him when he called on us the other day,--feigning abstraction in the dreadful pressure of affairs of state; rubbing his forehead as one who was aweary of the world; and exhibiting a sublime caricature of Lord Burleigh. He is the only thoroughly unreal man I have seen on this side the ocean. Heaven help the President! All parties are against him, and he appears truly wretched. We go to a levee at his house to-night. He has invited me to dinner on Friday, but I am obliged to decline; for we leave, per steamboat, to-morrow night.

"I said I wouldn't write anything more concerning the American people, for two months. Second thoughts are best. I shall not change, and may as well speak out--to you. They are friendly, earnest, hospitable, kind, frank, very often accomplished, far less prejudiced than you would suppose, warm-hearted, fervent, and enthusiastic. They are chivalrous in their universal politeness to women, courteous, obliging, disinterested; and, when they conceive a perfect affection for a man (as I may venture to say of myself), entirely devoted to him. I have received thousands of people of all ranks and grades, and have never once been asked an offensive or unpolite question,--except by Englishmen, who, when they have been 'located' here for some years, are worse than the devil in his blackest painting. The State is a parent to its people; has a parental care and watch over all poor children, women laboring of child, sick persons, and captives. The common men render you assistance in the streets, and would revolt from the offer of a piece of money. The desire to oblige is universal; and I have never once traveled in a public conveyance without making some generous acquaintance whom I have been sorry to part from, and who has in many cases come on miles, to see us again. But I don't like the country. I would not live here, on any consideration. It goes against the grain with me. It would with you. I think it impossible, utterly impossible, for any Englishman to live here and be happy. I have a confidence that I must be right, because I have everything, God knows, to lead me to the opposite conclusion; and yet I cannot resist coming to this one. As to the causes, they are too many to enter upon here. . . .

"One of two petitions for an international copyright which I brought here from American authors, with Irving at their head, has been presented to the House of Representatives. Clay retains the other for presentation to the Senate after I have left Washington. The presented one has been referred to a committee; the Speaker has nominated as its chairman Mr. Kennedy, member for Baltimore, who is himself an author and notoriously favorable to such a law; and I am going to assist him in his report.

"RICHMOND, IN VIRGINIA. Thursday Night, March 17.

"Irving was with me at Washington yesterday, and wept heartily at parting. He is a fine fellow, when you know him well; and you would relish him, my dear friend, of all things. We have laughed together at some absurdities we have encountered in company, quite in my vociferous Devonshire-Terrace style.

The 'Merrikin' government has treated him, he says, most liberally and handsomely in every respect. He thinks of sailing for Liverpool on the 7th of April, passing a short time in London, and then going to Paris. Perhaps you may meet him. If you do, he will know that you are my dearest friend, and will open his whole heart to you at once. His secretary of legation, Mr. Coggleswell, is a man of very remarkable information, a great traveler, a good talker, and a scholar.

"I am going to sketch you our trip here from Washington, as it involves nine miles of a 'Virginny Road.' That done, I must be brief, good brother.". . .

The reader of the American Notes will remember the admirable and most humorous description of the night steamer on the Potomac, and of the black driver over the Virginia road. Both were in this letter; which, after three days, he resumed "At Washington again, Monday, March the twenty-first:

"We had intended to go to Baltimore from Richmond, by a place called Norfolk; but, one of the boats being under repair, I found we should probably be detained at this Norfolk two days. Therefore we came back here yesterday, by the road we had traveled before; lay here last night; and go on to Baltimore this afternoon, at four o'clock. It is a journey of only two hours and a half. Richmond is a prettily situated town, but, like other towns in slave districts (as the planters themselves admit), has an aspect of decay and gloom which to an unaccustomed eye is most distressing. In the black car (for they don't let them sit with the whites), on the railroad as we went there, were a mother and family, whom the steamer was conveying away, to sell; retaining the man (the husband and father, I mean) on his plantation. The children cried the whole way. Yesterday, on board the boat, a slave-owner and two constables were our fellow-passengers. They were coming here in search of two negroes who had run away on the previous day. On the bridge at Richmond there is a notice against fast driving over it, as it is rotten and crazy: penalty--for whites, five dollars; for slaves, fifteen stripes. My heart is lightened as if a great load had been taken from it, when I think that we are turning our backs on this accursed and detested system. I really don't think I could have borne it any longer. It is all very well to say 'be silent on the subject.' They won't let you be silent. They will ask you what you think of it; and will expatiate on slavery as if it were one of the greatest blessings of mankind. 'It's not,' said a hard, bad-looking fellow to me the other day, 'it's not the interest of a man to use his slaves ill. It's damned nonsense that you hear in England.'--I told him quietly that it was not a man's interest to get drunk, or to steal, or to game, or to indulge in any other vice, but he did indulge in it for all that; that cruelty, and the abuse of irresponsible power, were two of the bad passions of human nature, with the gratification of which, considerations of interest or of ruin, had nothing whatever to do; and that, while every candid man must admit that even a slave might be happy enough with a good master, all human beings knew that bad masters, cruel masters, and masters who disgraced the form they bore, were matters of experience and history, whose existence was as undisputed as that of slaves themselves. He was a little taken aback by this, and asked me if I believed in the Bible. Yes, I said, but if any man could prove to me that it sanctioned slavery, I would place no further credence in it. 'Well then,' he said, 'by God, sir, the niggers must be kept down, and the whites have put down the colored people wherever they have found them.' 'That's the whole question,' said I. 'Yes, and by God,' says he, 'the British had better not stand out on that point when Lord Ashburton comes over, for I never felt so warlike as I do now,--and that's a fact.' I was obliged to accept a public supper in this Richmond, and I saw plainly enough there that the hatred which these Southern States bear to us as a nation has been fanned up and revived again by this Creole business, and can scarcely be exaggerated.

. . . . "We were desperately tired at Richmond, as we went to a great many places and received a very great number of visitors. We appoint usually two hours in every day for this latter purpose, and have our room so full at that period that it is difficult to move or breathe. Before we left Richmond, a gentleman

told me, when I really was so exhausted that I could hardly stand, that 'three people of great fashion' were much offended by having been told, when they called last evening, that I was tired and not visible, then, but would be 'at home' from twelve to two next day! Another gentleman (no doubt of great fashion also) sent a letter to me two hours after I had gone to bed, preparatory to rising at four next morning, with instructions to the slave who brought it to knock me up and wait for an answer!

"I am going to break my resolution of accepting no more public entertainments, in favor of the originators of the printed document overleaf. They live upon the confines of the Indian territory, some two thousand miles or more west of New York! Think of my dining there! And yet, please God, the festival will come off--I should say about the 12th or 15th of next month.". . .

The printed document was a series of resolutions, moved at a public meeting attended by all the principal citizens, judges, professors, and doctors of St. Louis, urgently inviting to that city of the Far West the distinguished writer then the guest of America, eulogizing his genius, and tendering to him their warmest hospitalities. He was at Baltimore when he closed his letter.

"BALTIMORE, Tuesday, March 22d._

"I have a great diffidence in running counter to any impression formed by a man of Maclise's genius, on a subject he has fully considered." (Referring, apparently, to some remark by myself on the picture of the Play-scene in Hamlet, exhibited this year.) "But I quite agree with you about the King in Hamlet. Talking of Hamlet, I constantly carry in my great-coat pocket the Shakspeare you bought for me in Liverpool. What an unspeakable source of delight that book is to me!

"Your Ontario letter I found here to-night: sent on by the vigilant and faithful Colden, who makes every thing having reference to us or our affairs a labor of the heartiest love. We devoured its contents, greedily. Good Heaven, my dear fellow, how I miss you! and how I count the time 'twixt this and coming home again! Shall I ever forget the day of our parting at Liverpool! when even ---- became jolly and radiant in his sympathy with our separation! Never, never shall I forget that time. Ah! how seriously I thought then, and how seriously I have thought many, many times since, of the terrible folly of ever quarreling with a true friend, on good-for-nothing trifles! Every little hasty word that has ever passed between us rose up before me like a reproachful ghost. At this great distance, I seem to look back upon any miserable small interruption of our affectionate intercourse, though only for the instant it has never outlived, with a sort of pity for myself as if I were another creature.

"I have bought another accordion. The steward lent me one, on the passage out, and I regaled the ladies' cabin with my performances. You can't think with what feeling I play Home Sweet Home every night, or how pleasantly sad it makes us. . . . And so God bless you. . . . I leave space for a short postscript before sealing this, but it will probably contain nothing. The dear, dear children! what a happiness it is to know that they are in such hands!

"P.S. Twenty-third March, 1842. Nothing new. And all well. I have not heard that the Columbia is in, but she is hourly expected. Washington Irving has come on for another leave-taking, and dines with me to-day. We start for the West, at half-after eight to-morrow morning. I send you a newspaper, the most respectable in the States, with a very just copyright article."

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Canal-Boat Journeys: Bound Far West

It would not be possible that a more vivid or exact impression than that which is derivable from these letters could be given of either the genius or the character of the writer. The whole man is here in the supreme hour of his life, and in all the enjoyment of its highest sensations. Inexpressibly sad to me has been the task of going over them, but the surprise has equaled the sadness. I had forgotten what was in them. That they contained, in their first vividness, all the most prominent descriptions of his published book, I knew. But the reproduction of any part of these was not permissible here; and, believing that the substance of them had been thus almost wholly embodied in the American Notes, when they were lent to assist in its composition, I turned to them with very small expectation of finding anything available for present use. Yet the difficulty has been, not to find, but to reject; and the rejection when most unavoidable has not been most easy. Even where the subjects recur that are in the printed volume, there is a freshness of first impressions in the letters that renders it no small trial to act strictly on the rule adhered to in these extracts from them. In the Notes there is of course very much, masterly in observation and description, of which there is elsewhere no trace; but the passages amplified from the letters have not been improved, and the manly force and directness of some of their views and reflections, conveyed by touches of a picturesque completeness that no elaboration could give, have here and there not been strengthened by rhetorical additions in the printed work. There is also a charm in the letters which the plan adopted in the book necessarily excluded from it. It will always, of course, have value as a deliberate expression of the results gathered from the American experiences, but the personal narrative of this famous visit to America is in the letters alone. In what way his experiences arose, the desire at the outset to see nothing that was not favorable, the slowness with which adverse impressions were formed, and the eager recognition of every truthful and noble quality that arose and remained above the fault-finding, are discoverable only in the letters.

Already it is manifest from them that the before-mentioned disappointments, as well of the guest in his entertainers as of the entertainers in their guest, had their beginning in the copyright differences; but it is not less plain that the social dissatisfactions on his side were of even earlier date, and with the country itself had certainly nothing to do. It was objected to him, I well remember, that in making such unfavorable remarks as his published book did on many points, he was assailing the democratic institutions that had formed the character of the nation; but the answer is obvious, that, democratic institutions being universal in America, they were as fairly entitled to share in the good as in the bad; and in what he praised, of which there is here abundant testimony, he must be held to have exalted those institutions as much, as in what he blamed he could be held to depreciate them. He never sets himself up in judgment on the entire people. As we see, from the way the letters show us that the opinions he afterwards published were formed, he does not draw conclusions while his observation is only half concluded; and he refrains throughout from the example too strongly set him, even in the very terms of his welcome by the writers of America, of flinging one nation in the other's face. He leaves each upon its own ground. His great business in his publication, as in the first impressions recorded here, is to exhibit social influences at work as he saw them himself; and it would surely have been of all bad compliments the worst, when resolving, in the tone and with the purpose of a friend, to make public what he had observed in America, if he had supposed that such a country would take truth amiss.

There is, however, one thing to be especially remembered, as well in reading the letters as in judging of

the book which was founded on them. It is a point to which I believe Mr. Emerson directed the attention of his countrymen. Everything of an objectionable kind, whether the author would have it so or not, stands out more prominently and distinctly than matter of the opposite description. The social sin is a more tangible thing than the social virtue. Pertinaciously to insist upon the charities and graces of life, is to outrage their quiet and unobtrusive character; but we incur the danger of extending the vulgarities and indecencies if we seem to countenance by omitting to expose them. And if this is only kept in view in reading what is here given, the proportion of censure will be found not to overbalance the just admiration and unexaggerated praise.

Apart from such considerations, it is to be also said, the letters, from which I am now printing exactly as they were written, have claims, as mere literature, of an unusual kind. Unrivaled quickness of observation, the rare faculty of seizing out of a multitude of things the thing only that is essential, the irresistible play of humor, such pathos as only humorists of this high order possess, and the unwearied unforced vivacity of ever fresh, buoyant, bounding animal spirits, never found more natural, variously easy, or picturesque expression. Written amid such distraction, fatigue, and weariness as they describe, amid the jarring noises of hotels and streets, aboard steamers, on canal-boats, and in log huts, there is not an erasure in them. Not external objects only, but feelings, reflections, and thoughts, are photographed into visible forms with the same unexampled ease. They borrow no help from the matters of which they treat. They would have given, to the subjects described, old acquaintance and engrossing interest if they had been about a people in the moon. Of the personal character at the same time self-portrayed, others, whose emotions it less vividly awakens, will judge more calmly and clearly than myself. Yet to myself only can it be known how small were the services of friendship that sufficed to rouse all the sensibilities of this beautiful and noble nature. Throughout our life-long intercourse it was the same. His keenness of discrimination failed him never excepting here, when it was lost in the limitless extent of his appreciation of all kindly things; and never did he receive what was meant for a benefit that he was not eager to return it a hundredfold. No man more truly generous ever lived.

His next letter was begun from "on board the canal-boat. Going to Pittsburgh. Monday, March twenty-eighth, 1842;" and the difficulties of rejection, to which reference has just been made, have been nowhere felt by me so much. Several of the descriptive masterpieces of the book are in it, with such touches of original freshness as might fairly have justified a reproduction of them in their first form. Among these are the Harrisburg coach on its way through the Susquehanna valley; the railroad across the mountain; the brown-forester of the Mississippi, the interrogative man in pepper-and-salt, and the affecting scene of the emigrants put ashore as the steamer passes up the Ohio. But all that I may here give, bearing any resemblance to what is given in the Notes, are the opening sketch of the small creature on the top of the queer stage-coach, to which the printed version fails to do adequate justice, and an experience to which the interest belongs of having suggested the settlement of Eden in Martin Chuzzlewit. . . . "We left Baltimore last Thursday, the twenty-fourth, at half-past eight in the morning, by railroad; and got to a place called York, about twelve. There we dined, and took a stage-coach for Harrisburg; twenty-five miles further. This stage-coach was like nothing so much as the body of one of the swings you see at a fair set upon four wheels and roofed and covered at the sides with painted canvas. There were twelve inside! I, thank my stars, was on the box. The luggage was on the roof; among it, a good-sized dining-table, and a big rocking-chair. We also took up an intoxicated gentleman, who sat for ten miles between me and the coachman; and another intoxicated gentleman who got up behind, but in the course of a mile or two fell off without hurting himself, and was seen in the distant perspective reeling back to the grog-shop where we had found him. There were four horses to this land-ark, of course; but we did not perform the journey until after half-past six o'clock that night. . . . The first half of the journey was tame enough, but the second lay through the valley of the Susquehanah (I

think I spell it right, but I haven't that American Geography at hand), which is very beautiful. . . .

"I think I formerly made a casual remark to you touching the precocity of the youth of this country. When we changed horses on this journey I got down to stretch my legs, refresh myself with a glass of whiskey-and-water, and shake the wet off my great-coat,--for it was raining very heavily, and continued to do so, all night. Mounting to my seat again, I observed something lying on the roof of the coach, which I took to be a rather large fiddle in a brown bag. In the course of ten miles or so, however, I discovered that it had a pair of dirty shoes at one end, and a glazed cap at the other; and further observation demonstrated it to be a small boy, in a snuff-colored coat, with his arms quite pinioned to his sides by deep forcing into his pockets. He was, I presume, a relative or friend of the coachman's, as he lay atop of the luggage, with his face towards the rain; and, except when a change of position brought his shoes in contact with my hat, he appeared to be asleep. Sir, when we stopped to water the horses, about two miles from Harrisburg, this thing slowly upreared itself to the height of three foot eight, and, fixing its eyes on me with a mingled expression of complacency, patronage, national independence, and sympathy for all outer barbarians and foreigners, said, in shrill piping accents, 'Well now, stranger, I guess you find this a'most like an English a'ternoon,--hey?' It is unnecessary to add that I thirsted for his blood. . . .

"We had all next morning in Harrisburg, as the canal-boat was not to start until three o'clock in the afternoon. The officials called upon me before I had finished breakfast; and, as the town is the seat of the Pennsylvanian legislature, I went up to the Capitol. I was very much interested in looking over a number of treaties made with the poor Indians, their signatures being rough drawings of the creatures or weapons they are called after; and the extraordinary drawing of these emblems, showing the queer, unused, shaky manner in which each man has held the pen, struck me very much.

"You know my small respect for our House of Commons. These local legislatures are too insufferably apish of mighty legislation, to be seen without bile; for which reason, and because a great crowd of senators and ladies had assembled in both houses to behold the inimitable, and had already begun to pour in upon him even in the secretary's private room, I went back to the hotel, with all speed. The members of both branches of the legislature followed me there, however, so we had to hold the usual levee before our half-past one o'clock dinner. We received a great number of them. Pretty nearly every man spat upon the carpet, as usual; and one blew his nose with his fingers,--also on the carpet, which was a very neat one, the room given up to us being the private parlor of the landlord's wife. This has become so common since, however, that it scarcely seems worth mentioning. Please to observe that the gentleman in question was a member of the senate, which answers (as they very often tell me) to our House of Lords.

"The innkeeper was the most attentive, civil, and obliging person I ever saw in my life. On being asked for his bill, he said there was no bill: the honor and pleasure, etc. being more than sufficient. I did not permit this, of course, and begged Mr. Q. to explain to him that, traveling four strong, I could not hear of it on any account.

"And now I come to the Canal-Boat. Bless your heart and soul, my dear fellow,--if you could only see us on board the canal-boat! Let me think, for a moment, at what time of the day or night I should best like you to see us. In the morning? Between five and six in the morning, shall I say? Well! you would like to see me, standing on the deck, fishing the dirty water out of the canal with a tin ladle chained to the boat by a long chain; pouring the same into a tin basin (also chained up in like manner); and scrubbing my face with the jack towel. At night, shall I say? I don't know that you would like to look into the cabin at night, only to see me lying on a temporary shelf exactly the width of this sheet of paper when it's open (I measured it this morning), with one man above me, and another below; and, in all, eight-and-twenty in a low cabin, which you can't stand upright in with your hat on. I don't think you would like to look in at

breakfast-time either, for then these shelves have only just been taken down and put away, and the atmosphere of the place is, as you may suppose, by no means fresh; though there are upon the table tea and coffee, and bread and butter, and salmon, and shad, and liver, and steak, and potatoes, and pickles, and ham, and pudding, and sausages; and three-and-thirty people sitting round it, eating and drinking; and savory bottles of gin, and whiskey, and brandy, and rum, in the bar hard by; and seven-and-twenty out of the eight-and-twenty men, in foul linen, with yellow streams from half-chewed tobacco trickling down their chins. Perhaps the best time for you to take a peep would be the present: eleven o'clock in the forenoon: when the barber is at his shaving, and the gentlemen are lounging about the stove waiting for their turns, and not more than seventeen are spitting in concert, and two or three are walking overhead (lying down on the luggage every time the man at the helm calls 'Bridge!'), and I am writing this in the ladies' cabin, which is a part of the gentlemen's, and only screened off by a red curtain. Indeed, it exactly resembles the dwarf's private apartment in a caravan at a fair; and the gentlemen, generally, represent the spectators at a penny a head. The place is just as clean and just as large as that caravan you and I were in at Greenwich Fair last past. Outside, it is exactly like any canal-boat you have seen near the Regent's Park, or elsewhere.

"You never can conceive what the hawking and spitting is, the whole night through. Last night was the worst. Upon my honor and word I was obliged, this morning, to lay my fur coat on the deck, and wipe the half-dried flakes of spittle from it with my handkerchief; and the only surprise seemed to be that I should consider it necessary to do so. When I turned in last night, I put it on a stool beside me, and there it lay, under a cross-fire from five men,--three opposite, one above, and one below. I make no complaints, and show no disgust. I am looked upon as highly facetious at night, for I crack jokes with everybody near me until we fall asleep. I am considered very hardy in the morning, for I run up, bare-necked, and plunge my head into the half-frozen water, by half-past five o'clock. I am respected for my activity, inasmuch as I jump from the boat to the towing-path, and walk five or six miles before breakfast; keeping up with the horses all the time. In a word, they are quite astonished to find a sedentary Englishman roughing it so well, and taking so much exercise; and question me very much on that head. The greater part of the men will sit and shiver round the stove all day, rather than put one foot before the other. As to having a window open, that's not to be thought of.

"We expect to reach Pittsburgh to-night, between eight and nine o'clock; and there we ardently hope to find your March letters awaiting us. We have had, with the exception of Friday afternoon, exquisite weather, but cold. Clear starlight and moonlight nights. The canal has run, for the most part, by the side of the Susquehanah and Iwanata rivers; and has been carried through tremendous obstacles. Yesterday we crossed the mountain. This is done by railroad. . . . You dine at an inn upon the mountain; and, including the half-hour allowed for the meal, are rather more than five hours performing this strange part of the journey. The people north and 'down east' have terrible legends of its danger; but they appear to be exceedingly careful, and don't go to work at all wildly. There are some queer precipices close to the rails, certainly; but every precaution is taken, I am inclined to think, that such difficulties, and such a vast work, will admit of.

"The scenery, before you reach the mountains, and when you are on them, and after you have left them, is very grand and fine; and the canal winds its way through some deep, sullen gorges, which, seen by moonlight, are very impressive: though immeasurably inferior to Glencoe, to whose terrors I have not seen the smallest approach. We have passed, both in the mountains and elsewhere, a great number of new settlements and detached log houses. Their utterly forlorn and miserable appearance baffles all description. I have not seen six cabins out of six hundred, where the windows have been whole. Old hats, old clothes, old boards, old fragments of blanket and paper, are stuffed into the broken glass; and their air is misery and desolation. It pains the eye to see the stumps of great trees thickly strewn in every

field of wheat; and never to lose the eternal swamp and dull morass, with hundreds of rotten trunks, of elm and pine and sycamore and logwood, steeped in its unwholesome water; where the frogs so croak at night that after dark there is an incessant sound as if millions of phantom teams, with bells, were traveling through the upper air, at an enormous distance off. It is quite an oppressive circumstance, too, to come upon great tracks, where settlers have been burning down the trees; and where their wounded bodies lie about, like those of murdered creatures; while here and there some charred and blackened giant rears two bare arms aloft, and seems to curse his enemies. The prettiest sight I have seen was yesterday, when we--on the heights of the mountain, and in a keen wind--looked down into a valley full of light and softness; catching glimpses of scattered cabins; children running to the doors; dogs bursting out to bark; pigs scampering home, like so many prodigal sons; families sitting out in their gardens; cows gazing upward, with a stupid indifference; men in their shirt-sleeves, looking on at their unfinished houses, and planning work for to-morrow;--and the train riding on, high above them, like a storm. But I know this is beautiful--very--very beautiful!

"I wonder whether you and Mac mean to go to Greenwich Fair! Perhaps you dine at the Crown and Sceptre to-day, for it's Easter-Monday--who knows! I wish you drank punch, dear Forster. It's a shabby thing, not to be able to picture you with that cool green glass. . . .

"I told you of the many uses of the word 'fix.' I ask Mr. Q. on board a steamboat if breakfast be nearly ready, and he tells me yes he should think so, for when he was last below the steward was 'fixing the tables'--in other words, laying the cloth. When we have been writing, and I beg him (do you remember anything of my love of order, at this distance of time?) to collect our papers, he answers that he'll 'fix 'em presently.' So when a man's dressing he's 'fixing' himself, and when you put yourself under a doctor he 'fixes' you in no time. T'other night, before we came on board here, when I had ordered a bottle of mulled claret and waited some time for it, it was put on table with an apology from the landlord (a lieutenant-colonel) that 'he feared it wasn't fixed properly.' And here, on Saturday morning, a Western man, handing the potatoes to Mr. Q. at breakfast, inquired if he wouldn't take some of 'these fixings' with his meat. I remained as grave as a judge. I catch them looking at me sometimes, and feel that they think I don't take any notice. Politics are very high here; dreadfully strong; handbills, denunciations, invectives, threats, and quarrels. The question is, who shall be the next President. The election comes off in three years and a half from this time."

He resumed his letter, "on board the steamboat from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, April the 1st, 1842. A very tremulous steamboat, which makes my hand shake. This morning, my dear friend, this very morning, which, passing by without bringing news from England, would have seen us on our way to St. Louis (via Cincinnati and Louisville) with sad hearts and dejected countenances, and the prospect of remaining for at least three weeks longer without any intelligence of those so inexpressibly dear to us--this very morning, bright and lucky morning that it was, a great packet was brought to our bedroom door, from HOME. How I have read and re-read your affectionate, hearty, interesting, funny, serious, delightful, and thoroughly Forsterian Columbia letter, I will not attempt to tell you; or how glad I am that you liked my first; or how afraid I am that my second was not written in such good spirits as it should have been; or how glad I am again to think that my third was; or how I hope you will find some amusement from my fourth: this present missive. All this, and more affectionate and earnest words than the post-office would convey at any price, though they have no sharp edges to hurt the stamping-clerk--you will understand, I know, without expression, or attempt at expression. So, having got over the first agitation of so much pleasure; and having walked the deck; and being now in the cabin, where one party are playing at chess, and another party are asleep, and another are talking round the stove, and all are spitting; and a persevering bore of a horrible New Englander with a droning voice like a gigantic bee will sit down beside me, though I am writing, and talk incessantly, in my very ear, to Kate; here goes again.

"Let me see. I should tell you, first, that we got to Pittsburgh between eight and nine o'clock of the evening of the day on which I left off at the top of this sheet; and were there received by a little man (a very little man) whom I knew years ago in London. He rejoiceth in the name of D. G.; and, when I knew him, was in partnership with his father on the Stock-Exchange, and lived handsomely at Dalston. They failed in business soon afterwards, and then this little man began to turn to account what had previously been his amusement and accomplishment, by painting little subjects for the fancy shops. So I lost sight of him, nearly ten years ago; and here he turned up t'other day, as a portrait-painter in Pittsburgh! He had previously written me a letter which moved me a good deal, by a kind of quiet independence and contentment it breathed, and still a painful sense of being alone, so very far from home. I received it in Philadelphia, and answered it. He dined with us every day of our stay in Pittsburgh (they were only three), and was truly gratified and delighted to find me unchanged,--more so than I can tell you. I am very glad to-night to think how much happiness we have fortunately been able to give him.

"Pittsburgh is like Birmingham--at least its townsfolks say so; and I didn't contradict them. It is, in one respect. There is a great deal of smoke in it. I quite offended a man at our yesterday's levee, who supposed I was 'now quite at home,' by telling him that the notion of London being so dark a place was a popular mistake. We had very queer customers at our receptions, I do assure you. Not least among them, a gentleman with his inexpressibles imperfectly buttoned and his waistband resting on his thighs, who stood behind the half-opened door, and could by no temptation or inducement be prevailed upon to come out. There was also another gentleman, with one eye and one fixed gooseberry, who stood in a corner, motionless like an eight-day clock, and glared upon me, as I courteously received the Pittsburgians. There were also two red-headed brothers--boys--young dragons rather--who hovered about Kate, and wouldn't go. A great crowd they were, for three days; and a very queer one."

"STILL IN THE SAME BOAT. April the Second, 1842._

"Many, many happy returns of the day. It's only eight o'clock in the morning now, but we mean to drink your health after dinner, in a bumper; and scores of Richmond dinners to us! We have some wine (a present sent on board by our Pittsburgh landlord) in our own cabin; and we shall tap it to good purpose, I assure you; wishing you all manner and kinds of happiness, and a long life to ourselves that we may be partakers of it. We have wondered a hundred times already, whether you and Mac will dine anywhere together, in honor of the day. I say yes, but Kate says no. She predicts that you'll ask Mac, and he won't go. I have not yet heard from him.

"We have a better cabin here than we had on board the Britannia; the berths being much wider, and the den having two doors: one opening on the ladies' cabin, and one upon a little gallery in the stern of the boat. We expect to be at Cincinnati some time on Monday morning, and we carry about fifty passengers. The cabin for meals goes right through the boat, from the prow to the stern, and is very long; only a small portion of it being divided off, by a partition of wood and ground glass, for the ladies. We breakfast at half-after seven, dine at one, and sup at six. Nobody will sit down to any one of these meals, though the dishes are smoking on the board, until the ladies have appeared and taken their chairs. It was the same in the canal-boat.

"The washing department is a little more civilized than it was on the canal, but bad is the best. Indeed, the Americans when they are traveling, as Miss Martineau seems disposed to admit, are exceedingly negligent; not to say dirty. To the best of my making out, the ladies, under most circumstances, are content with smearing their hands and faces in a very small quantity of water. So are the men; who superadd to that mode of ablution a hasty use of the common brush and comb. It is quite a practice, too, to wear but one cotton shirt a week, and three or four fine linen fronts. Anne reports that this is Mr. Q.'s course of proceeding; and my portrait-painting friend told me that it was the case with pretty nearly all his

sitters; so that when he bought a piece of cloth not long ago, and instructed the sempstress to make it all into shirts, not fronts, she thought him deranged.

"My friend the New Englander, of whom I wrote last night, is perhaps the most intolerable bore on this vast continent. He drones, and snuffles, and writes poems, and talks small philosophy and metaphysics, and never will be quiet, under any circumstances. He is going to a great temperance convention at Cincinnati; along with a doctor of whom I saw something at Pittsburgh. The doctor, in addition to being everything that the New Englander is, is a phrenologist besides. I dodge them about the boat. Whenever I appear on deck, I see them bearing down upon me--and fly. The New Englander was very anxious last night that he and I should 'form a magnetic chain,' and magnetize the doctor, for the benefit of all incredulous passengers; but I declined on the plea of tremendous occupation in the way of letter-writing.

"And, speaking of magnetism, let me tell you that the other night at Pittsburgh, there being present only Mr. Q. and the portrait-painter, Kate sat down, laughing, for me to try my hand upon her. I had been holding forth upon the subject rather luminously, and asserting that I thought I could exercise the influence, but had never tried. In six minutes, I magnetized her into hysterics, and then into the magnetic sleep. I tried again next night, and she fell into the slumber in little more than two minutes. . . . I can wake her with perfect ease; but I confess (not being prepared for anything so sudden and complete) I was on the first occasion rather alarmed. . . . The Western parts being sometimes hazardous, I have fitted out the whole of my little company with LIFE-PRESERVERS, which I inflate with great solemnity when we get aboard any boat, and keep, as Mrs. Cluppins did her umbrella in the court of common pleas, ready for use upon a moment's notice.". . .

He resumed his letter, on "Sunday, April the third," with allusion to a general who had called upon him in Washington with two literary ladies, and had written to him next day for an immediate interview, as "the two LL's" were ambitious of the honor of a personal introduction. "Besides the doctor and the dread New Englander, we have on board that valiant general who wrote to me about the 'two LL's.' He is an old, old man with a weazen face, and the remains of a pigeon-breast in his military surtout. He is acutely gentlemanly and officer-like. The breast has so subsided, and the face has become so strongly marked, that he seems, like a pigeon-pie, to show only the feet of the bird outside, and to keep the rest to himself. He is perhaps the most horrible bore in this country. And I am quite serious when I say that I do not believe there are, on the whole earth besides, so many intensified bores as in these United States. No man can form an adequate idea of the real meaning of the word, without coming here. There are no particular characters on board, with these three exceptions. Indeed, I seldom see the passengers but at meal-times, as I read and write in our own little state-room. . . . I have smuggled two chairs into our crib, and write this on a book upon my knee. Everything is in the neatest order, of course; and my shaving-tackle, dressing-case, brushes, books, and papers, are arranged with as much precision as if we were going to remain here a month. Thank God we are not.

"The average width of the river rather exceeds that of the Thames at Greenwich. In parts it is much broader; and then there is usually a green island, covered with trees, dividing it into two streams. Occasionally we stop for a few minutes at a small town, or village (I ought to say city, everything is a city here); but the banks are for the most part deep solitudes, overgrown with trees, which, in these western latitudes, are already in leaf, and very green. . . .

"All this I see, as I write, from the little door into the stern-gallery which I mentioned just now. It don't happen six times in a day that any other passenger comes near it; and, as the weather is amply warm enough to admit of our sitting with it open, here we remain from morning until night: reading, writing, talking. What our theme of conversation is, I need not tell you. No beauty or variety makes us weary less for home. We count the days, and say, 'When May comes, and we can say--next month--the time will

seem almost gone.' We are never tired of imagining what you are all about. I allow of no calculation for the difference of clocks, but insist on a corresponding minute in London. It is much the shortest way, and best. . . . Yesterday, we drank your health and many happy returns--in wine, after dinner; in a small milk-pot jug of gin-punch, at night. And when I made a temporary table, to hold the little candlestick, of one of my dressing-case trays; cunningly inserted under the mattress of my berth with a weight atop of it to keep it in its place, so that it made a perfectly exquisite bracket; we agreed, that, please God, this should be a joke at the Star and Garter on the second of April eighteen hundred and forty-three. If your blank can be surpassed, . . . believe me ours transcends it. My heart gets, sometimes, SORE for home.

"At Pittsburgh I saw another solitary confinement prison: Pittsburgh being also in Pennsylvania. A horrible thought occurred to me when I was recalling all I had seen, that night. What if ghosts be one of the terrors of these jails?_ I have pondered on it often, since then. The utter solitude by day and night; the many hours of darkness; the silence of death; the mind forever brooding on melancholy themes, and having no relief; sometimes an evil conscience very busy; imagine a prisoner covering up his head in the bedclothes and looking out from time to time, with a ghastly dread of some inexplicable silent figure that always sits upon his bed, or stands (if a thing can be said to stand, that never walks as men do) in the same corner of his cell. The more I think of it, the more certain I feel that not a few of these men (during a portion of their imprisonment at least) are nightly visited by spectres. I did ask one man in this last jail, if he dreamed much. He gave me a most extraordinary look, and said--under his breath--in a whisper, 'No.'"

"CINCINNATI. Fourth April, 1842._

"We arrived here this morning: about three o'clock, I believe, but I was fast asleep in my berth. I turned out soon after six, dressed, and breakfasted on board. About half-after eight, we came ashore and drove to the hotel, to which we had written on from Pittsburgh ordering rooms; and which is within a stone's throw of the boat-wharf. Before I had issued an official notification that we were 'not at home,' two Judges called, on the part of the inhabitants, to know when we would receive the townspeople. We appointed to-morrow morning, from half-past eleven to one; arranged to go out, with these two gentlemen, to see the town, at one; and were fixed for an evening party to-morrow night at the house of one of them. On Wednesday morning we go on by the mail-boat to Louisville, a trip of fourteen hours; and from that place proceed in the next good boat to St. Louis, which is a voyage of four days. Finding from my judicial friends (well-informed and most agreeable gentlemen) this morning that the prairie travel to Chicago is a very fatiguing one, and that the lakes are stormy, sea-sicky, and not over safe at this season, I wrote by our captain to St. Louis (for the boat that brought us here goes on there) to the effect, that I should not take the lake route, but should come back here; and should visit the prairies, which are within thirty miles of St. Louis, immediately on my arrival there. . . .

"I have walked to the window, since I turned this page, to see what aspect the town wears. We are in a wide street: paved in the carriage-way with small white stones, and in the footway with small red tiles. The houses are for the most part one story high; some are of wood; others of a clean white brick. Nearly all have green blinds outside every window. The principal shops over the way are, according to the inscriptions over them, a Large Bread Bakery; a Book Bindery; a Dry Goods Store; and a Carriage Repository; the last-named establishment looking very like an exceedingly small retail coal-shed. On the pavement under our window, a black man is chopping wood; and another black man is talking (confidentially) to a pig. The public table, at this hotel and at the hotel opposite, has just now finished dinner. The diners are collected on the pavement, on both sides of the way, picking their teeth, and talking. The day being warm, some of them have brought chairs into the street. Some are on three chairs; some on two; and some, in defiance of all known laws of gravity, are sitting quite comfortably on

one: with three of the chair's legs, and their own two, high up in the air. The loungers, underneath our window, are talking of a great Temperance convention which comes off here to-morrow. Others, about me. Others, about England. Sir Robert Peel is popular here, with everybody. . . ."

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The Far West: to Niagara Falls

THE next letter described his experiences in the Far West, his stay in St. Louis, his visit to a prairie, the return to Cincinnati, and, after a stage-coach ride from that city to Columbus, the travel thence to Sandusky, and so, by Lake Erie, to the Falls of Niagara. All these subjects appear in the Notes, but nothing printed there is repeated in the extracts now to be given. Of the closing passages of his journey, when he turned from Columbus in the direction of home, the story, here for the first time told, is in his most characteristic vein; the account that will be found of the prairie will probably be preferred to what is given in the Notes; the Cincinnati sketches are very pleasant; and even such a description as that of the Niagara Falls, of which so much is made in the book, has here an independent novelty and freshness. The first vividness is in his letter. The naturalness of associating no image or sense but of repose, with a grandeur so mighty and resistless, is best presented suddenly; and, in a few words, we have the material as well as moral beauty of a scene unrivaled in its kind upon the earth. The instant impression we find to be worth more than the eloquent recollection.

The captain of the boat that had dropped them at Cincinnati and gone to St. Louis had stayed in the latter place until they were able to join and return with him; this letter bears date accordingly, "On board the Messenger again. Going from St. Louis back to Cincinnati. Friday, fifteenth April, 1842;" and its first paragraph is an outline of the movements which it afterwards describes in detail. "We remained in Cincinnati one whole day after the date of my last, and left on Wednesday morning, the 6th. We reached Louisville soon after midnight on the same night; and slept there. Next day at one o'clock we put ourselves on board another steamer, and traveled on until Sunday evening, the tenth; when we reached St. Louis at about nine o'clock. The next day we devoted to seeing the city. Next day, Tuesday, the twelfth, I started off with a party of men (we were fourteen in all) to see a prairie; returned to St. Louis about noon on the thirteenth; attended a soiree and ball--not a dinner--given in my honor that night; and yesterday afternoon at four o'clock we turned our faces homewards. Thank Heaven!

"Cincinnati is only fifty years old, but is a very beautiful city; I think the prettiest place I have seen here, except Boston. It has risen out of the forest like an Arabian-Night city; is well laid out; ornamented in the suburbs with pretty villas; and above all, for this is a very rare feature in America, has smooth turf-plots and well-kept gardens. There happened to be a great temperance festival; and the procession mustered under, and passed, our windows early in the morning. I suppose they were twenty thousand strong, at least. Some of the banners were quaint and odd enough. The ship-carpenters, for instance, displayed on one side of their flag the good Ship Temperance in full sail; on the other, the Steamer Alcohol blowing up sky-high. The Irishmen had a portrait of Father Mathew, you may be sure. And Washington's broad lower jaw (by-the-by, Washington had not a pleasant face) figured in all parts of the ranks. In a kind of square at one outskirt of the city they divided into bodies, and were addressed by different speakers. Drier speaking I never heard. I own that I felt quite uncomfortable to think they could take the taste of it out of their mouths with nothing better than water.

"In the evening we went to a party at Judge Walker's, and were introduced to at least one hundred and fifty first-rate bores, separately and singly. I was required to sit down by the greater part of them, and talk! In the night we were serenaded (as we usually are in every place we come to), and very well serenaded, I assure you. But we were very much knocked up. I really think my face has acquired a fixed expression of sadness from the constant and unmitigated boring I endure. The LL's have carried away all my cheerfulness. There is a line in my chin (on the right side of the under lip), indelibly fixed there by the New Englander I told you of in my last. I have the print of a crow's foot on the outside of my left eye,

which I attribute to the literary characters of small towns. A dimple has vanished from my cheek, which I felt myself robbed of at the time by a wise legislator. But on the other hand I am really indebted for a good broad grin to P. . E. . , literary critic of Philadelphia, and sole proprietor of the English language in its grammatical and idiomatical purity; to P. . E. . , with the shiny straight hair and turned-down shirt-collar, who taketh all of us English men of letters to task in print, roundly and uncompromisingly, but told me, at the same time, that I had 'awakened a new era' in his mind. . . .

"The last 200 miles of the voyage from Cincinnati to St. Louis are upon the Mississippi, for you come down the Ohio to its mouth. It is well for society that this Mississippi, the renowned father of waters, had no children who take after him. It is the beastliest river in the world.". . . (His description is in the Notes.)

"Conceive the pleasure of rushing down this stream by night (as we did last night) at the rate of fifteen miles an hour; striking against floating blocks of timber every instant; and dreading some infernal blow at every bump. The helmsman in these boats is in a little glass house upon the roof. In the Mississippi, another man stands in the very head of the vessel, listening and watching intently; listening, because they can tell in dark nights by the noise when any great obstruction is at hand. This man holds the rope of a large bell which hangs close to the wheel-house, and whenever he pulls it the engine is to stop directly, and not to stir until he rings again. Last night, this bell rang at least once in every five minutes; and at each alarm there was a concussion which nearly flung one out of bed. . . . While I have been writing this account, we have shot out of that hideous river, thanks be to God; never to see it again, I hope, but in a nightmare. We are now on the smooth Ohio, and the change is like the transition from pain to perfect ease.

"We had a very crowded levee in St. Louis. Of course the paper had an account of it. If I were to drop a letter in the street, it would be in the newspaper next day, and nobody would think its publication an outrage. The editor objected to my hair, as not curling sufficiently. He admitted an eye; but objected again to dress, as being somewhat foppish, 'and indeed perhaps rather flash.' 'But such,' he benevolently adds, 'are the differences between American and English taste--rendered more apparent, perhaps, by all the other gentlemen present being dressed in black.' Oh that you could have seen the other gentlemen! . . .

"A St. Louis lady complimented Kate upon her voice and manner of speaking, assuring her that she should never have suspected her of being Scotch, or even English. She was so obliging as to add that she would have taken her for an American, anywhere: which she (Kate) was no doubt aware was a very great compliment, as the Americans were admitted on all hands to have greatly refined upon the English language! I need not tell you that out of Boston and New York a nasal drawl is universal, but I may as well hint that the prevailing grammar is also more than doubtful; that the oddest vulgarisms are received idioms; that all the women who have been bred in slave-States speak more or less like negroes, from having been constantly in their childhood with black nurses; and that the most fashionable and aristocratic (these are two words in great use), instead of asking you in what place you were born, inquire where you 'hail from.' ! !

"Lord Ashburton arrived at Annapolis t'other day, after a voyage of forty odd days in heavy weather. Straightway the newspapers state, on the authority of a correspondent who 'rowed round the ship' (I leave you to fancy her condition), that America need fear no superiority from England, in respect of her wooden walls. The same correspondent is 'quite pleased' with the frank manner of the English officers; and patronizes them as being, for John Bulls, quite refined. My face, like Haji Baba's, turns upside down, and my liver is changed to water, when I come upon such things, and think who writes and who read them. . . .

"They won't let me alone about slavery. A certain judge in St. Louis went so far yesterday that I fell upon

him (to the indescribable horror of the man who brought him) and told him a piece of my mind. I said that I was very averse to speaking on the subject here, and always forbore, if possible; but when he pitied our national ignorance of the truths of slavery, I must remind him that we went upon indisputable records, obtained after many years of careful investigation, and at all sorts of self-sacrifice, and that I believed we were much more competent to judge of its atrocity and horror than he who had been brought up in the midst of it. I told him that I could sympathize with men who admitted it to be a dreadful evil, but frankly confessed their inability to devise a means of getting rid of it; but that men who spoke of it as a blessing, as a matter of course, as a state of things to be desired, were out of the pale of reason; and that for them to speak of ignorance or prejudice was an absurdity too ridiculous to be combated. . . .

"It is not six years ago, since a slave in this very same St. Louis, being arrested (I forget for what), and knowing he had no chance of a fair trial, be his offense what it might, drew his bowie-knife and ripped the constable across the body. A scuffle ensuing, the desperate negro stabbed two others with the same weapon. The mob who gathered round (among whom were men of mark, wealth, and influence in the place) overpowered him by numbers; carried him away to a piece of open ground beyond the city; and burned him alive. This, I say, was done within six years, in broad day; in a city with its courts, lawyers, tipstaffs, judges, jails, and hangman; and not a hair on the head of one of those men has been hurt to this day. And it is, believe me, it is the miserable, wretched independence in small things, the paltry republicanism which recoils from honest service to an honest man, but does not shrink from every trick, artifice, and knavery in business, that makes these slaves necessary, and will render them so, until the indignation of other countries sets them free.

"They say the slaves are fond of their masters. Look at this pretty vignette (part of the stock in trade of a newspaper), and judge how you would feel, when men, looking in your face, told you such tales with the newspaper lying on the table. In all the slave-districts, advertisements for runaways are as much matters of course as the announcement of the play for the evening with us. The poor creatures themselves fairly worship English people: they would do anything for them. They are perfectly acquainted with all that takes place in reference to emancipation; and of course their attachment to us grows out of their deep devotion to their owners. I cut this illustration out of a newspaper which had a leader in reference to the abominable and hellish doctrine of Abolition--repugnant alike to every law of God and Nature. 'I know something,' said a Dr. Bartlett (a very accomplished man), late a fellow-passenger of ours,--'I know something of their fondness for their masters. I live in Kentucky; and I can assert upon my honor that, in my neighborhood, it is as common for a runaway slave, retaken, to draw his bowie-knife and rip his owner's bowels open, as it is for you to see a drunken fight in London.'

"SAME BOAT, Saturday, Sixteenth April, 1842._

"Let me tell you, my dear Forster, before I forget it, a pretty little scene we had on board the boat between Louisville and St. Louis, as we were going to the latter place. It is not much to tell, but it was very pleasant and interesting to witness."

What follows has been printed in the Notes, and ought not, by the rule I have laid down, to be given here. But, beautiful as the printed description is, it has not profited by the alteration of some touches and the omission of others in the first fresh version of it, which, for that reason, I here preserve,--one of the most charming soul-felt pictures of character and emotion that ever warmed the heart in fact or fiction. It was, I think, Jeffrey's favorite passage in all the writings of Dickens; and certainly, if any one would learn the secret of their popularity, it is to be read in the observation and description of this little incident.

"There was a little woman on board, with a little baby; and both little woman and little child were cheerful, good-looking, bright-eyed, and fair to see. The little woman had been passing a long time with a sick mother in New York, and had left her home in St. Louis in that condition in which ladies who truly love

their lords desire to be. The baby had been born in her mother's house, and she had not seen her husband (to whom she was now returning) for twelve months: having left him a month or two after their marriage. Well, to be sure, there never was a little woman so full of hope, and tenderness, and love, and anxiety, as this little woman was: and there she was, all the livelong day, wondering whether 'he' would be at the wharf; and whether 'he' had got her letter; and whether, if she sent the baby on shore by somebody else, _'he' would know it, meeting it in the street: which, seeing that he had never set eyes upon it in his life, was not very likely in the abstract, but was probable enough to the young mother. She was such an artless little creature; and was in such a sunny, beaming, hopeful state; and let out all this matter, clinging close about her heart, so freely; that all the other lady passengers entered into the spirit of it as much as she: and the captain (who heard all about it from his wife) was wondrous sly, I promise you: inquiring, every time we met at table, whether she expected anybody to meet her at St. Louis, and supposing she wouldn't want to go ashore the night we reached it, and cutting many other dry jokes which convulsed all his hearers, but especially the ladies. There was one little, weazen, dried-apple old woman among them, who took occasion to doubt the constancy of husbands under such circumstances of bereavement; and there was another lady (with a lap-dog), old enough to moralize on the lightness of human affections, and yet not so old that she could help nursing the baby now and then, or laughing with the rest when the little woman called it by its father's name, and asked it all manner of fantastic questions concerning him, in the joy of her heart. It was something of a blow to the little woman that when we were within twenty miles of our destination it became clearly necessary to put the baby to bed; but she got over that with the same good humor, tied a little handkerchief over her little head, and came out into the gallery with the rest. Then, such an oracle as she became in reference to the localities! and such facetiousness as was displayed by the married ladies! and such sympathy as was shown by the single ones! and such peals of laughter as the little woman herself (who would just as soon have cried) greeted every jest with! At last, there were the lights of St. Louis--and here was the wharf--and those were the steps--and the little woman, covering her face with her hands, and laughing, or seeming to laugh, more than ever, ran into her own cabin, and shut herself up tight. I have no doubt that, in the charming inconsistency of such excitement, she stopped her ears lest she should hear 'him' asking for her; but I didn't see her do it. Then a great crowd of people rushed on board, though the boat was not yet made fast, and was staggering about among the other boats to find a landing-place; and everybody looked for the husband, and nobody saw him; when all of a sudden, right in the midst of them,--God knows how she ever got there,--there was the little woman hugging with both arms round the neck of a fine, good-looking, sturdy fellow! And in a moment afterwards, there she was again, dragging him through the small door of her small cabin, to look at the baby as he lay asleep!--What a good thing it is to know that so many of us would have been quite down-hearted and sorry if that husband had failed to come!"

He then resumes; but in what follows nothing is repeated that will be found in his printed description of the jaunt to the looking-glass prairie:

"But about the prairie--it is not, I must confess, so good in its way as this; but I'll tell you all about that too, and leave you to judge for yourself. Tuesday the 12th was the day fixed; and we were to start at five in the morning--sharp. I turned out at four; shaved and dressed; got some bread and milk; and, throwing up the window, looked down into the street. Deuce a coach was there, nor did anybody seem to be stirring in the house. I waited until half-past five; but no preparations being visible even then, I left Mr. Q. to look out, and lay down upon the bed again. There I slept until nearly seven, when I was called. . . . Exclusive of Mr. Q. and myself, there were twelve of my committee in the party: all lawyers except one. He was an intelligent, mild, well-informed gentleman of my own age,--the Unitarian minister of the place. With him, and two other companions, I got into the first coach. . . .

"We halted at so good an inn at Lebanon that we resolved to return there at night, if possible. One would

scarcely find a better village alehouse of a homely kind in England. During our halt I walked into the village, and met a dwelling-house coming down-hill at a good round trot, drawn by some twenty oxen! We resumed our journey as soon as possible, and got upon the looking-glass prairie at sunset. We halted near a solitary log house for the sake of its water; unpacked the baskets; formed an encampment with the carriages; and dined.

"Now, a prairie is undoubtedly worth seeing--but more, that one may say one has seen it, than for any sublimity it possesses in itself. Like most things, great or small, in this country, you hear of it with considerable exaggerations. Basil Hall was really quite right in depreciating the general character of the scenery. The widely-famed Far West is not to be compared with even the tamest portions of Scotland or Wales. You stand upon the prairie, and see the unbroken horizon all round you. You are on a great plain, which is like a sea without water. I am exceedingly fond of wild and lonely scenery, and believe that I have the faculty of being as much impressed by it as any man living. But the prairie fell, by far, short of my preconceived idea. I felt no such emotions as I do in crossing Salisbury Plain. The excessive flatness of the scene makes it dreary, but tame. Grandeur is certainly not its characteristic. I retired from the rest of the party, to understand my own feelings the better; and looked all round, again and again. It was fine. It was worth the ride. The sun was going down, very red and bright; and the prospect looked like that ruddy sketch of Catlin's, which attracted our attention (you remember?); except that there was not so much ground as he represents, between the spectator and the horizon. But to say (as the fashion is here) that the sight is a landmark in one's existence, and awakens a new set of sensations, is sheer gammon. I would say to every man who can't see a prairie--go to Salisbury Plain, Marlborough Downs, or any of the broad, high, open lands near the sea. Many of them are fully as impressive, and Salisbury Plain is decidedly more so.

"We had brought roast fowls, buffalo's tongue, ham, bread, cheese, butter, biscuits, sherry, champagne, lemons and sugar for punch, and abundance of ice. It was a delicious meal; and, as they were most anxious that I should be pleased, I warmed myself into a state of surpassing jollity; proposed toasts from the coach-box (which was the chair); ate and drank with the best; and made, I believe, an excellent companion to a very friendly companionable party. In an hour or so we packed up, and drove back to the inn at Lebanon. While supper was preparing, I took a pleasant walk with my Unitarian friend; and when it was over (we drank nothing with it but tea and coffee) we went to bed. The clergyman and I had an exquisitely clean little chamber of our own; and the rest of the party were quartered overhead. . . .

"We got back to St. Louis soon after twelve at noon; and I rested during the remainder of the day. The soiree came off at night, in a very good ball-room at our inn,--the Planter's House. The whole of the guests were introduced to us, singly. We were glad enough, you may believe, to come away at midnight; and were very tired. Yesterday, I wore a blouse. To-day, a fur coat. Trying changes!

"IN THE SAME BOAT, "Sunday, Sixteenth April, 1842._

"The inns in these outlandish corners of the world would astonish you by their goodness. The Planter's House is as large as the Middlesex Hospital, and built very much on our hospital plan, with long wards abundantly ventilated, and plain whitewashed walls. They had a famous notion of sending up at breakfast-time large glasses of new milk with blocks of ice in them as clear as crystal. Our table was abundantly supplied indeed at every meal. One day when Kate and I were dining alone together, in our own room, we counted sixteen dishes on the table at the same time.

"The society is pretty rough, and intolerably conceited. All the inhabitants are young. I didn't see one gray head in St. Louis._ There is an island close by, called Bloody Island. It is the dueling-ground of St. Louis; and is so called from the last fatal duel which was fought there. It was a pistol duel, breast to breast, and both parties fell dead at the same time. One of our prairie party (a young man) had acted as second

there, in several encounters. The last occasion was a duel with rifles, at forty paces; and coming home he told us how he had bought his man a coat of green linen to fight in, woolen being usually fatal to rifle-wounds. Prairie is variously called (on the refinement principle, I suppose) Paraarer; parearer; and paroarer. I am afraid, my dear fellow, you will have had great difficulty in reading all the foregoing text. I have written it, very laboriously, on my knee; and the engine throbs and starts as if the boat were possessed with a devil.

"SANDUSKY, "Sunday, Twenty-fourth April, 1842._

"We went ashore at Louisville this night week, where I left off, two lines above; and slept at the hotel, in which we had put up before. The Messenger being abominably slow, we got our luggage out next morning, and started on again at eleven o'clock in the Benjamin Franklin mail-boat: a splendid vessel, with a cabin more than two hundred feet long, and little state-rooms affording proportionate conveniences. She got in at Cincinnati by one o'clock next morning, when we landed in the dark and went back to our old hotel. As we made our way on foot over the broken pavement, Anne measured her length upon the ground, but didn't hurt herself. I say nothing of Kate's troubles--but you recollect her propensity? She falls into, or out of, every coach or boat we enter; scrapes the skin off her legs; brings great sores and swellings on her feet; chips large fragments out of her ankle-bones; and makes herself blue with bruises. She really has, however, since we got over the first trial of being among circumstances so new and so fatiguing, made a most admirable traveler in every respect. She has never screamed or expressed alarm under circumstances that would have fully justified her in doing so, even in my eyes; has never given way to despondency or fatigue, though we have now been traveling incessantly, through a very rough country, for more than a month, and have been at times, as you may readily suppose, most thoroughly tired; has always accommodated herself, well and cheerfully, to everything; and has pleased me very much, and proved herself perfectly game.

"We remained at Cincinnati all Tuesday the nineteenth, and all that night. At eight o'clock on Wednesday morning the twentieth, we left in the mail-stage for Columbus: Anne, Kate, and Mr. Q. inside; I on the box. The distance is a hundred and twenty miles; the road macadamized; and, for an American road, very good. We were three-and-twenty hours performing the journey. We traveled all night; reached Columbus at seven in the morning; breakfasted; and went to bed until dinner-time. At night we held a levee for half an hour, and the people poured in as they always do: each gentleman with a lady on each arm, exactly like the Chorus to God Save the Queen. I wish you could see them, that you might know what a splendid comparison this is. They wear their clothes precisely as the chorus people do; and stand--supposing Kate and me to be in the centre of the stage, with our backs to the footlights--just as the company would, on the first night of the season. They shake hands exactly after the manner of the guests at a ball at the Adelphi or the Haymarket; receive any facetiousness on my part as if there were a stage direction 'all laugh;' and have rather more difficulty in 'getting off' than the last gentlemen, in white pantaloons, polished boots, and berlins, usually display, under the most trying circumstances.

"Next morning, that is to say, on Friday, the 22d, at seven o'clock exactly, we resumed our journey. The stage from Columbus to this place only running thrice a week, and not on that day, I bargained for an 'exclusive extra' with four horses; for which I paid forty dollars, or eight pounds English: the horses changing, as they would if it were the regular stage. To insure our getting on properly, the proprietors sent an agent on the box; and, with no other company but him and a hamper full of eatables and drinkables, we went upon our way. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea to you of the kind of road over which we traveled. I can only say that it was, at the best, but a track through the wild forest, and among the swamps, bogs, and morasses of the withered bush. A great portion of it was what is called a 'corduroy road:' which is made by throwing round logs or whole trees into a swamp, and leaving them to

settle there. Good Heaven! if you only felt one of the least of the jolts with which the coach falls from log to log! It is like nothing but going up a steep flight of stairs in an omnibus. Now the coach flung us in a heap on its floor, and now crushed our heads against its roof. Now one side of it was deep in the mire, and we were holding on to the other. Now it was lying on the horses' tails, and now again upon its back. But it never, never was in any position, attitude, or kind of motion, to which we are accustomed in coaches; or made the smallest approach to our experience of the proceedings of any sort of vehicle that goes on wheels. Still, the day was beautiful, the air delicious, and we were alone; with no tobacco-spittle, or eternal prosy conversation about dollars and politics (the only two subjects they ever converse about, or can converse upon), to bore us. We really enjoyed it; made a joke of the being knocked about; and were quite merry. At two o'clock we stopped in the wood to open our hamper and dine; and we drank to our darlings and all friends at home. Then we started again and went on until ten o'clock at night: when we reached a place called Lower Sandusky, sixty-two miles from our starting-point. The last three hours of the journey were not very pleasant; for it lightened--awfully: every flash very vivid, very blue, and very long; and, the wood being so dense that the branches on either side of the track rattled and broke against the coach, it was rather a dangerous neighborhood for a thunder-storm.

"The inn at which we halted was a rough log house. The people were all abed, and we had to knock them up. We had the queerest sleeping-room, with two doors, one opposite the other; both opening directly on the wild black country, and neither having any lock or bolt. The effect of these opposite doors was, that one was always blowing the other open: an ingenuity in the art of building, which I don't remember to have met with before. You should have seen me, in my shirt, blockading them with portmanteaus, and desperately endeavoring to make the room tidy! But the blockading was really needful, for in my dressing-case I have about 250l._ in gold; and for the amount of the middle figure in that scarce metal there are not a few men in the West who would murder their fathers. Apropos of this golden store, consider at your leisure the strange state of things in this country. It has no money; really no money. The bank-paper won't pass; the newspapers are full of advertisements from tradesmen who sell by barter; and American gold is not to be had, or purchased. I bought sovereigns, English sovereigns, at first; but as I could get none of them at Cincinnati, to this day, I have had to purchase French gold; 20-franc pieces; with which I am traveling as if I were in Paris!

"But let's go back to Lower Sandusky. Mr. Q. went to bed up in the roof of the log house somewhere, but was so beset by bugs that he got up after an hour and lay in the coach, . . . where he was obliged to wait till breakfast-time. We breakfasted, driver and all, in the one common room. It was papered with newspapers, and was as rough a place as need be. At half-past seven we started again, and we reached Sandusky at six o'clock yesterday afternoon. It is on Lake Erie, twenty-four hours' journey by steamboat from Buffalo. We found no boat here, nor has there been one, since. We are waiting, with every thing packed up, ready to start on the shortest notice; and are anxiously looking out for smoke in the distance.

"There was an old gentleman in the log inn at Lower Sandusky who treats with the Indians on the part of the American government, and has just concluded a treaty with the Wyandot Indians at that place to remove next year to some land provided for them west of the Mississippi, a little way beyond St. Louis. He described his negotiation to me, and their reluctance to go, exceedingly well. They are a fine people, but degraded and broken down. If you could see any of their men and women on a race-course in England, you would not know them from gipsies.

"We are in a small house here, but a very comfortable one, and the people are exceedingly obliging. Their demeanor in these country parts is invariably morose, sullen, clownish, and repulsive. I should think there is not, on the face of the earth, a people so entirely destitute of humor, vivacity, or the capacity of enjoyment. It is most remarkable. I am quite serious when I say that I have not heard a hearty

laugh these six weeks, except my own; nor have I seen a merry face on any shoulders but a black man's. Lounging listlessly about; idling in bar-rooms; smoking; spitting; and lolling on the pavement in rocking-chairs, outside the shop-doors; are the only recreations. I don't think the national shrewdness extends beyond the Yankees; that is, the Eastern men. The rest are heavy, dull, and ignorant. Our landlord here is from the East. He is a handsome, obliging, civil fellow. He comes into the room with his hat on; spits in the fireplace as he talks; sits down on the sofa with his hat on; pulls out his newspaper, and reads; but to all this I am accustomed. He is anxious to please--and that is enough.

"We are wishing very much for a boat; for we hope to find our letters at Buffalo. It is half-past one; and, as there is no boat in sight, we are fain (sorely against our wills) to order an early dinner.

"Tuesday, April Twenty-sixth, 1842._ "NIAGARA FALLS!!! (UPON THE ENGLISH SIDE.)

"I don't know at what length I might have written you from Sandusky, my beloved friend, if a steamer had not come in sight just as I finished the last unintelligible sheet! (oh! the ink in these parts!): whereupon I was obliged to pack up bag and baggage, to swallow a hasty apology for a dinner, and to hurry my train on board with all the speed I might. She was a fine steamship, four hundred tons burden, name the Constitution, had very few passengers on board, and had bountiful and handsome accommodation. It's all very fine talking about Lake Erie, but it won't do for persons who are liable to sea-sickness. We were all sick. It's almost as bad in that respect as the Atlantic. The waves are very short, and horribly constant. We reached Buffalo at six this morning; went ashore to breakfast; sent to the post-office forthwith; and received--oh! who or what can say with how much pleasure and what unspeakable delight!--our English letters!

"We lay all Sunday night at a town (and a beautiful town too) called Cleveland; on Lake Erie. The people poured on board, in crowds, by six on Monday morning, to see me; and a party of 'gentlemen' actually planted themselves before our little cabin, and stared in at the door and windows while I was washing, and Kate lay in bed. I was so incensed at this, and at a certain newspaper published in that town which I had accidentally seen in Sandusky (advocating war with England to the death, saying that Britain must be 'whipped again,' and promising all true Americans that within two years they should sing Yankee Doodle in Hyde Park and Hail Columbia in the courts of Westminster), that when the mayor came on board to present himself to me, according to custom, I refused to see him, and bade Mr. Q. tell him why and wherefore. His honor took it very coolly, and retired to the top of the wharf, with a big stick and a whittling knife, with which he worked so lustily (staring at the closed door of our cabin all the time) that long before the boat left, the big stick was no bigger than a cribbage-peg!

"I never in my life was in such a state of excitement as coming from Buffalo here, this morning. You come by railroad, and are nigh two hours upon the way. I looked out for the spray, and listened for the roar, as far beyond the bounds of possibility as though, landing in Liverpool, I were to listen for the music of your pleasant voice in Lincoln's Inn Fields. At last, when the train stopped, I saw two great white clouds rising up from the depths of the earth,--nothing more. They rose up slowly, gently, majestically, into the air. I dragged Kate down a deep and slippery path leading to the ferry-boat; bullied Anne for not coming fast enough; perspired at every pore; and felt, it is impossible to say how, as the sound grew louder and louder in my ears, and yet nothing could be seen for the mist.

"There were two English officers with us (ah! what gentlemen, what noblemen of nature they seemed), and they hurried off with me; leaving Kate and Anne on a crag of ice; and clambered after me over the rocks at the foot of the small Fall, while the ferryman was getting the boat ready. I was not disappointed--but I could make out nothing. In an instant I was blinded by the spray, and wet to the skin. I saw the water tearing madly down from some immense height, but could get no idea of shape, or situation, or anything but vague immensity. But when we were seated in the boat, and crossing at the

very foot of the cataract--then I began to feel what it was. Directly I had changed my clothes at the inn I went out again, taking Kate with me, and hurried to the Horse-shoe Fall. I went down alone, into the very basin. It would be hard for a man to stand nearer God than he does there. There was a bright rainbow at my feet; and from that I looked up to--great Heaven! to what a fall of bright green water! The broad, deep, mighty stream seems to die in the act of falling; and from its unfathomable grave arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid, and has been haunting this place with the same dread solemnity--perhaps from the creation of the world.

"We purpose remaining here a week. In my next I will try to give you some idea of my impressions, and to tell you how they change with every day. At present it is impossible. I can only say that the first effect of this tremendous spectacle on me was peace of mind--tranquillity--great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness--nothing of terror. I can shudder at the recollection of Glencoe (dear friend, with Heaven's leave we must see Glencoe together), but whenever I think of Niagara I shall think of its beauty.

"If you could hear the roar that is in my ears as I write this. Both Falls are under our windows. From our sitting-room and bedroom we look down straight upon them. There is not a soul in the house but ourselves. What would I give if you and Mac were here to share the sensations of this time! I was going to add, what would I give if the dear girl whose ashes lie in Kensal Green had lived to come so far along with us--but she has been here many times, I doubt not, since her sweet face faded from my earthly sight.

"One word on the precious letters before I close. You are right, my dear fellow, about the papers; and you are right (I grieve to say) about the people. Am I right?_ quoth the conjurer. Yes!_ from gallery, pit, and boxes. I did let out those things, at first, against my will, but when I come to tell you all--well; only wait--only wait--till the end of July. I say no more.

"I do perceive a perplexingly divided and subdivided duty, in the matter of the book of travels. Oh! the sublimated essence of comicality that I could distil, from the materials I have! . . . You are a part, and an essential part, of our home, dear friend, and I exhaust my imagination in picturing the circumstances under which I shall surprise you by walking into 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields. We are truly grateful to God for the health and happiness of our inexpressibly dear children and all our friends. But one letter more--only one. . . . I don't seem to have been half affectionate enough, but there are thoughts, you know, that lie too deep for words."

Volume I, Chapter 24 (1842): Niagara and Montreal

Niagara and Montreal

MY friend was better than his word, and two more letters reached me before his return. The opening of the first was written from Niagara on the 3d, and its close from Montreal on the 12th, of May; from which latter city also, on the 26th of that month, the last of all was written.

Much of the first of these letters had reference to the international copyright agitation, and gave strong expression to the indignation awakened in him (nor less in some of the best men of America) by the adoption, at a public meeting in Boston itself, of a memorial against any change of the law, in the course of which it was stated that, if English authors were invested with any control over the republication of their own books, it would be no longer possible for American editors to alter and adapt them to the American taste. This deliberate declaration, however, unsparing as Dickens's anger at it was, in effect vanquished him. He saw the hopelessness of pursuing further any present effort to bring about the change desired; and he took the determination not only to drop any allusion to it in his proposed book, but to try what effect might be produced, when he should again be in England, by a league of English authors to suspend further intercourse with American publishers while the law should remain as it is. On his return he made accordingly a public appeal to this effect, stating his own intention for the future to forego all profit derivable from the authorized transmission of early proofs across the Atlantic; but his hopes in this particular also were doomed to disappointment. I now leave the subject, quoting only from his present letter the general remarks with which it is dismissed by himself.

"NIAGARA FALLS, "Tuesday, Third May, 1842._

"I'll tell you what the two obstacles to the passing of an international copyright law with England are: firstly, the national love of 'doing' a man in any bargain or matter of business; secondly, the national vanity. Both these characteristics prevail to an extent which no stranger can possibly estimate.

"With regard to the first, I seriously believe that it is an essential part of the pleasure derived from the perusal of a popular English book, that the author gets nothing for it. It is so dar-nation 'cute--so knowing in Jonathan to get his reading on those terms. He has the Englishman so regularly on the hip that his eye twinkles with slyness, cunning, and delight; and he chuckles over the humor of the page with an appreciation of it quite inconsistent with, and apart from, its honest purchase. The raven hasn't more joy in eating a stolen piece of meat, than the American has in reading the English book which he gets for nothing.

"With regard to the second, it reconciles that better and more elevated class who are above this sort of satisfaction, with surprising ease. The man's read in America! The Americans like him! They are glad to see him when he comes here! They flock about him, and tell him that they are grateful to him for spirits in sickness; for many hours of delight in health; for a hundred fanciful associations which are constantly interchanged between themselves and their wives and children at home! It is nothing that all this takes place in countries where he is paid; it is nothing that he has won fame for himself elsewhere, and profit too. The Americans read him; the free, enlightened, independent Americans; and what more would he have? Here's reward enough for any man. The national vanity swallows up all other countries on the face of the earth, and leaves but this above the ocean. Now, mark what the real value of this American reading is. Find me in the whole range of literature one single solitary English book which becomes popular with them before, by going through the ordeal at home and becoming popular there, it has forced itself on their attention--and I am content that the law should remain as it is, forever and a day. I must make one exception. There are some mawkish tales of fashionable life before which crowds fall down as

they were gilded calves, which have been snugly enshrined in circulating libraries at home, from the date of their publication.

"As to telling them they will have no literature of their own, the universal answer (out of Boston) is, 'We don't want one. Why should we pay for one when we can get it for nothing? Our people don't think of poetry, sir. Dollars, banks, and cotton are our books, sir.' And they certainly are in one sense; for a lower average of general information than exists in this country on all other topics, it would be very hard to find. So much, at present, for international copyright."

The same letter kept the promise made in its predecessor that one or two more sketches of character should be sent: "One of the most amusing phrases in use all through the country, for its constant repetition, and adaptation to every emergency, is 'Yes, Sir.' Let me give you a specimen." (The specimen was the dialogue, in the Notes, of straw-hat and brown-hat, during the stage-coach ride to Sandusky.) "I am not joking, upon my word. This is exactly the dialogue. Nothing else occurring to me at this moment, let me give you the secretary's portrait. Shall I?

"He is of a sentimental turn--strongly sentimental; and tells Anne as June approaches that he hopes 'we shall sometimes think of him' in our own country. He wears a cloak, like Hamlet; and a very tall, big, limp, dusty black hat, which he exchanges on long journeys for a cap like Harlequin's. . . . He sings; and in some of our quarters, when his bedroom has been near ours, we have heard him grunting bass notes through the keyhole of his door, to attract our attention. His desire that I should formally ask him to sing, and his devices to make me do so, are irresistibly absurd. There was a piano in our room at Hartford (you recollect our being there, early in February?)--and he asked me one night, when we were alone, if 'Mrs. D.' played. 'Yes, Mr. Q.' 'Oh, indeed, Sir! I sing: so whenever you want a little soothing--' You may imagine how hastily I left the room, on some false pretense, without hearing more.

"He paints. . . . An enormous box of oil-colors is the main part of his luggage: and with these he blazes away, in his own room, for hours together. Anne got hold of some big-headed, pot-bellied sketches he made of the passengers on board the canal-boat (including me in my fur coat), the recollection of which brings the tears into my eyes at this minute. He painted the Falls, at Niagara, superbly; and is supposed now to be engaged on a full-length representation of me: waiters having reported that chamber-maids have said that there is a picture in his room which has a great deal of hair. One girl opined that it was 'the beginning of the King's Arms;' but I am pretty sure that the Lion is myself. . . .

"Sometimes, but not often, he commences a conversation. That usually occurs when we are walking the deck after dark; or when we are alone together in a coach. It is his practice at such times to relate the most notorious and patriarchal Joe Miller, as something that occurred in his own family. When traveling by coach, he is particularly fond of imitating cows and pigs; and nearly challenged a fellow-passenger the other day, who had been moved by the display of this accomplishment into telling him that he was 'a Perfect Calf.' He thinks it an indispensable act of politeness and attention to inquire constantly whether we're not sleepy, or, to use his own words, whether we don't 'suffer for sleep.' If we have taken a long nap of fourteen hours or so, after a long journey, he is sure to meet me at the bedroom door when I turn out in the morning, with this inquiry. But, apart from the amusement he gives us, I could not by possibility have lighted on any one who would have suited my purpose so well. I have raised his ten dollars per month to twenty; and mean to make it up for six months."

The conclusion of this letter was dated from "Montreal, Thursday, twelfth May," and was little more than an eager yearning for home: "This will be a very short and stupid letter, my dear friend; for the post leaves here much earlier than I expected, and all my grand designs for being unusually brilliant fall to the ground. I will write you one line by the next Cunard boat,--reserving all else until our happy and long long looked-for meeting.

"We have been to Toronto and Kingston; experiencing attentions at each which I should have difficulty in describing. The wild and rabid toryism of Toronto is, I speak seriously, appalling. English kindness is very different from American. People send their horses and carriages for your use, but they don't exact as payment the right of being always under your nose. We had no less than five carriages at Kingston waiting our pleasure at one time; not to mention the commodore's barge and crew, and a beautiful government steamer. We dined with Sir Charles Bagot last Sunday. Lord Mulgrave was to have met us yesterday at Lachine; but, as he was wind-bound in his yacht and couldn't get in, Sir Richard Jackson sent his drag four-in-hand, with two other young fellows who are also his aides, and in we came in grand style.

"The Theatricals (I think I told you I had been invited to play with the officers of the Coldstream Guards here) are A Roland for an Oliver; Two o'Clock in the Morning; and either the Young Widow, or Deaf as a Post. Ladies (unprofessional) are going to play, for the first time. I wrote to Mitchell at New York for a wig for Mr. Snobbington, which has arrived, and is brilliant. If they had done Love, Law, and Physick, as at first proposed, I was already 'up' in Flexible, having played it of old, before my authorship days; but if it should be Splash in the Young Widow, you will have to do me the favor to imagine me in a smart livery-coat, shiny black hat and cockade, white knee-cords, white top-boots, blue stock, small whip, red cheeks, and dark eyebrows. Conceive Topping's state of mind if I bring this dress home and put it on unexpectedly! . . . God bless you, dear friend. I can say nothing about the seventh, the day on which we sail. It is impossible. Words cannot express what we feel, now that the time is so near. . . ."

His last letter, dated from "Peasco's Hotel, Montreal, Canada, twenty-sixth of May," described the private theatricals, and inclosed me a bill of the play.

"This, like my last, will be a stupid letter, because both Kate and I are thrown into such a state of excitement by the near approach of the seventh of June that we can do nothing, and think of nothing.

"The play came off last night. The audience, between five and six hundred strong, were invited as to a party; a regular table with refreshments being spread in the lobby and saloon. We had the band of the twenty-third (one of the finest in the service) in the orchestra, the theatre was lighted with gas, the scenery was excellent, and the properties were all brought from private houses. Sir Charles Bagot, Sir Richard Jackson, and their staffs were present; and as the military portion of the audience were all in full uniform, it was really a splendid scene.

"We 'went' also splendidly; though with nothing very remarkable in the acting way. We had for Sir Mark Chase a genuine odd fish, with plenty of humor; but our Tristram Sappy was not up to the marvelous reputation he has somehow or other acquired here. I am not however, let me tell you, placarded as stage-manager for nothing. Everybody was told they would have to submit to the most iron despotism; and didn't I come Macready over them? Oh, no. By no means. Certainly not. The pains I have taken with them, and the perspiration I have expended, during the last ten days, exceed in amount anything you can imagine. I had regular plots of the scenery made out, and lists of the properties wanted; and had them nailed up by the prompter's chair. Every letter that was to be delivered, was written; every piece of money that had to be given, provided; and not a single thing lost sight of. I prompted, myself, when I was not on; when I was, I made the regular prompter of the theatre my deputy; and I never saw anything so perfectly touch and go, as the first two pieces. The bedroom scene in the interlude was as well furnished as Vestris had it; with a 'practicable' fireplace blazing away like mad, and everything in a concatenation accordingly. I really do believe that I was very funny: at least I know that I laughed heartily at myself, and made the part a character, such as you and I know very well: a mixture of T----, Harley, Yates, Keeley, and Jerry Sneak. It went with a roar, all through; and, as I am closing this, they have told me I was so well made up that Sir Charles Bagot, who sat in the stage-box, had no idea who played Mr. Snobbington,

until the piece was over.

COMMITTEE.

Mrs. TORRENS. W. C. ERMATINGER, Esq. Mrs. PERRY. Captain TORRENS. THE EARL OF MULGRAVE.

STAGE MANAGER--MR. CHARLES DICKENS.

QUEEN'S THEATRE, MONTREAL

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 25TH, 1842, WILL BE PERFORMED,

ROLAND FOR AN OLIVER.

MRS. SELBORNE. [Handwritten: Mrs. Torrens] MARIA DARLINGTON. [Handwritten: Miss Griffin] MRS. FIXTURE. [Handwritten: Miss Ermatinger.]

MR. SELBORNE. [Handwritten: Lord Mulgrave.] ALFRED HIGHFLYER. [Handwritten: Mr. Charles Dickens] SIR MARK CHASE. [Handwritten: Honourable Mr. Methuen] FIXTURE. [Handwritten: Captain Willoughby.] GAMEKEEPER. [Handwritten: Captain Granville]

AFTER WHICH, AN INTERLUDE IN ONE SCENE, (FROM THE FRENCH,) CALLED

Past Two o'Clock in the Morning.

THE STRANGER. [Handwritten: Captain Granville] MR. SNOBBINGTON. [Handwritten: Mr. Charles Dickens]

TO CONCLUDE WITH THE FARCE, IN ONE ACT, ENTITLED

DEAF AS A POST.

MRS. PLUMPLEY. [Handwritten: Mrs. Torrens] AMY TEMPLETON. [Handwritten: Mrs. Charles Dickens!!!!!!!!] SOPHY WALTON. [Handwritten: Mrs. Perry.] SALLY MAGGS. [Handwritten: Miss Griffin]

CAPTAIN TEMPLETON. [Handwritten: Captain Torrens] MR. WALTON. [Handwritten: Captain Willoughby.] TRISTRAM SAPPY. [Handwritten: Doctor Griffin] CRUPPER. [Handwritten: Lord Mulgrave] GALLOP. [Handwritten: Mr. Charles Dickens.]

MONTREAL, May 24, 1842. GAZETTE OFFICE.

"But only think of Kate playing! and playing devilish well, I assure you! All the ladies were capital, and we had no wait or hitch for an instant. You may suppose this, when I tell you that we began at eight, and had the curtain down at eleven. It is their custom here, to prevent heart-burnings in a very heart-burning town, whenever they have played in private, to repeat the performances in public. So, on Saturday (substituting, of course, real actresses for the ladies), we repeat the two first pieces to a paying audience, for the manager's benefit. . . .

"I send you a bill, to which I have appended a key.

"I have not told you half enough. But I promise you I shall make you shake your sides about this play. Wasn't it worthy of Crummles that when Lord Mulgrave and I went out to the door to receive the Governor-general, the regular prompter followed us in agony with four tall candlesticks with wax candles in them, and besought us with a bleeding heart to carry two apiece, in accordance with all the precedents? . . .

"I have hardly spoken of our letters, which reached us yesterday, shortly before the play began. A hundred thousand thanks for your delightful mainsail of that gallant little packet. I read it again and again; and had it all over again at breakfast-time this morning. I heard also, by the same ship, from Talfourd, Miss Coutts, Brougham, Rogers, and others. A delicious letter from Mac too, as good as his painting, I

swear. Give my hearty love to him. . . . God bless you, my dear friend. As the time draws nearer, we get FEVERED with anxiety for home. . . . Kiss our darlings for us. We shall soon meet, please God, and be happier and merrier than ever we were, in all our lives. . . . Oh, home--home--home--home--home--home--HOME!!!!!!!!!!"

Volume II, Chapter 1 (1842): American Notes

Volume II: 1842-1852

American Notes

THE reality did not fall short of the anticipation of home. His return was the occasion of unbounded enjoyment; and what he had planned before sailing as the way we should meet, received literal fulfilment. By the sound of his cheery voice I first knew that he was come; and from my house we went together to Maclise, also "without a moment's warning." A Greenwich dinner in which several friends (Talfourd, Milnes, Procter, Maclise, Stanfield, Marryat, Barham, Hood, and Cruikshank among them) took part, and other immediate greetings, followed; but the most special celebration was reserved for autumn, when, by way of challenge to what he had seen while abroad, a home-journey was arranged with Stanfield, Maclise, and myself for his companions, into such of the most striking scenes of a picturesque English county as the majority of us might not before have visited: Cornwall being ultimately chosen.

Before our departure he was occupied by his preparation of the American Notes; and to the same interval belongs the arrival in London of Mr. Longfellow, who became his guest, and (for both of us I am privileged to add) our attached friend. Longfellow's name was not then the pleasant and familiar word it has since been in England; but he had already written several of his most felicitous pieces, and he possessed all the qualities of delightful companionship, the culture and the charm, which have no higher type or example than the accomplished and genial American. He reminded me, when lately again in England, of two experiences out of many we had enjoyed together this quarter of a century before. One of them was a day at Rochester, when, met by one of those prohibitions which are the wonder of visitors and the shame of Englishmen, we overleapt gates and barriers, and, setting at defiance repeated threats of all the terrors of law coarsely expressed to us by the custodian of the place, explored minutely the castle ruins. The other was a night among those portions of the population which outrage law and defy its terrors all the days of their lives, the tramps and thieves of London; when, under guidance and protection of the most trusted officers of the two great metropolitan prisons afforded to us by Mr. Chesterton and Lieut. Tracey, we went over the worst haunts of the most dangerous classes. Nor will it be unworthy of remark, in proof that attention is not drawn vainly to such scenes, that, upon Dickens going over them a dozen years later when he wrote a paper about them for his Household Words, he found important changes effected whereby these human dens, if not less dangerous, were become certainly more decent. On the night of our earlier visit, Maclise, who accompanied us, was struck with such sickness on entering the first of the Mint lodging-houses in the borough, that he had to remain, for the time we were in them, under guardianship of the police outside. Longfellow returned home by the Great Western from Bristol on the 21st of October, enjoying as he passed through Bath the hospitality of Landor; and at the end of the following week we started on our Cornish travel.

But what before this had occupied Dickens in the writing way must now be told. Not long after his reappearance amongst us, his house being still in the occupation of Sir John Wilson, he went to Broadstairs, taking with him the letters from which I have quoted so largely to help him in preparing his American Notes; and one of his first announcements to me (18th of July) shows not only this labour in progress, but the story he was under engagement to begin in November working in his mind. "The subjects at the beginning of the book are of that kind that I can't dash at them, and now and then they fret me in consequence. When I come to Washington, I am all right. The solitary prison at Philadelphia is a good subject, though; I forgot that for the moment. Have you seen the Boston chapter yet? . . . I have never been in Cornwall either. A mine certainly; and a letter for that purpose shall be got from

Southwood Smith. I have some notion of opening the new book in the lantern of a lighthouse!" A letter a couple of months later (16th of Sept.) recurs to that proposed opening of his story which after all he laid aside; and shows how rapidly he was getting his American Notes into shape. "At the Isle of Thanet races yesterday I saw--oh! who shall say what an immense amount of character in the way of inconceivable villainy and blackguardism! I even got some new wrinkles in the way of showmen, conjurors, pea-and-thimblers, and trampers generally. I think of opening my new book on the coast of Cornwall, in some terribly dreary iron-bound spot. I hope to have finished the American book before the end of next month; and we will then together fly down into that desolate region." Our friends having Academy engagements to detain them, we had to delay a little; and I meanwhile turn back to his letters to observe his progress with his Notes, and other employments or enjoyments of the interval. They require no illustration that they will not themselves supply: but I may remark that the then collected Poems of Tennyson had become very favourite reading with him; and that while in America Mr. Mitchell the comedian had given him a small white shaggy terrier, who bore at first the imposing name of Timber Doodle, and became a great domestic pet and companion.

"I have been reading" (7th of August) "Tennyson all this morning on the seashore. Among other trifling effects, the waters have dried up as they did of old, and shown me all the mermen and mermaids, at the bottom of the ocean; together with millions of queer creatures, half-fish and half-fungus, looking down into all manner of coral caves and seaweed conservatories; and staring in with their great dull eyes at every open nook and loop-hole. Who else, too, could conjure up such a close to the extraordinary and as Landor would say 'most wonderful' series of pictures in the 'dream of fair women,' as--

"'Squadrons and squares of men in brazen plates, Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers woes, Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron grates, And hushed seraglios!'

"I am getting on pretty well, but it was so glittering and sunshiny yesterday that I was forced to make holiday." Four days later: "I have not written a word this blessed day. I got to New York yesterday, and think it goes as it should . . . Little doggy improves rapidly, and now jumps over my stick at the word of command. I have changed his name to Snittle Timbery, as more sonorous and expressive. He unites with the rest of the family in cordial regards and loves. Nota Bene. The Margate theatre is open every evening, and the Four Patagonians (see Goldsmith's Essays) are performing thrice a week at Ranelagh . . ."

A visit from me was at this time due, to which these were held out as inducements; and there followed what it was supposed I could not resist, a transformation into the broadest farce of a deep tragedy by a dear friend of ours. "Now you really must come. Seeing only is believing, very often isn't that, and even Being the thing falls a long way short of believing it. Mrs. Nickleby herself once asked me, as you know, if I really believed there ever was such a woman; but there'll be no more belief, either in me or my descriptions, after what I have to tell of our excellent friend's tragedy, if you don't come and have it played again for yourself 'by particular desire.' We saw it last night, and oh! if you had but been with us! Young Betty, doing what the mind of man without my help never can conceive, with his legs like padded boot-trees wrapped up in faded yellow drawers, was the hero. The comic man of the company enveloped in a white sheet, with his head tied with red tape like a brief and greeted with yells of laughter whenever he appeared, was the venerable priest. A poor toothless old idiot at whom the very gallery roared with contempt when he was called a tyrant, was the remorseless and aged Creon. And Ismene being arrayed in spangled muslin trowsers very loose in the legs and very tight in the ankles, such as Fatima would wear in Blue Beard, was at her appearance immediately called upon for a song. After this, can you longer. . . ?"

With the opening of September I had renewed report of his book, and of other matters. "The Philadelphia

chapter I think very good, but I am sorry to say it has not made as much in print as I hoped . . . In America they have forged a letter with my signature, which they coolly declare appeared in the Chronicle with the copyright circular; and in which I express myself in such terms as you may imagine, in reference to the dinners and so forth. It has been widely distributed all over the States; and the felon who invented it is a 'smart man' of course. You are to understand that it is not done as a joke, and is scurrilously reviewed. Mr. Park Benjamin begins a lucubration upon it with these capitals, DICKENS IS A FOOL, AND A LIAR. . . . I have a new protege, in the person of a wretched deaf and dumb boy whom I found upon the sands the other day, half dead, and have got (for the present) into the union infirmary at Minster. A most deplorable case."

On the 14th he told me: "I have pleased myself very much to-day in the matter of Niagara. I have made the description very brief (as it should be), but I fancy it is good. I am beginning to think over the introductory chapter, and it has meanwhile occurred to me that I should like, at the beginning of the volumes, to put what follows on a blank page. I dedicate this Book to those friends of mine in America, who, loving their country, can bear the truth, when it is written good humouredly and in a kind spirit._ What do you think? Do you see any objection?"

My reply is to be inferred from what he sent back on the 20th. "I don't quite see my way towards an expression in the dedication of any feeling in reference to the American reception. Of course I have always intended to glance at it, gratefully, in the end of the book; and it will have its place in the introductory chapter, if we decide for that. Would it do to put in, after 'friends in America,' who giving me a welcome I must ever gratefully and proudly remember, left my judgment free, and who, loving, &c. If so, so be it."

Before the end of the month he wrote: "For the last two or three days I have been rather slack in point of work; not being in the vein. To-day I had not written twenty lines before I rushed out (the weather being gorgeous) to bathe. And when I have done that, it is all up with me in the way of authorship until to-morrow. The little dog is in the highest spirits; and jumps, as Mr. Kenwigs would say, perpetivally. I have had letters by the Britannia from Felton, Prescott, Mr. Q, and others, all very earnest and kind. I think you will like what I have written on the poor emigrants and their ways as I literally and truly saw them on the boat from Quebec to Montreal."

This was a passage, which, besides being in itself as attractive as any in his writings, gives such perfect expression to a feeling that underlies them all, that I subjoin it in a note. On board this Canadian steamboat he encountered crowds of poor emigrants and their children; and such was their patient kindness and cheerful endurance, in circumstances where the easy-living rich could hardly fail to be monsters of impatience and selfishness, that it suggested to him a reflection than which it was not possible to have written anything more worthy of observation, or more absolutely true. Jeremy Taylor has the same philosophy in his lesson on opportunities, but here it was beautified by the example with all its fine touches. It made us read Rich and Poor by new translation.

The printers were now hard at work, and in the last week of September he wrote: "I send you proofs as far as Niagara . . . I am rather holiday-making this week . . . taking principal part in a regatta here yesterday, very pretty and gay indeed. We think of coming up in time for Macready's opening, when perhaps you will give us a chop; and of course you and Mac will dine with us the next day? I shall leave nothing of the book to do after coming home, please God, but the two chapters on slavery and the people which I could manage easily in a week, if need were . . . The policeman who supposed the Duke of Brunswick to be one of the swell mob, ought instantly to be made an inspector. The suspicion reflects the highest credit (I seriously think) on his penetration and judgment." Three days later: "For the last two days we have had gales blowing from the north-east, and seas rolling on us that drown the pier. To-day it

is tremendous. Such a sea was never known here at this season, and it is running in at this moment in waves of twelve feet high. You would hardly know the place. But we shall be punctual to your dinner hour on Saturday. If the wind should hold in the same quarter, we may be obliged to come up by land; and in that case I should start the caravan at six in the morning. . . . What do you think of this for my title--American Notes for General Circulation; and of this motto?

"In reply to a question from the Bench, the Solicitor for the Bank observed, that this kind of notes circulated the most extensively, in those parts of the world where they were stolen and forged. Old Bailey Report._"

The motto was omitted, objection being made to it; and on the last day of the month I had the last of his letters during this Broadstairs visit. "Strange as it may appear to you" (25th of September), "the sea is running so high that we have no choice but to return by land. No steamer can come out of Ramsgate, and the Margate boat lay out all night on Wednesday with all her passengers on board. You may be sure of us therefore on Saturday at 5, for I have determined to leave here to-morrow, as we could not otherwise manage it in time; and have engaged an omnibus to bring the whole caravan by the overland route. . . . We cannot open a window, or a door; legs are of no use on the terrace; and the Margate boats can only take people aboard at Herne Bay!" He brought with him all that remained to be done of his second volume except the last two chapters, including that to which he has referred as "introductory;" and on the following Wednesday (5th of October) he told me that the first of these was done. "I want you very much to come and dine to-day that we may repair to Drury-lane together; and let us say half-past four, or there is no time to be comfortable. I am going out to Tottenham this morning, on a cheerless mission I would willingly have avoided. Hone, of the Every Day Book, is dying; and sent Cruikshank yesterday to beg me to go and see him, as, having read no books but mine of late, he wanted to see and shake hands with me before (as George said) 'he went.' There is no help for it, of course; so to Tottenham I repair, this morning. I worked all day, and till midnight; and finished the slavery chapter yesterday."

The cheerless visit had its mournful sequel before the next month closed, when he went with the same companion to poor Hone's funeral; and one of his letters written at the time to Mr. Felton has so vividly recalled to me the tragi-comedy of an incident of that day, as for long after he used to describe it, and as I have heard the other principal actor in it good-naturedly admit to be perfectly true, that two or three sentences may be given here. The wonderful neighbourhood in this life of ours, of serious and humorous things, constitutes in itself very much of the genius of Dickens's writing; the laughter close to the pathos, but never touching it with ridicule; and this small occurrence may be taken in farther evidence of its reality.

"We went into a little parlour where the funeral party was, and God knows it was miserable enough, for the widow and children were crying bitterly in one corner, and the other mourners (mere people of ceremony, who cared no more for the dead man than the hearse did) were talking quite coolly and carelessly together in another; and the contrast was as painful and distressing as anything I ever saw. There was an independent clergyman present, with his bands on and a bible under his arm, who, as soon as we were seated, addressed C thus, in a loud emphatic voice. 'Mr. C, have you seen a paragraph respecting our departed friend, which has gone the round of the morning papers?' 'Yes, sir,' says C, 'I have:' looking very hard at me the while, for he had told me with some pride coming down that it was his composition. 'Oh!' said the clergyman. 'Then you will agree with me, Mr. C, that it is not only an insult to me, who am the servant of the Almighty, but an insult to the Almighty, whose servant I am.' 'How is that, sir?' says C. 'It is stated, Mr. C, in that paragraph,' says the minister, 'that when Mr. Hone failed in business as a bookseller, he was persuaded by me to try the pulpit; which is false, incorrect, unchristian,

in a manner blasphemous, and in all respects contemptible. Let us pray.' With which, and in the same breath, I give you my word, he knelt down, as we all did, and began a very miserable jumble of an extemporary prayer. I was really penetrated with sorrow for the family" (he exerted himself zealously for them afterwards, as the kind-hearted C also did), "but when C, upon his knees and sobbing for the loss of an old friend, whispered me 'that if that wasn't a clergyman, and it wasn't a funeral, he'd have punched his head,' I felt as if nothing but convulsions could possibly relieve me."

On the 10th of October I heard from him that the chapter intended to be introductory to the Notes was written, and waiting our conference whether or not it should be printed. We decided against it; on his part so reluctantly, that I had to undertake for its publication when a more fitting time should come. This in my judgment has arrived, and the chapter first sees the light on this page. There is no danger at present, as there would have been when it was written, that its proper self-assertion should be mistaken for an apprehension of hostile judgments which he was anxious to deprecate or avoid. He is out of reach of all that now; and reveals to us here, as one whom fear or censure can touch no more, his honest purpose in the use of satire even where his humorous temptations were strongest. What he says will on other grounds also be read with unusual interest, for it will be found to connect itself impressively not with his first experiences only, but with his second visit to America at the close of his life. He held always the same high opinion of what was best in that country, and always the same contempt for what was worst in it.

"INTRODUCTORY. AND NECESSARY TO BE READ.

"I have placed the foregoing title at the head of this page, because I challenge and deny the right of any person to pass judgment on this book, or to arrive at any reasonable conclusion in reference to it, without first being at the trouble of becoming acquainted with its design and purpose.

"It is not statistical. Figures of arithmetic have already been heaped upon America's devoted head, almost as lavishly as figures of speech have been piled above Shakespeare's grave.

"It comprehends no small talk concerning individuals, and no violation of the social confidences of private life. The very prevalent practice of kidnapping live ladies and gentlemen, forcing them into cabinets, and labelling and ticketing them whether they will or no, for the gratification of the idle and the curious, is not to my taste. Therefore I have avoided it.

"It has not a grain of any political ingredient in its whole composition.

"Neither does it contain, nor have I intended that it should contain, any lengthened and minute account of my personal reception in the United States: not because I am, or ever was, insensible to that spontaneous effusion of affection and generosity of heart, in a most affectionate and generous-hearted people; but because I conceive that it would ill become me to flourish matter necessarily involving so much of my own praises, in the eyes of my unhappy readers.

"This book is simply what it claims to be--a record of the impressions I received from day to day, during my hasty travels in America, and sometimes (but not always) of the conclusions to which they, and after-reflection on them, have led me; a description of the country I passed through; of the institutions I visited; of the kind of people among whom I journeyed; and of the manners and customs that came within my observation. Very many works having just the same scope and range, have been already published, but I think that these two volumes stand in need of no apology on that account. The interest of such productions, if they have any, lies in the varying impressions made by the same novel things on different minds; and not in new discoveries or extraordinary adventures.

"I can scarcely be supposed to be ignorant of the hazard I run in writing of America at all. I know perfectly well that there is, in that country, a numerous class of well-intentioned persons prone to be dissatisfied

with all accounts of the Republic whose citizens they are, which are not couched in terms of exalted and extravagant praise. I know perfectly well that there is in America, as in most other places laid down in maps of the great world, a numerous class of persons so tenderly and delicately constituted, that they cannot bear the truth in any form. And I do not need the gift of prophecy to discern afar off, that they who will be aptest to detect malice, ill will, and all uncharitableness in these pages, and to show, beyond any doubt, that they are perfectly inconsistent with that grateful and enduring recollection which I profess to entertain of the welcome I found awaiting me beyond the Atlantic--will be certain native journalists, veracious and gentlemanly, who were at great pains to prove to me, on all occasions during my stay there, that the aforesaid welcome was utterly worthless.

"But, venturing to dissent even from these high authorities, I formed my own opinion of its value in the outset, and retain it to this hour; and in asserting (as I invariably did on all public occasions) my liberty and freedom of speech while I was among the Americans, and in maintaining it at home, I believe that I best show my sense of the high worth of that welcome, and of the honourable singleness of purpose with which it was extended to me. From first to last I saw, in the friends who crowded round me in America, old readers, over-grateful and over-partial perhaps, to whom I had happily been the means of furnishing pleasure and entertainment; not a vulgar herd who would flatter and cajole a stranger into turning with closed eyes from all the blemishes of the nation, and into chaunting its praises with the discrimination of a street ballad-singer. From first to last I saw, in those hospitable hands, a home-made wreath of laurel; and not an iron muzzle disguised beneath a flower or two.

"Therefore I take--and hold myself not only justified in taking, but bound to take--the plain course of saying what I think, and noting what I saw; and as it is not my custom to exalt what in my judgment are foibles and abuses at home, so I have no intention of softening down, or glozing over, those that I have observed abroad.

"If this book should fall into the hands of any sensitive American who cannot bear to be told that the working of the institutions of his country is far from perfect; that in spite of the advantage she has over all other nations in the elastic freshness and vigour of her youth, she is far from being a model for the earth to copy; and that even in those pictures of the national manners with which he quarrels most, there is still (after the lapse of several years, each of which may be fairly supposed to have had its stride in improvement) much that is just and true at this hour; let him lay it down, now, for I shall not please him. Of the intelligent, reflecting, and educated among his countrymen, I have no fear; for I have ample reason to believe, after many delightful conversations not easily to be forgotten, that there are very few topics (if any) on which their sentiments differ materially from mine.

"I may be asked--'If you have been in any respect disappointed in America, and are assured beforehand that the expression of your disappointment will give offence to any class, why do you write at all?' My answer is, that I went there expecting greater things than I found, and resolved as far as in me lay to do justice to the country, at the expense of any (in my view) mistaken or prejudiced statements that might have been made to its disparagement. Coming home with a corrected and sobered judgment, I consider myself no less bound to do justice to what, according to my best means of judgment, I found to be the truth."

Of the book for whose opening page this matter introductory was written, it will be enough merely to add that it appeared on the 18th of October; that before the close of the year four large editions had been sold; and that in my opinion it thoroughly deserved the estimate formed of it by one connected with America by the strongest social affections, and otherwise in all respects an honourable, high-minded, upright judge. "You have been very tender," wrote Lord Jeffrey, "to our sensitive friends beyond sea, and my whole heart goes along with every word you have written. I think that you have perfectly

accomplished all that you profess or undertake to do, and that the world has never yet seen a more faithful, graphic, amusing, kind-hearted narrative."

I permit myself so far to anticipate a later page as to print here a brief extract from one of the letters of the last American visit. Without impairing the interest with which the narrative of that time will be read in its proper place, I shall thus indicate the extent to which present impressions were modified by the experience of twenty-six years later. He is writing from Philadelphia on the fourteenth of January, 1868.

"I see great changes for the better, socially. Politically, no. England governed by the Marylebone vestry and the penny papers, and England as she would be after years of such governing; is what I make of that. Socially, the change in manners is remarkable. There is much greater politeness and forbearance in all ways. . . . On the other hand there are still provincial oddities wonderfully quizzical; and the newspapers are constantly expressing the popular amazement at 'Mr. Dickens's extraordinary composure.' They seem to take it ill that I don't stagger on to the platform overpowered by the spectacle before me, and the national greatness. They are all so accustomed to do public things with a flourish of trumpets, that the notion of my coming in to read without somebody first flying up and delivering an 'Oration' about me, and flying down again and leading me in, is so very unaccountable to them, that sometimes they have no idea until I open my lips that it can possibly be Charles Dickens."

Volume II, Chapter 2 (1843): First Year of Martin Chuzzlewit

First Year of Martin Chuzzlewit

THE Cornish trip had come off, meanwhile, with such unexpected and continued attraction for us that we were well into the third week of absence before we turned our faces homeward. Railways helped us then not much; but where the roads were inaccessible to post-horses, we walked. Tintagel was visited, and no part of mountain or sea consecrated by the legends of Arthur was left unexplored. We ascended to the cradle of the highest tower of Mount St. Michael, and descended into several mines. Land and sea yielded each its marvels to us; but of all the impressions brought away, of which some afterwards took forms as lasting as they could receive from the most delightful art, I doubt if any were the source of such deep emotion to us all as a sunset we saw at Land's-end. Stanfield knew the wonders of the Continent, the glories of Ireland were native to Maclise, I was familiar from boyhood with border and Scottish scenery, and Dickens was fresh from Niagara; but there was something in the sinking of the sun behind the Atlantic that autumn afternoon, as we viewed it together from the top of the rock projecting farthest into the sea, which each in his turn declared to have no parallel in memory.

But with the varied and overflowing gladness of those three memorable weeks it would be unworthy now to associate only the saddened recollection of the sole survivor. "Blessed star of morning!" wrote Dickens to Felton while yet the glow of its enjoyment was upon him. "Such a trip as we had into Cornwall just after Longfellow went away! . . . Sometimes we travelled all night, sometimes all day, sometimes both. . . . Heavens! If you could have seen the necks of bottles, distracting in their immense varieties of shape, peering out of the carriage pockets! If you could have witnessed the deep devotion of the post-boys, the wild attachment of the hostlers, the maniac glee of the waiters! If you could have followed us into the earthy old churches we visited, and into the strange caverns on the gloomy sea-shore, and down into the depths of mines, and up to the tops of giddy heights where the unspeakable green water was roaring, I don't know how many hundred feet below! If you could have seen but one gleam of the bright fires by which we sat in the big rooms of ancient inns at night, until long after the small hours had come and gone. . . . I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey. It would have done you good to hear me. I was choking and gasping and bursting the buckle off the back of my stock, all the way. And Stanfield got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him. Seriously, I do believe there never was such a trip. And they made such sketches, those two men, in the most romantic of our halting-places, that you would have sworn we had the Spirit of Beauty with us, as well as the Spirit of Fun."

The Logan Stone, by Stanfield, was one of them; and it laughingly sketched both the charm of what was seen and the mirth of what was done, for it perched me on the top of the stone. It is historical, however, the ascent having been made; and of this and other examples of steadiness at heights which deterred the rest, as well as of a subject suggested for a painting of which Dickens became the unknown purchaser, Maclise reminded me in some pleasant allusions many years later, which, notwithstanding their tribute to my athletic achievements, the good-natured reader must forgive my printing. They complete the little picture of our trip. Something I had written to him of recent travel among the mountain scenery of the wilder coasts of Donegal had touched the chord of these old remembrances. "As to your clambering," he replied, "don't I know what happened of old? Don't I still see the Logan Stone, and you perched on the giddy top, while we, rocking it on its pivot, shrank from all that lay concealed below! Should I ever have blundered on the waterfall of St. Wighton, if you had not piloted the way? And when we got to Land's-end, with the green sea far under us lapping into solitary rocky nooks where the mermaids live, who but you only had the courage to stretch over, to see those diamond jets of brightness

that I swore then, and believe still, were the flappings of their tails! And don't I recall you again, sitting on the tip-top stone of the cradle-turret over the highest battlement of the castle of St. Michael's Mount, with not a ledge or coigne of vantage 'twixt you and the fathomless ocean under you, distant three thousand feet? Last, do I forget you clambering up the goat-path to King Arthur's castle of Tintagel, when, in my vain wish to follow, I grovelled and clung to the soil like a Caliban, and you, in the manner of a tricksy spirit and stout Ariel, actually danced up and down before me!"

The waterfall I led him to was among the records of the famous holiday, celebrated also by Thackeray in one of his pen-and-ink pleasantries, which were sent by both painters to the next year's Academy; and so eager was Dickens to possess this landscape by Maclise which included the likeness of a member of his family, yet so anxious that our friend should be spared the sacrifice which he knew would follow an avowal of his wish, that he bought it under a feigned name before the Academy opened, and steadily refused to take back the money which on discovery of the artifice Maclise pressed upon him. Our friend, who already had munificently given him a charming drawing of his four eldest children to accompany him and his wife to America, had his generous way nevertheless; and as a voluntary offering four years later, painted Mrs. Dickens on a canvas of the same size as the picture of her husband in 1839.

"Behold finally the title of the new book," was the first note I had from Dickens (12th of November) after our return; "don't lose it, for I have no copy." Title and even story had been undetermined while we travelled, from the lingering wish he still had to begin it among those Cornish scenes; but this intention had now been finally abandoned, and the reader lost nothing by his substitution for the lighthouse or mine in Cornwall, of the Wiltshire-village forge on the windy autumn evening which opens the tale of Martin Chuzzlewit. Into that name he finally settled, but only after much deliberation, as a mention of his changes will show. Martin was the prefix to all, but the surname varied from its first form of Sweezleden, Sweezleback, and Sweezlewag, to those of Chuzzletoe, Chuzzleboy, Chubblewig, and Chuzzlewig; nor was Chuzzlewit chosen at last until after more hesitation and discussion. What he had sent me in his letter as finally adopted, ran thus: "The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewig, his family, friends, and enemies. Comprising all his wills and his ways. With an historical record of what he did and what he didn't. The whole forming a complete key to the house of Chuzzlewig." All which latter portion of the title was of course dropped as the work became modified, in its progress, by changes at first not contemplated; but as early as the third number he sent me the plan of "old Martin's plot to degrade and punish Pecksniff," and the difficulties he encountered in departing from other portions of his scheme were such as to render him, in his subsequent stories, more bent upon constructive care at the outset, and adherence as far as might be to any design he had formed.

The first number, which appeared in January 1843, had not been quite finished when he wrote to me on the 8th of December: "The Chuzzlewit copy makes so much more than I supposed, that the number is nearly done. Thank God!" Beginning so hurriedly as at last he did, altering his course at the opening and seeing little as yet of the main track of his design, perhaps no story was ever begun by him with stronger heart or confidence. Illness kept me to my rooms for some days, and he was so eager to try the effect of Pecksniff and Pinch that he came down with the ink hardly dry on the last slip to read the manuscript to me. Well did Sydney Smith, in writing to say how very much the number had pleased him, foresee the promise there was in those characters. "Pecksniff and his daughters, and Pinch, are admirable--quite first-rate painting, such as no one but yourself can execute!" And let me here at once remark that the notion of taking Pecksniff for a type of character was really the origin of the book; the design being to show, more or less by every person introduced, the number and variety of humours and vices that have their root in selfishness.

Another piece of his writing that claims mention at the close of 1842 was a prologue contributed to the

Patrician's Daughter, Mr. Westland Marston's first dramatic effort, which had attracted him by the beauty of its composition less than by the courage with which its subject had been chosen from the actual life of the time.

"Not light its import, and not poor its mien; Yourselves the actors, and your homes the scene."

This was the date, too, of Mr. Browning's tragedy of the Blot on the 'Scutcheon, which I took upon myself, after reading it in the manuscript, privately to impart to Dickens; and I was not mistaken in the belief that it would profoundly touch him. "Browning's play," he wrote (25th of November), "has thrown me into a perfect passion of sorrow. To say that there is anything in its subject save what is lovely, true, deeply affecting, full of the best emotion, the most earnest feeling, and the most true and tender source of interest, is to say that there is no light in the sun, and no heat in blood. It is full of genius, natural and great thoughts, profound and yet simple and beautiful in its vigour. I know nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as Mildred's recurrence to that 'I was so young--I had no mother.' I know no love like it, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception, like it. And I swear it is a tragedy that MUST be played; and must be played, moreover, by Macready. There are some things I would have changed if I could (they are very slight, mostly broken lines); and I assuredly would have the old servant begin his tale upon the scene; and be taken by the throat, or drawn upon, by his master, in its commencement. But the tragedy I never shall forget, or less vividly remember than I do now. And if you tell Browning that I have seen it, tell him that I believe from my soul there is no man living (and not many dead) who could produce such a work.--Macready likes the altered prologue very much.". . . There will come a more convenient time to speak of his general literary likings, or special regard for contemporary books; but I will say now that nothing interested him more than successes won honestly in his own field, and that in his large and open nature there was no hiding-place for little jealousies. An instance occurs to me which may be named at once, when, many years after the present date, he called my attention very earnestly to two tales then in course of publication in Blackwood's Magazine, and afterwards collected under the title of Scenes of Clerical Life. "Do read them," he wrote. "They are the best things I have seen since I began my course."

Eighteen hundred and forty-three opened with the most vigorous prosecution of his Chuzzlewit labour. "I hope the number will be very good," he wrote to me of number two (8th of January). "I have been hammering away, and at home all day. Ditto yesterday; except for two hours in the afternoon, when I ploughed through snow half a foot deep, round about the wilds of Willesden." For the present, however, I shall glance only briefly from time to time at his progress with the earlier portions of the story on which he was thus engaged until the midsummer of 1844. Disappointments arose in connection with it, unexpected and strange, which had important influence upon him: but, I reserve the mention of these for awhile, that I may speak of the leading incidents of 1843.

"I am in a difficulty," he wrote (12th of February), "and am coming down to you some time to-day or to-night. I couldn't write a line yesterday; not a word, though I really tried hard. In a kind of despair I started off at half-past two with my pair of petticoats to Richmond; and dined there!! Oh what a lovely day it was in those parts." His pair of petticoats were Mrs. Dickens and her sister Georgina: the latter, since his return from America, having become part of his household, of which she remained a member until his death; and he had just reason to be proud of the steadiness, depth, and devotion of her friendship. In a note-book begun by him in January 1855, where, for the first time in his life, he jotted down hints and fancies proposed to be made available in future writings, I find a character sketched of which, if the whole was not suggested by his sister-in-law, the most part was applicable to her. "She--sacrificed to children, and sufficiently rewarded. From a child herself, always 'the children' (of somebody else) to engross her. And so it comes to pass that she is never married; never herself has a child; is always

devoted 'to the children' (of somebody else); and they love her; and she has always youth dependent on her till her death--and dies quite happily." Not many days after that holiday at Richmond, a slight unstudied outline in pencil was made by Maclise of the three who formed the party there, as we all sat together; and never did a touch so light carry with it more truth of observation. The likenesses of all are excellent; and I here preserve the drawing because nothing ever done of Dickens himself has conveyed more vividly his look and bearing at this yet youthful time. He is in his most pleasing aspect; flattered, if you will; but nothing that is known to me gives a general impression so life-like and true of the then frank, eager, handsome face.

It was a year of much illness with me, which had ever-helpful and active sympathy from him. "Send me word how you are," he wrote, two days later. "But not so much for that I now write, as to tell you, peremptorily, that I insist on your wrapping yourself up and coming here in a hackney-coach, with a big portmanteau, to-morrow. It surely is better to be unwell with a Quick and Cheerful (and Co) in the neighbourhood, than in the dreary vastness of Lincoln's-inn-fields. Here is the snuggest tent-bedstead in the world, and there you are with the drawing-room for your workshop, the Q and C for your pal, and 'every-think in a concatenation accordingly.' I begin to have hopes of the regeneration of mankind after the reception of Gregory last night, though I have none of the Chronicle for not denouncing the villain. Have you seen the note touching my Notes in the blue and yellow?"

The first of these closing allusions was to the editor of the infamous Satirist having been hissed from the Drury-lane stage, on which he had presented himself in the character of Hamlet; and I remember with what infinite pleasure I afterwards heard Chief Justice Tindal in court, charging the jury in an action brought by this malefactor against a publican of St. Giles's for having paid men to take part in the hissing of him, avow the pride he felt in "living in the same parish with a man of that humble station of life of the defendant's," who was capable of paying money out of his own pocket to punish what he believed to be an outrage to decency. The second allusion was to a statement of the reviewer of the American Notes in the Edinburgh to the effect, that, if he had been rightly informed, Dickens had gone to America as a kind of missionary in the cause of international copyright; to which a prompt contradiction had been given in the Times. "I deny it," wrote Dickens, "wholly. He is wrongly informed; and reports, without enquiry, a piece of information which I could only characterize by using one of the shortest and strongest words in the language."

The disputes that had arisen out of the American book, I may add, stretched over great part of the year. It will quite suffice, however, to say here that the ground taken by him in his letters written on the spot, and printed in my former volume, which in all the more material statements his book invited public judgment upon and which he was moved to reopen in Chuzzlewit, was so kept by him against all comers, that none of the counter-statements or arguments dislodged him from a square inch of it. But the controversy is dead now; and he took occasion, on his later visit to America, to write its epitaph.

Though I did not, to revert to his February letter, obey its cordial bidding by immediately taking up quarters with him, I soon after joined him at a cottage he rented in Finchley; and here, walking and talking in the green lanes as the midsummer months were coming on, his introduction of Mrs. Gamp, and the uses to which he should apply that remarkable personage, first occurred to him. In his preface to the book he speaks of her as a fair representation, at the time it was published, of the hired attendant on the poor in sickness: but he might have added that the rich were no better off, for Mrs. Gamp's original was in reality a person hired by a most distinguished friend of his own, a lady, to take charge of an invalid very dear to her; and the common habit of this nurse in the sick room, among other Gampish peculiarities, was to rub her nose along the top of the tall fender. Whether or not, on that first mention of her, I had any doubts whether such a character could be made a central figure in his story, I do not now

remember; but if there were any at the time, they did not outlive the contents of the packet which introduced her to me in the flesh a few weeks after our return. "Tell me," he wrote from Yorkshire, where he had been meanwhile passing pleasant holiday with a friend, "what you think of Mrs. Gamp? You'll not find it easy to get through the hundreds of misprints in her conversation, but I want your opinion at once. I think you know already something of mine. I mean to make a mark with her." The same letter enclosed me a clever and pointed little parable in verse which he had written for an annual edited by Lady Blessington.

Another allusion in the February letter reminds me of the interest which his old work for the Chronicle gave him in everything affecting its credit, and that this was the year when Mr. John Black ceased to be its editor, in circumstances reviving strongly all Dickens's sympathies. "I am deeply grieved" (3rd of May, 1843) "about Black. Sorry from my heart's core. If I could find him out, I would go and comfort him this moment." He did find him out; and he and a certain number of us did also comfort this excellent man after a fashion extremely English, by giving him a Greenwich dinner on the 20th of May; when Dickens had arranged and ordered all to perfection, and the dinner succeeded in its purpose, as in other ways, quite wonderfully. Among the entertainers were Sheil and Thackeray, Fonblanque and Charles Buller, Southwood Smith and William Johnson Fox, Macready and Maclise, as well as myself and Dickens.

There followed another similar celebration, in which one of these entertainers was the guest and which owed hardly less to Dickens's exertions, when, at the Star-and-garter at Richmond in the autumn, we wished Macready good-speed on his way to America. Dickens took the chair at that dinner; and with Stanfield, Maclise, and myself, was in the following week to have accompanied the great actor to Liverpool to say good-bye to him on board the Cunard ship, and bring his wife back to London after their leave-taking; when a word from our excellent friend Captain Marryat, startling to all of us except Dickens himself, struck him out of our party. Marryat thought that Macready might suffer in the States by any public mention of his having been attended on his way by the author of the American Notes and Martin Chuzzlewit, and our friend at once agreed with him. "Your main and foremost reason," he wrote to me, "for doubting Marryat's judgment, I can at once destroy. It has occurred to me many times; I have mentioned the thing to Kate more than once; and I had intended not to go on board, charging Radley to let nothing be said of my being in his house. I have been prevented from giving any expression to my fears by a misgiving that I should seem to attach, if I did so, too much importance to my own doings. But now that I have Marryat at my back, I have not the least hesitation in saying that I am certain he is right. I have very great apprehensions that the Nickleby dedication will damage Macready. Marryat is wrong in supposing it is not printed in the American editions, for I have myself seen it in the shop windows of several cities. If I were to go on board with him, I have not the least doubt that the fact would be placarded all over New York, before he had shaved himself in Boston. And that there are thousands of men in America who would pick a quarrel with him on the mere statement of his being my friend, I have no more doubt than I have of my existence. You have only doubted Marryat because it is impossible for any man to know what they are in their own country, who has not seen them there."

This letter was written from Broadstairs, whither he had gone in August, after such help as he only could give, and never took such delight as in giving, to a work of practical humanity. Earlier in the year he had presided at a dinner for the Printers' Pension-fund, which Thomas Hood, Douglas Jerrold, and myself attended with him; and upon the terrible summer-evening accident at sea by which Mr. Elton the actor lost his life, it was mainly by Dickens's unremitting exertions, seconded admirably by Mr. Serle and warmly taken up by Mr. Elton's own profession (the most generous in the world), that ample provision was made for the many children. At the close of August I had news of him from his favourite watering-place, too characteristic to be omitted. The day before had been a day of "terrific heat," yet this had not deterred him from doing what he was too often suddenly prone to do in the midst of his hardest

work. "I performed an insane match against time of eighteen miles by the milestones in four hours and a half, under a burning sun the whole way. I could get" (he is writing next morning) "no sleep at night, and really began to be afraid I was going to have a fever. You may judge in what kind of authorship-training I am to-day. I could as soon eat the cliff as write about anything." A few days later, however, all was well again; and another sketch from himself, to his American friend, will show his sea-side life in ordinary. "In a bay-window in a one-pair sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny indeed. At one he disappears, presently emerges from a bathing-machine, and may be seen, a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise, splashing about in the ocean. After that he may be viewed in another bay-window on the ground floor, eating a strong lunch; and after that, walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back in the sand reading a book. Nobody bothers him unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable indeed. He's as brown as a berry, and they do say is a small fortune to the innkeeper who sells beer and cold punch. But this is mere rumour. Sometimes he goes up to London (eighty miles or so away), and then I'm told there is a sound in Lincoln's-inn-fields at night, as of men laughing, together with a clinking of knives and forks and wine-glasses."

He returned to town "for good" on Monday the 2nd of October, and from the Wednesday to the Friday of that week was at Manchester, presiding at the opening of its great Athenaeum, when Mr. Cobden and Mr. Disraeli also "assisted." Here he spoke mainly on a matter always nearest his heart, the education of the very poor. He protested against the danger of calling a little learning dangerous; declared his preference for the very least of the little over none at all; proposed to substitute for the old a new doggerel,

Though house and lands be never got, Learning can give what they can not;

told his listeners of the real and paramount danger we had lately taken Longfellow to see in the nightly refuges of London, "thousands of immortal creatures condemned without alternative or choice to tread, not what our great poet calls the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire, but one of jagged flints and stones laid down by brutal ignorance;" and contrasted this with the unspeakable consolation and blessings that a little knowledge had shed on men of the lowest estate and most hopeless means, "watching the stars with Ferguson the shepherd's boy, walking the streets with Crabbe, a poor barber here in Lancashire with Arkwright, a tallow-chandler's son with Franklin, shoemaking with Bloomfield in his garret, following the plough with Burns, and, high above the noise of loom and hammer, whispering courage in the ears of workers I could this day name in Sheffield and in Manchester."

The same spirit impelled him to give eager welcome to the remarkable institution of Ragged schools, which, begun by a shoemaker of Southampton and a chimney-sweep of Windsor and carried on by a peer of the realm, has had results of incalculable importance to society. The year of which I am writing was its first, as this in which I write is its last; and in the interval, out of three hundred thousand children to whom it has given some sort of education, it is computed also to have given to a third of that number the means of honest employment. "I sent Miss Coutts," he had written (24th of September), "a sledge hammer account of the Ragged schools; and as I saw her name for two hundred pounds in the clergy education subscription-list, took pains to show her that religious mysteries and difficult creeds wouldn't do for such pupils. I told her, too, that it was of immense importance they should be washed. She writes back to know what the rent of some large airy premises would be, and what the expense of erecting a regular bathing or purifying place; touching which points I am in correspondence with the authorities. I have no doubt she will do whatever I ask her in the matter. She is a most excellent creature, I protest to God, and I have a most perfect affection and respect for her."

One of the last things he did at the close of the year, in the like spirit, was to offer to describe the Ragged

schools for the Edinburgh Review. "I have told Napier," he wrote to me, "I will give a description of them in a paper on education, if the Review is not afraid to take ground against the church catechism and other mere formularies and subtleties, in reference to the education of the young and ignorant. I fear it is extremely improbable it will consent to commit itself so far." His fears were well-founded; but the statements then made by him give me opportunity to add that it was his impatience of differences on this point with clergymen of the Established Church that had led him, for the past year or two, to take sittings in the Little Portland-street Unitarian chapel; for whose officiating minister, Mr. Edward Tagart, he had a friendly regard which continued long after he had ceased to be a member of his congregation. That he did so quit it, after two or three years, I can distinctly state; and of the frequent agitation of his mind and thoughts in connection with this all-important theme, there will be other occasions to speak. But upon essential points he had never any sympathy so strong as with the leading doctrine and discipline of the Church of England; to these, as time went on, he found himself able to accommodate all minor differences; and the unswerving faith in Christianity itself, apart from sects and schisms, which had never failed him at any period of his life, found expression at its close in the language of his will. Twelve months before his death, these words were written. "I direct that my name be inscribed in plain English letters on my tomb . . . I conjure my friends on no account to make me the subject of any monument, memorial, or testimonial whatever. I rest my claim to the remembrance of my country on my published works, and to the remembrance of my friends upon their experience of me in addition thereto. I commit my soul to the mercy of God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here or there."

Active as he had been in the now ending year, and great as were its varieties of employment; his genius in its highest mood, his energy unwearied in good work, and his capacity for enjoyment without limit; he was able to signalize its closing months by an achievement supremely fortunate, which but for disappointments the year had also brought might never have been thought of. He had not begun until a week after his return from Manchester, where the fancy first occurred to him, and before the end of November he had finished, his memorable Christmas Carol. It was the work of such odd moments of leisure as were left him out of the time taken up by two numbers of his Chuzzlewit; and though begun with but the special design of adding something to the Chuzzlewit balance, I can testify to the accuracy of his own account of what befell him in its composition, with what a strange mastery it seized him for itself, how he wept over it, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself to an extraordinary degree, and how he walked thinking of it fifteen and twenty miles about the black streets of London, many and many a night after all sober folks had gone to bed. And when it was done, as he told our friend Mr. Felton in America, he let himself loose like a madman. "Forster is out again," he added, by way of illustrating our practical comments on his celebration of the jovial old season, "and if he don't go in again after the manner in which we have been keeping Christmas, he must be very strong indeed. Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blind-man's-buffings, such theatre-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones, never took place in these parts before."

Yet had it been to him, this closing year, a time also of much anxiety and strange disappointments of which I am now to speak; and before, with that view, we go back for a while to its earlier months, one step into the new year may be taken for what marked it with interest and importance to him. Eighteen hundred and forty-four was but fifteen days old when a third son (his fifth child, which received the name of its godfather Francis Jeffrey) was born; and here is an answer sent by him, two days later, to an invitation from Maclise, Stanfield, and myself to dine with us at Richmond. "DEVONSHIRE LODGE, Seventeenth of January, 1844. FELLOW COUNTRYMEN! The appeal with which you have honoured me, awakens within my breast emotions that are more easily to be imagined than described. Heaven

bless you. I shall indeed be proud, my friends, to respond to such a requisition. I had withdrawn from Public Life--I fondly thought forever--to pass the evening of my days in hydropathical pursuits, and the contemplation of virtue. For which latter purpose, I had bought a looking-glass.--But, my friends, private feeling must ever yield to a stern sense of public duty. The Man is lost in the Invited Guest, and I comply. Nurses, wet and dry; apothecaries; mothers-in-law; babbies; with all the sweet (and chaste) delights of private life; these, my countrymen, are hard to leave. But you have called me forth, and I will come. Fellow countrymen, your friend and faithful servant, CHARLES DICKENS."

Volume II, Chapter 3 (1843-1844): Chuzzlewit Disappointments and Christmas Carol

Chuzzlewit Disappointments and Christmas Carol

CHUZZLEWIT had fallen short of all the expectations formed of it in regard to sale. By much the most masterly of his writings hitherto, the public had rallied to it in far less numbers than to any of its predecessors. The primary cause of this, there is little doubt, had been the change to weekly issues in the form of publication of his last two stories; for into everything in this world mere habit enters more largely than we are apt to suppose. Nor had the temporary withdrawal to America been favourable to an immediate resumption by his readers of their old and intimate relations. This also is to be added, that the excitement by which a popular reputation is kept up to the highest selling mark, will always be subject to lulls too capricious for explanation. But whatever the causes, here was the undeniable fact of a grave depreciation of sale in his writings, unaccompanied by any falling off either in themselves or in the writer's reputation. It was very temporary; but it was present, and to be dealt with accordingly. The forty and fifty thousand purchasers of Pickwick and Nickleby, the sixty and seventy thousand of the early numbers of the enterprize in which the Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge appeared, had fallen to little over twenty thousand. They rose somewhat on Martin's ominous announcement, at the end of the fourth number, that he'd go to America; but though it was believed that this resolve, which Dickens adopted as suddenly as his hero, might increase the number of his readers, that reason influenced him less than the challenge to make good his Notes which every mail had been bringing him from unsparing assailants beyond the Atlantic. The substantial effect of the American episode upon the sale was yet by no means great. A couple of thousand additional purchasers were added, but the highest number at any time reached before the story closed was twenty-three thousand. Its sale, since, has ranked next after Pickwick and Copperfield.

We were now, however, to have a truth brought home to us which few that have had real or varied experience in such matters can have failed to be impressed by--that publishers are bitter bad judges of an author, and are seldom safe persons to consult in regard to the fate or fortunes that may probably await him. Describing the agreement for this book in September 1841, I spoke of a provision against the improbable event of its profits proving inadequate to certain necessary repayments. In this unlikely case, which was to be ascertained by the proceeds of the first five numbers, the publishers were to have power to appropriate fifty pounds a month out of the two hundred pounds payable for authorship in the expenses of each number; but though this had been introduced with my knowledge, I knew also too much of the antecedent relations of the parties to regard it as other than a mere form to satisfy the attorneys in the case. The fifth number, which landed Martin and Mark in America, and the sixth, which described their first experiences, were published; and on the eve of the seventh, in which Mrs. Gamp was to make her first appearance, I heard with infinite pain that from Mr. Hall, the younger partner of the firm which had enriched itself by Pickwick and Nickleby, and a very kind well-disposed man, there had dropped an inconsiderate hint to the writer of those books that it might be desirable to put the clause in force. It had escaped him without his thinking of all that it involved; certainly the senior partner, whatever amount of as thoughtless sanction he had at the moment given to it, always much regretted it, and made endeavours to exhibit his regret; but the mischief was done, and for the time was irreparable.

"I am so irritated," Dickens wrote to me on the 28th of June, "so rubbed in the tenderest part of my eyelids with bay-salt, by what I told you yesterday, that a wrong kind of fire is burning in my head, and I don't think I can write. Nevertheless, I am trying. In case I should succeed, and should not come down to

you this morning, shall you be at the club or elsewhere after dinner? I am bent on paying the money. And before going into the matter with anybody I should like you to propound from me the one preliminary question to Bradbury and Evans. It is more than a year and a half since Clowes wrote to urge me to give him a hearing, in case I should ever think of altering my plans. A printer is better than a bookseller, and it is quite as much the interest of one (if not more) to join me. But whoever it is, or whatever, I am bent upon paying Chapman and Hall down. And when I have done that, Mr. Hall shall have a piece of my mind."

What he meant by the proposed repayment will be understood by what formerly was said of his arrangements with these gentlemen on the repurchase of his early copyrights. Feeling no surprise at this announcement, I yet prevailed with him to suspend proceedings until his return from Broadstairs in October; and what then I had to say led to memorable resolves. The communication he had desired me to make to his printers had taken them too much by surprise to enable them to form a clear judgment respecting it; and they replied by suggestions which were in effect a confession of that want of confidence in themselves. They enlarged upon the great results that would follow a reissue of his writings in a cheap form; they strongly urged such an undertaking; and they offered to invest to any desired amount in the establishment of a magazine or other periodical to be edited by him. The possible dangers, in short, incident to their assuming the position of publishers as well as printers of new works from his pen, seemed at first to be so much greater than on closer examination they were found to be, that at the outset they shrank from encountering them. And hence the remarkable letter I shall now quote (1st of November, 1843).

"Don't be startled by the novelty and extent of my project. Both startled me at first; but I am well assured of its wisdom and necessity. I am afraid of a magazine--just now. I don't think the time a good one, or the chances favourable. I am afraid of putting myself before the town as writing tooth and nail for bread, headlong, after the close of a book taking so much out of one as Chuzzlewit. I am afraid I could not do it, with justice to myself. I know that whatever we may say at first, a new magazine, or a new anything, would require so much propping, that I should be forced (as in the Clock) to put myself into it, in my old shape. I am afraid of Bradbury and Evans's desire to force on the cheap issue of my books, or any of them, prematurely. I am sure if it took place yet awhile, it would damage me and damage the property, enormously. It is very natural in them to want it; but, since they do want it, I have no faith in their regarding me in any other respect than they would regard any other man in a speculation. I see that this is really your opinion as well; and I don't see what I gain, in such a case, by leaving Chapman and Hall. If I had made money, I should unquestionably fade away from the public eye for a year, and enlarge my stock of description and observation by seeing countries new to me; which it is most necessary to me that I should see, and which with an increasing family I can scarcely hope to see at all, unless I see them now. Already for some time I have had this hope and intention before me; and though not having made money yet, I find or fancy that I can put myself in the position to accomplish it. And this is the course I have before me. At the close of Chuzzlewit (by which time the debt will have been materially reduced) I purpose drawing from Chapman and Hall my share of the subscription--bills, or money, will do equally well. I design to tell them that it is not likely I shall do anything for a year; that, in the meantime, I make no arrangement whatever with any one; and our business matters rest in statu quo. The same to Bradbury and Evans. I shall let the house if I can; if not, leave it to be let. I shall take all the family, and two servants--three at most--to some place which I know beforehand to be CHEAP and in a delightful climate, in Normandy or Brittany, to which I shall go over, first, and where I shall rent some house for six or eight months. During that time, I shall walk through Switzerland, cross the Alps, travel through France and Italy; take Kate perhaps to Rome and Venice, but not elsewhere; and in short see everything that is to be seen. I shall write my descriptions to you from time to time, exactly as I did in America; and you will

be able to judge whether or not a new and attractive book may not be made on such ground. At the same time I shall be able to turn over the story I have in my mind, and which I have a strong notion might be published with great advantage, first in Paris--but that's another matter to be talked over. And of course I have not yet settled, either, whether any book about the travel, or this, should be the first. 'All very well,' you say, 'if you had money enough.' Well, but if I can see my way to what would be necessary without binding myself in any form to anything; without paying interest, or giving any security but one of my Eagle five thousand pounds; you would give up that objection. And I stand committed to no bookseller, printer, money-lender, banker, or patron whatever; and decidedly strengthen my position with my readers, instead of weakening it, drop by drop, as I otherwise must. Is it not so? and is not the way before me, plainly this? I infer that in reality you do yourself think, that what I first thought of is not the way? I have told you my scheme very badly, as I said I would. I see its great points, against many prepossessions the other way--as, leaving England, home, friends, everything I am fond of--but it seems to me, at a critical time, the step to set me right. A blessing on Mr. Mariotti my Italian master, and his pupil!--If you have any breath left, tell Topping how you are."

I had certainly not much after reading this letter, written amid all the distractions of his work, with both the Carol and Chuzzlewit in hand; but such insufficient breath as was left to me I spent against the project, and in favour of far more consideration than he had given to it, before anything should be settled. "I expected you," he wrote next day (the 2nd of November), "to be startled. If I was startled myself, when I first got this project of foreign travel into my head, MONTHS AGO, how much more must you be, on whom it comes fresh: numbering only hours! Still, I am very resolute upon it--very. I am convinced that my expenses abroad would not be more than half of my expenses here; the influence of change and nature upon me, enormous. You know, as well as I, that I think Chuzzlewit in a hundred points immeasurably the best of my stories. That I feel my power now, more than I ever did. That I have a greater confidence in myself than I ever had. That I know, if I have health, I could sustain my place in the minds of thinking men, though fifty writers started up to-morrow. But how many readers do not think! How many take it upon trust from knaves and idiots, that one writes too fast, or runs a thing to death! How coldly did this very book go on for months, until it forced itself up in people's opinion, without forcing itself up in sale! If I wrote for forty thousand Forsters, or for forty thousand people who know I write because I can't help it, I should have no need to leave the scene. But this very book warns me that if I can leave it for a time, I had better do so, and must do so. Apart from that again, I feel that longer rest after this story would do me good. You say two or three months, because you have been used to see me for eight years never leaving off. But it is not rest enough. It is impossible to go on working the brain to that extent for ever. The very spirit of the thing, in doing it, leaves a horrible despondency behind, when it is done; which must be prejudicial to the mind, so soon renewed, and so seldom let alone. What would poor Scott have given to have gone abroad, of his own free will, a young man, instead of creeping there, a driveller, in his miserable decay! I said myself in my note to you--anticipating what you put to me--that it was a question what I should come out with, first. The travel-book, if to be done at all, would cost me very little trouble; and surely would go very far to pay charges, whenever published. We have spoken of the baby, and of leaving it here with Catherine's mother. Moving the children into France could not, in any ordinary course of things, do them anything but good. And the question is, what it would do to that by which they live: not what it would do to them.--I had forgotten that point in the B. and E. negociation; but they certainly suggested instant publication of the reprints, or at all events of some of them; by which of course I know, and as you point out, I could provide of myself what is wanted. I take that as putting the thing distinctly as a matter of trade, and feeling it so. And, as a matter of trade with them or anybody else, as a matter of trade between me and the public, should I not be better off a year hence, with the reputation of having seen so much in the meantime? The reason which induces you to look upon this

scheme with dislike--separation for so long a time--surely has equal weight with me. I see very little pleasure in it, beyond the natural desire to have been in those great scenes; I anticipate no enjoyment at the time. I have come to look upon it as a matter of policy and duty. I have a thousand other reasons, but shall very soon myself be with you."

There were difficulties, still to be strongly urged, against taking any present step to a final resolve; and he gave way a little. But the pressure was soon renewed. "I have been," he wrote (10th of November), "all day in Chuzzlewit agonies--conceiving only. I hope to bring forth to-morrow. Will you come here at six? I want to say a word or two about the cover of the Carol and the advertising, and to consult you on a nice point in the tale. It will come wonderfully I think. Mac will call here soon after, and we can then all three go to Bulwer's together. And do, my dear fellow, do for God's sake turn over about Chapman and Hall, and look upon my project as a settled thing. If you object to see them, I must write to them." My reluctance as to the question affecting his old publishers was connected with the little story, which, amid all his perturbations and troubles and "Chuzzlewit agonies," he was steadily carrying to its close; and which remains a splendid proof of how thoroughly he was borne out in the assertion just before made, of the sense of his power felt by him, and his confidence that it had never been greater than when his readers were thus falling off from him. He had entrusted the Carol for publication on his own account, under the usual terms of commission, to the firm he had been so long associated with; and at such a moment to tell them, short of absolute necessity, his intention to quit them altogether, I thought a needless putting in peril of the little book's chances. He yielded to this argument; but the issue, as will be found, was less fortunate than I hoped.

Let disappointments or annoyances, however, beset him as they might, once heartily in his work and all was forgotten. His temperament of course coloured everything, cheerful or sad, and his present outlook was disturbed by imaginary fears; but it was very certain that his labours and successes thus far had enriched others more than himself, and while he knew that his mode of living had been scrupulously governed by what he believed to be his means, the first suspicion that these might be inadequate made a change necessary to so upright a nature. It was the turning-point of his career; and the issue, though not immediately, ultimately justified him. Much of his present restlessness I was too ready myself to ascribe to that love of change in him which was always arising from his passionate desire to vary and extend his observation; but even as to this the result showed him right in believing that he should obtain decided intellectual advantage from the mere effects of such farther travel. Here indeed he spoke from experience, for already he had returned from America with wider views than when he started, and with a larger maturity of mind. The money difficulties on which he dwelt were also, it is now to be admitted, unquestionable. Beyond his own domestic expenses necessarily increasing, there were many, never-satisfied, constantly-recurring claims from family quarters, not the more easily avoidable because unreasonable and unjust; and it was after describing to me one such with great bitterness, a few days following the letter last quoted, that he thus replied on the following day (19th of November) to the comment I had made upon it. "I was most horribly put out for a little while; for I had got up early to go at it, and was full of interest in what I had to do. But having eased my mind by that note to you, and taken a turn or two up and down the room, I went at it again, and soon got so interested that I blazed away till 9 last night; only stopping ten minutes for dinner! I suppose I wrote eight printed pages of Chuzzlewit yesterday. The consequence is that I could finish to-day, but am taking it easy, and making myself laugh very much." The very next day, unhappily, there came to himself a repetition of precisely similar trouble in exaggerated form, and to me a fresh reminder of what was gradually settling into a fixed resolve. "I am quite serious and sober when I say, that I have very grave thoughts of keeping my whole menagerie in Italy, three years."

Of the book which awoke such varied feelings and was the occasion of such vicissitudes of fortune,

some notice is now due; and this, following still as yet my former rule, will be not so much critical as biographical. He had left for Italy before the completed tale was published, and its reception for a time was exactly what his just-quoted letter prefigures. It had forced itself up in public opinion without forcing itself up in sale. It was felt generally to be an advance upon his previous stories, and his own opinion is not to be questioned that it was in a hundred points immeasurably the best of them thus far; less upon the surface, and going deeper into springs of character. Nor would it be difficult to say, in a single word, where the excellence lay that gave it this superiority. It had brought his highest faculty into play: over and above other qualities it had given scope to his imagination; and it first expressed the distinction in this respect between his earlier and his later books. Apart wholly from this, too, his letters will have confirmed a remark already made upon the degree to which his mental power had been altogether deepened and enlarged by the effect of his visit to America.

In construction and conduct of story Martin Chuzzlewit is defective, character and description constituting the chief part of its strength. But what it lost as a story by the American episode it gained in the other direction; young Martin, by happy use of a bitter experience, casting off his slough of selfishness in the poisonous swamp of Eden. Dickens often confessed, however, the difficulty it had been to him to have to deal with this gap in the main course of his narrative; and I will give an instance from a letter he wrote to me when engaged upon the number in which Jonas brings his wife to her miserable home. "I write in haste" (28th of July 1843), "for I have been at work all day; and, it being against the grain with me to go back to America when my interest is strong in the other parts of the tale, have got on but slowly. I have a great notion to work out with Sydney's favourite, and long to be at him again." But obstructions of this kind with Dickens measured only and always the degree of readiness and resource with which he rose to meet them, and never had his handling of character been so masterly as in Chuzzlewit. The persons delineated in former books had been more agreeable, but never so interpenetrated with meanings brought out with a grasp so large, easy, and firm. As well in this as in the passionate vividness of its descriptions, the imaginative power makes itself felt. The windy autumn night, with the mad desperation of the hunted leaves and the roaring mirth of the blazing village forge; the market-day at Salisbury; the winter walk, and the coach journey to London by night; the ship voyage over the Atlantic; the stormy midnight travel before the murder, the stealthy enterprise and cowardly return of the murderer; these are all instances of first-rate description, original in the design, imaginative in all the detail, and very complete in the execution. But the higher power to which I direct attention is even better discerned in the persons and dialogue. With nothing absent or abated in its sharp impressions of reality, there are more of the subtle requisites which satisfy reflection and thought. We have in this book for the most part, not only observation but the outcome of it, the knowledge as well as the fact. While we witness as vividly the life immediately passing, we are more conscious of the permanent life above and beyond it. Nothing nearly so effective therefore had yet been achieved by him. He had scrutinised as truly and satirised as keenly; but had never shown the imaginative insight with which he now sent his humour and his art into the core of the vices of the time.

Sending me the second chapter of his eighth number on the 15th of August, he gave me the latest tidings from America. "I gather from a letter I have had this morning that Martin has made them all stark staring raving mad across the water. I wish you would consider this. Don't you think the time has come when I ought to state that such public entertainments as I received in the States were either accepted before I went out, or in the first week after my arrival there; and that as soon as I began to have any acquaintance with the country, I set my face against any public recognition whatever but that which was forced upon me to the destruction of my peace and comfort--and made no secret of my real sentiments." We did not agree as to this, and the notion was abandoned; though his correspondent had not overstated the violence of the outbreak in the States when those chapters exploded upon them. But

though an angry they are a good humoured and a very placable people; and, as time moved on a little, the laughter on that side of the Atlantic became quite as great as our amusement on this side, at the astonishing fun and comicality of these scenes. With a little reflection the Americans had doubtless begun to find out that the advantage was not all with us, nor the laughter wholly against them.

They had no Pecksniff at any rate. Bred in a more poisonous swamp than their Eden, of greatly older standing and much harder to be drained, Pecksniff was all our own. The confession is not encouraging to national pride, but this character is so far English, that though our countrymen as a rule are by no means Pecksniffs, the ruling weakness is to countenance and encourage the race. When people call the character exaggerated, and protest that the lines are too broad to deceive any one, they only refuse, naturally enough, to sanction in a book what half their lives is passed in tolerating if not in worshipping. Dickens, illustrating his never-failing experience of being obliged to subdue in his books what he knew to be real for fear it should be deemed impossible, had already made the remark in his preface to Nickleby, that the world, which is so very credulous in what professes to be true, is most incredulous in what professes to be imaginary. They agree to be deceived in a reality, and reward themselves by refusing to be deceived in a fiction. That a great many people who might have sat for Pecksniff, should condemn him for a grotesque impossibility, as Dickens averred to be the case, was no more than might be expected. A greater danger he has exposed more usefully in showing the greater numbers, who, desiring secretly to be thought better than they are, support eagerly pretensions that keep their own in countenance, and, without being Pecksniffs, render Pecksniffs possible. All impostures would have something too suspicious or forbidding in their look if we were not prepared to meet them half way.

There is one thing favourable to us however, even in this view, which a French critic has lately suggested. Informing us that there are no Pecksniffs to be found in France, Mr. Taine explains this by the fact that his countrymen have ceased to affect virtue, and pretend only to vice; that a charlatan setting up morality would have no sort of following; that religion and the domestic virtues have gone so utterly to rags as not to be worth putting on for a deceitful garment; and that, no principles being left to parade, the only chance for the French modern Tartuffe is to confess and exaggerate weaknesses. We seem to have something of an advantage here. We require at least that the respectable homage of vice to virtue should not be omitted. "Charity, my dear," says our English Tartuffe, upon being bluntly called what he really is, "when I take my chamber-candlestick to-night, remind me to be more than usually particular in praying for Mr. Anthony Chuzzlewit, who has done me an injustice." No amount of self-indulgence weakens or lowers his pious and reflective tone. "Those are her daughters," he remarks, making maudlin overtures to Mrs. Todgers in memory of his deceased wife. "Mercy and Charity, Charity and Mercy, not unholy names I hope. She was beautiful. She had a small property." When his condition has fallen into something so much worse than maudlin that his friends have to put him to bed, they have not had time to descend the staircase when he is seen to be "fluttering" on the top landing, desiring to collect their sentiments on the nature of human life. "Let us be moral. Let us contemplate existence." He turns his old pupil out of doors in the attitude of blessing him, and when he has discharged that social duty retires to shed his personal tribute of a few tears in the back garden. No conceivable position, action, or utterance finds him without the vice in which his being is entirely steeped and saturated. Of such consummate consistency is its practice with him, that in his own house with his daughters he continues it to keep his hand in; and from the mere habit of keeping up appearances, even to himself, falls into the trap of Jonas. Thackeray used to say that there was nothing finer in rascaldom than this ruin of Pecksniff by his son-in-law at the very moment when the oily hypocrite believes himself to be achieving his masterpiece of dissembling over the more vulgar avowed ruffian. "'Jonas!' cried Mr. Pecksniff much affected, 'I am not a diplomatical character; my heart is in my hand. By far the greater part of the inconsiderable savings I have accumulated in the course of--I hope--a not dishonourable or useless career, is already given,

devised, or bequeathed (correct me, my dear Jonas, if I am technically wrong), with expressions of confidence which I will not repeat; and in securities which it is unnecessary to mention; to a person whom I cannot, whom I will not, whom I need not, name.' Here he gave the hand of his son-in-law a fervent squeeze, as if he would have added, 'God bless you: be very careful of it when you get it!'"

Certainly Dickens thus far had done nothing of which, as in this novel, the details were filled in with such minute and incomparable skill; where the wealth of comic circumstance was lavished in such overflowing abundance on single types of character; or where generally, as throughout the story, the intensity of his observation of individual humours and vices had taken so many varieties of imaginative form. Everything in Chuzzlewit indeed had grown under treatment, as will be commonly the case in the handling of a man of genius, who never knows where any given conception may lead him, out of the wealth of resource in development and incident which it has itself created. "As to the way," he wrote to me of its two most prominent figures, as soon as all their capabilities were revealed to him, "As to the way in which these characters have opened out, that is, to me, one of the most surprising processes of the mind in this sort of invention. Given what one knows, what one does not know springs up; and I am as absolutely certain of its being true, as I am of the law of gravitation--if such a thing be possible, more so." The remark displays exactly what in all his important characters was the very process of creation with him.

Nor was it in the treatment only of his present fiction, but also in its subject or design, that he had gone higher than in preceding efforts. Broadly what he aimed at, he would have expressed on the title-page if I had not dissuaded him, by printing there as its motto a verse altered from that prologue of his own composition to which I have formerly referred: "Your homes the scene. Yourselves, the actors, here!" Debtors' prisons, parish Bumbledoms, Yorkshire schools, were vile enough, but something much more pestiferous was now the aim of his satire; and he had not before so decisively shown vigour, daring, or discernment of what lay within reach of his art, as in taking such a person as Pecksniff for the central figure in a tale of existing life. Setting him up as the glass through which to view the groups around him, we are not the less moved to a hearty detestation of the social vices they exhibit, and pre-eminently of selfishness in all its forms, because we see more plainly than ever that there is but one vice which is quite irremediable. The elder Chuzzlewits are bad enough, but they bring their self-inflicted punishments; the Jonases and Tigg Montagues are execrable, but the law has its halter and its penal servitude; the Moulds and Gamps have plague-bearing breaths, from which sanitary wisdom may clear us; but from the sleek, smiling, crawling abomination of a Pecksniff, there is no help but self-help. Every man's hand should be against him, for his is against every man; and, as Mr. Taine very wisely warns us, the virtues have most need to be careful that they do not make themselves panders to his vice. It is an amiable weakness to put the best face on the worst things, but there is none more dangerous. There is nothing so common as the mistake of Tom Pinch, and nothing so rare as his excuses.

The art with which that delightful character is placed at Mr. Pecksniff's elbow at the beginning of the story, and the help he gives to set fairly afloat the falsehood he innocently believes, contribute to an excellent management of this part of the design; and the same prodigal wealth of invention and circumstance which gives its higher imaginative stamp to the book, appears as vividly in its lesser as in its leading figures. There are wonderful touches of this suggestive kind in the household of Mould the undertaker; and in the vivid picture presented to us by one of Mrs. Gamp's recollections, we are transported to the youthful games of his children. "The sweet creeturs! playing at berryins down in the shop, and follerin' the order-book to its long home in the iron safe!" The American scenes themselves are not more full of life and fun and freshness, and do not contribute more to the general hilarity, than the cockney group at Todgers's; which is itself a little world of the qualities and humours that make up the interest of human life, whether it be high or low, vulgar or fine, filled in with a master's hand. Here, in a mere byestroke as it were, are the very finest things of the earlier books superadded to the new and

higher achievement that distinguished the later productions. No part indeed of the execution of this remarkable novel is inferior. Young Bailey and Sweedlepipes are in the front rank of his humorous creations; and poor Mrs. Todgers, worn but not depraved by the cares of gravy and solicitudes of her establishment, with calculation shining out of one eye but affection and goodheartedness still beaming in the other, is in her way quite as perfect a picture as even the portentous Mrs. Gamp with her grim grotesqueness, her filthy habits and foul enjoyments, her thick and damp but most amazing utterances, her moist clammy functions, her pattens, her bonnet, her bundle, and her umbrella. But such prodigious claims must have a special mention.

This world-famous personage has passed into and become one with the language, which her own parts of speech have certainly not exalted or refined. To none even of Dickens's characters has there been such a run of popularity; and she will remain among the everlasting triumphs of fiction, a superb masterpiece of English humour. What Mr. Mould says of her in his enthusiasm, that she's the sort of woman one would bury for nothing, and do it neatly too, every one feels to be an appropriate tribute; and this, by a most happy inspiration, is exactly what the genius to whom she owes her existence did, when he called her into life, to the foul original she was taken from. That which enduringly stamped upon his page its most mirth-moving figure, had stamped out of English life for ever one of its disgraces. The mortal Mrs. Gamp was handsomely put into her grave, and only the immortal Mrs. Gamp survived. Age will not wither this one, nor custom stale her variety. In the latter point she has an advantage over even Mr. Pecksniff. She has a friend, an alter ego, whose kind of service to her is expressed by her first utterance in the story; and with this, which introduces her, we may leave her most fitly. '"Mrs. Harris,' I says, at the very last case as ever I acted in, which it was but a young person, 'Mrs. Harris,' I says, 'leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and don't ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged.' 'Mrs. Gamp,' she says in answer, 'if ever there was a sober creetur to be got at eighteen pence a day for working people, and three and six for gentlefolks--night watching,' said Mrs. Gamp with emphasis, 'being a extra charge--you are that inwallable person.' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'don't name the charge, for if I could afford to lay all my fellow-creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it, sich is the love I bears 'em.'" To this there is nothing to be added, except that in the person of that astonishing friend every phase of fun and comedy in the character is repeated, under fresh conditions of increased appreciation and enjoyment. By the exuberance of comic invention which gives his distinction to Mr. Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp profits quite as much; the same wealth of laughable incident which surrounds that worthy man is upon her heaped to overflowing; but over and above this, by the additional invention of Mrs. Harris, it is all reproduced, acted over with renewed spirit, and doubled and quadrupled in her favour. This on the whole is the happiest stroke of humorous art in all the writings of Dickens.

But this is a chapter of disappointments, and I have now to state, that as Martin Chuzzlewit's success was to seem to him at first only distant and problematical, so even the prodigious immediate success of the Christmas Carol itself was not to be an unmitigated pleasure. Never had a little book an outset so full of brilliancy of promise. Published but a few days before Christmas, it was hailed on every side with enthusiastic greeting. The first edition of six thousand copies was sold the first day, and on the third of January 1844 he wrote to me that "two thousand of the three printed for second and third editions are already taken by the trade." But a very few weeks were to pass before the darker side of the picture came. "Such a night as I have passed!" he wrote to me on Saturday morning the 10th of February. "I really believed I should never get up again, until I had passed through all the horrors of a fever. I found the Carol accounts awaiting me, and they were the cause of it. The first six thousand copies show a profit of L230! And the last four will yield as much more. I had set my heart and soul upon a Thousand, clear. What a wonderful thing it is, that such a great success should occasion me such intolerable anxiety and disappointment! My year's bills, unpaid, are so terrific, that all the energy and determination I

can possibly exert will be required to clear me before I go abroad; which, if next June come and find me alive, I shall do. Good Heaven, if I had only taken heart a year ago! Do come soon, as I am very anxious to talk with you. We can send round to Mac after you arrive, and tell him to join us at Hampstead or elsewhere. I was so utterly knocked down last night, that I came up to the contemplation of all these things quite bold this morning. If I can let the house for this season, I will be off to some seaside place as soon as a tenant offers. I am not afraid, if I reduce my expenses; but if I do not, I shall be ruined past all mortal hope of redemption."

The ultimate result was that his publishers were changed, and the immediate result that his departure for Italy became a settled thing; but a word may be said on these Carol accounts before mention is made of his new publishing arrangements. Want of judgment had been shown in not adjusting the expenses of production with a more equable regard to the selling price, but even as it was, before the close of the year, he had received L726 from a sale of fifteen thousand copies; and the difference between this and the amount realised by the same proportion of the sale of the successor to the Carol, undoubtedly justified him in the discontent now expressed. Of that second tale, as well as of the third and fourth, more than double the numbers of the Carol were at once sold, and of course there was no complaint of any want of success: but the truth really was, as to all the Christmas stories issued in this form, that the price charged, while too large for the public addressed by them, was too little to remunerate their outlay; and when in later years he put forth similar fancies for Christmas, charging for them fewer pence than the shillings required for these, he counted his purchasers, with fairly corresponding gains to himself, not by tens but by hundreds of thousands.

It was necessary now that negotiations should be resumed with his printers, but before any step was taken Messrs. Chapman and Hall were informed of his intention not to open fresh publishing relations with them after Chuzzlewit should have closed. Then followed deliberations and discussions, many and grave, which settled themselves at last into the form of an agreement with Messrs. Bradbury and Evans executed on the first of June 1844; by which, upon advance made to him of L2800, he assigned to them a fourth share in whatever he might write during the next ensuing eight years, to which the agreement was to be strictly limited. There were the usual protecting clauses, but no interest was to be paid, and no obligations were imposed as to what works should be written, if any, or the form of them; the only farther stipulation having reference to the event of a periodical being undertaken whereof Dickens might be only partially editor or author, in which case his proprietorship of copyright and profits was to be two thirds instead of three fourths. There was an understanding, at the time this agreement was signed, that a successor to the Carol would be ready for the Christmas of 1844; but no other promise was asked or made in regard to any other book, nor had he himself decided what form to give to his experiences of Italy, if he should even finally determine to publish them at all.

Between this agreement and his journey six weeks elapsed, and there were one or two characteristic incidents before his departure: but mention must first be interposed of the success quite without alloy that also attended the little book, and carried off in excitement and delight every trace of doubt or misgiving.

"Blessings on your kind heart!" wrote Jeffrey to the author of the Carol. "You should be happy yourself, for you may be sure you have done more good by this little publication, fostered more kindly feelings, and prompted more positive acts of beneficence, than can be traced to all the pulpits and confessionals in Christendom since Christmas 1842." "Who can listen," exclaimed Thackeray, "to objections regarding such a book as this? It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it a personal kindness." Such praise expressed what men of genius felt and said; but the small volume had other tributes, less usual and not less genuine. There poured upon its author daily, all through that

Christmas time, letters from complete strangers to him which I remember reading with a wonder of pleasure; not literary at all, but of the simplest domestic kind; of which the general burden was to tell him, amid many confidences about their homes, how the Carol had come to be read aloud there, and was to be kept upon a little shelf by itself, and was to do them all no end of good. Anything more to be said of it will not add much to this.

There was indeed nobody that had not some interest in the message of the Christmas Carol. It told the selfish man to rid himself of selfishness; the just man to make himself generous; and the good-natured man to enlarge the sphere of his good nature. Its cheery voice of faith and hope, ringing from one end of the island to the other, carried pleasant warning alike to all, that if the duties of Christmas were wanting no good could come of its outward observances; that it must shine upon the cold hearth and warm it, and into the sorrowful heart and comfort it; that it must be kindness, benevolence, charity, mercy, and forbearance, or its plum pudding would turn to bile, and its roast beef be indigestible. Nor could any man have said it with the same appropriateness as Dickens. What was marked in him to the last was manifest now. He had identified himself with Christmas fancies. Its life and spirits, its humour in riotous abundance, of right belonged to him. Its imaginations as well as kindly thoughts were his; and its privilege to light up with some sort of comfort the squalidest places, he had made his own. Christmas Day was not more social or welcome: New Year's Day not more new: Twelfth Night not more full of characters. The duty of diffusing enjoyment had never been taught by a more abundant, mirthful, thoughtful, ever-seasonable writer.

Something also is to be said of the spirit of the book, and of the others that followed it, which will not anticipate special allusions to be made hereafter. No one was more intensely fond than Dickens of old nursery tales, and he had a secret delight in feeling that he was here only giving them a higher form. The social and manly virtues he desired to teach, were to him not less the charm of the ghost, the goblin, and the fairy fancies of his childhood; however rudely set forth in those earlier days. What now were to be conquered were the more formidable dragons and giants which had their places at our own hearths, and the weapons to be used were of a finer than the "ice-brook's temper." With brave and strong restraints, what is evil in ourselves was to be subdued; with warm and gentle sympathies, what is bad or unreclaimed in others was to be redeemed; the Beauty was to embrace the Beast, as in the divinest of all those fables; the star was to rise out of the ashes, as in our much-loved Cinderella; and we were to play the Valentine with our wilder brothers, and bring them back with brotherly care to civilization and happiness. Nor is it to be doubted, I think, that, in that largest sense of benefit, great public and private service was done; positive, earnest, practical good; by the extraordinary popularity, and nearly universal acceptance, which attended these little holiday volumes. They carried to countless firesides, with new enjoyment of the season, better apprehension of its claims and obligations; they mingled grave with glad thoughts, much to the advantage of both; what seemed almost too remote to meddle with they brought within reach of the charities, and what was near they touched with a dearer tenderness; they comforted the generous, rebuked the sordid, cured folly by kindly ridicule and comic humour, and, saying to their readers Thus you have done, but it were better Thus, may for some have realised the philosopher's famous experience, and by a single fortunate thought revised the whole manner of a life. Criticism here is a second-rate thing, and the reader may be spared such discoveries as it might have made in regard to the Christmas Carol.

Volume II, Chapter 4 (1844): Year of Departure for Italy

Year of Departure for Italy

AND now, before accompanying Dickens on his Italian travel, one or two parting incidents will receive illustration from his letters. A thoughtful little poem written during the past summer for Lady Blessington has been quoted on a previous page: and it may remind me to say here what warmth of regard he had for her, and for all the inmates of Gore-house; how uninterruptedly joyous and pleasurable were his associations with them; and what valued help they now gave in his preparations for Italy. The poem, as we have seen, was written during a visit made in Yorkshire to the house of Mr. Smithson, already named as the partner of his early companion, Mr. Mitton; and this visit he repeated in sadder circumstances during the present year, when (April 1844) he attended Mr. Smithson's funeral. With members or connections of the family of this friend, his intercourse long continued.

In the previous February, on the 26th and 28th respectively, he had taken the chair at two great meetings, in Liverpool of the Mechanics' Institution, and in Birmingham of the Polytechnic Institution, to which reference is made by him in a letter of the 21st. I quote the allusion because it shows thus early the sensitive regard to his position as a man of letters, and his scrupulous consideration for the feelings as well as interest of the class, which he manifested in many various and often greatly self-sacrificing ways all through his life. "Advise me on the following point. And as I must write to-night, having already lost a post, advise me by bearer. This Liverpool Institution, which is wealthy and has a high grammar-school the masters of which receive in salaries upwards of L2000 a year (indeed its extent horrifies me; I am struggling through its papers this morning), writes me yesterday by its secretary a business letter about the order of the proceedings on Monday; and it begins thus. 'I beg to send you prefixed, with the best respects of our committee, a bank order for twenty pounds in payment of the expenses contingent on your visit to Liverpool.'--And there, sure enough, it is. Now my impulse was, and is, decidedly to return it. Twenty pounds is not of moment to me; and any sacrifice of independence is worth it twenty times' twenty times told. But haggling in my mind is a doubt whether that would be proper, and not boastful (in an inexplicable way); and whether as an author, I have a right to put myself on a basis which the professors of literature in other forms connected with the Institution cannot afford to occupy. Don't you see? But of course you do. The case stands thus. The Manchester Institution, being in debt, appeals to me as it were in forma pauperis, and makes no such provision as I have named. The Birmingham Institution, just struggling into life with great difficulty, applies to me on the same grounds. But the Leeds people (thriving) write to me, making the expenses a distinct matter of business; and the Liverpool, as a point of delicacy, say nothing about it to the last minute, and then send the money. Now, what in the name of goodness ought I to do?--I am as much puzzled with the cheque as Colonel Jack was with his gold. If it would have settled the matter to put it in the fire yesterday, I should certainly have done it. Your opinion is requested. I think I shall have grounds for a very good speech at Brummagem; but I am not sure about Liverpool: having misgivings of over-gentility." My opinion was clearly for sending the money back, which accordingly was done.

Both speeches, duly delivered to enthusiastic listeners at the places named, were good, and both, with suitable variations, had the same theme: telling his popular audience in Birmingham that the principle of their institute, education comprehensive and unsectarian, was the only safe one, for that without danger no society could go on punishing men for preferring vice to virtue without giving them the means of knowing what virtue was; and reminding his genteeler audience in Liverpool, that if happily they had been themselves well taught, so much the more should they seek to extend the benefit to all, since, whatever the precedence due to rank, wealth, or intellect, there was yet a nobility beyond them,

expressed unaffectedly by the poet's verse and in the power of education to confer.

Howe'er it be, it seems to me, 'Tis only noble to be good: True hearts are more than coronets, And simple faith than Norman blood.

He underwent some suffering, which he might have spared himself, at his return. "I saw the Carol last night," he wrote to me of a dramatic performance of the little story at the Adelphi. "Better than usual, and Wright seems to enjoy Bob Cratchit, but heart-breaking to me. Oh Heaven! if any forecast of this was ever in my mind! Yet O. Smith was drearily better than I expected. It is a great comfort to have that kind of meat under done; and his face is quite perfect." Of what he suffered from these adaptations of his books, multiplied remorselessly at every theatre, I have forborne to speak, but it was the subject of complaint with him incessantly; and more or less satisfied as he was with individual performances, such as Mr. Yates's Quilp or Mantalini and Mrs. Keeley's Smike or Dot, there was only one, that of Barnaby Rudge by the Miss Fortescue who became afterwards Lady Gardner, on which I ever heard him dwell with a thorough liking. It is true that to the dramatizations of his next and other following Christmas stories he gave help himself; but, even then, all such efforts to assist special representations were mere attempts to render more tolerable what he had no power to prevent, and, with a few rare exceptions, they were never very successful. Another and graver wrong was the piracy of his writings, every one of which had been reproduced with merely such colourable changes of title, incidents, and names of characters, as were believed to be sufficient to evade the law and adapt them to "penny" purchasers. So shamelessly had this been going on ever since the days of Pickwick, in so many outrageous ways and with all but impunity, that a course repeatedly urged by Talfourd and myself was at last taken in the present year with the Christmas Carol and the Chuzzlewit pirates. Upon a case of such peculiar flagrancy, however, that the vice-chancellor would not even hear Dickens's counsel; and what it cost our dear friend Talfourd to suppress his speech exceeded by very much the labour and pains with which he had prepared it. "The pirates," wrote Dickens to me, after leaving the court on the 18th of January, "are beaten flat. They are bruised, bloody, battered, smashed, squelched, and utterly undone. Knight Bruce would not hear Talfourd, but instantly gave judgment. He had interrupted Anderdon constantly by asking him to produce a passage which was not an expanded or contracted idea from my book. And at every successive passage he cried out, 'That is Mr. Dickens's case. Find another!' He said that there was not a shadow of doubt upon the matter. That there was no authority which would bear a construction in their favour; the piracy going beyond all previous instances. They might mention it again in a week, he said, if they liked, and might have an issue if they pleased; but they would probably consider it unnecessary after that strong expression of his opinion. Of course I will stand by what we have agreed as to the only terms of compromise with the printers. I am determined that I will have an apology for their affidavits. The other men may pay their costs and get out of it, but I will stick to my friend the author." Two days later he wrote: "The farther affidavits put in by way of extenuation by the printing rascals are rather strong, and give one a pretty correct idea of what the men must be who hold on by the heels of literature. Oh! the agony of Talfourd at Knight Bruce's not hearing him! He had sat up till three in the morning, he says, preparing his speech; and would have done all kinds of things with the affidavits. It certainly was a splendid subject. We have heard nothing from the vagabonds yet. I once thought of printing the affidavits without a word of comment, and sewing them up with Chuzzlewit. Talfourd is strongly disinclined to compromise with the printers on any terms. In which case it would be referred to the master to ascertain what profits had been made by the piracy, and to order the same to be paid to me. But wear and tear of law is my consideration." The undertaking to which he had at last to submit was, that upon ample public apology, and payment of all costs, the offenders should be let go; but the real result was that, after infinite vexation and trouble, he had himself to pay all the costs incurred on his own behalf; and, a couple of years later, upon repetition of the wrong he had suffered in so gross a form that proceedings were

again advised by Talfourd and others, he wrote to me from Switzerland the condition of mind to which his experience had brought him. "My feeling about the ---- is the feeling common, I suppose, to three fourths of the reflecting part of the community in our happiest of all possible countries; and that is, that it is better to suffer a great wrong than to have recourse to the much greater wrong of the law. I shall not easily forget the expense, and anxiety, and horrible injustice of the Carol case, wherein, in asserting the plainest right on earth, I was really treated as if I were the robber instead of the robbed. Upon the whole, I certainly would much rather NOT proceed. What do you think of sending in a grave protest against what has been done in this case, on account of the immense amount of piracy to which I am daily exposed, and because I have been already met in the court of chancery with the legal doctrine that silence under such wrongs barred my remedy: to which Talfourd's written opinion might be appended as proof that we stopped under no discouragement. It is useless to affect that I don't know I have a morbid susceptibility of exasperation, to which the meanness and badness of the law in such a matter would be stinging in the last degree. And I know of nothing that could come, even of a successful action, which would be worth the mental trouble and disturbance it would cost."

A few notes of besetting temptations during his busiest days at Chuzzlewit, one taken from each of the first four months of the year when he was working at its masterly closing scenes, will amusingly exhibit, side by side, his powers of resistance and capacities of enjoyment. "I had written you a line" (16th of January), "pleading Jonas and Mrs. Gamp, but this frosty day tempts me sorely. I am distractingly late; but I look at the sky, think of Hampstead, and feel hideously tempted. Don't come with Mae, and fetch me. I couldn't resist if you did." In the next (18th of February), he is not the tempted, but the tempter. "Stanfield and Mac have come in, and we are going to Hampstead to dinner. I leave Betsey Prig as you know, so don't you make a scruple about leaving Mrs. Harris. We shall stroll leisurely up, to give you time to join us, and dinner will be on the table at Jack Straw's at four. . . . In the very improbable (surely impossible?) case of your not coming, we will call on you at a quarter before eight, to go to the ragged school." The next (5th of March) shows him in yielding mood, and pitying himself for his infirmity of compliance. "Sir, I will--he--he--he--he--he--he--I will NOT eat with you, either at your own house or the club. But the morning looks bright, and a walk to Hampstead would suit me marvellously. If you should present yourself at my gate (bringing the R. A.'s along with you) I shall not be sapparized. So no more at this writing from Poor MR. DICKENS." But again the tables are turned, and he is tempter in the last; written on that Shakespeare day (23rd of April) which we kept always as a festival, and signed in character expressive of his then present unfitness for any of the practical affairs of life, including the very pressing business which at the moment ought to have occupied him, namely, attention to the long deferred nuptials of Miss Charity Pecksniff. "November blasts! Why it's the warmest, most genial, most intensely bland, delicious, growing, springy, songster-of-the-grovy, bursting-forth-of-the-buddy, day as ever was. At half-past four I shall expect you. Ever, MODDLE."

Moddle, the sentimental noodle hooked by Miss Pecksniff who flies on his proposed wedding-day from the frightful prospect before him, the reader of course knows; and has perhaps admired for his last supreme outbreak of common sense. It was a rather favourite bit of humour with Dickens; and I find it pleasant to think that he never saw the description given of it by a trained and skilful French critic, who has been able to pass under his review the whole of English literature without any apparent sense or understanding of one of its most important as well as richest elements. A man without the perception of humour taking English prose literature in hand, can of course set about it only in one way. Accordingly, in Mr. Taine's decisive judgments of our last great humourist, which proceed upon a principle of psychological analysis which it is only fair to say he applies impartially to everybody, Pickwick, Oliver Twist, and The Old Curiosity Shop are not in any manner even named or alluded to; Mrs. Gamp is only once mentioned as always talking of Mrs. Harris; and Mr. Micawber also only once as using always the

same emphatic phrases; the largest extracts are taken from the two books in all the Dickens series that are weakest on the humorous side, Hard Times and the Chimes; Nickleby, with its many laughter-moving figures, is dismissed in a line and a half; Mr. Toots, Captain Cuttle, Susan Nipper, Toodles, and the rest have no place in what is said of Dombey; and, to close with what has caused and must excuse my digression, Mr. Augustus Moddle is introduced as a gloomy maniac who makes us laugh and makes us shudder, and as drawn so truly for a madman that though at first sight agreeable, he is in reality horrible!

A month before the letter subscribed by Dickens in the character, so happily unknown to himself, of this gloomy maniac, he had written to me from amidst his famous chapter in which the tables are turned on Pecksniff; but here I quote the letter chiefly for noticeable words at its close. "I heard from Macready by the Hibernia. I have been slaving away regularly, but the weather is against rapid progress. I altered the verbal error, and substituted for the action you didn't like some words expressive of the hurry of the scene. Macready sums up slavery in New Orleans in the way of a gentle doubting on the subject, by a 'but' and a dash. I believe it is in New Orleans that the man is lying under sentence of death, who, not having the fear of God before his eyes, did not deliver up a captive slave to the torture? The largest gun in that country has not burst yet--but it will. Heaven help us, too, from explosions nearer home! I declare I never go into what is called 'society' that I am not aweary of it, despise it, hate it, and reject it. The more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors, the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth." Thus we see that the old radical leanings were again rather strong in him at present, and I may add that he had found occasional recent vent for them by writing in the Morning Chronicle.

Some articles thus contributed by him having set people talking, the proprietors of the paper rather eagerly mooted the question what payment he would ask for contributing regularly; and ten guineas an article was named. Very sensibly, however, the editor who had succeeded his old friend Black pointed out to him, that though even that sum would not be refused in the heat of the successful articles just contributed, yet (I quote his own account in a letter of the 7th of March 1844) so much would hardly be paid continuously; and thereupon an understanding, was come to, that he would write as a volunteer and leave his payment to be adjusted to the results. "Then said the editor--and this I particularly want you to turn over in your mind, at leisure--supposing me to go abroad, could I contemplate such a thing as the writing of a letter a week under any signature I chose, with such scraps of descriptions and impressions as suggested themselves to my mind? If so, would I do it for the Chronicle? And if so again, what would I do it for? He thought for such contributions Easthope would pay anything. I told him that the idea had never occurred to me; but that I was afraid he did not know what the value of such contributions would be. He repeated what he had said before; and I promised to consider whether I could reconcile it to myself to write such letters at all. The pros and cons need to be very carefully weighed. I will not tell you to which side I incline, but if we should disagree, or waver on the same points, we will call Bradbury and Evans to the council. I think it more than probable that we shall be of exactly the same mind, but I want you to be in possession of the facts and therefore send you this rigmarole." The rigmarole is not unimportant; because, though we did not differ on the wisdom of saying No to the Chronicle, the "council" spoken of was nevertheless held, and in it lay the germ of another newspaper enterprise he permitted himself to engage in twelve months later, to which he would have done more wisely to have also answered No.

The preparation for departure was now actively going forward, and especially his enquiries for two important adjuncts thereto, a courier and a carriage. As to the latter it occurred to him that he might perhaps get for little money "some good old shabby devil of a coach--one of those vast phantoms that hide themselves in a corner of the Pantechnicon;" and exactly such a one he found there; sitting himself

inside it, a perfect Sentimental Traveller, while the managing man told him its history. "As for comfort--let me see--it is about the size of your library; with night-lamps and day-lamps and pockets and imperials and leathern cellars, and the most extraordinary contrivances. Joking apart, it is a wonderful machine. And when you see it (if you do see it) you will roar at it first, and will then proclaim it to be 'perfectly brilliant, my dear fellow.'" It was marked sixty pounds; he got it for five-and-forty; and my own emotions respecting it he had described by anticipation quite correctly. In finding a courier he was even more fortunate; and these successes were followed by a third apparently very promising, but in the result less satisfactory. His house was let to not very careful people.

The tenant having offered herself for Devonshire-terrace unexpectedly, during the last week or two of his stay in England he went into temporary quarters in Osnaburgh-terrace; and here a domestic difficulty befell of which the mention may be amusing, when I have disposed of an incident that preceded it too characteristic for omission. The Mendicity Society's officers had caught a notorious begging-letter writer, had identified him as an old offender against Dickens of which proofs were found on his person, and had put matters in train for his proper punishment; when the wretched creature's wife made such appeal before the case was heard at the police-court, that Dickens broke down in his character of prosecutor, and at the last moment, finding what was said of the man's distress at the time to be true, relented. "When the Mendicity officers themselves told me the man was in distress, I desired them to suppress what they knew about him, and slipped out of the bundle (in the police office) his first letter, which was the greatest lie of all. For he looked wretched, and his wife had been waiting about the street to see me, all the morning. It was an exceedingly bad case however, and the imposition, all through, very great indeed. Insomuch that I could not say anything in his favour, even when I saw him. Yet I was not sorry that the creature found the loophole for escape. The officers had taken him illegally without any warrant; and really they messed it all through, quite facetiously."

He will himself also best relate the small domestic difficulty into which he fell in his temporary dwelling, upon his unexpectedly discovering it to be unequal to the strain of a dinner party for which invitations had gone out just before the sudden "let" of Devonshire-terrace. The letter is characteristic in other ways, or I should hardly have gone so far into domesticities here; and it enables me to add that with the last on its list of guests, Mr. Chapman the chairman of Lloyd's, he held much friendly intercourse, and that few things more absurd or unfounded have been invented, even of Dickens, than that he found any part of the original of Mr. Dombey in the nature, the appearance, or the manners of this estimable gentleman. "Advise, advise," he wrote (9 Osnaburgh-terrace, 28th of May 1844), "advise with a distracted man. Investigation below stairs renders it, as my father would say, 'manifest to any person of ordinary intelligence, if the term may be considered allowable,' that the Saturday's dinner cannot come off here with safety. It would be a toss-up, and might come down heads, but it would put us into an agony with that kind of people. . . . Now, I feel a difficulty in dropping it altogether, and really fear that this might have an indefinably suspicious and odd appearance. Then said I at breakfast this morning, I'll send down to the Clarendon. Then says Kate, have it at Richmond. Then I say, that might be inconvenient to the people. Then she says, how could it be if we dine late enough? Then I am very much offended without exactly knowing why; and come up here, in a state of hopeless mystification. . . . What do you think? Ellis would be quite as dear as anybody else; and unless the weather changes, the place is objectionable. I must make up my mind to do one thing or other, for we shall meet Lord Denman at dinner to-day. Could it be dropped decently? That, I think very doubtful. Could it be done for a couple of guineas apiece at the Clarendon? . . . In a matter of more importance I could make up my mind. But in a matter of this kind I bother and bewilder myself, and come to no conclusion whatever. Advise! Advise! . . . List of the Invited. There's Lord Normanby. And there's Lord Denman. There's Easthope, wife, and sister. There's Sydney Smith. There's you and Mac. There's Babbage. There's a Lady Osborne and her daughter. There's

Southwood Smith. And there's Quin. And there are Thomas Chapman and his wife. So many of these people have never dined with us, that the fix is particularly tight. Advise! Advise!" My advice was for throwing over the party altogether, but additional help was obtained and the dinner went off very pleasantly. It was the last time we saw Sydney Smith.

Of one other characteristic occurrence he wrote before he left; and the very legible epigraph round the seal of his letter, "It is particularly requested that if Sir James Graham should open this, he will not trouble himself to seal it again," expresses both its date and its writer's opinion of a notorious transaction of the time. "I wish" (28th of June) "you would read this, and give it me again when we meet at Stanfield's to-day. Newby has written to me to say that he hopes to be able to give Overs more money than was agreed on." The enclosure was the proof-sheet of a preface written by him to a small collection of stories by a poor carpenter dying of consumption, who hoped by their publication, under protection of such a name, to leave behind him some small provision for his ailing wife and little children. The book was dedicated to the kind physician, Doctor Elliotson, whose name was for nearly thirty years a synonym with us all for unwearied, self-sacrificing, beneficent service to every one in need.

The last incident before Dickens's departure was a farewell dinner to him at Greenwich, which took also the form of a celebration for the completion of Chuzzlewit, or, as the Ballantynes used to call it in Scott's case, a christening dinner; when Lord Normanby took the chair, and I remember sitting next the great painter Turner, who had come with Stanfield, and had enveloped his throat, that sultry summer day, in a huge red belcher-handkerchief which nothing would induce him to remove. He was not otherwise demonstrative, but enjoyed himself in a quiet silent way, less perhaps at the speeches than at the changing lights on the river. Carlyle did not come; telling me in his reply to the invitation that he truly loved Dickens, having discerned in the inner man of him a real music of the genuine kind, but that he'd rather testify to this in some other form than that of dining out in the dogdays.

Volume II, Chapter 5 (1844): Idleness at Albaro: Villa Bagnerello

Idleness at Albaro: Villa Bagnerello

THE travelling party arrived at Marseilles on the evening of Sunday the 14th of July. Not being able to get vetturino horses in Paris, they had come on, post; paying for nine horses but bringing only four, and thereby saving a shilling a mile out of what the four would have cost in England. So great thus far, however, had been the cost of travel, that "what with distance, caravan, sight-seeing, and everything," two hundred pounds would be nearly swallowed up before they were at their destination. The success otherwise had been complete. The children had not cried in their worst troubles, the carriage had gone lightly over abominable roads, and the courier had proved himself a perfect gem. "Surrounded by strange and perfectly novel circumstances," Dickens wrote to me from Marseilles, "I feel as if I had a new head on side by side with my old one."

To what shrewd and kindly observation the old one had helped him at every stage of his journey, his published book of travel tells, and of all that there will be nothing here; but a couple of experiences at his outset, of which he told me afterwards, have enough character in them to be worth mention.

Shortly before there had been some public interest about the captain of a Boulogne steamer apprehended on a suspicion of having stolen specie, but reinstated by his owners after a public apology to him on their behalf; and Dickens had hardly set foot on the boat that was to carry them across, when he was attracted by the look of its captain, and discovered him after a few minutes' talk to be that very man. "Such an honest, simple, good fellow, I never saw," said Dickens, as he imitated for me the homely speech in which his confidences were related. The Boulogne people, he said, had given him a piece of plate, "but Lord bless us! it took a deal more than that to get him round again in his own mind; and for weeks and weeks he was uncommon low to be sure. Newgate, you see! What a place for a sea-faring man as had held up his head afore the best on 'em, and had more friends, I mean to say, and I do tell you the daylight truth, than any man on this station--ah! or any other, I don't care where!"

His first experience in a foreign tongue he made immediately on landing, when he had gone to the bank for money, and after delivering with most laborious distinctness a rather long address in French to the clerk behind the counter, was disconcerted by that functionary's cool enquiry in the native-born Lombard-street manner, "How would you like to take it, sir?" He took it, as everybody must, in five-franc pieces, and a most inconvenient coinage he found it; for he required so much that he had to carry it in a couple of small sacks, and was always "turning hot about suddenly" taking it into his head that he had lost them.

The evening of Tuesday the 16th of July saw him in a villa at Albaro, the suburb of Genoa in which, upon the advice of our Gore-house friends, he had resolved to pass the summer months before taking up his quarters in the city. His wish was to have had Lord Byron's house there, but it had fallen into neglect and become the refuge of a third-rate wine-shop. The matter had then been left to Angus Fletcher who just now lived near Genoa, and he had taken at a rent absurdly above its value an unpicturesque and uninteresting dwelling, which at once impressed its new tenant with its likeness to a pink jail. "It is," he said to me, "the most perfectly lonely, rusty, stagnant old staggerer of a domain that you can possibly imagine. What would I give if you could only look round the courtyard! I look down into it, whenever I am near that side of the house, for the stable is so full of 'vermin and swarmers' (pardon the quotation from my inimitable friend) that I always expect to see the carriage going out bodily, with legions of industrious fleas harnessed to and drawing it off, on their own account. We have a couple of Italian work-people in

our establishment; and to hear one or other of them talking away to our servants with the utmost violence and volubility in Genoese, and our servants answering with great fluency in English (very loud: as if the others were only deaf, not Italian), is one of the most ridiculous things possible. The effect is greatly enhanced by the Genoese manner, which is exceedingly animated and pantomimic; so that two friends of the lower class conversing pleasantly in the street, always seem on the eve of stabbing each other forthwith. And a stranger is immensely astonished at their not doing it."

The heat tried him less than he expected, excepting always the sirocco, which, near the sea as they were, and right in the course of the wind as it blew against the house, made everything hotter than if there had been no wind. "One feels it most, on first getting up. Then, it is really so oppressive that a strong determination is necessary to enable one to go on dressing; one's tendency being to tumble down anywhere and lie there." It seemed to hit him, he said, behind the knee, and made his legs so shake that he could not walk or stand. He had unfortunately a whole week of this without intermission, soon after his arrival; but then came a storm, with wind from the mountains; and he could bear the ordinary heat very well. What at first had been a home-discomfort, the bare walls, lofty ceilings, icy floors, and lattice blinds, soon became agreeable; there were regular afternoon breezes from the sea; in his courtyard was a well of very pure and very cold water; there were new milk and eggs by the bucketful, and, to protect from the summer insects these and other dainties, there were fresh vine-leaves by the thousand; and he satisfied himself, by the experience of a day or two in the city, that he had done well to come first to its suburb by the sea. What startled and disappointed him most were the frequent cloudy days. He opened his third letter (3rd of August) by telling me there was a thick November fog, that rain was pouring incessantly, and that he did not remember to have seen in his life, at that time of year, such cloudy weather as he had seen beneath Italian skies.

"The story goes that it is in autumn and winter, when other countries are dark and foggy, that the beauty and clearness of this are most observable. I hope it may prove so; for I have postponed going round the hills which encircle the city, or seeing any of the sights, until the weather is more favourable. I have never yet seen it so clear, for any longer time of the day together, as on a bright, lark-singing, coast-of-France-discerning day at Broadstairs; nor have I ever seen so fine a sunset, throughout, as is very common there. But the scenery is exquisite, and at certain periods of the evening and the morning the blue of the Mediterranean surpasses all conception or description. It is the most intense and wonderful colour, I do believe, in all nature."

In his second letter from Albaro there was more of this subject; and an outbreak of whimsical enthusiasm in it, meant especially for Maclise, is followed by some capital description. "I address you, my friend," he wrote, "with something of the lofty spirit of an exile, a banished commoner, a sort of Anglo-Pole. I don't exactly know what I have done for my country in coming away from it, but I feel it is something; something great; something virtuous and heroic. Lofty emotions rise within me, when I see the sun set on the blue Mediterranean. I am the limpet on the rock. My father's name is Turner, and my boots are green. . . . Apropos of blue. In a certain picture called the Serenade for which Browning wrote that verse in Lincoln's-inn-fields, you, O Mac, painted a sky. If you ever have occasion to paint the Mediterranean, let it be exactly of that colour. It lies before me now, as deeply and intensely blue. But no such colour is above me. Nothing like it. In the south of France, at Avignon, at Aix, at Marseilles, I saw deep blue skies; and also in America. But the sky above me is familiar to my sight. Is it heresy to say that I have seen its twin brother shining through the window of Jack Straw's--that down in Devonshire-terrace I have seen a better sky? I dare say it is; but like a great many other heresies, it is true. . . . But such green, green, green, as flutters in the vineyard down below the windows, that I never saw; nor yet such lilac and such purple as float between me and the distant hills; nor yet in anything, picture, book, or vestal boredom, such awful, solemn, impenetrable blue, as in that same sea. It has such an absorbing, silent, deep,

profound effect, that I can't help thinking it suggested the idea of Styx. It looks as if a draught of it, only so much as you could scoop up on the beach in the hollow of your hand, would wash out everything else, and make a great blue blank of your intellect. . . . When the sun sets clearly, then, by Heaven, it is majestic. From any one of eleven windows here, or from a terrace overgrown with grapes, you may behold the broad sea, villas, houses, mountains, forts, strewn with rose leaves. Strewn with them? Steeped in them! Dyed, through and through and through. For a moment. No more. The sun is impatient and fierce (like everything else in these parts), and goes down headlong. Run to fetch your hat--and it's night. Wink at the right time of black night--and it's morning. Everything is in extremes. There is an insect here that chirps all day. There is one outside the window now. The chirp is very loud: something like a Brobdingnagian grasshopper. The creature is born to chirp; to progress in chirping; to chirp louder, louder, louder; till it gives one tremendous chirp and bursts itself. That is its life and death. Everything is 'in a concatenation accordingly.' The day gets brighter, brighter, brighter, till it's night. The summer gets hotter, hotter, hotter, till it explodes. The fruit gets riper, riper, riper, till it tumbles down and rots. . . . Ask me a question or two about fresco: will you be so good? All the houses are painted in fresco, hereabout (the outside walls I mean, the fronts, backs, and sides), and all the colour has run into damp and green seediness; and the very design has straggled away into the component atoms of the plaster. Beware of fresco! Sometimes (but not often) I can make out a Virgin with a mildewed glory round her head, holding nothing in an undiscernible lap with invisible arms; and occasionally the leg or arm of a cherub. But it is very melancholy and dim. There are two old fresco-painted vases outside my own gate, one on either hand, which are so faint that I never saw them till last night; and only then, because I was looking over the wall after a lizard who had come upon me while I was smoking a cigar above, and crawled over one of these embellishments in his retreat. . . ."

That letter sketched for me the story of his travel through France, and I may at once say that I thus received, from week to week, the "first sprightly runnings" of every description in his Pictures from Italy. But my rule as to the American letters must be here observed yet more strictly; and nothing resembling his printed book, however distantly, can be admitted into these pages. Even so my difficulty of rejection will not be less; for as he had not actually decided, until the very last, to publish his present experiences at all, a larger number of the letters were left unrifled by him. He had no settled plan from the first, as in the other case.

His most valued acquaintance at Albaro was the French consul-general, a student of our literature who had written on his books in one of the French reviews, and who with his English wife lived in the very next villa, though so oddly shut away by its vineyard that to get from the one adjoining house to the other was a mile's journey. Describing, in that August letter, his first call from this new friend thus pleasantly self-recommended, he makes the visit his excuse for breaking off from a facetious description of French inns to introduce to me a sketch, from a pencil outline by Fletcher, of what bore the imposing name of the Villa di Bella vista, but which he called by the homelier one of its proprietor, Bagnerello. "This, my friend, is quite accurate. Allow me to explain it. You are standing, sir, in our vineyard, among the grapes and figs. The Mediterranean is at your back as you look at the house: of which two sides, out of four, are here depicted. The lower story (nearly concealed by the vines) consists of the hall, a wine-cellar, and some store-rooms. The three windows on the left of the first floor belong to the sala, lofty and whitewashed, which has two more windows round the corner. The fourth window did belong to the dining-room, but I have changed one of the nurseries for better air; and it now appertains to that branch of the establishment. The fifth and sixth, or two right-hand windows, sir, admit the light to the inimitable's (and uxor's) chamber; to which the first window round the right-hand corner, which you perceive in shadow, also belongs. The next window in shadow, young sir, is the bower of Miss H. The next, a nursery window; the same having two more round the corner again. The bowery-looking place stretching out

upon the left of the house is the terrace, which opens out from a French window in the drawing-room on the same floor, of which you see nothing: and forms one side of the court-yard. The upper windows belong to some of those uncounted chambers upstairs; the fourth one, longer than the rest, being in F.'s bedroom. There is a kitchen or two up there besides, and my dressing-room; which you can't see from this point of view. The kitchens and other offices in use are down below, under that part of the house where the roof is longest. On your left, beyond the bay of Genoa, about two miles off, the Alps stretch off into the far horizon; on your right, at three or four miles distance, are mountains crowned with forts. The intervening space on both sides is dotted with villas, some green, some red, some yellow, some blue, some (and ours among the number) pink. At your back, as I have said, sir, is the ocean; with the slim Italian tower of the ruined church of St. John the Baptist rising up before it, on the top of a pile of savage rocks. You go through the court-yard, and out at the gate, and down a narrow lane to the sea. Note. The sala goes sheer up to the top of the house; the ceiling being conical, and the little bedrooms built round the spring of its arch. You will observe that we make no pretension to architectural magnificence, but that we have abundance of room. And here I am, beholding only vines and the sea for days together. . . . Good Heavens! How I wish you'd come for a week or two, and taste the white wine at a penny farthing the pint. It is excellent.". . . Then, after seven days: "I have got my paper and inkstand and figures now (the box from Osnaburgh-terrace only came last Thursday), and can think--I have begun to do so every morning--with a business-like air, of the Christmas book. My paper is arranged, and my pens are spread out in the usual form. I think you know the form--Don't you? My books have not passed the custom-house yet, and I tremble for some volumes of Voltaire. . . . I write in the best bedroom. The sun is off the corner window at the side of the house by a very little after twelve; and I can then throw the blinds open, and look up from my paper, at the sea, the mountains, the washed-out villas, the vineyards, at the blistering white hot fort with a sentry on the drawbridge standing in a bit of shadow no broader than his own musket, and at the sky, as often as I like. It is a very peaceful view, and yet a very cheerful one. Quiet as quiet can be."

Not yet however had the time for writing come. A sharp attack of illness befell his youngest little daughter, Kate, and troubled him much. Then, after beginning the Italian grammar himself, he had to call in the help of a master; and this learning of the language took up time. But he had an aptitude for it, and after a month's application told me (24th of August) that he could ask in Italian for whatever he wanted in any shop or coffee-house, and could read it pretty well. "I wish you could see me" (16th of September), "without my knowing it, walking about alone here. I am now as bold as a lion in the streets. The audacity with which one begins to speak when there is no help for it, is quite astonishing." The blank impossibility at the outset, however, of getting native meanings conveyed to his English servants, he very humorously described to me; and said the spell was first broken by the cook, "being really a clever woman, and not entrenching herself in that astonishing pride of ignorance which induces the rest to oppose themselves to the receipt of any information through any channel, and which made A. careless of looking out of window, in America, even to see the Falls of Niagara." So that he soon had to report the gain, to all of them, from the fact of this enterprising woman having so primed herself with "the names of all sorts of vegetables, meats, soups, fruits, and kitchen necessaries," that she was able to order whatever was needful of the peasantry that were trotting in and out all day, basketed and barefooted. Her example became at once contagious; and before the end of the second week of September news reached me that "the servants are beginning to pick up scraps of Italian; some of them go to a weekly conversazione of servants at the Governor's every Sunday night, having got over their consternation at the frequent introduction of quadrilles on these occasions; and I think they begin to like their foreigneering life."

In the tradespeople they dealt with at Albaro he found amusing points of character. Sharp as they were after money, their idleness quenched even that propensity. Order for immediate delivery two or three

pounds of tea, and the tea-dealer would be wretched. "Won't it do to-morrow?" "I want it now," you would reply; and he would say, "No, no, there can be no hurry!" He remonstrated against the cruelty. But everywhere there was deference, courtesy, more than civility. "In a cafe a little tumbler of ice costs something less than threepence, and if you give the waiter in addition what you would not offer to an English beggar, say, the third of a halfpenny, he is profoundly grateful." The attentions received from English residents were unremitting. In moments of need at the outset, they bestirred themselves ("large merchants and grave men") as if they were the family's salaried purveyors; and there was in especial one gentleman named Curry whose untiring kindness was long remembered.

The light, eager, active figure soon made itself familiar in the streets of Genoa, and he never went into them without bringing some oddity away. I soon heard of the strada Nuova and strada Balbi; of the broadest of the two as narrower than Albany-street, and of the other as less wide than Drury-lane or Wych-street; but both filled with palaces of noble architecture and of such vast dimensions that as many windows as there are days in the year might be counted in one of them, and this not covering by any means the largest plot of ground. I heard too of the other streets, none with footways, and all varying in degrees of narrowness, but for the most part like Field-lane in Holborn, with little breathing-places like St. Martin's-court; and the widest only in parts wide enough to enable a carriage and pair to turn. "Imagine yourself looking down a street of Reform Clubs cramped after this odd fashion, the lofty roofs almost seeming to meet in the perspective." In the churches nothing struck him so much as the profusion of trash and tinsel in them that contrasted with their real splendours of embellishment. One only, that of the Cappucini friars, blazed every inch of it with gold, precious stones, and paintings of priceless art; the principal contrast to its radiance being the dirt of its masters, whose bare legs, corded waists, and coarse brown serge never changed by night or day, proclaimed amid their corporate wealth their personal vows of poverty. He found them less pleasant to meet and look at than the country people of their suburb on festa-days, with the Indulgences that gave them the right to make merry stuck in their hats like turnpike-tickets. He did not think the peasant girls in general good-looking, though they carried themselves daintily and walked remarkably well: but the ugliness of the old women, begotten of hard work and a burning sun, with porters' knots of coarse grey hair grubbed up over wrinkled and cadaverous faces, he thought quite stupendous. He was never in a street a hundred yards long without getting up perfectly the witch part of Macbeth.

With the theatres of course he soon became acquainted, and of that of the puppets he wrote to me again and again with humorous rapture. "There are other things," he added, after giving me the account which is published in his book, "too solemnly surprising to dwell upon. They must be seen. They must be seen. The enchanter carrying off the bride is not greater than his men brandishing fiery torches and dropping their lighted spirits of wine at every shake. Also the enchanter himself, when, hunted down and overcome, he leaps into the rolling sea, and finds a watery grave. Also the second comic man, aged about 55 and like George the Third in the face, when he gives out the play for the next night. They must all be seen. They can't be told about. Quite impossible." The living performers he did not think so good, a disbelief in Italian actors having been always a heresy with him, and the deplorable length of dialogue to the small amount of action in their plays making them sadly tiresome. The first that he saw at the principal theatre was a version of Balzac's Pere Goriot. "The domestic Lear I thought at first was going to be very clever. But he was too pitiful--perhaps the Italian reality would be. He was immensely applauded, though." He afterwards saw a version of Dumas' preposterous play of Kean, in which most of the representatives of English actors wore red hats with steeple crowns, and very loose blouses with broad belts and buckles round their waists. "There was a mysterious person called the Prince of Var-lees" (Wales), "the youngest and slimmest man in the company, whose badinage in Kean's dressing-room was irresistible; and the dresser wore top-boots, a Greek skull-cap, a black velvet jacket, and leather

breeches. One or two of the actors looked very hard at me to see how I was touched by these English peculiarities--especially when Kean kissed his male friends on both cheeks." The arrangements of the house, which he described as larger than Drury-lane, he thought excellent. Instead of a ticket for the private box he had taken on the first tier, he received the usual key for admission which let him in as if he lived there; and for the whole set-out, "quite as comfortable and private as a box at our opera," paid only eight and fourpence English. The opera itself had not its regular performers until after Christmas, but in the summer there was a good comic company, and he saw the Scaramuccia and the Barber of Seville brightly and pleasantly done. There was also a day theatre, beginning at half past four in the afternoon; but beyond the novelty of looking on at the covered stage as he sat in the fresh pleasant air, he did not find much amusement in the Goldoni comedy put before him. There came later a Russian circus, which the unusual rains of that summer prematurely extinguished.

The Religious Houses he made early and many enquiries about, and there was one that had stirred and baffled his curiosity much before he discovered what it really was. All that was visible from the street was a great high wall, apparently quite alone, no thicker than a party wall, with grated windows, to which iron screens gave farther protection. At first he supposed there had been a fire; but by degrees came to know that on the other side were galleries, one above another, one above another, and nuns always pacing them to and fro. Like the wall of a racket-ground outside, it was inside a very large nunnery; and let the poor sisters walk never so much, neither they nor the passers-by could see anything of each other. It was close upon the Acqua Sola, too; a little park with still young but very pretty trees, and fresh and cheerful fountains, which the Genoese made their Sunday promenade; and underneath which was an archway with great public tanks, where, at all ordinary times, washerwomen were washing away, thirty or forty together. At Albaro they were worse off in this matter: the clothes there being washed in a pond, beaten with gourds, and whitened with a preparation of lime: "so that," he wrote to me (24th of August), "what between the beating and the burning they fall into holes unexpectedly, and my white trowsers, after six weeks' washing, would make very good fishing-nets. It is such a serious damage that when we get into the Peschiere we mean to wash at home."

Exactly a fortnight before this date, he had hired rooms in the Peschiere from the first of the following October; and so ended the house-hunting for his winter residence, that had taken him so often to the city. The Peschiere was the largest palace in Genoa let on hire, and had the advantage of standing on a height aloof from the town, surrounded by its own gardens. The rooms taken had been occupied by an English colonel, the remainder of whose term was let to Dickens for 500 francs a month (L20); and a few days after (20th of August) he described to me a fellow tenant: "A Spanish duke has taken the room under me in the Peschiere. The duchess was his mistress many years, and bore him (I think) six daughters. He always promised her that if she gave birth to a son, he would marry her; and when at last the boy arrived, he went into her bedroom, saying--'Duchess, I am charmed to "salute you!"' And he married her in good earnest, and legitimatized (as by the Spanish law he could) all the other children." The beauty of the new abode will justify a little description when he takes up his quarters there. One or two incidents may be related, meanwhile, of the closing weeks of his residence at Albaro.

In the middle of August he dined with the French consul-general, and there will now be no impropriety in printing his agreeable sketch of the dinner. "There was present, among other Genoese, the Marquis di Negri: a very fat and much older Jerdan, with the same thickness of speech and size of tongue. He was Byron's friend, keeps open house here, writes poetry, improvises, and is a very good old Blunderbore; just the sort of instrument to make an artesian well with, anywhere. Well, sir, after dinner, the consul proposed my health, with a little French conceit to the effect that I had come to Italy to have personal experience of its lovely climate, and that there was this similarity between the Italian sun and its visitor, that the sun shone into the darkest places and made them bright and happy with its benignant influence,

and that my books had done the like with the breasts of men, and so forth. Upon which Blunderbore gives his bright-buttoned blue coat a great rap on the breast, turns up his fishy eye, stretches out his arm like the living statue defying the lightning at Astley's, and delivers four impromptu verses in my honour, at which everybody is enchanted, and I more than anybody--perhaps with the best reason, for I didn't understand a word of them. The consul then takes from his breast a roll of paper, and says, 'I shall read them!' Blunderbore then says, 'Don't!' But the consul does, and Blunderbore beats time to the music of the verse with his knuckles on the table; and perpetually ducks forward to look round the cap of a lady sitting between himself and me, to see what I think of them. I exhibit lively emotion. The verses are in French--short line--on the taking of Tangiers by the Prince de Joinville; and are received with great applause; especially by a nobleman present who is reported to be unable to read and write. They end in my mind (rapidly translating them into prose) thus,--

'The cannon of France Rendering thanks Shake the foundation To Heaven. Of the wondering sea, The King The artillery on the shore And all the Royal Family Is put to silence. Are bathed Honour to Joinville In tears. And the Brave! They call upon the name The Great Intelligence Of Joinville! Is borne France also Upon the wings of Fame Weeps, and echoes it. To Paris. Joinville is crowned Her national citizens With Immortality; Exchange caresses And Peace and Joinville, In the streets! And the Glory of France, The temples are crowded Diffuse themselves With religious patriots Conjointly.'

If you can figure to yourself the choice absurdity of receiving anything into one's mind in this way, you can imagine the labour I underwent in my attempts to keep the lower part of my face square, and to lift up one eye gently, as with admiring attention. But I am bound to add that this is really pretty literal; for I read them afterwards."

This, too, was the year of other uncomfortable glories of France in the last three years of her Orleans dynasty; among them the Tahiti business, as politicians may remember; and so hot became rumours of war with England at the opening of September that Dickens had serious thoughts of at once striking his tent. One of his letters was filled with the conflicting doubts in which they lived for nigh a fortnight, every day's arrival contradicting the arrival of the day before: so that, as he told me, you met a man in the street to-day, who told you there would certainly be war in a week; and you met the same man in the street to-morrow, and he swore he always knew there would be nothing but peace; and you met him again the day after, and he said it all depended now on something perfectly new and unheard of before, which somebody else said had just come to the knowledge of some consul in some dispatch which said something about some telegraph which had been at work somewhere, signalizing some prodigious intelligence. However, it all passed harmlessly away, leaving him undisturbed opportunity to avail himself of a pleasure that arose out of the consul-general's dinner party, and to be present at a great reception given shortly after by the good "old Blunderbore" just mentioned, on the occasion of his daughter's birthday.

The Marquis had a splendid house, but Dickens found the grounds so carved into grottoes and fanciful walks as to remind him of nothing so much as our old White-conduit-house, except that he would have been well pleased, on the present occasion, to have discovered a waiter crying, "Give your orders, gents!" it being not easy to him at any time to keep up, the whole night through, on ices and variegated lamps merely. But the scene for awhile was amusing enough, and not rendered less so by the delight of the Marquis himself, "who was constantly diving out into dark corners and then among the lattice-work and flower pots, rubbing his hands and going round and round with explosive chuckles in his huge satisfaction with the entertainment." With horror it occurred to Dickens, however, that four more hours of this kind of entertainment would be too much; that the Genoa gates closed at twelve; and that as the carriage had not been ordered till the dancing was expected to be over and the gates to reopen, he must

make a sudden bolt if he would himself get back to Albaro. "I had barely time," he told me, "to reach the gate before midnight; and was running as hard as I could go, down-hill, over uneven ground, along a new street called the strada Sevra, when I came to a pole fastened straight across the street, nearly breast high, without any light or watchman--quite in the Italian style. I went over it, headlong, with such force that I rolled myself completely white in the dust; but although I tore my clothes to shreds, I hardly scratched myself except in one place on the knee. I had no time to think of it then, for I was up directly and off again to save the gate: but when I got outside the wall, and saw the state I was in, I wondered I had not broken my neck. I 'took it easy' after this, and walked home, by lonely ways enough, without meeting a single soul. But there is nothing to be feared, I believe, from midnight walks in this part of Italy. In other places you incur the danger of being stabbed by mistake; whereas the people here are quiet and good tempered, and very rarely commit any outrage."

Such adventures, nevertheless, are seldom without consequences, and there followed in this case a short but sharp attack of illness. It came on with the old "unspeakable and agonizing pain in the side," for which Bob Fagin had prepared and applied the hot bottles in the old warehouse time; and it yielded quickly to powerful remedies. But for a few days he had to content himself with the minor sights of Albaro. He sat daily in the shade of the ruined chapel on the seashore. He looked in at the festa in the small country church, consisting mainly of a tenor singer, a seraphine, and four priests sitting gaping in a row on one side of the altar "in flowered satin dresses and little cloth caps, looking exactly like the band at a wild-beast-caravan." He was interested in the wine-making, and in seeing the country tenants preparing their annual presents for their landlords, of baskets of grapes and other fruit prettily dressed with flowers. The season of the grapes, too, brought out after dusk strong parties of rats to eat them as they ripened, and so many shooting parties of peasants to get rid of these despoilers, that as he first listened to the uproar of the firing and the echoes he half fancied it a siege of Albaro. The flies mustered strong, too, and the mosquitos; so that at night he had to lie covered up with gauze, like cold meat in a safe.

Of course all news from England, and especially visits paid him by English friends who might be travelling in Italy, were a great delight. This was the year when O'Connell was released from prison by the judgment of the Lords on appeal. "I have no faith in O'Connell taking the great position he might upon this: being beleaguered by vanity always. Denman delights me. I am glad to think I have always liked him so well. I am sure that whenever he makes a mistake, it is a mistake; and that no man lives who has a grander and nobler scorn of every mean and dastard action. I would to Heaven it were decorous to pay him some public tribute of respect . . . O'Connell's speeches are the old thing: fretty, boastful, frothy, waspish at the voices in the crowd, and all that: but with no true greatness. . . . What a relief to turn to that noble letter of Carlyle's" (in which a timely testimony had been borne to the truthfulness and honour of Mazzini), "which I think above all praise. My love to him." Among his English visitors were Mr. Tagart's family, on their way from a scientific congress at Milan; and Peter (now become Lord) Robertson from Rome, of whose talk he wrote very pleasantly. The sons of Burns had been entertained during the summer in Edinburgh at what was called a Burns Festival, of which, through Jerrold who was present, I had sent him no very favourable account; and this was now confirmed by Robertson, whose letters had given him an "awful" narrative of Wilson's speech, and of the whole business. "There was one man who spoke a quarter of an hour or so, to the toast of the navy; and could say nothing more than 'the--British--navy--always appreciates--' which remarkable sentiment he repeated over and over again for that space of time; and then sat down. Robertson told me also that Wilson's allusion to, or I should rather say expatiation upon, the 'vices' of Burns, excited but one sentiment of indignation and disgust: and added, very sensibly, 'By God!--I want to know what Burns did! I never heard of his doing anything that need be strange or unaccountable to the Professor's mind. I think he must have mistaken the name,

and fancied it a dinner to the sons of Burke'--meaning of course the murderer. In short he fully confirmed Jerrold in all respects." The same letter told me, too, something of his reading. Jerrold's Story of a Feather he had derived much enjoyment from. "Gauntwolf's sickness and the career of that snuffbox, masterly. I have been deep in Voyages and Travels, and in De Foe. Tennyson I have also been reading, again and again. What a great creature he is! . . . What about the Goldsmith? Apropos, I am all eagerness to write a story about the length of that most delightful of all stories, the Vicar of Wakefield."

In the second week of September he went to meet his brother Frederick at Marseilles, and bring him back over the Cornice road to pass a fortnight's holiday at Genoa; and his description of the first inn upon the Alps they slept in is too good to be lost. "We lay last night," he wrote (9th of September) "at the first halting-place on this journey, in an inn which is not entitled, as it ought to be, The house of call for fleas and vermin in general, but is entitled the grand hotel of the Post! I hardly know what to compare it to. It seemed something like a house in Somers-town originally built for a wine-vaults and never finished, but grown very old. There was nothing to eat in it and nothing to drink. They had lost the teapot; and when they found it, they couldn't make out what had become of the lid, which, turning up at last and being fixed on to the teapot, couldn't be got off again for the pouring in of more water. Fleas of elephantine dimensions were gambolling boldly in the dirty beds; and the mosquitoes!--But let me here draw a curtain (as I would have done if there had been any). We had scarcely any sleep, and rose up with hands and arms hardly human."

In four days they were at Albaro, and the morning after their arrival Dickens underwent the terrible shock of seeing his brother very nearly drowned in the bay. He swam out into too strong a current, and was only narrowly saved by the accident of a fishing-boat preparing to leave the harbour at the time. "It was a world of horror and anguish," Dickens wrote to me, "crowded into four or five minutes of dreadful agitation; and, to complete the terror of it, Georgy, Charlotte" (the nurse), "and the children were on a rock in full view of it all, crying, as you may suppose, like mad creatures." His own bathing was from the rock, and, as he had already told me, of the most primitive kind. He went in whenever he pleased, broke his head against sharp stones if he went in with that end foremost, floundered about till he was all over bruises, and then climbed and staggered out again. "Everybody wears a dress. Mine extremely theatrical: Masaniello to the life: shall be preserved for your inspection in Devonshire-terrace." I will add another personal touch, also Masaniello-like, which marks the beginning of a change which, though confined for the present to his foreign residence and removed when he came to England, was resumed somewhat later, and in a few more years wholly altered the aspect of his face. "The moustaches are glorious, glorious. I have cut them shorter, and trimmed them a little at the ends to improve the shape. They are charming, charming. Without them, life would be a blank."

Volume II, Chapter 6 (1844): Work in Genoa: Palazzo Peschiere

Work in Genoa: Palazzo Peschiere

IN the last week of September they moved from Albaro into Genoa, amid a violent storm of wind and wet, "great guns blowing," the lightning incessant, and the rain driving down in a dense thick cloud. But the worst of the storm was over when they reached the Peschiere. As they passed into it along the stately old terraces, flanked on either side with antique sculptured figures, all the seven fountains were playing in its gardens, and the sun was shining brightly on its groves of camellias and orange-trees.

It was a wonderful place, and I soon became familiar with the several rooms that were to form their home for the rest of their stay in Italy. In the centre was the grand sala, fifty feet high, of an area larger than "the dining-room of the Academy," and painted, walls and ceiling, with frescoes three hundred years old, "as fresh as if the colours had been laid on yesterday." On the same floor as this great hall were a drawing-room, and a dining-room, both covered also with frescoes still bright enough to make them thoroughly cheerful, and both so nicely proportioned as to give to their bigness all the effect of snugness. Out of these opened three other chambers that were turned into sleeping-rooms and nurseries. Adjoining the sala, right and left, were the two best bedrooms; "in size and shape like those at Windsor-castle but greatly higher;" both having altars, a range of three windows with stone balconies, floors tesselated in patterns of black and white stone, and walls painted every inch: on the left, nymphs pursued by satyrs "as large as life and as wicked;" on the right, "Phaeton larger than life, with horses bigger than Meux and Co.'s, tumbling headlong down into the best bed." The right-hand one he occupied with his wife, and of the left took possession as a study; writing behind a big screen he had lugged into it, and placed by one of the windows, from which he could see over the city, as he wrote, as far as the lighthouse in its harbour. Distant little over a mile as the crow flew, flashing five times in four minutes, and on dark nights, as if by magic, illuminating brightly the whole palace-front every time it shone, this lighthouse was one of the wonders of Genoa.

When it had all become more familiar to him, he was fond of dilating on its beauties; and even the dreary sound of the chaunting from neighbouring mass-performances, as it floated in at all the open windows, which at first was a sad trouble, came to have its charm for him. I remember a vivid account he gave me of a great festa on the hill behind the house, when the people alternately danced under tents in the open air and rushed to say a prayer or two in an adjoining church bright with red and gold and blue and silver; so many minutes of dancing, and of praying, in regular turns of each. But the view over into Genoa, on clear bright days, was a never failing enjoyment. The whole city then, without an atom of smoke, and with every possible variety of tower and steeple pointing up into the sky, lay stretched out below his windows. To the right and left were lofty hills, with every indentation in their rugged sides sharply discernible; and on one side of the harbour stretched away into the dim bright distance the whole of the Cornice, its first highest range of mountains hoary with snow. Sitting down one Spring day to write to me, he thus spoke of the sea and of the garden. "Beyond the town is the wide expanse of the Mediterranean, as blue, at this moment, as the most pure and vivid prussian blue on Mac's palette when it is newly set; and on the horizon there is a red flush, seen nowhere as it is here. Immediately below the windows are the gardens of the house, with gold fish swimming and diving in the fountains; and below them, at the foot of a steep slope, the public garden and drive, where the walks are marked out by hedges of pink roses, which blush and shine through the green trees and vines, close up to the balconies of these windows. No custom can impair, and no description enhance, the beauty of the scene."

All these and other glories and beauties, however, did not come to him at once. They counted for little indeed when he first set himself seriously to write. "Never did I stagger so upon a threshold before. I seem as if I had plucked myself out of my proper soil when I left Devonshire-terrace; and could take root no more until I return to it. . . . Did I tell you how many fountains we have here? No matter. If they played nectar, they wouldn't please me half so well as the West Middlesex water-works at Devonshire-terrace." The subject for his new Christmas story he had chosen, but he had not found a title for it, or the machinery to work it with; when, at the moment of what seemed to be his greatest trouble, both reliefs came. Sitting down one morning resolute for work, though against the grain, his hand being out and everything inviting to idleness, such a peal of chimes arose from the city as he found to be "maddening." All Genoa lay beneath him, and up from it, with some sudden set of the wind, came in one fell sound the clang and clash of all its steeples, pouring into his ears, again and again, in a tuneless, grating, discordant, jerking, hideous vibration that made his ideas "spin round and round till they lost themselves in a whirl of vexation and giddiness, and dropped down dead." He had never before so suffered, nor did he again; but this was his description to me next day, and his excuse for having failed in a promise to send me his title. Only two days later, however, came a letter in which not a syllable was written but "We have heard THE CHIMES at midnight, Master Shallow!" and I knew he had discovered what he wanted.

Other difficulties were still to be got over. He craved for the London streets. He so missed his long night-walks before beginning anything that he seemed, as he said, dumbfounded without them. "I can't help thinking of the boy in the school-class whose button was cut off by Walter Scott and his friends. Put me down on Waterloo-bridge at eight o'clock in the evening, with leave to roam about as long as I like, and I would come home, as you know, panting to go on. I am sadly strange as it is, and can't settle. You will have lots of hasty notes from me while I am at work; but you know your man; and whatever strikes me, I shall let off upon you as if I were in Devonshire-terrace. It's a great thing to have my title, and see my way how to work the bells. Let them clash upon me now from all the churches and convents in Genoa, I see nothing but the old London belfry I have set them in. In my mind's eye, Horatio. I like more and more my notion of making, in this little book, a great blow for the poor. Something powerful, I think I can do, but I want to be tender too, and cheerful; as like the Carol in that respect as may be, and as unlike it as such a thing can be. The duration of the action will resemble it a little, but I trust to the novelty of the machinery to carry that off; and if my design be anything at all, it has a grip upon the very throat of the time." (8th of October.)

Thus bent upon his work, for which he never had been in more earnest mood, he was disturbed by hearing that he must attend the levee of the Governor who had unexpectedly arrived in the city, and who would take it as an affront, his eccentric friend Fletcher told him, if that courtesy were not immediately paid. "It was the morning on which I was going to begin, so I wrote round to our consul,"--praying, of course, that excuse should be made for him. Don't bother yourself, replied that sensible functionary, for all the consuls and governors alive; but shut yourself up by all means. "So," continues Dickens, telling me the tale, "he went next morning in great state and full costume, to present two English gentlemen. 'Where's the great poet?' said the Governor. 'I want to see the great poet.' 'The great poet, your excellency,' said the consul, 'is at work, writing a book, and begged me to make his excuses.' 'Excuses!' said the Governor, 'I wouldn't interfere with such an occupation for all the world. Pray tell him that my house is open to the honour of his presence when it is perfectly convenient for him; but not otherwise. And let no gentleman,' said the Governor, a surweyin' of his suite with a majestic eye, 'call upon Signor Dickens till he is understood to be disengaged.' And he sent somebody with his own cards next day. Now I do seriously call this, real politeness and pleasant consideration--not positively American, but still gentlemanly and polished. The same spirit pervades the inferior departments; and I have not been required to observe the usual police regulations, or to put myself to the slightest trouble about anything."

(18th of October.)

The picture I am now to give of him at work should be prefaced by a word or two that may throw light on the design he was working at. It was a large theme for so small an instrument; and the disproportion was not more characteristic of the man, than the throes of suffering and passion to be presently undergone by him for results that many men would smile at. He was bent, as he says, on striking a blow for the poor. They had always been his clients, they had never been forgotten in any of his books, but here nothing else was to be remembered. He had become, in short, terribly earnest in the matter. Several months before he left England, I had noticed in him the habit of more gravely regarding many things before passed lightly enough; the hopelessness of any true solution of either political or social problems by the ordinary Downing-street methods had been startlingly impressed on him in Carlyle's writings; and in the parliamentary talk of that day he had come to have as little faith for the putting down of any serious evil, as in a then notorious city Alderman's gabble for the putting down of suicide. The latter had stirred his indignation to its depths just before he came to Italy, and his increased opportunities of solitary reflection since had strengthened and extended it. When he came therefore to think of his new story for Christmas time, he resolved to make it a plea for the poor. He did not want it to resemble his Carol, but the same kind of moral was in his mind. He was to try and convert Society, as he had converted Scrooge, by showing that its happiness rested on the same foundations as those of the individual, which are mercy and charity not less than justice. Whether right or wrong in these assumptions, need not be questioned here, where facts are merely stated to render intelligible what will follow; he had not made politics at any time a study, and they were always an instinct with him rather than a science; but the instinct was wholesome and sound, and to set class against class never ceased to be as odious to him as he thought it righteous at all times to help each to a kindlier knowledge of the other. And so, here in Italy, amid the grand surroundings of this Palazzo Peschiere, the hero of his imagination was to be a sorry old drudge of a London ticket-porter, who in his anxiety not to distrust or think hardly of the rich, has fallen into the opposite extreme of distrusting the poor. From such distrust it is the object of the story to reclaim him; and, to the writer of it, the tale became itself of less moment than what he thus intended it to enforce. Far beyond mere vanity in authorship went the passionate zeal with which he began, and the exultation with which he finished, this task. When we met at its close, he was fresh from Venice, which had impressed him as "the wonder" and "the new sensation" of the world: but well do I remember how high above it all arose the hope that filled his mind. "Ah!" he said to me, "when I saw those places, how I thought that to leave one's hand upon the time, lastingly upon the time, with one tender touch for the mass of toiling people that nothing could obliterate, would be to lift oneself above the dust of all the Doges in their graves, and stand upon a giant's staircase that Sampson couldn't overthrow!" In varying forms this ambition was in all his life.

Another incident of these days will exhibit aspirations of a more solemn import that were not less part of his nature. It was depth of sentiment rather than clearness of faith which kept safe the belief on which they rested against all doubt or question of its sacredness, but every year seemed to strengthen it in him. This was told me in his second letter after reaching the Peschiere; the first having sent me some such commissions in regard to his wife's family as his kindly care for all connected with him frequently led to. "Let me tell you," he wrote (30th of September), "of a curious dream I had, last Monday night; and of the fragments of reality I can collect; which helped to make it up. I have had a return of rheumatism in my back, and knotted round my waist like a girdle of pain; and had laid awake nearly all that night under the infliction, when I fell asleep and dreamed this dream. Observe that throughout I was as real, animated, and full of passion as Macready (God bless him!) in the last scene of Macbeth. In an indistinct place, which was quite sublime in its indistinctness, I was visited by a Spirit. I could not make out the face, nor do I recollect that I desired to do so. It wore a blue drapery, as the Madonna might in a picture by

Raphael; and bore no resemblance to any one I have known except in stature. I think (but I am not sure) that I recognized the voice. Anyway, I knew it was poor Mary's spirit. I was not at all afraid, but in a great delight, so that I wept very much, and stretching out my arms to it called it 'Dear.' At this, I thought it recoiled; and I felt immediately, that not being of my gross nature, I ought not to have addressed it so familiarly. 'Forgive me!' I said. 'We poor living creatures are only able to express ourselves by looks and words. I have used the word most natural to our affections; and you know my heart.' It was so full of compassion and sorrow for me--which I knew spiritually, for, as I have said, I didn't perceive its emotions by its face--that it cut me to the heart; and I said, sobbing, 'Oh! give me some token that you have really visited me!' 'Form a wish,' it said. I thought, reasoning with myself: 'If I form a selfish wish, it will vanish.' So I hastily discarded such hopes and anxieties of my own as came into my mind, and said, 'Mrs. Hogarth is surrounded with great distresses'--observe, I never thought of saying 'your mother' as to a mortal creature--'will you extricate her?' 'Yes.' 'And her extrication is to be a certainty to me, that this has really happened?' 'Yes.' 'But answer me one other question!' I said, in an agony of entreaty lest it should leave me. 'What is the True religion?' As it paused a moment without replying, I said--Good God in such an agony of haste, lest it should go away!--'You think, as I do, that the Form of religion does not so greatly matter, if we try to do good? or,' I said, observing that it still hesitated, and was moved with the greatest compassion for me, 'perhaps the Roman Catholic is the best? perhaps it makes one think of God oftener, and believe in him more steadily?' 'For you,' said the Spirit, full of such heavenly tenderness for me, that I felt as if my heart would break; 'for you, it is the best!' Then I awoke, with the tears running down my face, and myself in exactly the condition of the dream. It was just dawn. I called up Kate, and repeated it three or four times over, that I might not unconsciously make it plainer or stronger afterwards. It was exactly this. Free from all hurry, nonsense, or confusion, whatever. Now, the strings I can gather up, leading to this, were three. The first you know, from the main subject of my last letter. The second was, that there is a great altar in our bed-room, at which some family who once inhabited this palace had mass performed in old time: and I had observed within myself, before going to bed, that there was a mark in the wall, above the sanctuary, where a religious picture used to be; and I had wondered within myself what the subject might have been, and what the face was like. Thirdly, I had been listening to the convent bells (which ring at intervals in the night), and so had thought, no doubt, of Roman Catholic services. And yet, for all this, put the case of that wish being fulfilled by any agency in which I had no hand; and I wonder whether I should regard it as a dream, or an actual Vision!" It was perhaps natural that he should omit, from his own considerations awakened by the dream, the very first that would have risen in any mind to which his was intimately known--that it strengthens other evidences, of which there are many in his life, of his not having escaped those trying regions of reflection which most men of thought and all men of genius have at some time to pass through. In such disturbing fancies during the next year or two, I may add that the book which helped him most was the Life of Arnold. "I respect and reverence his memory," he wrote to me in the middle of October, in reply to my mention of what had most attracted myself in it, "beyond all expression. I must have that book. Every sentence that you quote from it is the text-book of my faith."

He kept his promise that I should hear from him while writing, and I had frequent letters when he was fairly in his work. "With my steam very much up, I find it a great trial to be so far off from you, and consequently to have no one (always excepting Kate and Georgy) to whom to expatiate on my day's work. And I want a crowded street to plunge into at night. And I want to be 'on the spot' as it were. But apart from such things, the life I lead is favourable to work." In his next letter: "I am in regular, ferocious excitement with the Chimes; get up at seven; have a cold bath before breakfast; and blaze away, wrathful and red-hot, until three o'clock or so; when I usually knock off (unless it rains) for the day . . . I am fierce to finish in a spirit bearing some affinity to those of truth and mercy, and to shame the cruel

and the canting. I have not forgotten my catechism. 'Yes verily, and with God's help, so I will!'"

Within a week he had completed his first part, or quarter. "I send you to-day" (18th of October), "by mail, the first and longest of the four divisions. This is great for the first week, which is usually up-hill. I have kept a copy in shorthand in case of accidents. I hope to send you a parcel every Monday until the whole is done. I do not wish to influence you, but it has a great hold upon me, and has affected me, in the doing, in divers strong ways, deeply, forcibly. To give you better means of judgment I will sketch for you the general idea, but pray don't read it until you have read this first part of the MS." I print it here. It is a good illustration of his method in all his writing. His idea is in it so thoroughly, that, by comparison with the tale as printed, we see the strength of its mastery over his first design. Thus always, whether his tale was to be written in one or in twenty numbers, his fancies controlled him. He never, in any of his books, accomplished what he had wholly preconceived, often as he attempted it. Few men of genius ever did. Once at the sacred heat that opens regions beyond ordinary vision, imagination has its own laws; and where characters are so real as to be treated as existences, their creator himself cannot help them having their own wills and ways. Fern the farm-labourer is not here, nor yet his niece the little Lilian (at first called Jessie) who is to give to the tale its most tragical scene; and there are intimations of poetic fancy at the close of my sketch which the published story fell short of. Altogether the comparison is worth observing.

"The general notion is this. That what happens to poor Trotty in the first part, and what will happen to him in the second (when he takes the letter to a punctual and a great man of business, who is balancing his books and making up his accounts, and complacently expatiating on the necessity of clearing off every liability and obligation, and turning over a new leaf and starting fresh with the new year), so dispirits him, who can't do this, that he comes to the conclusion that his class and order have no business with a new year, and really are 'intruding.' And though he will pluck up for an hour or so, at the christening (I think) of a neighbour's child, that evening: still, when he goes home, Mr. Filer's precepts will come into his mind, and he will say to himself, 'we are a long way past the proper average of children, and it has no business to be born:' and will be wretched again. And going home, and sitting there alone, he will take that newspaper out of his pocket, and reading of the crimes and offences of the poor, especially of those whom Alderman Cute is going to put down, will be quite confirmed in his misgiving that they are bad; irredeemably bad. In this state of mind, he will fancy that the Chimes are calling, to him; and saying to himself 'God help me. Let me go up to 'em. I feel as if I were going to die in despair--of a broken heart; let me die among the bells that have been a comfort to me!'--will grope his way up into the tower; and fall down in a kind of swoon among them. Then the third quarter, or in other words the beginning of the second half of the book, will open with the Goblin part of the thing: the bells ringing, and innumerable spirits (the sound or vibration of them) flitting and tearing in and out of the church-steeple, and bearing all sorts of missions and commissions and reminders and reproaches, and comfortable recollections and what not, to all sorts of people and places. Some bearing scourges; and others flowers, and birds, and music; and others pleasant faces in mirrors, and others ugly ones: the bells haunting people in the night (especially the last of the old year) according to their deeds. And the bells themselves, who have a goblin likeness to humanity in the midst of their proper shapes, and who shine in a light of their own, will say (the Great Bell being the chief spokesman) Who is he that being of the poor doubts the right of poor men to the inheritance which Time reserves for them, and echoes an unmeaning cry against his fellows? Toby, all aghast, will tell him it is he, and why it is. Then the spirits of the bells will bear him through the air to various scenes, charged with this trust: That they show him how the poor and wretched, at the worst--yes, even in the crimes that aldermen put down, and he has thought so horrible--have some deformed and hunchbacked goodness clinging to them; and how they have their right and share in Time. Following out the history of Meg the Bells will show her, that marriage broken off and all friends dead,

with an infant child; reduced so low, and made so miserable, as to be brought at last to wander out at night. And in Toby's sight, her father's, she will resolve to drown herself and the child together. But before she goes down to the water, Toby will see how she covers it with a part of her own wretched dress, and adjusts its rags so as to make it pretty in its sleep, and hangs over it, and smooths its little limbs, and loves it with the dearest love that God ever gave to mortal creatures; and when she runs down to the water, Toby will cry 'Oh spare her! Chimes, have mercy on her! Stop her!'--and the bells will say, 'Why stop her? She is bad at heart--let the bad die.' And Toby on his knees will beg and pray for mercy: and in the end the bells will stop her, by their voices, just in time. Toby will see, too, what great things the punctual man has left undone on the close of the old year, and what accounts he has left unsettled: punctual as he is. And he will see a great many things about Richard, once so near being his son-in-law, and about a great many people. And the moral of it all will be, that he has his portion in the new year no less than any other man, and that the poor require a deal of beating out of shape before their human shape is gone; that even in their frantic wickedness there may be good in their hearts triumphantly asserting itself, though all the aldermen alive say 'No,' as he has learnt from the agony of his own child; and that the truth is Trustfulness in them, not doubt, nor putting down, nor filing them away. And when at last a great sea rises, and this sea of Time comes sweeping down, bearing the alderman and such mudworms of the earth away to nothing, dashing them to fragments in its fury--Toby will climb a rock and hear the bells (now faded from his sight) pealing out upon the waters. And as he hears them, and looks round for help, he will wake up and find himself with the newspaper lying at his foot; and Meg sitting opposite to him at the table, making up the ribbons for her wedding to-morrow; and the window open, that the sound of the bells ringing the old year out and the new year in may enter. They will just have broken out, joyfully; and Richard will dash in to kiss Meg before Toby, and have the first kiss of the new year (he'll get it too); and the neighbours will crowd round with good wishes; and a band will strike up gaily (Toby knows a Drum in private); and the altered circumstances, and the ringing of the bells, and the jolly musick, will so transport the old fellow that he will lead off a country dance forthwith in an entirely new step, consisting of his old familiar trot. Then quoth the inimitable--Was it a dream of Toby's after all? Or is Toby but a dream? and Meg a dream? and all a dream! In reference to which, and the realities of which dreams are born, the inimitable will be wiser than he can be now, writing for dear life, with the post just going, and the brave C booted. . . . Ah how I hate myself, my dear fellow, for this lame and halting outline of the Vision I have in my mind. But it must go to you. . . . You will say what is best for the frontispiece". . . .

With the second part or quarter, after a week's interval, came announcement of the enlargement of his plan, by which he hoped better to carry out the scheme of the story, and to get, for its following part, an effect for his heroine that would increase the tragic interest. "I am still in stout heart with the tale. I think it well-timed and a good thought; and as you know I wouldn't say so to anybody else, I don't mind saying freely thus much. It has great possession of me every moment in the day; and drags me where it will. . . . If you only could have read it all at once!--But you never would have done that, anyway, for I never should have been able to keep it to myself; so that's nonsense. I hope you'll like it. I would give a hundred pounds (and think it cheap) to see you read it. . . . Never mind."

That was the first hint of an intention of which I was soon to hear more; but meanwhile, after eight more days, the third part came, with the scene from which he expected so much, and with a mention of what the writing of it had cost him. "This book (whether in the Hajji Baba sense or not I can't say, but certainly in the literal one) has made my face white in a foreign land. My cheeks, which were beginning to fill out, have sunk again; my eyes have grown immensely large; my hair is very lank; and the head inside the hair is hot and giddy. Read the scene at the end of the third part, twice. I wouldn't write it twice, for something. . . . You will see that I have substituted the name of Lilian for Jessie. It is prettier in sound,

and suits my music better. I mention this, lest you should wonder who and what I mean by that name. To-morrow I shall begin afresh (starting the next part with a broad grin, and ending it with the very soul of jollity and happiness); and I hope to finish by next Monday at latest. Perhaps on Saturday. I hope you will like the little book. Since I conceived, at the beginning of the second part, what must happen in the third, I have undergone as much sorrow and agitation as if the thing were real; and have wakened up with it at night. I was obliged to lock myself in when I finished it yesterday, for my face was swollen for the time to twice its proper size, and was hugely ridiculous.". . . His letter ended abruptly. "I am going for a long walk, to clear my head. I feel that I am very shakey from work, and throw down my pen for the day. There! (That's where it fell.)" A huge blot represented it, and, as Hamlet says, the rest was silence.

Two days later, answering a letter from me that had reached in the interval, he gave sprightlier account of himself, and described a happy change in the weather. Up to this time, he protested, they had not had more than four or five clear days. All the time he had been writing they had been wild and stormy. "Wind, hail, rain, thunder and lightning. To-day," just before he sent me his last manuscript, "has been November slack-baked, the sirocco having come back; and to-night it blows great guns with a raging storm." "Weather worse," he wrote after three Mondays, "than any November English weather I have ever beheld, or any weather I have had experience of anywhere. So horrible to-day that all power has been rained and gloomed out of me. Yesterday, in pure determination to get the better of it, I walked twelve miles in mountain rain. You never saw it rain. Scotland and America are nothing to it." But now all this was over. "The weather changed on Saturday night, and has been glorious ever since. I am afraid to say more in its favour, lest it should change again." It did not. I think there were no more complainings. I heard now of autumn days with the mountain wind lovely, enjoyable, exquisite past expression. I heard of mountain walks behind the Peschiere, most beautiful and fresh, among which, and along the beds of dry rivers and torrents, he could "pelt away," in any dress, without encountering a soul but the contadini. I heard of his starting off one day after finishing work, "fifteen miles to dinner--oh my stars! at such an inn!!!" On another day, of a party to dinner at their pleasant little banker's at Quinto six miles off, to which, while the ladies drove, he was able "to walk in the sun of the middle of the day and to walk home again at night." On another, of an expedition up the mountain on mules. And on another of a memorable tavern-dinner with their merchant friend Mr. Curry, in which there were such successions of surprising dishes of genuine native cookery that they took two hours in the serving, but of the component parts of not one of which was he able to form the remotest conception: the site of the tavern being on the city wall, its name in Italian sounding very romantic and meaning "the Whistle," and its bill of fare kept for an experiment to which, before another month should be over, he dared and challenged my cookery in Lincoln's-inn.

A visit from him to London was to be expected almost immediately! That all remonstrance would be idle, under the restless excitement his work had awakened, I well knew. It was not merely the wish he had, natural enough, to see the last proofs and the woodcuts before the day of publication, which he could not otherwise do; but it was the stronger and more eager wish, before that final launch, to have a vivider sense than letters could give him of the effect of what he had been doing. "If I come, I shall put up at Cuttris's" (then the Piazza-hotel in Covent-garden) "that I may be close to you. Don't say to anybody, except our immediate friends, that I am coming. Then I shall not be bothered. If I should preserve my present fierce writing humour, in any pass I may run to Venice, Bologna, and Florence, before I turn my face towards Lincoln's-inn-fields; and come to England by Milan and Turin. But this of course depends in a great measure on your reply." My reply, dwelling on the fatigue and cost, had the reception I foresaw. "Notwithstanding what you say, I am still in the same mind about coming to London. Not because the proofs concern me at all (I should be an ass as well as a thankless vagabond if they did), but because of that unspeakable restless something which would render it almost as impossible for me to remain here

and not see the thing complete, as it would be for a full balloon, left to itself, not to go up. I do not intend coming from here, but by way of Milan and Turin (previously going to Venice), and so, across the wildest pass of the Alps that may be open, to Strasburg. . . . As you dislike the Young England gentleman I shall knock him out, and replace him by a man (I can dash him in at your rooms in an hour) who recognizes no virtue in anything but the good old times, and talks of them, parrot-like, whatever the matter is. A real good old city tory, in a blue coat and bright buttons and a white cravat, and with a tendency of blood to the head. File away at Filer, as you please; but bear in mind that the Westminster Review considered Scrooge's presentation of the turkey to Bob Cratchit as grossly incompatible with political economy. I don't care at all for the skittle-playing." These were among things I had objected to.

But the close of his letter revealed more than its opening of the reason, not at once so frankly confessed, for the long winter-journey he was about to make; and if it be thought that, in printing the passage, I take a liberty with my friend, it will be found that equal liberty is taken with myself, whom it goodnaturedly caricatures; so that the reader can enjoy his laugh at either or both. "Shall I confess to you, I particularly want Carlyle above all to see it before the rest of the world, when it is done; and I should like to inflict the little story on him and on dear old gallant Macready with my own lips, and to have Stanny and the other Mac sitting by. Now, if you was a real gent, you'd get up a little circle for me, one wet evening, when I come to town: and would say, 'My boy (SIR, will you have the goodness to leave those books alone and to go downstairs--WHAT the Devil are you doing! And mind, sir, I can see nobody--do you hear? Nobody. I am particularly engaged with a gentleman from Asia)--My boy, would you give us that little Christmas book (a little Christmas book of Dickens's, Macready, which I'm anxious you should hear); and don't slur it, now, or be too fast, Dickens, please!'--I say, if you was a real gent, something to this effect might happen. I shall be under sailing orders the moment I have finished. And I shall produce myself (please God) in London on the very day you name. For one week: to the hour."

The wish was complied with, of course; and that night in Lincoln's-inn-fields led to rather memorable issues. His next letter told me the little tale was done. "Third of November, 1844. Half-past two, afternoon. Thank God! I have finished the Chimes. This moment. I take up my pen again to-day; to say only that much; and to add that I have had what women call 'a real good cry!'" Very genuine all this, it is hardly necessary to say. The little book thus completed was not one of his greater successes, and it raised him up some objectors; but there was that in it which more than repaid the suffering its writing cost him, and the enmity its opinions provoked; and in his own heart it had a cherished corner to the last. The intensity of it seemed always best to represent to himself what he hoped to be longest remembered for; and exactly what he felt as to this, his friend Jeffrey warmly expressed. "All the tribe of selfishness, and cowardice and cant, will hate you in their hearts, and cavil when they can; will accuse you of wicked exaggeration, and excitement to discontent, and what they pleasantly call disaffection! But never mind. The good and the brave are with you, and the truth also."

He resumed his letter on the fourth of November. "Here is the brave courier measuring bits of maps with a carving-fork, and going up mountains on a teaspoon. He and I start on Wednesday for Parma, Modena, Bologna, Venice, Verona, Brescia, and Milan. Milan being within a reasonable journey from here, Kate and Georgy will come to meet me when I arrive there on my way towards England; and will bring me all letters from you. I shall be there on the 18th. . . . Now, you know my punctiwality. Frost, ice, flooded rivers, steamers, horses, passports, and custom-houses may damage it. But my design is, to walk into Cuttris's coffee-room on Sunday the 1st of December, in good time for dinner. I shall look for you at the farther table by the fire--where we generally go. . . . But the party for the night following? I know you have consented to the party. Let me see. Don't have any one, this particular night, to dinner, but let it be a summons for the special purpose at half-past 6. Carlyle, indispensable, and I should like his wife of all things: her judgment would be invaluable. You will ask Mac, and why not his sister? Stanny

and Jerrold I should particularly wish; Edwin Landseer; Blanchard; perhaps Harness; and what say you to Fonblanque and Fox? I leave it to you. You know the effect I want to try . . . Think the Chimes a letter, my dear fellow, and forgive this. I will not fail to write to you on my travels. Most probably from Venice. And when I meet you (in sound health I hope) oh Heaven! what a week we will have."

Volume II, Chapter 7 (1844): Italian Travel

Italian Travel

SO it all fell out accordingly. He parted from his disconsolate wife, as he told me in his first letter from Ferrara, on Wednesday the 6th of November: left her shut up in her palace like a baron's lady in the time of the crusades; and had his first real experience of the wonders of Italy. He saw Parma, Modena, Bologna, Ferrara, Venice, Verona, and Mantua. As to all which the impressions conveyed to me in his letters have been more or less given in his published Pictures. They are charmingly expressed. There is a sketch of a cicerone at Bologna which will remain in his books among their many delightful examples of his unerring and loving perception for every gentle, heavenly, and tender soul, under whatever conventional disguise it wanders here on earth, whether as poorhouse orphan or lawyer's clerk, architect's pupil at Salisbury or cheerful little guide to graves at Bologna; and there is another memorable description in his Rembrandt sketch, in form of a dream, of the silent, unearthly, watery wonders of Venice. This last, though not written until after his London visit, had been prefigured so vividly in what he wrote at once from the spot, that those passages from his letter may be read still with a quite undiminished interest. "I must not," he said, "anticipate myself. But, my dear fellow, nothing in the world that ever you have heard of Venice, is equal to the magnificent and stupendous reality. The wildest visions of the Arabian Nights are nothing to the piazza of Saint Mark, and the first impression of the inside of the church. The gorgeous and wonderful reality of Venice is beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer. Opium couldn't build such a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in a vision. All that I have heard of it, read of it in truth or fiction, fancied of it, is left thousands of miles behind. You know that I am liable to disappointment in such things from over-expectation, but Venice is above, beyond, out of all reach of coming near, the imagination of a man. It has never been rated high enough. It is a thing you would shed tears to see. When I came on board here last night (after a five miles' row in a gondola; which somehow or other, I wasn't at all prepared for); when, from seeing the city lying, one light, upon the distant water, like a ship, I came plashing through the silent and deserted streets; I felt as if the houses were reality--the water, fever-madness. But when, in the bright, cold, bracing day, I stood upon the piazza, this morning, by Heaven the glory of the place was insupportable! And diving down from that into its wickedness and gloom--its awful prisons, deep below the water; its judgment chambers, secret doors, deadly nooks, where the torches you carry with you blink as if they couldn't bear the air in which the frightful scenes were acted; and coming out again into the radiant, unsubstantial Magic of the town; and diving in again, into vast churches, and old tombs--a new sensation, a new memory, a new mind came upon me. Venice is a bit of my brain from this time. My dear Forster, if you could share my transports (as you would if you were here) what would I not give! I feel cruel not to have brought Kate and Georgy; positively cruel and base. Canaletti and Stanny, miraculous in their truth. Turner, very noble. But the reality itself, beyond all pen or pencil. I never saw the thing before that I should be afraid to describe. But to tell what Venice is, I feel to be an impossibility. And here I sit alone, writing it: with nothing to urge me on, or goad me to that estimate, which, speaking of it to anyone I loved, and being spoken to in return, would lead me to form. In the sober solitude of a famous inn; with the great bell of Saint Mark ringing twelve at my elbow; with three arched windows in my room (two stories high) looking down upon the grand canal and away, beyond, to where the sun went down to-night in a blaze; and thinking over again those silent speaking faces of Titian and Tintoretto; I swear (uncooled by any humbug I have seen) that Venice is the wonder and the new sensation of the world! If you could be set down in it, never having heard of it, it would still be so. With your foot upon its stones, its pictures before you, and its history in your mind, it is something past all writing of or speaking of--almost past all thinking

of. You couldn't talk to me in this room, nor I to you, without shaking hands and saying 'Good God my dear fellow, have we lived to see this!'"

Five days later, Sunday the 17th, he was at Lodi, from which he wrote to me that he had been, like Leigh Hunt's pig, up "all manner of streets" since he left his palazzo; that with one exception he had not on any night given up more than five hours to rest; that all the days except two had been bad ("the last two foggy as Blackfriars-bridge on Lord Mayor's day"); and that the cold had been dismal. But what cheerful, keen, observant eyes he carried everywhere; and, in the midst of new and unaccustomed scenes, and of objects and remains of art for which no previous study had prepared him, with what a delicate play of imagination and fancy the minuteness and accuracy of his ordinary vision was exalted and refined; I think strikingly shown by the few unstudied passages I am preserving from these friendly letters. He saw everything for himself; and from mistakes in judging for himself which not all the learning and study in the world will save ordinary men, the intuition of genius almost always saved him. Hence there is hardly anything uttered by him, of this much-trodden and wearisomely-visited, but eternally beautiful and interesting country, that will not be found worth listening to.

"I am already brim-full of cant about pictures, and shall be happy to enlighten you on the subject of the different schools, at any length you please. It seems to me that the preposterous exaggeration in which our countrymen delight in reference to this Italy, hardly extends to the really good things. Perhaps it is in its nature, that there it should fall short. I have never seen any praise of Titian's great picture of the Transfiguration of the Virgin at Venice, which soared half as high as the beautiful and amazing reality. It is perfection. Tintoretto's picture too, of the Assembly of the Blest, at Venice also, with all the lines in it (it is of immense size and the figures are countless) tending majestically and dutifully to Almighty God in the centre, is grand and noble in the extreme. There are some wonderful portraits there, besides; and some confused, and hurried, and slaughterous battle pieces, in which the surprising art that presents the generals to your eye, so that it is almost impossible you can miss them in a crowd though they are in the thick of it, is very pleasant to dwell upon. I have seen some delightful pictures; and some (at Verona and Mantua) really too absurd and ridiculous even to laugh at. Hampton-court is a fool to 'em--and oh there are some rum 'uns there, my friend. Some werry rum 'uns. . . . Two things are clear to me already. One is, that the rules of art are much too slavishly followed; making it a pain to you, when you go into galleries day after day, to be so very precisely sure where this figure will be turning round, and that figure will be lying down, and that other will have a great lot of drapery twined about him, and so forth. This becomes a perfect nightmare. The second is, that these great men, who were of necessity very much in the hands of the monks and priests, painted monks and priests a vast deal too often. I constantly see, in pictures of tremendous power, heads quite below the story and the painter; and I invariably observe that those heads are of the convent stamp, and have their counterparts, exactly, in the convent inmates of this hour. I see the portraits of monks I know at Genoa, in all the lame parts of strong paintings: so I have settled with myself that in such cases the lameness was not with the painter, but with the vanity and ignorance of his employers, who would be apostles on canvas at all events."

In the same letter he described the Inns. "It is a great thing--quite a matter of course--with English travellers, to decry the Italian inns. Of course you have no comforts that you are used to in England; and travelling alone, you dine in your bedroom always. Which is opposed to our habits. But they are immeasurably better than you would suppose. The attendants are very quick; very punctual; and so obliging, if you speak to them politely, that you would be a beast not to look cheerful, and take everything pleasantly. I am writing this in a room like a room on the two-pair front of an unfinished house in Eaton-square: the very walls make me feel as if I were a bricklayer distinguished by Mr. Cubitt with the favour of having it to take care of. The windows won't open, and the doors won't shut; and these latter (a cat could get in, between them and the floor) have a windy command of a colonnade which is open to

the night, so that my slippers positively blow off my feet, and make little circuits in the room--like leaves. There is a very ashy wood-fire, burning on an immense hearth which has no fender (there is no such thing in Italy); and it only knows two extremes--an agony of heat when wood is put on, and an agony of cold when it has been on two minutes. There is also an uncomfortable stain in the wall, where the fifth door (not being strictly indispensable) was walled up a year or two ago, and never painted over. But the bed is clean; and I have had an excellent dinner; and without being obsequious or servile, which is not at all the characteristic of the people in the North of Italy, the waiters are so amiably disposed to invent little attentions which they suppose to be English, and are so lighthearted and goodnatured, that it is a pleasure to have to do with them. But so it is with all the people. Vetturino-travelling involves a stoppage of two hours in the middle of the day, to bait the horses. At that time I always walk on. If there are many turns in the road, I necessarily have to ask my way, very often: and the men are such gentlemen, and the women such ladies, that it is quite an interchange of courtesies."

Of the help his courier continued to be to him I had whimsical instances in almost every letter, but he appears too often in the published book to require such celebration here. He is however an essential figure to two little scenes sketched for me at Lodi, and I may preface them by saying that Louis Roche, a native of Avignon, justified to the close his master's high opinion. He was again engaged for nearly a year in Switzerland, and soon after, poor fellow, though with a jovial robustness of look and breadth of chest that promised unusual length of days, was killed by heart-disease. "The brave C continues to be a prodigy. He puts out my clothes at every inn as if I were going to stay there twelve months; calls me to the instant every morning; lights the fire before I get up; gets hold of roast fowls and produces them in coaches at a distance from all other help, in hungry moments; and is invaluable to me. He is such a good fellow, too, that little rewards don't spoil him. I always give him, after I have dined, a tumbler of Sauterne or Hermitage or whatever I may have; sometimes (as yesterday) when we have come to a public-house at about eleven o'clock, very cold, having started before day-break and had nothing, I make him take his breakfast with me; and this renders him only more anxious than ever, by redoubling attentions, to show me that he thinks he has got a good master . . . I didn't tell you that the day before I left Genoa, we had a dinner-party--our English consul and his wife; the banker; Sir George Crawford and his wife; the De la Rues; Mr. Curry; and some others, fourteen in all. At about nine in the morning, two men in immense paper caps enquired at the door for the brave C, who presently introduced them in triumph as the Governor's cooks, his private friends, who had come to dress the dinner! Jane wouldn't stand this, however; so we were obliged to decline. Then there came, at half-hourly intervals, six gentlemen having the appearance of English clergymen; other private friends who had come to wait. . . . We accepted their services; and you never saw anything so nicely and quietly done. He had asked, as a special distinction, to be allowed the supreme control of the dessert; and he had ices made like fruit, had pieces of crockery turned upside down so as to look like other pieces of crockery non-existent in this part of Europe, and carried a case of tooth-picks in his pocket. Then his delight was, to get behind Kate at one end of the table, to look at me at the other, and to say to Georgy in a low voice whenever he handed her anything, 'What does master think of datter 'rangement? Is he content?'. . . If you could see what these fellows of couriers are when their families are not upon the move, you would feel what a prize he is. I can't make out whether he was ever a smuggler, but nothing will induce him to give the custom-house-officers anything: in consequence of which that portmanteau of mine has been unnecessarily opened twenty times. Two of them will come to the coach-door, at the gate of a town. 'Is there anything contraband in this carriage, signore?'--'No, no. There's nothing here. I am an Englishman, and this is my servant.' 'A buono mano signore?' 'Roche,'(in English) 'give him something, and get rid of him.' He sits unmoved. 'A buono mano signore?' 'Go along with you!' says the brave C. 'Signore, I am a custom-house-officer!' 'Well, then, more shame for you!'--he always makes the same answer. And then he turns to me and says

in English: while the custom-house-officer's face is a portrait of anguish framed in the coach-window, from his intense desire to know what is being told to his disparagement: 'Datter chip,' shaking his fist at him, 'is greatest tief--and you know it you rascal--as never did en-razh me so, that I cannot bear myself!' I suppose chip to mean chap, but it may include the custom-house-officer's father and have some reference to the old block, for anything I distinctly know."

He closed his Lodi letter next day at Milan, whither his wife and her sister had made an eighty miles journey from Genoa, to pass a couple of days with him in Prospero's old Dukedom before he left for London. "We shall go our several ways on Thursday morning, and I am still bent on appearing at Cuttris's on Sunday the first, as if I had walked thither from Devonshire-terrace. In the meantime I shall not write to you again . . . to enhance the pleasure (if anything can enhance the pleasure) of our meeting . . . I am opening my arms so wide!" One more letter I had nevertheless; written at Strasburg on Monday night the 25th; to tell me I might look for him one day earlier, so rapid had been his progress. He had been in bed only once, at Friburg for two or three hours, since he left Milan; and he had sledged through the snow on the top of the Simplon in the midst of prodigious cold. "I am sitting here in a wood-fire, and drinking brandy and water scalding hot, with a faint idea of coming warm in time. My face is at present tingling with the frost and wind, as I suppose the cymbals may, when that turbaned turk attached to the life guards' band has been newly clashing at them in St. James's-park. I am in hopes it may be the preliminary agony of returning animation."

There was certainly no want of animation when we met. I have but to write the words to bring back the eager face and figure, as they flashed upon me so suddenly this wintry Saturday night that almost before I could be conscious of his presence I felt the grasp of his hand. It is almost all I find it possible to remember of the brief, bright, meeting. Hardly did he seem to have come when he was gone. But all that the visit proposed he accomplished. He saw his little book in its final form for publication; and, to a select few brought together on Monday the 2nd of December at my house, had the opportunity of reading it aloud. An occasion rather memorable, in which was the germ of those readings to larger audiences by which, as much as by his books, the world knew him in his later life; but of which no detail beyond the fact remains in my memory, and all are now dead who were present at it excepting only Mr. Carlyle and myself. Among those however who have thus passed away was one, our excellent Maclise, who, anticipating the advice of Captain Cuttle, had "made a note of" it in pencil, which I am able here to reproduce. It will tell the reader all he can wish to know. He will see of whom the party consisted; and may be assured (with allowance for a touch of caricature to which I may claim to be considered myself as the chief victim), that in the grave attention of Carlyle, the eager interest of Stanfield and Maclise, the keen look of poor Laman Blanchard, Fox's rapt solemnity, Jerrold's skyward gaze, and the tears of Harness and Dyce, the characteristic points of the scene are sufficiently rendered. All other recollection of it is passed and gone; but that at least its principal actor was made glad and grateful, sufficient farther testimony survives. Such was the report made of it, that once more, on the pressing intercession of our friend Thomas Ingoldsby (Mr. Barham), there was a second reading to which the presence and enjoyment of Fonblanque gave new zest; and when I expressed to Dickens, after he left us, my grief that he had had so tempestuous a journey for such brief enjoyment, he replied that the visit had been one happiness and delight to him. "I would not recall an inch of the way to or from you, if it had been twenty times as long and twenty thousand times as wintry. It was worth any travel--anything! With the soil of the road in the very grain of my cheeks, I swear I wouldn't have missed that week, that first night of our meeting, that one evening of the reading at your rooms, aye, and the second reading too, for any easily stated or conceived consideration."

He wrote from Paris, at which he had stopped on his way back to see Macready, whom an engagement to act there with Mr. Mitchell's English company had prevented from joining us in Lincoln's-inn-fields.

There had been no such frost and snow since 1829, and he gave dismal report of the city. With Macready he had gone two nights before to the Odeon to see Alexandre Dumas' Christine played by Madame St. George, "once Napoleon's mistress; now of an immense size, from dropsy I suppose; and with little weak legs which she can't stand upon. Her age, withal, somewhere about 80 or 90. I never in my life beheld such a sight. Every stage-conventionality she ever picked up (and she has them all) has got the dropsy too, and is swollen and bloated hideously. The other actors never looked at one another, but delivered all their dialogues to the pit, in a manner so egregiously unnatural and preposterous that I couldn't make up my mind whether to take it as a joke or an outrage." And then came allusion to a project we had started on the night of the reading, that a private play should be got up by us on his return from Italy. "You and I, sir, will reform this altogether." He had but to wait another night, however, when he saw it all reformed at the Italian opera where Grisi was singing in Il Pirato, and "the passion and fire of a scene between her, Mario, and Fornasari, was as good and great as it is possible for anything operatic to be. They drew on one another, the two men--not like stage-players, but like Macready himself: and she, rushing in between them; now clinging to this one, now to that, now making a sheath for their naked swords with her arms, now tearing her hair in distraction as they broke away from her and plunged again at each other; was prodigious." This was the theatre at which Macready was immediately to act, and where Dickens saw him next day rehearse the scene before the doge and council in Othello, "not as usual facing the float but arranged on one side," with an effect that seemed to him to heighten the reality of the scene.

He left Paris on the night of the 13th with the malle poste, which did not reach Marseilles till fifteen hours behind its time, after three days and three nights travelling over horrible roads. Then, in a confusion between the two rival packets for Genoa, he unwillingly detained one of them more than an hour from sailing; and only managed at last to get to her just as she was moving out of harbour. As he went up the side, he saw a strange sensation among the angry travellers whom he had detained so long; heard a voice exclaim "I am blarmed if it ain't DICKENS!" and stood in the centre of a group of Five Americans! But the pleasantest part of the story is that they were, one and all, glad to see him; that their chief man, or leader, who had met him in New York, at once introduced them all round with the remark, "Personally our countrymen, and you, can fix it friendly sir, I do expectuate;" and that, through the stormy passage to Genoa which followed, they were excellent friends. For the greater part of the time, it is true, Dickens had to keep to his cabin; but he contrived to get enjoyment out of them nevertheless. The member of the party who had the travelling dictionary wouldn't part with it, though he was dead sick in the cabin next to my friend's; and every now and then Dickens was conscious of his fellow-travellers coming down to him, crying out in varied tones of anxious bewilderment, "I say, what's French for a pillow?" "Is there any Italian phrase for a lump of sugar? Just look, will you?" "What the devil does echo mean? The garsong says echo to everything!" They were excessively curious to know, too, the population of every little town on the Cornice, and all its statistics; "perhaps the very last subjects within the capacity of the human intellect," remarks Dickens, "that would ever present themselves to an Italian steward's mind. He was a very willing fellow, our steward; and, having some vague idea that they would like a large number, said at hazard fifty thousand, ninety thousand, four hundred thousand, when they asked about the population of a place not larger than Lincoln's-inn-fields. And when they said Non Possible!_ (which was the leader's invariable reply), he doubled or trebled the amount; to meet what he supposed to be their views, and make it quite satisfactory."

Volume II, Chapter 8 (1845): Last Months in Italy

Last Months in Italy

ON the 22nd of December he had resumed his ordinary Genoa life; and of a letter from Jeffrey, to whom he had dedicated his little book, he wrote as "most energetic and enthusiastic. Filer sticks in his throat rather, but all the rest is quivering in his heart. He is very much struck by the management of Lilian's story, and cannot help speaking of that; writing of it all indeed with the freshness and ardour of youth, and not like a man whose blue and yellow has turned grey." Some of its words have been already given. "Miss Coutts has sent Charley, with the best of letters to me, a Twelfth Cake weighing ninety pounds, magnificently decorated; and only think of the characters, Fairburn's Twelfth Night characters, being detained at the custom-house for Jesuitical surveillance! But these fellows are---- Well! never mind. Perhaps you have seen the history of the Dutch minister at Turin, and of the spiriting away of his daughter by the Jesuits? It is all true; though, like the history of our friend's servant, almost incredible. But their devilry is such that I am assured by our consul that if, while we are in the south, we were to let our children go out with servants on whom we could not implicitly rely, these holy men would trot even their small feet into churches with a view to their ultimate conversion! It is tremendous even to see them in the streets, or slinking about this garden." Of his purpose to start for the south of Italy in the middle of January, taking his wife with him, his letter the following week told me; dwelling on all he had missed, in that first Italian Christmas, of our old enjoyments of the season in England; and closing its pleasant talk with a postscript at midnight. "First of January, 1845. Many many many happy returns of the day! A life of happy years! The Baby is dressed in thunder, lightning, rain, and wind. His birth is most portentous here."

It was of ill-omen to me, one of its earliest incidents being my only brother's death; but Dickens had a friend's true helpfulness in sorrow, and a portion of what he then wrote to me I permit myself to preserve in a note for what it relates of his own sad experiences and solemn beliefs and hopes. The journey southward began on the 20th January, and five days later I had a letter written from La Scala, at a little inn, "supported on low brick arches like a British haystack," the bed in their room "like a mangle," the ceiling without lath or plaster, nothing to speak of available for comfort or decency, and nothing particular to eat or drink. "But for all this I have become attached to the country and I don't care who knows it." They had left Pisa that morning and Carrara the day before: at the latter place an ovation awaiting him, the result of the zeal of our eccentric friend Fletcher, who happened to be staying there with an English marble-merchant. "There is a beautiful little theatre there, built of marble; and they had it illuminated that night, in my honour. There was really a very fair opera: but it is curious that the chorus has been always, time out of mind, made up of labourers in the quarries, who don't know a note of music, and sing entirely by ear. It was crammed to excess, and I had a great reception; a deputation waiting upon us in the box, and the orchestra turning out in a body afterwards and serenading us at Mr. Walton's." Between this and Rome they had a somewhat wild journey; and before Radicofani was reached, there were disturbing rumours of bandits and even uncomfortable whispers as to their night's lodging-place. "I really began to think we might have an adventure; and as I had brought (like an ass) a bag of Napoleons with me from Genoa, I called up all the theatrical ways of letting off pistols that I could call to mind, and was the more disposed to fire them from not having any." It ended in no worse adventure, however, than a somewhat exciting dialogue with an old professional beggar at Radicofani itself, in which he was obliged to confess that he came off second-best. It transpired at a little town hanging on a hill side, of which the inhabitants, being all of them beggars, had the habit of swooping down, like so many birds of prey, upon any carriage that approached it.

"Can you imagine" (he named a first-rate bore, for whose name I shall substitute) "M. F. G. in a very frowsy brown cloak concealing his whole figure, and with very white hair and a very white beard, darting out of this place with a long staff in his hand, and begging? There he was, whether you can or not; out of breath with the rapidity of his dive, and staying with his staff all the Radicofani boys, that he might fight it out with me alone. It was very wet, and so was I: for I had kept, according to custom, my box-seat. It was blowing so hard that I could scarcely stand; and there was a custom-house on the spot, besides. Over and above all this, I had no small money; and the brave C never has, when I want it for a beggar. When I had excused myself several times, he suddenly drew himself up and said, with a wizard look (fancy the aggravation of M. F. G. as a wizard!) 'Do you know what you are doing, my lord? Do you mean to go on, to-day?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I do.' 'My lord,' he said, 'do you know that your vetturino is unacquainted with this part of the country; that there is a wind raging on the mountain, which will sweep you away; that the courier, the coach, and all the passengers, were blown from the road last year; and that the danger is great and almost certain?' 'No,' I said, 'I don't.' 'My lord, you don't understand me, I think?' 'Yes I do, d---- you!' nettled by this (you feel it? I confess it). 'Speak to my servant. It's his business. Not mine'--for he really was too like M. F. G. to be borne. If you could have seen him!--'Santa Maria, these English lords! It's not their business, if they're killed! They leave it to their servants!' He drew off the boys; whispered them to keep away from the heretic; and ran up the hill again, almost as fast as he had come down. He stopped at a little distance as we moved on; and pointing to Roche with his long staff cried loudly after me, 'It's his business if you're killed, is it, my lord? Ha! ha! ha! whose business is it, when the English lords are born! Ha! ha! ha!' The boys taking it up in a shrill yell, I left the joke and them at this point. But I must confess that I thought he had the best of it. And he had so far reason for what he urged, that when we got on the mountain pass the wind became terrific, so that we were obliged to take Kate out of the carriage lest she should be blown over, carriage and all, and had ourselves to hang on to it, on the windy side, to prevent its going Heaven knows where!"

The first impression of Rome was disappointing. It was the evening of the 30th of January, and the cloudy sky, dull cold rain, and muddy footways, he was prepared for; but he was not prepared for the long streets of commonplace shops and houses like Paris or any other capital, the busy people, the equipages, the ordinary walkers up and down. "It was no more my Rome, degraded and fallen and lying asleep in the sun among a heap of ruins, than Lincoln's-inn-fields is. So I really went to bed in a very indifferent humour." That all this yielded to later and worthier impressions I need hardly say; and he had never in his life, he told me afterwards, been so moved or overcome by any sight as by that of the Coliseum, "except perhaps by the first contemplation of the Falls of Niagara." He went to Naples for the interval before the holy week; and his first letter from it was to say that he had found the wonderful aspects of Rome before he left, and that for loneliness and grandeur of ruin nothing could transcend the southern side of the Campagna. But farther and farther south the weather had become worse; and for a week before his letter (the 11th of February), the only bright sky he had seen was just as the sun was coming up across the sea at Terracina. "Of which place, a beautiful one, you can get a very good idea by imagining something as totally unlike the scenery in Fra Diavolo as possible." He thought the bay less striking at Naples than at Genoa, the shape of the latter being more perfect in its beauty, and the smaller size enabling you to see it all at once, and feel it more like an exquisite picture. The city he conceived the greatest dislike to. "The condition of the common people here is abject and shocking. I am afraid the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established as the world goes onward. Except Fondi, there is nothing on earth that I have seen so dirty as Naples. I don't know what to liken the streets to where the mass of the lazzaroni live. You recollect that favourite pigstye of mine near Broadstairs? They are more like streets of such apartments heaped up story on story, and tumbled house on house, than anything else I can think

of, at this moment." In a later letter he was even less tolerant. "What would I give that you should see the lazzaroni as they really are--mere squalid, abject, miserable animals for vermin to batten on; slouching, slinking, ugly, shabby, scavenging scarecrows! And oh the raffish counts and more than doubtful countesses, the noodles and the blacklegs, the good society! And oh the miles of miserable streets and wretched occupants, to which Saffron-hill or the Borough-mint is a kind of small gentility, which are found to be so picturesque by English lords and ladies; to whom the wretchedness left behind at home is lowest of the low, and vilest of the vile, and commonest of all common things. Well! well! I have often thought that one of the best chances of immortality for a writer is in the Death of his language, when he immediately becomes good company; and I often think here,--What would you say to these people, milady and milord, if they spoke out of the homely dictionary of your own 'lower orders.'" He was again at Rome on Sunday the second of March.

Sad news from me as to a common and very dear friend awaited him there; but it is a subject on which I may not dwell farther than to say that there arose from it much to redeem even such a sorrow, and that this I could not indicate better than by these wise and tender words from Dickens. "No philosophy will bear these dreadful things, or make a moment's head against them, but the practical one of doing all the good we can, in thought and deed. While we can, God help us! ourselves stray from ourselves so easily; and there are all around us such frightful calamities besetting the world in which we live; nothing else will carry us through it. . . . What a comfort to reflect on what you tell me. Bulwer Lytton's conduct is that of a generous and noble-minded man, as I have ever thought him. Our dear good Procter too! And Thackeray--how earnest they have all been! I am very glad to find you making special mention of Charles Lever. I am glad over every name you write. It says something for our pursuit, in the midst of all its miserable disputes and jealousies, that the common impulse of its followers, in such an instance as this, is surely and certainly of the noblest."

After the ceremonies of the holy week, of which the descriptions sent to me were reproduced in his book, he went to Florence, which lived always afterwards in his memory with Venice, and with Genoa. He thought these the three great Italian cities. "There are some places here,--oh Heaven how fine! I wish you could see the tower of the palazzo Vecchio as it lies before me at this moment, on the opposite bank of the Arno! But I will tell you more about it, and about all Florence, from my shady arm-chair up among the Peschiere oranges. I shall not be sorry to sit down in it again. . . . Poor Hood, poor Hood! I still look for his death, and he still lingers on. And Sydney Smith's brother gone after poor dear Sydney himself! Maltby will wither when he reads it; and poor old Rogers will contradict some young man at dinner, every day for three weeks."

Before he left Florence (on the 4th of April) I heard of a "very pleasant and very merry day" at Lord Holland's; and I ought to have mentioned how much he was gratified, at Naples, by the attentions of the English Minister there, Mr. Temple, Lord Palmerston's brother, whom he described as a man supremely agreeable, with everything about him in perfect taste, and with that truest gentleman-manner which has its root in kindness and generosity of nature. He was back at home in the Peschiere on Wednesday the ninth of April. Here he continued to write to me every week, for as long as he remained, of whatever he had seen: with no definite purpose as yet, but the pleasure of interchanging with myself the impressions and emotions undergone by him. "Seriously," he wrote to me on the 13th of April, "it is a great pleasure to me to find that you are really pleased with these shadows in the water, and think them worth the looking at. Writing at such odd places, and in such odd seasons, I have been half savage with myself, very often, for not doing better. But d'Orsay, from whom I had a charming letter three days since, seems to think as you do of what he has read in those shown to him, and says they remind him vividly of the real aspect of these scenes. . . . Well, if we should determine, after we have sat in council, that the experiences they relate are to be used, we will call B. and E. to their share and voice in the matter."

Shortly before he left, the subject was again referred to (7th of June). "I am in as great doubt as you about the letters I have written you with these Italian experiences. I cannot for the life of me devise any plan of using them to my own satisfaction, and yet think entirely with you that in some form I ought to use them." Circumstances not in his contemplation at this time settled the form they ultimately took.

Two more months were to finish his Italian holiday, and I do not think he enjoyed any part of it so much as its close. He had formed a real friendship for Genoa, was greatly attached to the social circle he had drawn round him there, and liked rest after his travel all the more for the little excitement of living its activities over again, week by week, in these letters to me. And so, from his "shady arm-chair up among the Peschiere oranges," I had at regular intervals what he called his rambling talk; went over with him again all the roads he had taken; and of the more important scenes and cities, such as Venice, Rome, and Naples, received such rich filling-in to the first outlines sent, as fairly justified the title of Pictures finally chosen for them. The weather all the time too had been without a flaw. "Since our return," he wrote on the 27th April, "we have had charming spring days. The garden is one grove of roses; we have left off fires; and we breakfast and dine again in the great hall, with the windows open. To-day we have rain, but rain was rather wanted I believe, so it gives offence to nobody. As far as I have had an opportunity of judging yet, the spring is the most delightful time in this country. But for all that I am looking with eagerness to the tenth of June, impatient to renew our happy old walks and old talks in dear old home."

Of incidents during these remaining weeks there were few, but such as he mentioned had in them points of humour or character still worth remembering. Two men were hanged in the city; and two ladies of quality, he told me, agreed to keep up for a time a prayer for the souls of these two miserable creatures so incessant that Heaven should never for a moment be left alone; to which end "they relieved each other" after such wise, that, for the whole of the stated time, one of them was always on her knees in the cathedral church of San Lorenzo. From which he inferred that "a morbid sympathy for criminals is not wholly peculiar to England, though it affects more people in that country perhaps than in any other."

Of Italian usages to the dead some notices from his letters have been given, and he had an example before he left of the way in which they affected English residents. A gentleman of his friend Fletcher's acquaintance living four miles from Genoa had the misfortune to lose his wife; and no attendance on the dead beyond the city gate, nor even any decent conveyance, being practicable, the mourner, to whom Fletcher had promised nevertheless the sad satisfaction of an English funeral, which he had meanwhile taken enormous secret pains to arrange with a small Genoese upholsterer, was waited upon, on the appointed morning, by a very bright yellow hackney-coach-and-pair driven by a coachman in yet brighter scarlet knee-breeches and waistcoat, who wanted to put the husband and the body inside together. "They were obliged to leave one of the coach-doors open for the accommodation even of the coffin; the widower walked beside the carriage to the Protestant cemetery; and Fletcher followed on a big grey horse."

Scarlet breeches reappear, not less characteristically, in what his next letter told of a couple of English travellers who took possession at this time (24th of May) of a portion of the ground floor of the Peschiere. They had with them a meek English footman who immediately confided to Dickens's servants, among other personal grievances, the fact that he was made to do everything, even cooking, in crimson breeches; which in a hot climate, he protested, was "a grinding of him down." "He is a poor soft country fellow; and his master locks him up at night, in a basement room with iron bars to the window. Between which our servants poke wine in, at midnight. His master and mistress buy old boxes at the curiosity shops, and pass their lives in lining 'em with bits of parti-coloured velvet. A droll existence, is it not? We are lucky to have had the palace to ourselves until now, but it is so large that we never see or hear these

people; and I should not have known even, if they had not called upon us, that another portion of the ground floor had been taken by some friends of old Lady Holland--whom I seem to see again, crying about dear Sydney Smith, behind that green screen as we last saw her together."

Then came a little incident also characteristic. An English ship of war, the Phantom, appeared in the harbour; and from her commander, Sir Henry Nicholson, Dickens received, among attentions very pleasant to him, an invitation to lunch on board and bring his wife, for whom, at a time appointed, a boat was to be sent to the Ponte Reale (the royal bridge). But no boat being there at the time, Dickens sent off his servant in another boat to the ship to say he feared some mistake. "While we were walking up and down a neighbouring piazza in his absence, a brilliant fellow in a dark blue shirt with a white hem to it all round the collar, regular corkscrew curls, and a face as brown as a berry, comes up to me and says 'Beg your pardon sir--Mr. Dickens?' 'Yes.' 'Beg your pardon sir, but I'm one of the ship's company of the Phantom sir, cox'en of the cap'en's gig sir, she's a lying off the pint sir--been there half an hour.' 'Well but my good fellow,' I said, 'you're at the wrong place!' 'Beg your pardon sir, I was afeerd it was the wrong place sir, but I've asked them Genoese here sir, twenty times, if it was Port Real; and they knows no more than a dead jackass!'--Isn't it a good thing to have made a regular Portsmouth name of it?"

That was in his letter of the 1st June, which began by telling me it had been twice begun and twice flung into the basket, so great was his indisposition to write as the time for departure came; and which ended thus. "The fire-flies at night now, are miraculously splendid; making another firmament among the rocks on the seashore, and the vines inland. They get into the bedrooms, and fly about, all night, like beautiful little lamps.. . . I have surrendered much I had fixed my heart upon, as you know, admitting you have had reason for not coming to us here: but I stand by the hope that you and Mac will come and meet us at Brussels; it being so very easy. A day or two there, and at Antwerp, would be very happy for us; and we could still dine in Lincoln's-inn-fields on the day of arrival." I had been unable to join him in Genoa, urgently as he had wished it: but what is said here was done, and Jerrold was added to the party.

His last letter from Genoa was written on the 7th of June, not from the Peschiere, but from a neighbouring palace, "Brignole Rosso," into which he had fled from the miseries of moving. "They are all at sixes and sevens up at the Peschiere, as you may suppose; and Roche is in a condition of tremendous excitement, engaged in settling the inventory with the house-agent, who has just told me he is the devil himself. I had been appealed to, and had contented myself with this expression of opinion. 'Signor Noli, you are an old impostor!' 'Illustrissimo,' said Signor Noli in reply, 'your servant is the devil himself: sent on earth to torture me.' I look occasionally towards the Peschiere (it is visible from this room), expecting to see one of them flying out of a window. Another great cause of commotion is, that they have been paving the lane by which the house is approached, ever since we returned from Rome. We have not been able to get the carriage up since that time, in consequence; and unless they finish to-night, it can't be packed in the garden, but the things will have to be brought down in baskets, piecemeal, and packed in the street. To avoid this inconvenient necessity, the Brave made proposals of bribery to the paviours last night, and induced them to pledge themselves that the carriage should come up at seven this evening. The manner of doing that sort of paving work here, is to take a pick or two with an axe, and then lie down to sleep for an hour. When I came out, the Brave had issued forth to examine the ground; and was standing alone in the sun among a heap of prostrate figures: with a Great Despair depicted in his face, which it would be hard to surpass. It was like a picture--'After the Battle'--Napoleon by the Brave: Bodies by the Paviours."

He came home by the Great St. Gothard, and was quite carried away by what he saw of Switzerland. The country was so divine that he should have wondered indeed if its sons and daughters had ever been other than a patriotic people. Yet, infinitely above the country he had left as he ranked it in its natural

splendours, there was something more enchanting than these that he lost in leaving Italy; and he expressed this delightfully in the letter from Lucerne (14th of June) which closes the narrative of his Italian life.

"We came over the St. Gothard, which has been open only eight days. The road is cut through the snow, and the carriage winds along a narrow path between two massive snow walls, twenty feet high or more. Vast plains of snow range up the mountain-sides above the road, itself seven thousand feet above the sea; and tremendous waterfalls, hewing out arches for themselves in the vast drifts, go thundering down from precipices into deep chasms, here and there and everywhere: the blue water tearing through the white snow with an awful beauty that is most sublime. The pass itself, the mere pass over the top, is not so fine, I think, as the Simplon; and there is no plain upon the summit, for the moment it is reached the descent begins. So that the loneliness and wildness of the Simplon are not equalled there. But being much higher, the ascent and the descent range over a much greater space of country; and on both sides there are places of terrible grandeur, unsurpassable, I should imagine, in the world. The Devil's Bridge, terrific! The whole descent between Andermatt (where we slept on Friday night) and Altdorf, William Tell's town, which we passed through yesterday afternoon, is the highest sublimation of all you can imagine in the way of Swiss scenery. Oh God! what a beautiful country it is! How poor and shrunken, beside it, is Italy in its brightest aspect!

"I look upon the coming down from the Great St. Gothard with a carriage and four horses and only one postilion, as the most dangerous thing that a carriage and horses can do. We had two great wooden logs for drags, and snapped them both like matches. The road is like a geometrical staircase, with horrible depths beneath it; and at every turn it is a toss-up, or seems to be, whether the leaders shall go round or over. The lives of the whole party may depend upon a strap in the harness; and if we broke our rotten harness once yesterday, we broke it at least a dozen times. The difficulty of keeping the horses together in the continual and steep circle, is immense. They slip and slide, and get their legs over the traces, and are dragged up against the rocks; carriage, horses, harness, all a confused heap. The Brave, and I, and the postilion, were constantly at work, in extricating the whole concern from a tangle, like a skein of thread. We broke two thick iron chains, and crushed the box of a wheel, as it was; and the carriage is now undergoing repair, under the window, on the margin of the lake: where a woman in short petticoats, a stomacher, and two immensely long tails of black hair hanging down her back very nearly to her heels, is looking on--apparently dressed for a melodrama, but in reality a waitress at this establishment.

"If the Swiss villages look beautiful to me in winter, their summer aspect is most charming: most fascinating: most delicious. Shut in by high mountains capped with perpetual snow; and dotting a rich carpet of the softest turf, overshadowed by great trees; they seem so many little havens of refuge from the troubles and miseries of great towns. The cleanliness of the little baby-houses of inns is wonderful to those who come from Italy. But the beautiful Italian manners, the sweet language, the quick recognition of a pleasant look or cheerful word; the captivating expression of a desire to oblige in everything; are left behind the Alps. Remembering them, I sigh for the dirt again: the brick floors, bare walls, unplaistered ceilings, and broken windows."

We met at Brussels; Maclise, Jerrold, myself, and the travellers; passed a delightful week in Flanders together; and were in England at the close of June.

Volume II, Chapter 9 (1845-1846): Again in England. 1845-1846

Again in England. 1845-1846

HIS first letter after again taking possession of Devonshire-terrace revived a subject on which opinions had been from time to time interchanged during his absence, and to which there was allusion in the agreement executed before his departure. The desire was still as strong with him as when he started Master Humphrey's Clock to establish a periodical, that, while relieving his own pen by enabling him to receive frequent help from other writers, might yet retain always the popularity of his name. "I really think I have an idea, and not a bad one, for the periodical. I have turned it over, the last two days, very much in my mind: and think it positively good. I incline still to weekly; price three halfpence, if possible; partly original, partly select; notices of books, notices of theatres, notices of all good things, notices of all bad ones; Carol philosophy, cheerful views, sharp anatomization of humbug, jolly good temper; papers always in season, pat to the time of year; and a vein of glowing, hearty, generous, mirthful, beaming reference in everything to Home, and Fireside. And I would call it, sir,--

---------- | | | THE CRICKET. | | | | A cheerful creature that chirrups on the Hearth. | | | | Natural History._ | | | ----------

"Now, don't decide hastily till you've heard what I would do. I would come out, sir, with a prospectus on the subject of the Cricket that should put everybody in a good temper, and make such a dash at people's fenders and arm-chairs as hasn't been made for many a long day. I could approach them in a different mode under this name, and in a more winning and immediate way, than under any other. I would at once sit down upon their very hobs; and take a personal and confidential position with them which should separate me, instantly, from all other periodicals periodically published, and supply a distinct and sufficient reason for my coming into existence. And I would chirp, chirp, chirp away in every number until I chirped it up to----well, you shall say how many hundred thousand! . . . Seriously, I feel a capacity in this name and notion which appears to give us a tangible starting-point, and a real, defined, strong, genial drift and purpose. I seem to feel that it is an aim and name which people would readily and pleasantly connect with me; and that, for a good course and a clear one, instead of making circles pigeon-like at starting, here we should be safe. I think the general recognition would be likely to leap at it; and of the helpful associations that could be clustered round the idea at starting, and the pleasant tone of which the working of it is susceptible, I have not the smallest doubt. . . . But you shall determine. What do you think? And what do you say? The chances are, that it will either strike you instantly, or not strike you at all. Which is it, my dear fellow? You know I am not bigoted to the first suggestions of my own fancy; but you know also exactly how I should use such a lever, and how much power I should find in it. Which is it? What do you say?--I have not myself said half enough. Indeed I have said next to nothing; but like the parrot in the negro-story, I 'think a dam deal.'"

My objection, incident more or less to every such scheme, was the risk of losing its general advantage by making it too specially dependent on individual characteristics; but there was much in favour of the present notion, and its plan had been modified so far, in the discussions that followed, as to involve less absolute personal identification with Dickens,--when discussion, project, everything was swept away by a larger scheme, in its extent and its danger more suitable to the wild and hazardous enterprises of that prodigious year (1845) of excitement and disaster. In this more tremendous adventure, already hinted at on a previous page, we all became involved; and the chirp of the Cricket, delayed in consequence until Christmas, was heard then in circumstances quite other than those that were first intended. The change

he thus announced to me about half way through the summer, in the same letter which told me the success of d'Orsay's kind exertion to procure a fresh engagement for his courier Roche. "What do you think of a notion that has occurred to me in connection with our abandoned little weekly? It would be a delicate and beautiful fancy for a Christmas book, making the Cricket a little household god--silent in the wrong and sorrow of the tale, and loud again when all went well and happy." The reader will not need to be told that thus originated the story of the Cricket on the Hearth, a Fairy Tale of Home, which had a great popularity in the Christmas days of 1845. Its sale at the outset doubled that of both its predecessors.

But as yet the larger adventure has not made itself known, and the interval was occupied with the private play of which the notion had been started between us at his visit in December, and which cannot now be better introduced than by a passage of autobiography. This belongs to his early life, but I overlooked it when engaged on that portion of the memoir; and the accident gives it now a more appropriate place. For, though the facts related belong to the interval described in the chapter on his school-days and start in life, when he had to pass nearly two years as a reporter for one of the offices in Doctors' Commons, the influences and character it illustrates had their strongest expression at this later time. I had asked him, after his return to Genoa, whether he continued to think that we should have the play; and this was his reply. It will startle and interest the reader, and I must confess that it took myself by surprise; for I did not thus early know the story of his boyish years, and I thought it strange that he could have concealed from me so much.

"ARE we to have that play??? Have I spoken of it, ever since I came home from London, as a settled thing! I do not know if I have ever told you seriously, but I have often thought, that I should certainly have been as successful on the boards as I have been between them. I assure you, when I was on the stage at Montreal (not having played for years) I was as much astonished at the reality and ease, to myself, of what I did as if I had been another man. See how oddly things come about! When I was about twenty, and knew three or four successive years of Mathews's At Homes from sitting in the pit to hear them, I wrote to Bartley who was stage manager at Covent-garden, and told him how young I was, and exactly what I thought I could do; and that I believed I had a strong perception of character and oddity, and a natural power of reproducing in my own person what I observed in others. There must have been something in the letter that struck the authorities, for Bartley wrote to me, almost immediately, to say that they were busy getting up the Hunchback (so they were!) but that they would communicate with me again, in a fortnight. Punctual to the time, another letter came: with an appointment to do anything of Mathews's I pleased, before him and Charles Kemble, on a certain day at the theatre. My sister Fanny was in the secret, and was to go with me to play the songs. I was laid up, when the day came, with a terrible bad cold and an inflammation of the face; the beginning, by the bye, of that annoyance in one ear to which I am subject at this day. I wrote to say so, and added that I would resume my application next season. I made a great splash in the gallery soon afterwards; the Chronicle opened to me; I had a distinction in the little world of the newspaper, which made me like it; began to write; didn't want money; had never thought of the stage, but as a means of getting it; gradually left off turning my thoughts that way; and never resumed the idea. I never told you this, did I? See how near I may have been, to another sort of life.

"This was at the time when I was at Doctors' Commons as a shorthand writer for the proctors. And I recollect I wrote the letter from a little office I had there, where the answer came also. It wasn't a very good living (though not a very bad one), and was wearily uncertain; which made me think of the Theatre in quite a business-like way. I went to some theatre every night, with a very few exceptions, for at least three years: really studying the bills first, and going to where there was the best acting: and always to see Mathews whenever he played. I practised immensely (even such things as walking in and out, and

sitting down in a chair): often four, five, six hours a day: shut up in my own room, or walking about in the fields. I prescribed to myself, too, a sort of Hamiltonian system for learning parts; and learnt a great number. I haven't even lost the habit now, for I knew my Canadian parts immediately, though they were new to me. I must have done a good deal: for, just as Macready found me out, they used to challenge me at Braham's: and Yates, who was knowing enough in those things, wasn't to be parried at all. It was just the same, that day at Keeley's, when they were getting up the Chuzzlewit last June.

"If you think Macready would be interested in this Strange news from the South, tell it him. Fancy Bartley or Charles Kemble now! And how little they suspect me!" In the later letter from Lucerne written as he was travelling home, he adds: "Did I ever tell you the details of my theatrical idea, before? Strange, that I should have quite forgotten it. I had an odd fancy, when I was reading the unfortunate little farce at Covent-garden, that Bartley looked as if some struggling recollection and connection were stirring up within him--but it may only have been his doubts of that humorous composition." The last allusion is to the farce of the Lamplighter which he read in the Covent-garden green-room, and to which former allusion was made in speaking of his wish to give help to Macready's managerial enterprise.

What Might have Been is a history of too little profit to be worth anybody's writing, and here there is no call even to regret how great an actor was in Dickens lost. He took to a higher calling, but it included the lower. There was no character created by him into which life and reality were not thrown with such vividness, that the thing written did not seem to his readers the thing actually done, whether the form of disguise put on by the enchanter was Mrs. Gamp, Tom Pinch, Mr. Squeers, or Fagin the Jew. He had the power of projecting himself into shapes and suggestions of his fancy which is one of the marvels of creative imagination, and what he desired to express he became. The assumptions of the theatre have the same method at a lower pitch, depending greatly on personal accident; but the accident as much as the genius favoured Dickens, and another man's conception underwent in his acting the process which in writing he applied to his own. Into both he flung himself with the passionate fullness of his nature; and though the theatre had limits for him that may be named hereafter, and he was always greater in quickness of assumption than in steadiness of delineation, there was no limit to his delight and enjoyment in the adventures of our theatrical holiday.

In less than three weeks after his return we had selected our play, cast our parts, and all but engaged our theatre; as I find by a note from my friend of the 22nd of July, in which the good natured laugh can give now no offence, since all who might have objected to it have long gone from us. Fanny Kelly, the friend of Charles Lamb, and a genuine successor to the old school of actresses in which the Mrs. Orgers and Miss Popes were bred, was not more delightful on the stage than impracticable when off, and the little theatre in Dean-street which the Duke of Devonshire's munificence had enabled her to build, and which with any ordinary good sense might handsomely have realized both its uses, as a private school for young actresses and a place of public amusement, was made useless for both by her mere whims and fancies. "Heavens! Such a scene as I have had with Miss Kelly here, this morning! She wanted us put off until the theatre should be cleaned and brushed up a bit, and she would and she would not, for she is eager to have us and alarmed when she thinks of us. By the foot of Pharaoh, it was a great scene! Especially when she choked, and had the glass of water brought. She exaggerates the importance of our occupation, dreads the least prejudice against the establishment in the minds of any of our company, says the place already has quite ruined her, and with tears in her eyes protests that any jokes at her additional expense in print would drive her mad. By the body of Caesar, the scene was incredible! It's like a preposterous dream." Something of our play is disclosed by the oaths a la Bobadil, and of our actors by "the jokes" poor Miss Kelly was afraid of. We had chosen EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR, with special regard to the singleness and individuality of the "humours" portrayed in it; and our company included the leaders of a journal then in its earliest years, but already not more renowned as the most

successful joker of jokes yet known in England, than famous for that exclusive use of its laughter and satire for objects the highest or most harmless which makes it still so enjoyable a companion to mirth-loving right-minded men. Maclise took earnest part with us, and was to have acted, but fell away on the eve of the rehearsals; and Stanfield, who went so far as to rehearse Downright twice, then took fright and also ran away: but Jerrold, who played Master Stephen, brought with him Lemon, who took Brainworm; Leech, to whom Master Matthew was given; A'Beckett, who had condescended to the small part of William; and Mr. Leigh, who had Oliver Cob. I played Kitely, and Bobadil fell to Dickens, who took upon him the redoubtable Captain long before he stood in his dress at the footlights; humouring the completeness of his assumption by talking and writing Bobadil, till the dullest of our party were touched and stirred to something of his own heartiness of enjoyment. One or two hints of these have been given, and I will only add to them his refusal of my wish that he should go and see some special performance of the Gamester. "Man of the House. Gamester!_ By the foot of Pharaoh, I will not see the Gamester. Man shall not force, nor horses drag, this poor gentleman-like carcass into the presence of the Gamester. I have said it. . . . The player Mac hath bidden me to eat and likewise drink with him, thyself, and short-necked Fox to-night--An' I go not, I am a hog, and not a soldier. But an' thou goest not--Beware citizen! Look to it. . . . Thine as thou meritest. BOBADIL (Captain). Unto Master Kitely. These."

The play was played on the 21st of September with a success that out-ran the wildest expectation; and turned our little enterprise into one of the small sensations of the day. The applause of the theatre found so loud an echo in the press, that for the time nothing else was talked about in private circles; and after a week or two we had to yield (we did not find it difficult) to a pressure of demand for more public performance in a larger theatre, by which a useful charity received important help, and its committee showed their gratitude by an entertainment to us at the Clarendon, a month or two later, when Lord Lansdowne took the chair. There was also another performance by us at the same theatre, before the close of the year, of a play by Beaumont and Fletcher. I may not farther indicate the enjoyments that attended the success, and gave always to the first of our series of performances a pre-eminently pleasant place in memory.

Of the thing itself, however, it is necessary to be said that a modicum of merit goes a long way in all such matters, and it would not be safe now to assume that ours was much above the average of amateur attempts in general. Lemon certainly had most of the stuff, conventional as well as otherwise, of a regular actor in him, but this was not of a high kind; and though Dickens had the title to be called a born comedian, the turn for it being in his very nature, his strength was rather in the vividness and variety of his assumptions, than in the completeness, finish, or ideality he could give to any part of them. It is expressed exactly by what he says of his youthful preference for the representations of the elder Mathews. At the same time this was in itself so thoroughly genuine and enjoyable, and had in it such quickness and keenness of insight, that of its kind it was unrivalled; and it enabled him to present in Bobadil, after a richly coloured picture of bombastical extravagance and comic exaltation in the earlier scenes, a contrast in the later of tragical humility and abasement, that had a wonderful effect. But greatly as his acting contributed to the success of the night, this was nothing to the service he had rendered as manager. It would be difficult to describe it. He was the life and soul of the entire affair. I never seemed till then to have known his business capabilities. He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property-man, prompter, and band-master. Without offending any one he kept every one in order. For all he had useful suggestions, and the dullest of clays under his potter's hand were transformed into little bits of porcelain. He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills, wrote out calls, and enforced as well as exhibited in his proper person everything of which he urged the necessity on others. Such a chaos of dirt, confusion, and noise, as the little theatre was the day we entered it, and such a

cosmos as he made it of cleanliness, order, and silence, before the rehearsals were over! There were only two things left as we found them, bits of humanity both, understood from the first as among the fixtures of the place: a Man in a Straw Hat, tall, and very fitful in his exits and entrances, of whom we never could pierce the mystery, whether he was on guard or in possession, or what he was; and a solitary little girl, who flitted about so silently among our actors and actresses that she might have been deaf and dumb but for sudden small shrieks and starts elicited by the wonders going on, which obtained for her the name of Fireworks. There is such humorous allusion to both in a letter of Dickens's of a year's later date, on the occasion of the straw-hatted mystery revealing itself as a gentleman in training for the tragic stage, that it may pleasantly close for the present our private theatricals.

"OUR STRAW-HATTED FRIEND from Miss Kelly's! Oh my stars! To think of him, all that time--Macbeth in disguise; Richard the Third grown straight; Hamlet as he appeared on his seavoyage to England. What an artful villain he must be, never to have made any sign of the melodrama that was in him! What a wicked-minded and remorseless Iago to have seen you doing Kitely night after night! raging to murder you and seize the part! Oh fancy Miss Kelly 'getting him up' in Macbeth. Good Heaven! what a mass of absurdity must be shut up sometimes within the walls of that small theatre in Dean-street! FIREWORKS will come out shortly, depend upon it, in the dumb line; and will relate her history in profoundly unintelligible motions that will be translated into long and complicated descriptions by a grey-headed father, and a red-wigged countryman, his son. You remember the dumb dodge of relating an escape from captivity? Clasping the left wrist with the right hand, and the right wrist with the left hand--alternately (to express chains)--and then going round and round the stage very fast, and coming hand over hand down an imaginary cord; at the end of which there is one stroke on the drum, and a kneeling to the chandelier? If Fireworks can't do that--and won't somewhere--I'm a Dutchman."

Graver things now claim a notice which need not be proportioned to their gravity, because, though they had an immediate effect on Dickens's fortunes, they do not otherwise form part of his story. But first let me say, he was at Broadstairs for three weeks in the autumn; we had the private play on his return; and a month later, on the 28th of October, a sixth child and fourth son, named Alfred Tennyson after his godfathers d'Orsay and Tennyson, was born in Devonshire-terrace. A death in the family followed, the older and more gifted of his ravens having indulged the same illicit taste for putty and paint which had been fatal to his predecessor. Voracity killed him, as it killed Scott's. He died unexpectedly before the kitchen-fire. "He kept his eye to the last upon the meat as it roasted, and suddenly turned over on his back with a sepulchral cry of Cuckoo!" The letter which told me this (31st of October) announced to me also that he was at a dead lock in his Christmas story: "Sick, bothered and depressed. Visions of Brighton come upon me; and I have a great mind to go there to finish my second part, or to Hampstead. I have a desperate thought of Jack Straw's. I never was in such bad writing cue as I am this week, in all my life." The reason was not far to seek. In the preparation for the proposed new Daily Paper to which reference has been made, he was now actively assisting, and had all but consented to the publication of his name.

I entertained at this time, for more than one powerful reason, the greatest misgiving of his intended share in the adventure. It was not fully revealed until later on what difficult terms, physical as well as mental, Dickens held the tenure of his imaginative life; but already I knew enough to doubt the wisdom of what he was at present undertaking. In all intellectual labour, his will prevailed so strongly when he fixed it on any object of desire, that what else its attainment might exact was never duly measured; and this led to frequent strain and unconscious waste of what no man could less afford to spare. To the world gladdened by his work, its production might always have seemed quite as easy as its enjoyment; but it may be doubted if ever any man's mental effort cost him more. His habits were robust, but not his health; that secret had been disclosed to me before he went to America; and to the last he refused steadily to

admit the enormous price he had paid for his triumphs and successes. The morning after his last note I heard again. "I have been so very unwell this morning, with giddiness, and headache, and botheration of one sort or other, that I didn't get up till noon: and, shunning Fleet-street" (the office of the proposed new paper), "am now going for a country walk, in the course of which you will find me, if you feel disposed to come away in the carriage that goes to you with this. It is to call for a pull of the first part of the Cricket, and will bring you, if you like, by way of Hampstead to me, and subsequently to dinner. There is much I should like to discuss, if you can manage it. It's the loss of my walks, I suppose; but I am as giddy as if I were drunk, and can hardly see." I gave far from sufficient importance at the time to the frequency of complaints of this kind, or to the recurrence, at almost regular periods after the year following the present, of those spasms in the side of which he has recorded an instance in the recollections of his childhood, and of which he had an attack in Genoa; but though not conscious of it to its full extent, this consideration was among those that influenced me in a determination to endeavour to turn him from what could not but be regarded as full of peril. His health, however, had no real prominence in my letter; and it is strange now to observe that it appears as an argument in his reply. I had simply put before him, in the strongest form, all the considerations drawn from his genius and fame that should deter him from the labour and responsibility of a daily paper, not less than from the party and political involvements incident to it; and here was the material part of the answer made. "Many thanks for your affectionate letter, which is full of generous truth. These considerations weigh with me, heavily: but I think I descry in these times, greater stimulants to such an effort; greater chance of some fair recognition of it; greater means of persevering in it, or retiring from it unscratched by any weapon one should care for; than at any other period. And most of all I have, sometimes, that possibility of failing health or fading popularity before me, which beckons me to such a venture when it comes within my reach. At the worst, I have written to little purpose, if I cannot write myself right in people's minds, in such a case as this."

And so it went on: but it does not fall within my plan to describe more than the issue, which was to be accounted so far at least fortunate that it established a journal which has advocated steadily improvements in the condition of all classes, rich as well as poor, and has been able, during late momentous occurrences, to give wider scope to its influence by its enterprise and liberality. To that result, the great writer whose name gave its earliest attraction to the Daily News was not enabled to contribute much; but from him it certainly received the first impress of the opinions it has since consistently maintained. Its prospectus is before me in his handwriting, but it bears upon itself sufficiently the character of his hand and mind. The paper would be kept free, it said, from personal influence or party bias; and would be devoted to the advocacy of all rational and honest means by which wrong might be redressed, just rights maintained, and the happiness and welfare of society promoted.

The day for the appearance of its first number was that which was to follow Peel's speech for the repeal of the corn laws; but, brief as my allusions to the subject are, the remark should be made that even before this day came there were interruptions to the work of preparation, at one time very grave, which threw such "changes of vexation" on Dickens's personal relations to the venture as went far to destroy both his faith and his pleasure in it. No opinion need be offered as to where most of the blame lay, and it would be useless now to apportion the share that might possibly have belonged to himself; but, owing to this cause, his editorial work began with such diminished ardour that its brief continuance could not but be looked for. A little note written "before going home" at six o'clock in the morning of Wednesday the 21st of January 1846, to tell me they had "been at press three quarters of an hour, and were out before the Times," marks the beginning; and a note written in the night of Monday the 9th of February, "tired to death and quite worn out," to say that he had just resigned his editorial functions, describes the end. I had not been unprepared. A week before (Friday 30th of January) he had written: "I want a long talk with you. I was obliged to come down here in a hurry to give out a travelling letter I meant to have given out

last night, and could not call upon you. Will you dine with us to-morrow at six sharp? I have been revolving plans in my mind this morning for quitting the paper and going abroad again to write a new book in shilling numbers. Shall we go to Rochester to-morrow week (my birthday) if the weather be, as it surely must be, better?" To Rochester accordingly we had gone, he and Mrs. Dickens and her sister, with Maclise and Jerrold and myself; going over the old Castle, Watts's Charity, and Chatham fortifications on the Saturday, passing Sunday in Cobham church and Cobham park; having our quarters both days at the Bull inn made famous in Pickwick; and thus, by indulgence of the desire which was always strangely urgent in him, associating his new resolve in life with those earliest scenes of his youthful time. On one point our feeling had been in thorough agreement. If long continuance with the paper was not likely, the earliest possible departure from it was desirable. But as the letters descriptive of his Italian travel (turned afterwards into Pictures from Italy) had begun with its first number, his name could not at once be withdrawn; and for the time during which they were still to appear, he consented to contribute other occasional letters on important social questions. Public executions and Ragged schools were among the subjects chosen by him, and all were handled with conspicuous ability. But the interval they covered was a short one.

To the supreme control which he had quitted, I succeeded, retaining it very reluctantly for the greater part of that weary, anxious, laborious year; but in little more than four months from the day the paper started, the whole of Dickens's connection with the Daily News, even that of contributing letters with his signature, had ceased. As he said in the preface to the republished Pictures, it was a mistake to have disturbed the old relations between himself and his readers, in so departing from his old pursuits. It had however been "a brief mistake;" the departure had been only "for a moment;" and now those pursuits were "joyfully" to be resumed in Switzerland. Upon the latter point we had much discussion; but he was bent on again removing himself from London, and his glimpse of the Swiss mountains on his coming from Italy had given him a passion to visit them again. "I don't think," he wrote to me, "I could shut out the paper sufficiently, here, to write well. No . . . I will write my book in Lausanne and in Genoa, and forget everything else if I can; and by living in Switzerland for the summer, and in Italy or France for the winter, I shall be saving money while I write." So therefore it was finally determined.

There is not much that calls for mention before he left. The first conceiving of a new book was always a restless time, and other subjects beside the characters that were growing in his mind would persistently intrude themselves into his night-wanderings. With some surprise I heard from him afterwards, for example, of a communication opened with a leading member of the Government to ascertain what chances there might be for his appointment, upon due qualification, to the paid magistracy of London: the reply not giving him encouragement to entertain the notion farther. It was of course but an outbreak of momentary discontent; and if the answer had been as hopeful as for others' sake rather than his own one could have wished it to be, the result would have been the same. Just upon the eve of his departure, I may add, he took much interest in the establishment of the General Theatrical Fund, of which he remained a trustee until his death. It had originated in the fact that the Funds of the two large theatres, themselves then disused for theatrical performances, were no longer available for the ordinary members of the profession; and on the occasion of his presiding at its first dinner in April he said, very happily, that now the statue of Shakespeare outside the door of Drury-lane, as emphatically as his bust inside the church of Stratford-on-Avon, pointed out his grave. I am tempted also to mention as felicitous a word which I heard fall from him at one of the many private dinners that were got up in those days of parting to give him friendliest farewell. "Nothing is ever so good as it is thought," said Lord Melbourne. "And nothing so bad," interposed Dickens.

The last incidents were that he again obtained Roche for his travelling servant, and that he let his Devonshire-terrace house to Sir James Duke for twelve months, the entire proposed term of his

absence. On the 30th of May they all dined with me, and on the following day left England.

Volume II, Chapter 10 (1846): A Home in Switzerland

A Home in Switzerland

HALTING only at Ostend, Verviers, Coblentz, and Mannheim, they reached Strasburg on the seventh of June: the beauty of the weather showing them the Rhine at its best. At Mayence there had come aboard their boat a German, who soon after accosted Mrs. Dickens on deck in excellent English: "Your countryman Mr. Dickens is travelling this way just now, our papers say. Do you know him, or have you passed him anywhere?" Explanations ensuing, it turned out, by one of the odd chances my friend thought himself always singled out for, that he had with him a letter of introduction to the brother of this gentleman; who then spoke to him of the popularity of his books in Germany, and of the many persons he had seen reading them in the steamboats as he came along. Dickens remarking at this how great his own vexation was not to be able himself to speak a word of German, "Oh dear! that needn't trouble you," rejoined the other; "for even in so small a town as ours, where we are mostly primitive people and have few travellers, I could make a party of at least forty people who understand and speak English as well as I do, and of at least as many more who could manage to read you in the original." His town was Worms, which Dickens afterwards saw, ". . . a fine old place, though greatly shrunken and decayed in respect of its population; with a picturesque old cathedral standing on the brink of the Rhine, and some brave old churches shut up, and so hemmed in and overgrown with vineyards that they look as if they were turning into leaves and grapes."

He had no other adventure on the Rhine. But, on the same steamer, a not unfamiliar bit of character greeted him in the well-known lineaments, moral and physical, of two travelling Englishmen who had got an immense barouche on board with them, and had no plan whatever of going anywhere in it. One of them wanted to have this barouche wheeled ashore at every little town and village they came to. The other was bent upon "seeing it out," as he said--meaning, Dickens supposed, the river; though neither of them seemed to have the slightest interest in it. "The locomotive one would have gone ashore without the carriage, and would have been delighted to get rid of it; but they had a joint courier, and neither of them would part with him for a moment; so they went growling and grumbling on together, and seemed to have no satisfaction but in asking for impossible viands on board the boat, and having a grim delight in the steward's excuses."

From Strasburg they went by rail on the 8th to Bale, from which they started for Lausanne next day, in three coaches, two horses to each, taking three days for the journey: its only enlivening incident being an uproar between the landlord of an inn on the road, and one of the voituriers who had libelled Boniface's establishment by complaining of the food. "After various defiances on both sides, the landlord said 'Scelerat! Mecreant! Je vous boaxerai!' to which the voiturier replied, 'Aha! Comment dites-vous? Voulez-vous boaxer? Eh? Voulez-vous? Ah! Boaxez-moi donc! Boaxez-moi!'--at the same time accompanying these retorts with gestures of violent significance, which explained that this new verb-active was founded on the well-known English verb to boax, or box. If they used it once, they used it at least a hundred times, and goaded each other to madness with it always." The travellers reached the hotel Gibbon at Lausanne on the evening of Thursday the 11th of June; having been tempted as they came along to rest somewhat short of it, by a delightful glimpse of Neuchatel. "On consideration however I thought it best to come on here, in case I should find, when I begin to write, that I want streets sometimes. In which case, Geneva (which I hope would answer the purpose) is only four and twenty miles away."

He at once began house-hunting, and had two days' hard work of it. He found the greater part of those let to the English like small villas in the Regent's-park, with verandahs, glass-doors opening on lawns,

and alcoves overlooking the lake and mountains. One he was tempted by, higher up the hill, "poised above the town like a ship on a high wave;" but the possible fury of its winter winds deterred him. Greater still was the temptation to him of "L'Elysee," more a mansion than a villa; with splendid grounds overlooking the lake, and in its corridors and staircases as well as furniture like an old fashioned country house in England; which he could have got for twelve months for L160. "But when I came to consider its vastness, I was rather dismayed at the prospect of windy nights in the autumn, with nobody staying in the house to make it gay." And so he again fell back upon the very first place he had seen, Rosemont, quite a doll's house; with two pretty little salons, a dining-room, hall, and kitchen, on the ground floor; and with just enough bedrooms upstairs to leave the family one to spare. "It is beautifully situated on the hill that rises from the lake, within ten minutes' walk of this hotel, and furnished, though scantily as all here are, better than others except Elysee, on account of its having being built and fitted up (the little salons in the Parisian way) by the landlady and her husband for themselves. They lived now in a smaller house like a porter's lodge, just within the gate. A portion of the grounds is farmed by a farmer, and he lives close by; so that, while it is secluded, it is not at all lonely." The rent was to be ten pounds a month for half a year, with reduction to eight for the second half, if he should stay so long; and the rooms and furniture were to be described to me, so that according to custom I should be quite at home there, as soon as, also according to a custom well-known, his own ingenious re-arrangements and improvements in the chairs and tables should be completed. "I shall merely observe at present therefore, that my little study is upstairs, and looks out, from two French windows opening into a balcony, on the lake and mountains; and that there are roses enough to smother the whole establishment of the Daily News in. Likewise, there is a pavilion in the garden, which has but two rooms in it; in one of which, I think you shall do your work when you come. As to bowers for reading and smoking, there are as many scattered about the grounds, as there are in Chalk-farm tea-gardens. But the Rosemont bowers are really beautiful. Will you come to the bowers. . . ?"

Very pleasant were the earliest impressions of Switzerland with which this first letter closed. "The country is delightful in the extreme--as leafy, green, and shady, as England; full of deep glens, and branchy places (rather a Leigh Huntish expression), and bright with all sorts of flowers in profusion. It abounds in singing birds besides--very pleasant after Italy; and the moonlight on the lake is noble. Prodigious mountains rise up from its opposite shore (it is eight or nine miles across, at this point), and the Simplon, the St. Gothard, Mont Blanc, and all the Alpine wonders are piled there, in tremendous grandeur. The cultivation is uncommonly rich and profuse. There are all manner of walks, vineyards, green lanes, cornfields, and pastures full of hay. The general neatness is as remarkable as in England. There are no priests or monks in the streets, and the people appear to be industrious and thriving. French (and very intelligible and pleasant French) seems to be the universal language. I never saw so many booksellers' shops crammed within the same space, as in the steep up-and-down streets of Lausanne."

Of the little town he spoke in his next letter as having its natural dulness increased by that fact of its streets going up and down hill abruptly and steeply, like the streets in a dream; and the consequent difficulty of getting about it. "There are some suppressed churches in it, now used as packers' warehouses: with cranes and pulleys growing out of steeple-towers; little doors for lowering goods through, fitted into blocked-up oriel windows; and cart-horses stabled in crypts. These also help to give it a deserted and disused appearance. On the other hand, as it is a perfectly free place subject to no prohibitions or restrictions of any kind, there are all sorts of new French books and publications in it, and all sorts of fresh intelligence from the world beyond the Jura mountains. It contains only one Roman Catholic church, which is mainly for the use of the Savoyards and Piedmontese who come trading over the Alps. As for the country, it cannot be praised too highly, or reported too beautiful. There are no great waterfalls, or walks through mountain-gorges, close at hand, as in some other parts of Switzerland; but

there is a charming variety of enchanting scenery. There is the shore of the lake, where you may dip your feet, as you walk, in the deep blue water, if you choose. There are the hills to climb up, leading to the great heights above the town; or to stagger down, leading to the lake. There is every possible variety of deep green lanes, vineyard, cornfield, pasture-land, and wood. There are excellent country roads that might be in Kent or Devonshire: and, closing up every view and vista, is an eternally changing range of prodigious mountains--sometimes red, sometimes grey, sometimes purple, sometimes black; sometimes white with snow; sometimes close at hand; and sometimes very ghosts in the clouds and mist."

In the heart of these things he was now to live and work for at least six months; and, as the love of nature was as much a passion with him in his intervals of leisure, as the craving for crowds and streets when he was busy with the creatures of his fancy, no man was better qualified to enjoy what was thus open to him from his little farm.

The view from each side of it was different in character, and from one there was visible the liveliest aspect of Lausanne itself, close at hand, and seeming, as he said, to be always coming down the hill with its steeples and towers, not able to stop itself. "From a fine long broad balcony on which the windows of my little study on the first floor (where I am now writing) open, the lake is seen to wonderful advantage,--losing itself by degrees in the solemn gorge of mountains leading to the Simplon pass. Under the balcony is a stone colonnade, on which the six French windows of the drawing-room open; and quantities of plants are clustered about the pillars and seats, very prettily. One of these drawing-rooms is furnished (like a French hotel) with red velvet, and the other with green; in both, plenty of mirrors and nice white muslin curtains; and for the larger one in cold weather there is a carpet, the floors being bare now, but inlaid in squares with different-coloured woods." His description did not close until, in every nook and corner inhabited by the several members of the family, I was made to feel myself at home; but only the final sentence need be added. "Walking out into the balcony as I write, I am suddenly reminded, by the sight of the Castle of Chillon glittering in the sunlight on the lake, that I omitted to mention that object in my catalogue of the Rosemont beauties. Please to put it in, like George Robins, in a line by itself."

Regular evening walks of nine or ten miles were named in the same letter (22nd of June) as having been begun; and thoughts of his books were already stirring in him. "An odd shadowy undefined idea is at work within me, that I could connect a great battle-field somehow with my little Christmas story. Shapeless visions of the repose and peace pervading it in after-time; with the corn and grass growing over the slain, and people singing at the plough; are so perpetually floating before me, that I cannot but think there may turn out to be something good in them when I see them more plainly. . . . I want to get Four Numbers of the monthly book done here, and the Christmas book. If all goes well, and nothing changes, and I can accomplish this by the end of November, I shall run over to you in England for a few days with a light heart, and leave Roche to move the caravan to Paris in the meanwhile. It will be just the very point in the story when the life and crowd of that extraordinary place will come vividly to my assistance in writing." Such was his design; and, though difficulties not now seen started up which he had a hard fight to get through, he managed to accomplish it. His letter ended with a promise to tell me, when next he wrote, of the small colony of English who seemed ready to give him even more than the usual welcome. Two visits had thus early been paid him by Mr. Haldimand, formerly a member of the English parliament, an accomplished man, who, with his sister Mrs. Marcet (the well-known authoress), had long made Lausanne his home. He had a very fine seat just below Rosemont, and his character and station had made him quite the little sovereign of the place. "He has founded and endowed all sorts of hospitals and institutions here, and he gives a dinner to-morrow to introduce our neighbours, whoever they are."

He found them to be happily the kind of people who rendered entirely pleasant those frank and cordial hospitalities which the charm of his personal intercourse made every one so eager to offer him. The dinner at Mr. Haldimand's was followed by dinners from the guests he met there; from an English lady married to a Swiss, Mr. and Mrs. Cerjat, clever and agreeable both, far beyond the common; from her sister wedded to an Englishman, Mr. and Mrs. Goff; and from Mr. and Mrs. Watson of Rockingham-castle in Northamptonshire, who had taken the Elysee on Dickens giving it up, and with whom, as with Mr. Haldimand, his relations continued to be very intimate long after he left Lausanne. In his drive to Mr. Cerjat's dinner a whimsical difficulty presented itself. He had set up, for use of his wife and children, an odd little one-horse-carriage; made to hold three persons sideways, so that they should avoid the wind always blowing up or down the valley; and he found it attended with one of the drollest consequences conceivable. "It can't be easily turned; and as you face to the side, all sorts of evolutions are necessary to bring you 'broad-side to' before the door of the house where you are going. The country houses here are very like those upon the Thames between Richmond and Kingston (this, particularly), with grounds all round. At Mr. Cerjat's we were obliged to be carried, like the child's riddle, round the house and round the house, without touching the house; and we were presented in the most alarming manner, three of a row, first to all the people in the kitchen, then to the governess who was dressing in her bedroom, then to the drawing-room where the company were waiting for us, then to the dining-room where they were spreading the table, and finally to the hall where we were got out--scraping the windows of each apartment as we glared slowly into it."

A dinner party of his own followed of course; and a sad occurrence, of which he and his guests were unconscious, signalised the evening (15th of July). "While we were sitting at dinner, one of the prettiest girls in Lausanne was drowned in the lake--in the most peaceful water, reflecting the steep mountains, and crimson with the setting sun. She was bathing in one of the nooks set apart for women, and seems somehow to have entangled her feet in the skirts of her dress. She was an accomplished swimmer, as many of the girls are here, and drifted, suddenly, out of only five feet water. Three or four friends who were with her, ran away, screaming. Our children's governess was on the lake in a boat with M. Verdeil (my prison-doctor) and his family. They ran inshore immediately; the body was quickly got out; and M. Verdeil, with three or four other doctors, laboured for some hours to restore animation; but she only sighed once. After all that time, she was obliged to be borne, stiff and stark, to her father's house. She was his only child, and but 17 years old. He has been nearly dead since, and all Lausanne has been full of the story. I was down by the lake, near the place, last night; and a boatman acted to me the whole scene: depositing himself finally on a heap of stones, to represent the body."

With M. Verdeil, physician to the prison and vice-president of the council of health, introduced by Mr. Haldimand, there had already been much communication; and I could give nothing more characteristic of Dickens than his reference to this, and other similar matters in which his interest was strongly moved during his first weeks at Lausanne.

"Some years ago, when they set about reforming the prison at Lausanne, they turned their attention, in a correspondence of republican feeling, to America; and taking the Philadelphian system for granted, adopted it. Terrible fits, new phases of mental affection, and horrible madness, among the prisoners, were very soon the result; and attained to such an alarming height, that M. Verdeil, in his public capacity, began to report against the system, and went on reporting and working against it until he formed a party who were determined not to have it, and caused it to be abolished--except in cases where the imprisonment does not exceed ten months in the whole. It is remarkable that in his notes of the different cases, there is every effect I mentioned as having observed myself at Philadelphia; even down to those contained in the description of the man who had been there thirteen years, and who picked his hands so much as he talked. He has only recently, he says, read the American Notes; but he is so much struck by

the perfect coincidence that he intends to republish some extracts from his own notes, side by side with these passages of mine translated into French. I went with him over the prison the other day. It is wonderfully well arranged for a continental jail, and in perfect order. The sentences however, or some of them, are very terrible. I saw one man sent there for murder under circumstances of mitigation--for 30 years. Upon the silent social system all the time! They weave, and plait straw, and make shoes, small articles of turnery and carpentry, and little common wooden clocks. But the sentences are too long for that monotonous and hopeless life; and, though they are well-fed and cared for, they generally break down utterly after two or three years. One delusion seems to become common to three-fourths of them after a certain time of imprisonment. Under the impression that there is something destructive put into their food 'pour les guerir de crime' (says M. Verdeil), they refuse to eat!"

It was at the Blind Institution, however, of which Mr. Haldimand was the president and great benefactor, that Dickens's attention was most deeply arrested; and there were two cases in especial of which the detail may be read with as much interest now as when my friend's letters were written, and as to which his own suggestions open up still rather startling trains of thought. The first, which in its attraction for him he found equal even to Laura Bridgman's, was that of a young man of 18: "born deaf and dumb, and stricken blind by an accident when he was about five years old. The Director of the institution is a young German, of great ability, and most uncommonly prepossessing appearance. He propounded to the scientific bodies of Geneva, a year ago (when this young man was under education in the asylum), the possibility of teaching him to speak--in other words, to play with his tongue upon his teeth and palate as if on an instrument, and connect particular performances with particular words conveyed to him in the finger-language. They unanimously agreed that it was quite impossible. The German set to work, and the young man now speaks very plainly and distinctly: without the least modulation, of course, but with comparatively little hesitation; expressing the words aloud as they are struck, so to speak, upon his hands; and showing the most intense and wonderful delight in doing it. This is commonly acquired, as you know, by the deaf and dumb who learn by sight; but it has never before been achieved in the case of a deaf, dumb, and blind subject. He is an extremely lively, intelligent, good-humoured fellow; an excellent carpenter; a first-rate turner; and runs about the building with a certainty and confidence which none of the merely blind pupils acquire. He has a great many ideas, and an instinctive dread of death. He knows of God, as of Thought enthroned somewhere; and once told, on nature's prompting (the devil's of course), a lie. He was sitting at dinner, and the Director asked him whether he had had anything to drink; to which he instantly replied 'No,' in order that he might get some more, though he had been served in his turn. It was explained to him that this was a wrong thing, and wouldn't do, and that he was to be locked up in a room for it: which was done. Soon after this, he had a dream of being bitten in the shoulder by some strange animal. As it left a great impression on his mind, he told M. the Director that he had told another lie in the night. In proof of it he related his dream, and added, 'It must be a lie you know, because there is no strange animal here, and I never was bitten.' Being informed that this sort of lie was a harmless one, and was called a dream, he asked whether dead people ever dreamed while they were lying in the ground. He is one of the most curious and interesting studies possible."

The second case had come in on the very day that Dickens visited the place. "When I was there" (8th of July) "there had come in, that morning, a girl of ten years old, born deaf and dumb and blind, and so perfectly untaught that she has not learnt to have the least control even over the performance of the common natural functions. . . . And yet she laughs sometimes (good God! conceive what at!)--and is dreadfully sensitive from head to foot, and very much alarmed, for some hours before the coming on of a thunder storm. Mr. Haldimand has been long trying to induce her parents to send her to the asylum. At last they have consented; and when I saw her, some of the little blind girls were trying to make friends with her, and to lead her gently about. She was dressed in just a loose robe from the necessity of

changing her frequently, but had been in a bath, and had had her nails cut (which were previously very long and dirty), and was not at all ill-looking--quite the reverse; with a remarkably good and pretty little mouth, but a low and undeveloped head of course. It was pointed out to me, as very singular, that the moment she is left alone, or freed from anybody's touch (which is the same thing to her), she instantly crouches down with her hands up to her ears, in exactly the position of a child before its birth; and so remains. I thought this such a strange coincidence with the utter want of advancement in her moral being, that it made a great impression on me; and conning it over and over, I began to think that this is surely the invariable action of savages too, and that I have seen it over and over again described in books of voyages and travels. Not having any of these with me, I turned to Robinson Crusoe; and I find De Foe says, describing the savages who came on the island after Will Atkins began to change for the better and commanded under the grave Spaniard for the common defence, 'their posture was generally sitting upon the ground, with their knees up towards their mouth, and the head put between the two hands, leaning down upon the knees'--exactly the same attitude!" In his next week's letter he reported further: "I have not been to the Blind asylum again yet, but they tell me that the deaf and dumb and blind child's face is improving obviously, and that she takes great delight in the first effort made by the Director to connect himself with an occupation of her time. He gives her, every day, two smooth round pebbles to roll over and over between her two hands. She appears to have an idea that it is to lead to something; distinctly recognizes the hand that gives them to her, as a friendly and protecting one; and sits for hours quite busy."

To one part of his very thoughtful suggestion I objected, and would have attributed to a mere desire for warmth, in her as in the savage, what he supposed to be part of an undeveloped or embryo state explaining also the absence of sentient and moral being. To this he replied (25th of July): "I do not think that there is reason for supposing that the savage attitude originates in the desire of warmth, because all naked savages inhabit hot climates; and their instinctive attitude, if it had reference to heat or cold, would probably be the coolest possible; like their delight in water, and swimming. I do not think there is any race of savage men, however low in grade, inhabiting cold climates, who do not kill beasts and wear their skins. The girl decidedly improves in face, and, if one can yet use the word as applied to her, in manner too. No communication by the speech of touch has yet been established with her, but the time has not been long enough." In a later letter he tells me (24th of August): "The deaf, dumb, and blind girl is decidedly improved, and very much improved, in this short time. No communication is yet established with her, but that is not to be expected. They have got her out of that strange, crouching position; dressed her neatly; and accustomed her to have a pleasure in society. She laughs frequently, and also claps her hands and jumps; having, God knows how, some inward satisfaction. I never saw a more tremendous thing in its way, in my life, than when they stood her, t'other day, in the centre of a group of blind children who sang a chorus to the piano; and brought her hand, and kept it, in contact with the instrument. A shudder pervaded her whole being, her breath quickened, her colour deepened,--and I can compare it to nothing but returning animation in a person nearly dead. It was really awful to see how the sensation of the music fluttered and stirred the locked-up soul within her." The same letter spoke again of the youth: "The male subject is well and jolly as possible. He is very fond of smoking. I have arranged to supply him with cigars during our stay here; so he and I are in amazing sympathy. I don't know whether he thinks I grow them, or make them, or produce them by winking, or what. But it gives him a notion that the world in general belongs to me.". . . Before his kind friend left Lausanne the poor fellow had been taught to say, "Monsieur Dickens m'a donne les cigares," and at their leave-taking his gratitude was expressed by incessant repetition of these words for a full half-hour.

Certainly by no man was gratitude more persistently earned, than by Dickens, from all to whom nature or the world had been churlish or unfair. Not to those only made desolate by poverty or the temptations

incident to it, but to those whom natural defects or infirmities had placed at a disadvantage with their kind, he gave his first consideration; helping them personally where he could, sympathising and sorrowing with them always, but above all applying himself to the investigation of such alleviation or cure as philosophy or science might be able to apply to their condition. This was a desire so eager as properly to be called one of the passions of his life, visible in him to the last hour of it.

Only a couple of weeks, themselves not idle ones, had passed over him at Rosemont when he made a dash at the beginning of his real work; from which indeed he had only been detained so long by the non-arrival of a box dispatched from London before his own departure, containing not his proper writing materials only, but certain quaint little bronze figures that thus early stood upon his desk, and were as much needed for the easy flow of his writing as blue ink or quill pens. "I have not been idle" (28th of June) "since I have been here, though at first I was 'kept out' of the big box as you know. I had a good deal to write for Lord John about the Ragged schools. I set to work and did that. A good deal for Miss Coutts, in reference to her charitable projects. I set to work and did that. Half of the children's New Testament to write, or pretty nearly. I set to work and did that. Next I cleared off the greater part of such correspondence as I had rashly pledged myself to; and then. . . .

BEGAN DOMBEY!

I performed this feat yesterday--only wrote the first slip--but there it is, and it is a plunge straight over head and ears into the story. . . . Besides all this, I have really gone with great vigour at the French, where I find myself greatly assisted by the Italian; and am subject to two descriptions of mental fits in reference to the Christmas book: one, of the suddenest and wildest enthusiasm; one, of solitary and anxious consideration. . . . By the way, as I was unpacking the big box I took hold of a book, and said to 'Them,'--'Now, whatever passage my thumb rests on, I shall take as having reference to my work.' It was TRISTRAM SHANDY, and opened at these words, 'What a work it is likely to turn out! Let us begin it!'"

The same letter told me that he still inclined strongly to "the field of battle notion" for his Christmas volume, but was not as yet advanced in it; being curious first to see whether its capacity seemed to strike me at all. My only objection was to his adventure of opening two stories at once, of which he did not yet see the full danger; but for the moment the Christmas fancy was laid aside, and not resumed, except in passing allusions, until after the close of August, when the first two numbers of Dombey were done. The interval supplied fresh illustration of his life in his new home, not without much interest; and as I have shown what a pleasant social circle, "wonderfully friendly and hospitable" to the last, already had grouped itself round him in Lausanne, and how full of "matter to be heard and learn'd" he found such institutions as its prison and blind school, the picture will receive attractive touches if I borrow from his letters written during this outset of Dombey, some farther notices as well of the general progress of his work, as of what was specially interesting or amusing to him at the time, and of how the country and the people impressed him. In all of these his character will be found strongly marked.

Volume II, Chapter 11 (1846): Swiss People and Scenery

Swiss People and Scenery

WHAT at once had struck him as the wonderful feature in the mountain scenery was its everchanging and yet unchanging aspect. It was never twice like the same thing to him. Shifting and altering, advancing and retreating, fifty times a day, it was unalterable only in its grandeur. The lake itself too had every kind of varying beauty for him. By moonlight it was indescribably solemn; and before the coming on of a storm had a strange property in it of being disturbed, while yet the sky remained clear and the evening bright, which he found to be mysterious and impressive in an especial degree. Such a storm had come among his earliest and most grateful experiences; a degree of heat worse even than in Italy having disabled him at the outset for all exertion until the lightning, thunder, and rain arrived. The letter telling me this (5th July) described the fruit as so abundant in the little farm, that the trees of the orchard in front of his house were bending beneath it; spoke of a field of wheat sloping down to the side window of his dining-room as already cut and carried; and said that the roses, which the hurricane of rain had swept away, were come back lovelier and in greater numbers than ever.

Of the ordinary Swiss people he formed from the first a high opinion which everything during his stay among them confirmed. He thought it the greatest injustice to call them "the Americans of the Continent." In his first letters he said of the peasantry all about Lausanne that they were as pleasant a people as need be. He never passed, on any of the roads, man, woman, or child, without a salutation; and anything churlish or disagreeable he never noticed in them. "They have not," he continued, "the sweetness and grace of the Italians, or the agreeable manners of the better specimens of French peasantry, but they are admirably educated (the schools of this canton are extraordinarily good, in every little village), and always prepared to give a civil and pleasant answer. There is no greater mistake. I was talking to my landlord about it the other day, and he said he could not conceive how it had ever arisen, but that when he returned from his eighteen years' service in the English navy he shunned the people, and had no interest in them until they gradually forced their real character upon his observation. We have a cook and a coachman here, taken at hazard from the people of the town; and I never saw more obliging servants, or people who did their work so truly with a will. And in point of cleanliness, order, and punctuality to the moment, they are unrivalled. . . ."

The first great gathering of the Swiss peasantry which he saw was in the third week after his arrival, when a country fete was held at a place called The Signal; a deep green wood, on the sides and summit of a very high hill overlooking the town and all the country round; and he gave me very pleasant account of it. "There were various booths for eating and drinking, and the selling of trinkets and sweetmeats; and in one place there was a great circle cleared, in which the common people waltzed and polka'd, without cessation, to the music of a band. There was a great roundabout for children (oh my stars what a family were proprietors of it! A sunburnt father and mother, a humpbacked boy, a great poodle-dog possessed of all sorts of accomplishments, and a young murderer of seventeen who turned the machinery); and there were some games of chance and skill established under trees. It was very pretty. In some of the drinking booths there were parties of German peasants, twenty together perhaps, singing national drinking-songs, and making a most exhilarating and musical chorus by rattling their cups and glasses on the table and drinking them against each other, to a regular tune. You know it as a stage dodge, but the real thing is splendid. Farther down the hill, other peasants were rifle-shooting for prizes, at targets set on the other side of a deep ravine, from two to three hundred yards off. It was quite fearful to see the astonishing accuracy of their aim, and how, every time a rifle awakened the ten thousand echoes of the green glen, some men crouching behind a little wall immediately in front of the targets, sprung up with

large numbers in their hands denoting where the ball had struck the bull's eye--and then in a moment disappeared again. Standing in a ring near these shooters was another party of Germans singing hunting-songs, in parts, most melodiously. And down in the distance was Lausanne, with all sorts of haunted-looking old towers rising up before the smooth water of the lake, and an evening sky all red, and gold, and bright green. When it closed in quite dark, all the booths were lighted up; and the twinkling of the lamps among the forest of trees was beautiful. . . ." To this pretty picture, a letter of a little later date, describing a marriage on the farm, added farther comical illustration of the rifle-firing propensities of the Swiss, and had otherwise also whimsical touches of character. "One of the farmer's people--a sister, I think--was married from here the other day. It is wonderful to see how naturally the smallest girls are interested in marriages. Katey and Mamey were as excited as if they were eighteen. The fondness of the Swiss for gunpowder on interesting occasions, is one of the drollest things. For three days before, the farmer himself, in the midst of his various agricultural duties, plunged out of a little door near my windows, about once in every hour, and fired off a rifle. I thought he was shooting rats who were spoiling the vines; but he was merely relieving his mind, it seemed, on the subject of the approaching nuptials. All night afterwards, he and a small circle of friends kept perpetually letting off guns under the casement of the bridal chamber. A Bride is always drest here, in black silk; but this bride wore merino of that colour, observing to her mother when she bought it (the old lady is 82, and works on the farm), 'You know, mother, I am sure to want mourning for you, soon; and the same gown will do.'"

Meanwhile, day by day, he was steadily moving on with his first number; feeling sometimes the want of streets in an "extraordinary nervousness it would be hardly possible to describe," that would come upon him after he had been writing all day; but at all other times finding the repose of the place very favourable to industry. "I am writing slowly at first, of course" (5th of July), "but I hope I shall have finished the first number in the course of a fortnight at farthest. I have done the first chapter, and begun another. I say nothing of the merits thus far, or of the idea beyond what is known to you; because I prefer that you should come as fresh as may be upon them. I shall certainly have a great surprise for people at the end of the fourth number; and I think there is a new and peculiar sort of interest, involving the necessity of a little bit of delicate treatment whereof I will expound my idea to you by and by. When I have done this number, I may take a run to Chamounix perhaps. . . . My thoughts have necessarily been called away from the Christmas book. The first Dombey done, I think I should fly off to that, whenever the idea presented itself vividly before me. I still cherish the Battle fancy, though it is nothing but a fancy as yet." A week later he told me that he hoped to finish the first number by that day week or thereabouts, when he should then run and look for his Christmas book in the glaciers at Chamounix. His progress to this point had been pleasing him. "I think Dombey very strong--with great capacity in its leading idea; plenty of character that is likely to tell; and some rollicking facetiousness, to say nothing of pathos. I hope you will soon judge of it for yourself, however; and I know you will say what you think. I have been very constantly at work." Six days later I heard that he had still eight slips to write, and for a week had put off Chamounix.

But though the fourth chapter yet was incomplete, he could repress no longer the desire to write to me of what he was doing (18th of July). "I think the general idea of Dombey is interesting and new, and has great material in it. But I don't like to discuss it with you till you have read number one, for fear I should spoil its effect. When done--about Wednesday or Thursday, please God--I will send it in two days' posts, seven letters each day. If you have it set at once (I am afraid you couldn't read it, otherwise than in print) I know you will impress on B. & E. the necessity of the closest secrecy. The very name getting out, would be ruinous. The points for illustration, and the enormous care required, make me excessively anxious. The man for Dombey, if Browne could see him, the class man to a T, is Sir A---- E----, of D----'s. Great pains will be necessary with Miss Tox. The Toodle family should not be too much caricatured, because

of Polly. I should like Browne to think of Susan Nipper, who will not be wanted in the first number. After the second number, they will all be nine or ten years older, but this will not involve much change in the characters, except in the children and Miss Nipper. What a brilliant thing to be telling you all these names so familiarly, when you know nothing about 'em! I quite enjoy it. By the bye, I hope you may like the introduction of Solomon Gills. I think he lives in a good sort of house. . . . One word more. What do you think, as a name for the Christmas book, of THE BATTLE OF LIFE? It is not a name I have conned at all, but has just occurred to me in connection with that foggy idea. If I can see my way, I think I will take it next, and clear it off. If you knew how it hangs about me, I am sure you would say so too. It would be an immense relief to have it done, and nothing standing in the way of Dombey."

Within the time left for it the opening number was done, but two little incidents preceded still the trip to Chamounix. The first was a visit from Hallam to Mr. Haldimand. "Heavens! how Hallam did talk yesterday! I don't think I ever saw him so tremendous. Very good-natured and pleasant, in his way, but Good Heavens! how he did talk. That famous day you and I remember was nothing to it. His son was with him, and his daughter (who has an impediment in her speech, as if nature were determined to balance that faculty in the family), and his niece, a pretty woman, the wife of a clergyman and a friend of Thackeray's. It strikes me that she must be 'the little woman' he proposed to take us to drink tea with, once, in Golden-square. Don't you remember? His great favourite? She is quite a charming person anyhow." I hope to be pardoned for preserving an opinion which more familiar later acquaintance confirmed, and which can hardly now give anything but pleasure to the lady of whom it is expressed. To the second incident he alludes more briefly. "As Haldimand and Mrs. Marcet and the Cerjats had devised a small mountain expedition for us for to-morrow, I didn't like to allow Chamounix to stand in the way. So we go with them first, and start on our own account on Tuesday. We are extremely pleasant with these people." The close of the same letter (25th of July), mentioning two pieces of local news, gives intimation of the dangers incident to all Swiss travelling, and of such special precautions as were necessary for the holiday among the mountains he was now about to take. "My first news is that a crocodile is said to have escaped from the Zoological gardens at Geneva, and to be now 'zigzag-zigging' about the lake. But I can't make out whether this is a great fact, or whether it is a pious fraud to prevent too much bathing and liability to accidents. The other piece of news is more serious. An English family whose name I don't know, consisting of a father, mother, and daughter, arrived at the hotel Gibbon here last Monday, and started off on some mountain expedition in one of the carriages of the country. It was a mere track, the road, and ought to have been travelled only by mules, but the Englishman persisted (as Englishmen do) in going on in the carriage; and in answer to all the representations of the driver that no carriage had ever gone up there, said he needn't be afraid he wasn't going to be paid for it, and so forth. Accordingly, the coachman got down and walked by the horses' heads. It was fiery hot; and, after much tugging and rearing, the horses began to back, and went down bodily, carriage and all, into a deep ravine. The mother was killed on the spot; and the father and daughter are lying at some house hard by, not expected to recover."

His next letter (written on the second of August) described his own first real experience of mountain-travel. "I begin my letter to-night, but only begin, for we returned from Chamounix in time for dinner just now, and are pretty considerably done up. We went by a mountain pass not often crossed by ladies, called the Col de Balme, where your imagination may picture Kate and Georgy on mules for ten hours at a stretch, riding up and down the most frightful precipices. We returned by the pass of the Tete Noire, which Talfourd knows, and which is of a different character, but astonishingly fine too. Mont Blanc, and the Valley of Chamounix, and the Mer de Glace, and all the wonders of that most wonderful place, are above and beyond one's wildest expectations. I cannot imagine anything in nature more stupendous or sublime. If I were to write about it now, I should quite rave--such prodigious impressions are rampant

within me. . . . You may suppose that the mule-travelling is pretty primitive. Each person takes a carpet-bag strapped on the mule behind himself or herself: and that is all the baggage that can be carried. A guide, a thorough-bred mountaineer, walks all the way, leading the lady's mule; I say the lady's par excellence, in compliment to Kate; and all the rest struggle on as they please. The cavalcade stops at a lone hut for an hour and a half in the middle of the day, and lunches brilliantly on whatever it can get. Going by that Col de Balme pass, you climb up and up and up for five hours and more, and look--from a mere unguarded ledge of path on the side of the precipice--into such awful valleys, that at last you are firm in the belief that you have got above everything in the world, and that there can be nothing earthly overhead. Just as you arrive at this conclusion, a different (and oh Heaven! what a free and wonderful) air comes blowing on your face; you cross a ridge of snow; and lying before you (wholly unseen till then), towering up into the distant sky, is the vast range of Mont Blanc, with attendant mountains diminished by its majestic side into mere dwarfs tapering up into innumerable rude Gothic pinnacles; deserts of ice and snow; forests of firs on mountain sides, of no account at all in the enormous scene; villages down in the hollow, that you can shut out with a finger; waterfalls, avalanches, pyramids and towers of ice, torrents, bridges; mountain upon mountain until the very sky is blocked away, and you must look up, overhead, to see it. Good God, what a country Switzerland is, and what a concentration of it is to be beheld from that one spot! And (think of this in Whitefriars and in Lincoln's-inn!) at noon on the second day from here, the first day being but half a one by the bye and full of uncommon beauty, you lie down on that ridge and see it all! . . . I think I must go back again (whether you come or not!) and see it again before the bad weather arrives. We have had sunlight, moonlight, a perfectly transparent atmosphere with not a cloud, and the grand plateau on the very summit of Mont Blanc so clear by day and night that it was difficult to believe in intervening chasms and precipices, and almost impossible to resist the idea that one might sally forth and climb up easily. I went into all sorts of places; armed with a great pole with a spike at the end of it, like a leaping-pole, and with pointed irons buckled on to my shoes; and am all but knocked up. I was very anxious to make the expedition to what is called 'The Garden:' a green spot covered with wild flowers, lying across the Mer de Glace, and among the most awful mountains: but I could find no Englishman at the hotels who was similarly disposed, and the Brave wouldn't go. No sir! He gave in point blank (having been horribly blown in a climbing excursion the day before), and couldn't stand it. He is too heavy for such work, unquestionably. In all other respects, I think he has exceeded himself on this journey; and if you could have seen him riding a very small mule, up a road exactly like the broken stairs of Rochester-castle; with a brandy bottle slung over his shoulder, a small pie in his hat, a roast fowl looking out of his pocket, and a mountain staff of six feet long carried cross-wise on the saddle before him; you'd have said so. He was (next to me) the admiration of Chamounix, but he utterly quenched me on the road."

On the road as they returned there had been a small adventure, the day before this letter was written. Dickens was jingling slowly up the Tete Noire pass (his mule having thirty-seven bells on its head), riding at the moment quite alone, when--"an Englishman came bolting out of a little chalet in a most inaccessible and extraordinary place, and said with great glee 'There has been an accident here sir!' I had been thinking of anything else you please; and, having no reason to suppose him an Englishman except his language, which went for nothing in the confusion, stammered out a reply in French and stared at him, in a very damp shirt and trowsers, as he stared at me in a similar costume. On his repeating the announcement, I began to have a glimmering of common sense; and so arrived at a knowledge of the fact that a German lady had been thrown from her mule and had broken her leg, at a short distance off, and had found her way in great pain to that cottage, where the Englishman, a Prussian, and a Frenchman, had presently come up; and the Frenchman, by extraordinary good fortune, was a surgeon! They were all from Chamounix, and the three latter were walking in company. It was

quite charming to see how attentive they were. The lady was from Lausanne; where she had come from Frankfort to make excursions with her two boys, who are at the college here, during the vacation. She had no other attendants, and the boys were crying and very frightened. The Englishman was in the full glee of having just cut up one white dress, two chemises, and three pocket handkerchiefs, for bandages; the Frenchman had set the leg skilfully; the Prussian had scoured a neighboring wood for some men to carry her forward; and they were all at it, behind the hut, making a sort of handbarrow on which to bear her. When it was constructed, she was strapped upon it; had her poor head covered over with a handkerchief, and was carried away; and we all went on in company: Kate and Georgy consoling and tending the sufferer, who was very cheerful, but had lost her husband only a year." With the same delightful observation, and missing no touch of kindly character that might give each actor his place in the little scene, the sequel is described; but it does not need to add more. It was hoped that by means of relays of men at Martigny the poor lady might have been carried on some twenty miles, in the cooler evening, to the head of the lake, and so have been got into the steamer; but she was too exhausted to be borne beyond the inn, and there she had to remain until joined by relatives from Frankfort.

A few days' rest after his return were interposed, before he began his second number; and until the latter has been completed, and the Christmas story taken in hand, I do not admit the reader to his full confidences about his writing. But there were other subjects that amused and engaged him up to that date, as well when he was idle as when again he was at work, to which expression so full of character is given in his letters that they properly find mention here.

Between the second and the ninth of August he went down one evening to the lake, five minutes after sunset, when the sky was covered with sullen black clouds reflected in the deep water, and saw the Castle of Chillon. He thought it the best deserving and least exaggerated in repute, of all the places he had seen. "The insupportable solitude and dreariness of the white walls and towers, the sluggish moat and drawbridge, and the lonely ramparts, I never saw the like of. But there is a court-yard inside; surrounded by prisons, oubliettes, and old chambers of torture; so terrifically sad, that death itself is not more sorrowful. And oh! a wicked old Grand Duke's bedchamber upstairs in the tower, with a secret staircase down into the chapel, where the bats were wheeling about; and Bonnivard's dungeon; and a horrible trap whence prisoners were cast out into the lake; and a stake all burnt and crackled up, that still stands in the torture-ante-chamber to the saloon of justice (!)--what tremendous places! Good God, the greatest mystery in all the earth, to me, is how or why the world was tolerated by its Creator through the good old times, and wasn't dashed to fragments."

On the ninth of August he wrote to me that there was to be a prodigious fete that day in Lausanne, in honour of the first anniversary of the proclamation of the New Constitution: "beginning at sunrise with the firing of great guns, and twice two thousand rounds of rifles by two thousand men; proceeding at eleven o'clock with a great service, and some speechifying, in the church; and ending to-night with a great ball in the public promenade, and a general illumination of the town." The authorities had invited him to a place of honour in the ceremony; and though he did not go ("having been up till three o'clock in the morning, and being fast asleep at the appointed time"), the reply that sent his thanks expressed also his sympathy. He was the readier with this from having discovered, in the "old" or "gentlemanly" party of the place ("including of course the sprinkling of English who are always tory, hang 'em!"), so wonderfully sore a feeling about the revolution thus celebrated, that to avoid its fete the majority had gone off by steamer the day before, and those who remained were prophesying assaults on the unilluminated houses, and other excesses. Dickens had no faith in such predictions. "The people are as perfectly good tempered and quiet always, as people can be. I don't know what the last Government may have been, but they seem to me to do very well with this, and to be rationally and cheaply provided for. If you believed what the discontented assert, you wouldn't believe in one solitary man or woman with a grain of goodness or

civility. I find nothing but civility; and I walk about in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, where they live rough lives enough, in solitary cottages." The issue was told in two postscripts to his letter, and showed him to be so far right. "P.S. 6 o'clock afternoon. The fete going on, in great force. Not one of 'the old party' to be seen. I went down with one to the ground before dinner, and nothing would induce him to go within the barrier with me. Yet what they call a revolution was nothing but a change of government. Thirty-six thousand people, in this small canton, petitioned against the Jesuits--God knows with good reason. The Government chose to call them 'a mob.' So, to prove that they were not, they turned the Government out. I honour them for it. They are a genuine people, these Swiss. There is better metal in them than in all the stars and stripes of all the fustian banners of the so-called, and falsely called, U-nited States. They are a thorn in the sides of European despots, and a good wholesome people to live near Jesuit-ridden Kings on the brighter side of the mountains." "P.P.S. August 10th. . . . The fete went off as quietly as I supposed it would; and they danced all night."

These views had forcible illustration in a subsequent letter, where he describes a similar revolution that occurred at Geneva before he left the country; and nothing could better show his practical good sense in a matter of this kind. The description will be given shortly; and meanwhile I subjoin a comment made by him, not less worthy of attention, upon my reply to his account of the anti-Jesuit celebration at Lausanne. "I don't know whether I have mentioned before, that in the valley of the Simplon hard by here, where (at the bridge of St. Maurice, over the Rhone) this Protestant canton ends and a Catholic canton begins, you might separate two perfectly distinct and different conditions of humanity by drawing a line with your stick in the dust on the ground. On the Protestant side, neatness; cheerfulness; industry; education; continual aspiration, at least, after better things. On the Catholic side, dirt, disease, ignorance, squalor, and misery. I have so constantly observed the like of this, since I first came abroad, that I have a sad misgiving that the religion of Ireland lies as deep at the root of all its sorrows, even as English misgovernment and Tory villainy." Almost the counterpart of this remark is to be found in one of the later writings of Macaulay.

Volume II, Chapter 12 (1846): Sketches Chiefly Personal

Sketches Chiefly Personal

SOME sketches from the life in his pleasantest vein now claim to be taken from the same series of letters; and I will prefix one or two less important notices, for the most part personal also, that have characteristic mention of his opinions in them.

Home-politics he criticized in what he wrote on the 24th of August, much in the spirit of his last excellent remark on the Protestant and Catholic cantons; having no sympathy with the course taken by the whigs in regard to Ireland after they had defeated Peel on his coercion bill, and resumed the government. "I am perfectly appalled by the hesitation and cowardice of the whigs. To bring in that arms bill, bear the brunt of the attack upon it, take out the obnoxious clauses, still retain the bill, and finally withdraw it, seems to me the meanest and most halting way of going to work that ever was taken. I cannot believe in them. Lord John must be helpless among them. They seem somehow or other never to know what cards they hold in their hands, and to play them out blindfold. The contrast with Peel (as he was last) is, I agree with you, certainly not favourable. I don't believe now they ever would have carried the repeal of the corn law, if they could." Referring in the same letter to the reluctance of public men of all parties to give the needful help to schemes of emigration, he ascribed it to a secret belief "in the gentle politico-economical principle that a surplus population must and ought to starve;" in which for himself he never could see anything but disaster for all who trusted to it. "I am convinced that its philosophers would sink any government, any cause, any doctrine, even the most righteous. There is a sense and humanity in the mass, in the long run, that will not bear them; and they will wreck their friends always, as they wrecked them in the working of the Poor-law-bill. Not all the figures that Babbage's calculating machine could turn up in twenty generations, would stand in the long run against the general heart."

Of other topics in his letters, one or two have the additional attractiveness derivable from touches of personal interest when these may with propriety be printed. Hardly within the class might have fallen a mention of Mark Lemon, of whom our recent play, and his dramatic adaptation of the Chimes, had given him pleasant experiences, if I felt less strongly not only that its publication would have been gladly sanctioned by the subject of it, but that it will not now displease another to whom also it refers, herself the member of a family in various ways distinguished on the stage, and to whom, since her husband's death, well-merited sympathy and respect have been paid. "After turning Mrs. Lemon's portrait over, in my mind, I am convinced that there is not a grain of bad taste in the matter, and that there is a manly composure and courage in the proceeding deserving of the utmost respect. If Lemon were one of your braggart honest men, he would set a taint of bad taste upon that action as upon everything else he might say or do; but being what he is, I admire him for it greatly, and hold it to be a proof of an exalted nature and a true heart. Your idea of him, is mine. I am sure he is an excellent fellow. We talk about not liking such and such a man because he doesn't look one in the face,--but how much we should esteem a man who looks the world in the face, composedly, and neither shirks it nor bullies it. Between ourselves, I say with shame and self-reproach that I am quite sure if Kate had been a Columbine her portrait would not be hanging, 'in character,' in Devonshire-terrace."

He speaks thus of a novel by Hood. "I have been reading poor Hood's Tylney Hall; the most extraordinary jumble of impossible extravagance, and especial cleverness, I ever saw. The man drawn to the life from the pirate-bookseller, is wonderfully good; and his recommendation to a reduced gentleman from the university, to rise from nothing as he, the pirate, did, and go round to the churches and see whether there's an opening, and begin by being a beadle, is one of the finest things I ever read, in its way." The same letter has a gentle little trait of the great duke, touching in its simplicity, and worth

preserving. "I had a letter from Tagart the day before yesterday, with a curious little anecdote of the Duke of Wellington in it. They have had a small cottage at Walmer; and one day--the other day only--the old man met their little daughter Lucy, a child about Mamey's age, near the garden; and having kissed her, and asked her what was her name, and who and what her parents were, tied a small silver medal round her neck with a bit of pink ribbon, and asked the child to keep it in remembrance of him. There is something good, and aged, and odd in it. Is there not?"

Another of his personal references was to Lord Grey, to whose style of speaking and general character of mind he had always a strongly-expressed dislike, drawn not impartially or quite justly from the days of reaction that followed the reform debates, when the whig leader's least attractive traits were presented to the young reporter. "He is a very intelligent agreeable fellow, the said Watson by the bye" (he is speaking of the member of the Lausanne circle with whom he established friendliest after-intercourse); "he sat for Northamptonshire in the reform bill time, and is high sheriff of his county and all the rest of it; but has not the least nonsense about him, and is a thorough good liberal. He has a charming wife, who draws well, and is making a sketch of Rosemont for us that shall be yours in Paris." (It is already, by permission of its present possessor, the reader's, and all the world's who may take interest in the little doll's house of Lausanne which lodged so illustrious a tenant.) "He was giving me some good recollections of Lord Grey the other evening when we were playing at battledore (old Lord Grey I mean), and of the constitutional impossibility he and Lord Lansdowne and the rest laboured under, of ever personally attaching a single young man, in all the excitement of that exciting time, to the leaders of the party. It was quite a delight to me, as I listened, to recall my own dislike of his style of speaking, his fishy coldness, his uncongenial and unsympathetic politeness, and his insufferable though most gentlemanly artificiality. The shape of his head (I see it now) was misery to me, and weighed down my youth. . . ."

It was now the opening of the second week in August; and before he finally addressed himself to the second number of Dombey, he had again turned a lingering look in the direction of his Christmas book. "It would be such a great relief to me to get that small story out of the way." Wisely, however, again he refrained, and went on with Dombey; at which he had been working for a little time when he described to me (24th of August) a visit from two English travellers, of one of whom with the slightest possible touch he gives a speaking likeness.

"Not having your letter as usual, I sat down to write to you on speculation yesterday, but lapsed in my uncertainty into Dombey, and worked at it all day. It was, as it has been since last Tuesday morning, incessantly raining regular mountain rain. After dinner, at a little after seven o'clock, I was walking up and down under the little colonnade in the garden, racking my brain about Dombeys and Battles of Lives, when two travel-stained-looking men approached, of whom one, in a very limp and melancholy straw hat, ducked, perpetually to me as he came up the walk. I couldn't make them out at all; and it wasn't till I got close up to them that I recognised A. and (in the straw hat) N. They had come from Geneva by the steamer, and taken a scrambling dinner on board. I gave them some fine Rhine wine, and cigars innumerable. A. enjoyed himself and was quite at home. N. (an odd companion for a man of genius) was snobbish, but pleased and good-natured. A. had a five pound note in his pocket which he had worn down, by careless carrying about, to some two-thirds of its original size, and which was so ragged in its remains that when he took it out bits of it flew about the table. 'Oh Lor you know--now really--like Goldsmith you know--or any of those great men!' said N. with the very 'snatches in his voice and burst of speaking' that reminded Leigh Hunt of Cloten. . . . The clouds were lying, as they do in such weather here, on the earth, and our friends saw no more of Lake Leman than of Battersea. Nor had they, it might appear, seen more of the Mer de Glace, on their way here; their talk about it bearing much resemblance to that of the man who had been to Niagara and said it was nothing but water."

His next letter described a day's party of the Cerjats, Watsons, and Haldimands, among the neighbouring hills, which, contrary to his custom while at work, he had been unable to resist the temptation of joining. They went to a mountain-lake twelve miles off, had dinner at the public-house on the lake, and returned home by Vevay at which they rested for tea; and where pleasant talk with Mr. Cerjat led to anecdotes of an excellent friend of ours, formerly resident at Lausanne, with which the letter closed. Our friend was a distinguished writer, and a man of many sterling fine qualities, but with a habit of occasional free indulgence in coarseness of speech, which, though his earlier life had made it as easy to acquire as difficult to drop, did always less than justice to a very manly, honest, and really gentle nature. He had as much genuinely admirable stuff in him as any favourite hero of Smollett or Fielding, and I never knew anyone who reminded me of those characters so much. "It would seem, Mr. Cerjat tells me, that he was, when here, infinitely worse in his general style of conversation, than now--sermuchser, as Toodles says, that Cerjat describes himself as having always been in unspeakable agony when he was at his table, lest he should forget himself (or remember himself, as I suggested) and break out before the ladies. There happened to be living here at that time a stately English baronet and his wife, who had two milksop sons, concerning whom they cherished the idea of accomplishing their education into manhood coexistently with such perfect purity and innocence, that they were hardly to know their own sex. Accordingly, they were sent to no school or college, but had masters of all sorts at home, and thus reached eighteen years or so, in what Falstaff calls a kind of male green-sickness. At this crisis of their innocent existence, our ogre friend encountered these lambs at dinner, with their father, at Cerjat's house; and, as if possessed by a devil, launched out into such frightful and appalling impropriety--ranging over every kind of forbidden topic and every species of forbidden word and every sort of scandalous anecdote--that years of education in Newgate would have been as nothing compared with their experience of that one afternoon. After turning paler and paler, and more and more stoney, the baronet, with a half-suppressed cry, rose and fled. But the sons--intent on the ogre--remained behind instead of following him; and are supposed to have been ruined from that hour. Isn't that a good story? I can SEE our friend and his pupils now. . . . Poor fellow! He seems to have a hard time of it with his wife. She had no interest whatever in her children; and was such a fury, that, being dressed to go out to dinner, she would sometimes, on no other provocation than a pin out of its place or some such thing, fall upon a little maid she had, beat her till she couldn't stand, then tumble into hysterics, and be carried to bed. He suffered martyrdom with her; and seems to have been himself, in all good-natured easy-going ways, just what we know him now."

There were at this time some fresh arrivals of travelling English at Lausanne, outside their own little circle, and among them another baronet and his family made amusing appearance. "We have another English family here, one Sir Joseph and his lady, and ten children. Sir Joseph, a large baronet something in the Graham style, with a little, loquacious, flat-faced, damaged-featured, old young wife. They are fond of society, and couldn't well have less. They delight in a view, and live in a close street at Ouchy, down among the drunken boatmen and the drays and omnibuses, where nothing whatever is to be seen but the locked wheels of carts scraping down the uneven, steep, stone pavement. The baronet plays double-dummy all day long, with an unhappy Swiss whom he has entrapped for that purpose; the baronet's lady pays visits; and the baronet's daughters play a Lausanne piano, which must be heard to be appreciated. . . ."

Another sketch in the same letter touches little more than the eccentricities (but all in good taste and good humour) of the subject of it, who is still gratefully remembered by English residents in Italy for his scholarly munificence, and for very valuable service conferred by it on Italian literature. "Another curious man is backwards and forwards here--a Lord Vernon, who is well-informed, a great Italian scholar deep in Dante, and a very good-humoured gentleman, but who has fallen into the strange infatuation of attending every rifle-match that takes place in Switzerland, accompanied by two men who load rifles for

him, one after another, which he has been frequently known to fire off, two a minute, for fourteen hours at a stretch, without once changing his position or leaving the ground. He wins all kinds of prizes; gold watches, flags, teaspoons, tea-boards, and so forth; and is constantly travelling about with them, from place to place, in an extraordinary carriage, where you touch a spring and a chair flies out, touch another spring and a bed appears, touch another spring and a closet of pickles opens, touch another spring and disclose a pantry. While Lady Vernon (said to be handsome and accomplished) is continually cutting across this or that Alpine pass in the night, to meet him on the road, for a minute or two, on one of his excursions; these being the only times at which she can catch him. The last time he saw her, was five or six months ago, when they met and supped together on the St. Gothard! It is a monomania with him, of course. He is a man of some note; seconded one of Lord Melbourne's addresses; and had forty thousand a year, now reduced to ten, but nursing and improving every day. He was with us last Monday, and comes back from some out-of-the-way place to join another small picnic next Friday. As I have said, he is the very soul of good nature and cheerfulness, but one can't help being melancholy to see a man wasting his life in such a singular delusion. Isn't it odd? He knows my books very well, and seems interested in everything concerning them; being indeed accomplished in books generally, and attached to many elegant tastes."

But the most agreeable addition to their own special circle was referred to in his first September letter, just when he was coming to the close of his second number of Dombey. "There are two nice girls here, the Ladies Taylor, daughters of Lord Headfort. Their mother was daughter (I think) of Sir John Stevenson, and Moore dedicated one part of the Irish Melodies to her. They inherit the musical taste, and sing very well. A proposal is on foot for our all bundling off on Tuesday (16 strong) to the top of the Great St. Bernard. But the weather seems to have broken, and the autumn rains to have set in; which I devoutly hope will break up the party. It would be a most serious hindrance to me, just now; but I have rashly promised. Do you know young Romilly? He is coming over from Geneva when 'the reading' comes off, and is a fine fellow I am told. There is not a bad little theatre here; and by way of an artificial crowd, I should certainly have got it open with an amateur company, if we were not so few that the only thing we want is the audience.". . . The "reading" named by him was that of his first number, which was to "come off" as soon as I could get the proofs out to him; but which the changes needful to be made, and to be mentioned hereafter, still delayed. The St. Bernard holiday, which within sight of his Christmas-book labour he would fain have thrown over, came off as proposed very fortunately for the reader, who might otherwise have lost one of his pleasantest descriptions. But before giving it, one more little sketch of character may be interposed as delicately done as anything in his writings. Steele's observation is in the outline, and Charles Lamb's humour in its touch of colouring.

". . . There are two old ladies (English) living here who may serve me for a few lines of gossip--as I have intended they should, over and over again, but I have always forgotten it. There were originally four old ladies, sisters, but two of them have faded away in the course of eighteen years, and withered by the side of John Kemble in the cemetery. They are very little, and very skinny; and each of them wears a row of false curls, like little rolling-pins, so low upon her brow, that there is no forehead; nothing above the eyebrows but a deep horizontal wrinkle, and then the curls. They live upon some small annuity. For thirteen years they have wanted very much to move to Italy, as the eldest old lady says the climate of this part of Switzerland doesn't agree with her, and preys upon her spirits; but they have never been able to go, because of the difficulty of moving 'the books.' This tremendous library belonged once upon a time to the father of these old ladies, and comprises about fifty volumes. I have never been able to see what they are, because one of the old ladies always sits before them; but they look, outside, like very old backgammon-boards. The two deceased sisters died in the firm persuasion that this precious property could never be got over the Simplon without some gigantic effort to which the united family was unequal.

The two remaining sisters live, and will die also, in the same belief. I met the eldest (evidently drooping) yesterday, and recommended her to try Genoa. She looked shrewdly at the snow that closes up the mountain prospect just now, and said that when the spring was quite set in, and the avalanches were down, and the passes well open, she would certainly try that place, if they could devise any plan, in the course of the winter, for moving 'the books.' The whole library will be sold by auction here, when they are both dead, for about a napoleon; and some young woman will carry it home in two journeys with a basket."

The last letter sent me before he fell upon his self-appointed task for Christmas, contained a delightful account of the trip to the Great St. Bernard. It was dated on the sixth of September.

"The weather obstinately clearing, we started off last Tuesday for the Great St. Bernard, returning here on Friday afternoon. The party consisted of eleven people and two servants--Haldimand, Mr. and Mrs. Cerjat and one daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Watson, two Ladies Taylor, Kate, Georgy, and I. We were wonderfully unanimous and cheerful; went away from here by the steamer; found at its destination a whole omnibus provided by the Brave (who went on in advance everywhere); rode therein to Bex; found two large carriages ready to take us to Martigny; slept there; and proceeded up the mountain on mules next day. Although the St. Bernard convent is, as I dare say you know, the highest inhabited spot but one in the world, the ascent is extremely gradual and uncommonly easy: really presenting no difficulties at all, until within the last league, when the ascent, lying through a place called the valley of desolation, is very awful and tremendous, and the road is rendered toilsome by scattered rocks and melting snow. The convent is a most extraordinary place, full of great vaulted passages, divided from each other with iron gratings; and presenting a series of the most astonishing little dormitories, where the windows are so small (on account of the cold and snow), that it is as much as one can do to get one's head out of them. Here we slept: supping, thirty strong, in a rambling room with a great wood-fire in it set apart for that purpose; with a grim monk, in a high black sugar-loaf hat with a great knob at the top of it, carving the dishes. At five o'clock in the morning the chapel bell rang in the dismallest way for matins: and I, lying in bed close to the chapel, and being awakened by the solemn organ and the chaunting, thought for a moment I had died in the night and passed into the unknown world.

"I wish to God you could see that place. A great hollow on the top of a range of dreadful mountains, fenced in by riven rocks of every shape and colour: and in the midst, a black lake, with phantom clouds perpetually stalking over it. Peaks, and points, and plains of eternal ice and snow, bounding the view, and shutting out the world on every side: the lake reflecting nothing: and no human figure in the scene. The air so fine, that it is difficult to breathe without feeling out of breath; and the cold so exquisitely thin and sharp that it is not to be described. Nothing of life or living interest in the picture, but the grey dull walls of the convent. No vegetation of any sort or kind. Nothing growing, nothing stirring. Everything iron-bound, and frozen up. Beside the convent, in a little outhouse with a grated iron door which you may unbolt for yourself, are the bodies of people found in the snow who have never been claimed and are withering away--not laid down, or stretched out, but standing up, in corners and against walls; some erect and horribly human, with distinct expressions on the faces; some sunk down on their knees; some dropping over on one side; some tumbled down altogether, and presenting a heap of skulls and fibrous dust. There is no other decay in that atmosphere; and there they remain during the short days and the long nights, the only human company out of doors, withering away by grains, and holding ghastly possession of the mountain where they died.

"It is the most distinct and individual place I have seen, even in this transcendent country. But, for the Saint Bernard holy fathers and convent in themselves, I am sorry to say that they are a piece of as sheer humbug as we ever learnt to believe in, in our young days. Trashy French sentiment and the dogs (of

which, by the bye, there are only three remaining) have done it all. They are a lazy set of fellows; not over fond of going out themselves; employing servants to clear the road (which has not been important or much used as a pass these hundred years); rich; and driving a good trade in Innkeeping: the convent being a common tavern in everything but the sign. No charge is made for their hospitality, to be sure; but you are shown to a box in the chapel, where everybody puts in more than could, with any show of face, be charged for the entertainment; and from this the establishment derives a right good income. As to the self-sacrifice of living up there, they are obliged to go there young, it is true, to be inured to the climate: but it is an infinitely more exciting and various life than any other convent can offer; with constant change and company through the whole summer; with a hospital for invalids down in the valley, which affords another change; and with an annual begging-journey to Geneva and this place and all the places round for one brother or other, which affords farther change. The brother who carved at our supper could speak some English, and had just had Pickwick given him!--what a humbug he will think me when he tries to understand it! If I had had any other book of mine with me, I would have given it him, that I might have had some chance of being intelligible. . . ."

Volume II, Chapter 13 (1846): Literary Labour at Lausanne

Literary Labour at Lausanne

SOMETHING of the other side of the medal has now to be presented. His letters enable us to see him amid his troubles and difficulties of writing, as faithfully as in his leisure and enjoyments; and when, to the picture thus given of Dickens's home life in Switzerland, some account has been added of the vicissitudes of literary labour undergone in the interval, as complete a representation of the man will be afforded as could be taken from any period of his career. Of the larger life whereof it is part, the Lausanne life is indeed a perfect microcosm, wanting only the London streets. This was his chief present want, as will shortly be perceived: but as yet the reader does not feel it, and he sees otherwise in all respects at his best the great observer and humourist; interested in everything that commended itself to a thoroughly earnest and eagerly enquiring nature; popular beyond measure with all having intercourse with him; the centre, and very soul, of social enjoyment; letting nothing escape a vision that was not more keen than kindly; and even when apparently most idle, never idle in the sense of his art, but adding day by day to experiences that widened its range, and gave freer and healthier play to an imagination always busily at work, alert and active in a singular degree, and that seemed to be quite untiring. At his heart there was a genuine love of nature at all times; and strange as it may seem to connect this with such forms of humorous delineation as are most identified with his genius, it is yet the literal truth that the impressions of this noble Swiss scenery were with him during the work of many subsequent years: a present and actual, though it might be seldom a directly conscious, influence. When he said afterwards, that, while writing the book on which he is now engaged, he had not seen less clearly each step of the wooden midshipman's staircase, each pew of the church in which Florence was married, or each bed in the dormitory of Doctor Blimber's establishment, because he was himself at the time by the lake of Geneva, he might as truly have said that he saw them all the more clearly even because of that circumstance. He worked his humour to its greatest results by the freedom and force of his imagination; and while the smallest or commonest objects around him were food for the one, the other might have pined or perished without additional higher aliment. Dickens had little love for Wordsworth, but he was himself an example of the truth the great poet never tired of enforcing, that Nature has subtle helps for all who are admitted to become free of her wonders and mysteries.

Another noticeable thing in him is impressed upon these letters, as upon many also heretofore quoted, for indeed all of them are marvellously exact in the reproduction of his nature. He did not think lightly of his work; and the work that occupied him at the time was for the time paramount with him. But the sense he entertained, whether right or wrong, of the importance of what he had to do, of the degree to which it concerned others that the power he held should be exercised successfully, and of the estimate he was justified in forming as the fair measure of its worth or greatness, does not carry with it of necessity presumption or self-conceit. Few men have had less of either. It was part of the intense individuality by which he effected so much, to set the high value which in general he did upon what he was striving to accomplish; he could not otherwise have mastered one half the work he designed; and we are able to form an opinion, more just now for ourselves than it might have seemed to us then from others, of the weight and truth of such self-judgment. The fussy pretension of small men in great places, and the resolute self-assertion of great men in small places, are things essentially different. Respice finem. The exact relative importance of all our pursuits is to be arrived at by nicer adjustments of the Now and the Hereafter than are possible to contemporary judgments; and there have been some indications since his death confirmatory of the belief, that the estimate which he thought himself entitled to form of the labours to which his life was devoted, will be strengthened, not lessened, by time.

Dickens proposed to himself, it will be remembered, to write at Lausanne not only the first four numbers of his larger book, but the Christmas book suggested to him by his fancy of a battle field; and reserving what is to be said of Dombey to a later chapter, this and its successor will deal only with what he finished as well as began in Switzerland, and will show at what cost even so much was achieved amid his other and larger engagements.

He had restless fancies and misgivings before he settled to his first notion. "I have been thinking this last day or two," he wrote on the 25th of July, "that good Christmas characters might be grown out of the idea of a man imprisoned for ten or fifteen years; his imprisonment being the gap between the people and circumstances of the first part and the altered people and circumstances of the second, and his own changed mind. Though I shall probably proceed with the Battle idea, I should like to know what you think of this one?" It was afterwards used in a modified shape for the Tale of Two Cities. "I shall begin the little story straightway," he wrote a few weeks later; "but I have been dimly conceiving a very ghostly and wild idea, which I suppose I must now reserve for the next Christmas book. Nous verrons._ It will mature in the streets of Paris by night, as well as in London." This took ultimately the form of the Haunted Man, which was not written until the winter of 1848. At last I knew that his first slip was done, and that even his eager busy fancy would not turn him back again.

But other unsatisfied wants and cravings had meanwhile broken out in him, of which I heard near the close of the second number of Dombey. The first he had finished at the end of July; and the second, which he began on the 8th of August, he was still at work upon in the first week of September, when this remarkable announcement came to me. It was his first detailed confession of what he felt so continuously, and if that were possible even more strongly, as the years went on, that there is no single passage in any of his letters which throws such a flood of illuminative light into the portions of his life which always awaken the greatest interest. Very much that is to follow must be read by it. "You can hardly imagine," he wrote on the 30th of August, "what infinite pains I take, or what extraordinary difficulty I find in getting on FAST. Invention, thank God, seems the easiest thing in the world; and I seem to have such a preposterous sense of the ridiculous, after this long rest" (it was now over two years since the close of Chuzzlewit), "as to be constantly requiring to restrain myself from launching into extravagances in the height of my enjoyment. But the difficulty of going at what I call a rapid pace, is prodigious; it is almost an impossibility. I suppose this is partly the effect of two years' ease, and partly of the absence of streets and numbers of figures. I can't express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (as at Broadstairs), and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE!! I don't say this at all in low spirits, for we are perfectly comfortable here, and I like the place very much indeed, and the people are even more friendly and fond of me than they were in Genoa. I only mention it as a curious fact, which I have never had an opportunity of finding out before. My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them. I wrote very little in Genoa (only the Chimes), and fancied myself conscious of some such influence there--but Lord! I had two miles of streets at least, lighted at night, to walk about in; and a great theatre to repair to, every night." At the close of the letter he told me that he had pretty well matured the general idea of the Christmas book, and was burning to get to work on it. He thought it would be all the better, for a change, to have no fairies or spirits in it, but to make it a simple domestic tale.

In less than a week from this date his second number was finished, his first slip of the little book done, and his confidence greater. They had had wonderful weather, so clear that he could see from the Neuchatel road the whole of Mont Blanc, six miles distant, as plainly as if he were standing close under it in the courtyard of the little inn at Chamounix; and, though again it was raining when he wrote, his "nailed

shoes" were by him and his "great waterproof cloak" in preparation for a "fourteen-mile walk" before dinner. Then, after three days more, came something of a sequel to the confession before made, which will be read with equal interest. "The absence of any accessible streets continues to worry me, now that I have so much to do, in a most singular manner. It is quite a little mental phenomenon. I should not walk in them in the day time, if they were here, I dare say: but at night I want them beyond description. I don't seem able to get rid of my spectres unless I can lose them in crowds. However, as you say, there are streets in Paris, and good suggestive streets too: and trips to London will be nothing then. WHEN I have finished the Christmas book, I shall fly to Geneva for a day or two, before taking up with Dombey again. I like this place better and better; and never saw, I think, more agreeable people than our little circle is made up of. It is so little, that one is not 'bothered' in the least; and their interest in the inimitable seems to strengthen daily. I read them the first number last night 'was a' week, with unrelateable success; and old Mrs. Marcet, who is devilish 'cute, guessed directly (but I didn't tell her she was right) that little Paul would die. They were all so apprehensive that it was a great pleasure to read it; and I shall leave here, if all goes well, in a brilliant shower of sparks struck out of them by the promised reading of the Christmas book." Little did either of us then imagine to what these readings were to lead, but even thus early they were taking in his mind the shape of a sort of jest that the smallest opportunity of favour might have turned into earnest. In his very next letter he wrote to me: "I was thinking the other day that in these days of lecturings and readings, a great deal of money might possibly be made (if it were not infra dig) by one's having Readings of one's own books. It would be an odd thing. I think it would take immensely. What do you say? Will you step to Dean-street, and see how Miss Kelly's engagement-book (it must be an immense volume!) stands? Or shall I take the St. James's?" My answer is to be inferred from his rejoinder: but even at this time, while heightening and carrying forward his jest, I suspected him of graver desires than he cared to avow; and the time was to come, after a dozen years, when with earnestness equal to his own I continued to oppose, for reasons to be stated in their place, that which he had set his heart upon too strongly to abandon, and which I still can only wish he had preferred to surrender with all that seemed to be its enormous gains! "I don't think you have exercised your usual judgment in taking Covent-garden for me. I doubt it is too large for my purpose. However, I shall stand by whatever you propose to the proprietors."

Soon came the changes of trouble and vexation I had too surely seen. "You remember," he wrote, "your objection about the two stories. I made over light of it. I ought to have considered that I have never before really tried the opening of two together--having always had one pretty far ahead when I have been driving a pair of them. I know it all now. The apparent impossibility of getting each into its place, coupled with that craving for streets, so thoroughly put me off the track, that, up to Wednesday or Thursday last, I really contemplated, at times, the total abandonment of the Christmas book this year, and the limitation of my labours to Dombey and Son! I cancelled the beginning of a first scene--which I have never done before--and, with a notion in my head, ran wildly about and about it, and could not get the idea into any natural socket. At length, thank Heaven, I nailed it all at once; and after going on comfortably up to yesterday, and working yesterday from half-past nine to six, I was last night in such a state of enthusiasm about it that I think I was an inch or two taller. I am a little cooler to-day, with a headache to boot; but I really begin to hope you will think it a pretty story, with some delicate notions in it agreeably presented, and with a good human Christmas groundwork. I fancy I see a great domestic effect in the last part."

That was written on the 20th of September; but six days later changed the picture and surprised me not a little. I might grudge the space thus given to one of the least important of his books but that the illustration goes farther than the little tale it refers to, and is a picture of him in his moods of writing, with their weakness as well as strength upon him, of a perfect truth and applicability to every period of his life.

Movement and change while he was working were not mere restlessness, as we have seen; it was no impatience of labour, or desire of pleasure, that led at such times to his eager craving for the fresh crowds and faces in which he might lose or find the creatures of his fancy; and recollecting this, much hereafter will be understood that might else be very far from clear, in regard to the sensitive conditions under which otherwise he carried on these exertions of his brain. "I am going to write you" (26th of September) "a most startling piece of intelligence. I fear there may be NO CHRISTMAS BOOK! I would give the world to be on the spot to tell you this. Indeed I once thought of starting for London to-night. I have written nearly a third of it. It promises to be pretty; quite a new idea in the story, I hope; but to manage it without the supernatural agency now impossible of introduction, and yet to move it naturally within the required space, or with any shorter limit than a Vicar of Wakefield, I find to be a difficulty so perplexing--the past Dombey work taken into account--that I am fearful of wearing myself out if I go on, and not being able to come back to the greater undertaking with the necessary freshness and spirit. If I had nothing but the Christmas book to do, I WOULD do it; but I get horrified and distressed beyond conception at the prospect of being jaded when I come back to the other, and making it a mere race against time. I have written the first part; I know the end and upshot of the second; and the whole of the third (there are only three in all). I know the purport of each character, and the plain idea that each is to work out; and I have the principal effects sketched on paper. It cannot end quite happily, but will end cheerfully and pleasantly. But my soul sinks before the commencement of the second part--the longest--and the introduction of the under-idea. (The main one already developed, with interest.) I don't know how it is. I suppose it is the having been almost constantly at work in this quiet place; and the dread for the Dombey; and the not being able to get rid of it, in noise and bustle. The beginning two books together is also, no doubt, a fruitful source of the difficulty; for I am now sure I could not have invented the Carol at the commencement of the Chuzzlewit, or gone to a new book from the Chimes. But this is certain. I am sick, giddy, and capriciously despondent. I have bad nights; am full of disquietude and anxiety; and am constantly haunted by the idea that I am wasting the marrow of the larger book, and ought to be at rest. One letter that I wrote you before this, I have torn up. In that the Christmas book was wholly given up for this year: but I now resolve to make one effort more. I will go to Geneva to-morrow, and try on Monday and Tuesday whether I can get on at all bravely, in the changed scene. If I cannot, I am convinced that I had best hold my hand at once; and not fritter my spirits and hope away, with that long book before me. You may suppose that the matter is very grave when I can so nearly abandon anything in which I am deeply interested, and fourteen or fifteen close MS. pages of which, that have made me laugh and cry, are lying in my desk. Writing this letter at all, I have a great misgiving that the letter I shall write you on Tuesday night will not make it better. Take it, for Heaven's sake, as an extremely serious thing, and not a fancy of the moment. Last Saturday after a very long day's work, and last Wednesday after finishing the first part, I was full of eagerness and pleasure. At all other times since I began, I have been brooding and brooding over the idea that it was a wild thing to dream of, ever: and that I ought to be at rest for the Dombey."

The letter came, written on Wednesday not Tuesday night, and it left the question still unsettled. "When I came here" (Geneva, 30th of September) "I had a bloodshot eye; and my head was so bad, with a pain across the brow, that I thought I must have got cupped. I have become a great deal better, however, and feel quite myself again to-day. . . . I still have not made up my mind as to what I CAN do with the Christmas book. I would give any money that it were possible to consult with you. I have begun the second part this morning, and have done a very fair morning's work at it, but I do not feel it in hand within the necessary space and divisions: and I have a great uneasiness in the prospect of falling behind hand with the other labour, which is so transcendantly important. I feel quite sure that unless I (being in reasonably good state and spirits) like the Christmas book myself, I had better not go on with it; but had

best keep my strength for Dombey, and keep my number in advance. On the other hand I am dreadfully averse to abandoning it, and am so torn between the two things that I know not what to do. It is impossible to express the wish I have that I could take counsel with you. Having begun the second part I will go on here, to-morrow and Friday (Saturday, the Talfourds come to us at Lausanne, leaving on Monday morning), unless I see new reason to give it up in the meanwhile. Let it stand thus--that my next Monday's letter shall finally decide the question. But if you have not already told Bradbury and Evans of my last letter I think it will now be best to do so. . . . This non-publication of a Christmas book, if it must be, I try to think light of with the greater story just begun, and with this Battle of Life story (of which I really think the leading idea is very pretty) lying by me, for future use. But I would like you to consider, in the event of my not going on, how best, by timely announcement, in November's or December's Dombey, I may seem to hold the ground prospectively. . . . Heaven send me a good deliverance! If I don't do it, it will be the first time I ever abandoned anything I had once taken in hand; and I shall not have abandoned it until after a most desperate fight. I could do it, but for the Dombey, as easily as I did last year or the year before. But I cannot help falling back on that continually: and this, combined with the peculiar difficulties of the story for a Christmas book, and my being out of sorts, discourages me sadly. . . . Kate is here, and sends her love.". . . A postscript was added on the following day. "Georgy has come over from Lausanne, and joins with Kate, &c. &c. My head remains greatly better. My eye is recovering its old hue of beautiful white, tinged with celestial blue. If I hadn't come here, I think I should have had some bad low fever. The sight of the rushing Rhone seemed to stir my blood again. I don't think I shall want to be cupped, this bout; but it looked, at one time, worse than I have confessed to you. If I have any return, I will have it done immediately."

He stayed two days longer at Geneva, which he found to be a very good place; pleasantly reporting himself as quite dismayed at first by the sight of gas in it, and as trembling at the noise in its streets, which he pronounced to be fully equal to the uproar of Richmond in Surrey; but deriving from it some sort of benefit both in health and in writing. So far his trip had been successful, though he had to leave the place hurriedly to welcome his English visitors to Rosemont.

One social and very novel experience he had in his hotel, however, the night before he left, which may be told before he hastens back to Lausanne; for it could hardly now offend any one even if the names were given. "And now sir I will describe, modestly, tamely, literally, the visit to the small select circle which I promised should make your hair stand on end. In our hotel were Lady A, and Lady B, mother and daughter, who came to the Peschiere shortly before we left it, and who have a deep admiration for your humble servant the inimitable B. They are both very clever. Lady B, extremely well-informed in languages, living and dead; books, and gossip; very pretty; with two little children, and not yet five and twenty. Lady A, plump, fresh, and rosy; matronly, but full of spirits and good looks. Nothing would serve them but we must dine with them; and accordingly, on Friday at six, we went down to their room. I knew them to be rather odd. For instance, I have known Lady A, full dressed, walk alone through the streets of Genoa, the squalid Italian bye streets, to the Governor's soiree; and announce herself at the palace of state, by knocking at the door. I have also met Lady B, full dressed, without any cap or bonnet, walking a mile to the opera, with all sorts of jingling jewels about her, beside a sedan chair in which sat enthroned her mama. Consequently, I was not surprised at such little sparkles in the conversation (from the young lady) as 'Oh God what a sermon we had here, last Sunday!' 'And did you ever read such infernal trash as Mrs. Gore's?'--and the like. Still, but for Kate and Georgy (who were decidedly in the way, as we agreed afterwards), I should have thought it all very funny; and, as it was, I threw the ball back again, was mighty free and easy, made some rather broad jokes, and was highly applauded. 'You smoke, don't you?' said the young lady, in a pause of this kind of conversation. 'Yes,' I said, 'I generally take a cigar after dinner when I am alone.' 'I'll give you a good 'un,' said she, 'when we go up-stairs.' Well sir, in due

course we went up stairs, and there we were joined by an American lady residing in the same hotel, who looked like what we call in old England 'a reg'lar Bunter'--fluffy face (rouged); considerable development of figure; one groggy eye; blue satin dress made low with short sleeves, and shoes of the same. Also a daughter; face likewise fluffy; figure likewise developed; dress likewise low, with short sleeves, and shoes of the same; and one eye not yet actually groggy, but going to be. American lady married at sixteen; daughter sixteen now, often mistaken for sisters, &c. &c. &c. When that was over, Lady B brought out a cigar box, and gave me a cigar, made of negrohead she said, which would quell an elephant in six whiffs. The box was full of cigarettes--good large ones, made of pretty strong tobacco; I always smoke them here, and used to smoke them at Genoa, and I knew them well. When I lighted my cigar, Lady B lighted hers, at mine; leaned against the mantelpiece, in conversation with me; put out her stomach, folded her arms, and with her pretty face cocked up sideways and her cigarette smoking away like a Manchester cotton mill, laughed, and talked, and smoked, in the most gentlemanly manner I ever beheld. Lady A immediately lighted her cigar; American lady immediately lighted hers; and in five minutes the room was a cloud of smoke, with us four in the centre pulling away bravely, while American lady related stories of her 'Hookah' up stairs, and described different kinds of pipes. But even this was not all. For presently two Frenchmen came in, with whom, and the American lady, Lady B sat down to whist. The Frenchmen smoked of course (they were really modest gentlemen, and seemed dismayed), and Lady B played for the next hour or two with a cigar continually in her mouth--never out of it. She certainly smoked six or eight. Lady A gave in soon--I think she only did it out of vanity. American lady had been smoking all the morning. I took no more; and Lady B and the Frenchmen had it all to themselves.

"Conceive this in a great hotel, with not only their own servants, but half a dozen waiters coming constantly in and out! I showed no atom of surprise; but I never was so surprised, so ridiculously taken aback, in my life; for in all my experience of 'ladies' of one kind and another, I never saw a woman--not a basket woman or a gypsy--smoke, before!" He lived to have larger and wider experience, but there was enough to startle as well as amuse him in the scene described.

But now Saturday is come; he has hurried back for the friends who are on their way to his cottage; and on his arrival, even before they have appeared, he writes to tell me his better news of himself and his work.

"In the breathless interval" (Rosemont: 3rd of October) "between our return from Geneva and the arrival of the Talfourds (expected in an hour or two), I cannot do better than write to you. For I think you will be well pleased if I anticipate my promise, and Monday, at the same time. I have been greatly better at Geneva, though I still am made uneasy by occasional giddiness and headache: attributable, I have not the least doubt, to the absence of streets. There is an idea here, too, that people are occasionally made despondent and sluggish in their spirits by this great mass of still water, lake Leman. At any rate I have been very uncomfortable: at any rate I am, I hope, greatly better: and (lastly) at any rate I hope and trust, now, the Christmas book will come in due course!! I have had three very good days' work at Geneva, and trust I may finish the second part (the third is the shortest) by this day week. Whenever I finish it, I will send you the first two together. I do not think they can begin to illustrate it, until the third arrives; for it is a single minded story, as it were, and an artist should know the end: which I don't think very likely, unless he reads it." Then, after relating a superhuman effort he was making to lodge his visitors in his doll's house ("I didn't like the idea of turning them out at night. It is so dark in these lanes, and groves, when the moon's not bright"), he sketched for me what he possibly might, and really did, accomplish. He would by great effort finish the small book on the 20th; would fly to Geneva for a week to work a little at Dombey, if he felt "pretty sound;" in any case would finish his number three by the 10th of November; and on that day would start for Paris: "so that, instead of resting unprofitably here, I shall be using my

interval of idleness to make the journey and get into a new house, and shall hope so to put a pinch of salt on the tail of the sliding number in advance. . . . I am horrified at the idea of getting the blues (and bloodshots) again." Though I did not then know how gravely ill he had been, I was fain to remind him that it was bad economy to make business out of rest itself; but I received prompt confirmation that all was falling out as he wished. The Talfourds stayed two days: "and I think they were very happy. He was in his best aspect; the manner so well known to us, not the less loveable for being laughable; and if you could have seen him going round and round the coach that brought them, as a preliminary to paying the voiturier to whom he couldn't speak, in a currency he didn't understand, you never would have forgotten it." His friends left Lausanne on the 5th; and five days later he sent me two-thirds of the manuscript of his Christmas book.

Volume II, Chapter 14 (1846): Revolution at Geneva, Christmas Book, and Last Days in Switzerland

Revolution at Geneva, Christmas Book, and Last Days in Switzerland

"I SEND you in twelve letters, counting this as one, the first two parts (thirty-five slips) of the Christmas book. I have two present anxieties respecting it. One to know that you have received it safely; and the second to know how it strikes you. Be sure you read the first and second parts together. . . . There seems to me to be interest in it, and a pretty idea; and it is unlike the others. . . . There will be some minor points for consideration: as, the necessity for some slight alterations in one or two of the Doctor's speeches in the first part; and whether it should be called 'The Battle of Life. A Love Story'--to express both a love story in the common acceptation of the phrase, and also a story of love; with one or two other things of that sort. We can moot these by and by. I made a tremendous day's work of it yesterday and was horribly excited--so I am going to rush out, as fast as I can: being a little used up, and sick. . . . But never say die! I have been to the glass to look at my eye. Pretty bright!"

I made it brighter next day by telling him that the first number of Dombey had outstripped in sale the first of Chuzzlewit by more than twelve thousand copies; and his next letter, sending the close of his little tale, showed his need of the comfort my pleasant news had given him. "I really do not know what this story is worth. I am so floored: wanting sleep, and never having had my head free from it for this month past. I think there are some places in this last part which I may bring better together in the proof, and where a touch or two may be of service; particularly in the scene between Craggs and Michael Warden, where, as it stands, the interest seems anticipated. But I shall have the benefit of your suggestions, and my own then cooler head, I hope; and I will be very careful with the proofs, and keep them by me as long as I can. . . . Mr. Britain must have another Christian name, then? 'Aunt Martha' is the Sally of whom the Doctor speaks in the first part. Martha is a better name. What do you think of the concluding paragraph? Would you leave it for happiness' sake? It is merely experimental. . . . I am flying to Geneva to-morrow morning." (That was on the 18th of October; and on the 20th he wrote from Geneva.) "We came here yesterday, and we shall probably remain until Katey's birthday, which is next Thursday week. I shall fall to work on number three of Dombey as soon as I can. At present I am the worse for wear, but nothing like as much so as I expected to be on Sunday last. I had not been able to sleep for some time, and had been hammering away, morning, noon, and night. A bottle of hock on Monday, when Elliotson dined with us (he went away homeward yesterday morning), did me a world of good; the change comes in the very nick of time; and I feel in Dombeian spirits already. . . . But I have still rather a damaged head, aching a good deal occasionally, as it is doing now, though I have not been cupped--yet. . . . I dreamed all last week that the Battle of Life was a series of chambers impossible to be got to rights or got out of, through which I wandered drearily all night. On Saturday night I don't think I slept an hour. I was perpetually roaming through the story, and endeavouring to dove-tail the revolution here into the plot. The mental distress, quite horrible."

Of the "revolution" he had written to me a week before, from Lausanne; where the news had just reached them, that, upon the Federal Diet decreeing the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Roman Catholic cantons had risen against the decree, the result being that the Protestants had deposed the grand council and established a provisional government, dissolving the Catholic league. His interest in this, and prompt seizure of what really was brought into issue by the conflict, is every way characteristic of Dickens. "You will know," he wrote from Lausanne on the 11th of October, "long before you get this, all about the revolution at Geneva. There were stories of plots against the Government when I was there, but I didn't

believe them; for all sorts of lies are always afloat against the radicals, and wherever there is a consul from a Catholic Power the most monstrous fictions are in perpetual circulation against them: as in this very place, where the Sardinian consul was gravely whispering the other day that a society called the Homicides had been formed, whereof the president of the council of state, the O'Connell of Switzerland and a clever fellow, was a member; who were sworn on skulls and cross-bones to exterminate men of property, and so forth. There was a great stir here, on the day of the fight in Geneva. We heard the guns (they shook this house) all day; and seven hundred men marched out of this town of Lausanne to go and help the radical party--arriving at Geneva just after it was all over. There is no doubt they had received secret help from here; for a powder barrel, found by some of the Genevese populace with 'Canton de Vaud' painted on it, was carried on a pole about the streets as a standard, to show that they were sympathized with by friends outside. It was a poor mean fight enough, I am told by Lord Vernon, who was present and who was with us last night. The Government was afraid; having no confidence whatever, I dare say, in its own soldiers; and the cannon were fired everywhere except at the opposite party, who (I mean the revolutionists) had barricaded a bridge with an omnibus only, and certainly in the beginning might have been turned with ease. The precision of the common men with the rifle was especially shown by a small party of five, who waited on the ramparts near one of the gates of the town, to turn a body of soldiery who were coming in to the Government assistance. They picked out every officer and struck him down instantly, the moment the party appeared; there were three or four of them; upon which the soldiers gravely turned round and walked off. I dare say there are not fifty men in this place who wouldn't click your card off a target a hundred and fifty yards away, at least. I have seen them, time after time, fire across a great ravine as wide as the ornamental ground in St. James's-park, and never miss the bull's-eye.

"It is a horribly ungentlemanly thing to say here, though I do say it without the least reserve--but my sympathy is all with the radicals. I don't know any subject on which this indomitable people have so good a right to a strong feeling as Catholicity--if not as a religion, clearly as a means of social degradation. They know what it is. They live close to it. They have Italy beyond their mountains. They can compare the effect of the two systems at any time in their own valleys; and their dread of it, and their horror of the introduction of Catholic priests and emissaries into their towns, seems to me the most rational feeling in the world. Apart from this, you have no conception of the preposterous, insolent little aristocracy of Geneva: the most ridiculous caricature the fancy can suggest of what we know in England. I was talking to two famous gentlemen (very intelligent men) of that place, not long ago, who came over to invite me to a sort of reception there--which I declined. Really their talk about 'the people' and 'the masses,' and the necessity they would shortly be under of shooting a few of them as an example for the rest, was a kind of monstrosity one might have heard at Genoa. The audacious insolence and contempt of the people by their newspapers, too, is quite absurd. It is difficult to believe that men of sense can be such donkeys politically. It was precisely such a state of things that brought about the change here. There was a most respectful petition presented on the Jesuit question, signed by its tens of thousands of small farmers; the regular peasants of the canton, all splendidly taught in public schools, and intellectually as well as physically a most remarkable body of labouring men. This document is treated by the gentlemanly party with the most sublime contempt, and the signatures are said to be the signatures of 'the rabble.' Upon which, each man of the rabble shoulders his rifle, and walks in upon a given day agreed upon among them to Lausanne; and the gentlemanly party walk out without striking a blow."

Such traces of the "revolution" as he found upon his present visit to Geneva he described in writing to me from the hotel de l'Ecu on the 20th of October. "You never would suppose from the look of this town that there had been anything revolutionary going on. Over the window of my old bedroom there is a great hole made by a cannon-ball in the house-front; and two of the bridges are under repair. But these are

small tokens which anything else might have brought about as well. The people are all at work. The little streets are rife with every sight and sound of industry; the place is as quiet by ten o'clock as Lincoln's-inn-fields; and the only outward and visible sign of public interest in political events is a little group at every street corner, reading a public announcement from the new Government of the forthcoming election of state-officers, in which the people are reminded of their importance as a republican institution, and desired to bear in mind their dignity in all their proceedings. Nothing very violent or bad could go on with a community so well educated as this. It is the best antidote to American experiences, conceivable. As to the nonsense 'the gentlemanly interest' talk about, their opposition to property and so forth, there never was such mortal absurdity. One of the principal leaders in the late movement has a stock of watches and jewellery here of immense value--and had, during the disturbance--perfectly unprotected. James Fahzey has a rich house and a valuable collection of pictures; and, I will be bound to say, twice as much to lose as half the conservative declaimers put together. This house, the liberal one, is one of the most richly furnished and luxurious hotels on the continent. And if I were a Swiss with a hundred thousand pounds, I would be as steady against the Catholic cantons and the propagation of Jesuitism as any radical among 'em: believing the dissemination of Catholicity to be the most horrible means of political and social degradation left in the world. Which these people, thoroughly well educated, know perfectly. . . . The boys of Geneva were very useful in bringing materials for the construction of the barricades on the bridges; and the enclosed song may amuse you. They sing it to a tune that dates from the great French Revolution--a very good one."

But revolutions may be small as well as their heroes, and while he thus was sending me his Gamin de Geneve I was sending him news of a sudden change in Whitefriars which had quite as vivid interest for him. Not much could be told him at first, but his curiosity instantly arose to fever pitch. "In reference to that Daily News revolution," he wrote from Geneva on the 26th, "I have been walking and wondering all day through a perfect Miss Burney's Vauxhall of conjectural dark walks. Heaven send you enlighten me fully on Wednesday, or number three will suffer!" Two days later he resumed, as he was beginning his journey back to Lausanne. "I am in a great state of excitement on account of your intelligence, and desperately anxious to know all about it. I shall be put out to an unspeakable extent if I don't find your letter awaiting me. God knows there has been small comfort for either of us in the D. N._'s nine months." There was not much to tell then, and there is less now; but at last the discomfort was over for us both, as I had been unable to reconcile myself to a longer continuance of the service I had given in Whitefriars since he quitted it. The subject may be left with the remark made upon it in his first letter after returning to Rosemont. "I certainly am very glad of the result of the Daily News business, though my gladness is dashed with melancholy to think that you should have toiled there so long, to so little purpose. I escaped more easily. However, it is all past now. . . . As to the undoubted necessity of the course you took, I have not a grain of question in my mind. That, being what you are, you had only one course to take and have taken it, I no more doubt than that the Old Bailey is not Westminster Abbey. In the utmost sum at which you value yourself, you were bound to leave; and now you have left, you will come to Paris, and there, and at home again, we'll have, please God, the old kind of evenings and the old life again, as it used to be before those daily nooses caught us by the legs and sometimes tripped us up. Make a vow (as I have done) never to go down that court with the little news-shop at the corner, any more, and let us swear by Jack Straw as in the ancient times. . . . I am beginning to get over my sorrow for your nights up aloft in Whitefriars, and to feel nothing but happiness in the contemplation of your enfranchisement. God bless you!"

The time was now shortening for him at Lausanne; but before my sketches of his pleasant days there close, the little story of his Christmas book may be made complete by a few extracts from the letters that followed immediately upon the departure of the Talfourds. Without comment they will explain its closing

touches, his own consciousness of the difficulties in working out the tale within limits too confined not to render its proper development imperfect, and his ready tact in dealing with objection and suggestion from without. His condition while writing it did not warrant me in pressing what I might otherwise have thought necessary; but as the little story finally left his hands, it had points not unworthy of him; and a sketch of its design will render the fragments from his letters more intelligible. I read it lately with a sense that its general tone of quiet beauty deserved well the praise which Jeffrey in those days had given it. "I like and admire the Battle extremely," he said in a letter on its publication, sent me by Dickens and not included in Lord Cockburn's Memoir. "It is better than any other man alive could have written, and has passages as fine as anything that ever came from the man himself. The dance of the sisters in that autumn orchard is of itself worth a dozen inferior tales, and their reunion at the close, and indeed all the serious parts, are beautiful, some traits of Clemency charming."

Yet it was probably here the fact, as with the Chimes, that the serious parts were too much interwoven with the tale to render the subject altogether suitable to the old mirth-bringing season; but this had also some advantages. The story is all about two sisters, the younger of whom, Marion, sacrifices her own affection to give happiness to the elder, Grace. But Grace had already made the same sacrifice for this younger sister; life's first and hardest battle had been won by her before the incidents begin; and when she is first seen, she is busying herself to bring about her sister's marriage with Alfred Heathfield, whom she has herself loved, and whom she has kept wholly unconscious, by a quiet change in her bearing to him, of what his own still disengaged heart would certainly not have rejected. Marion, however, had earlier discovered this, though it is not until her victory over herself that Alfred knows it; and meanwhile he is become her betrothed. The sisters thus shown at the opening, one believing her love undiscovered and the other bent for the sake of that love on surrendering her own, each practising concealment and both unselfishly true, form a pretty and tender picture. The second part is intended to give to Marion's flight the character of an elopement; and so to manage this as to show her all the time unchanged to the man she is pledged to, yet flying from, was the author's difficulty. One Michael Warden is the deus ex machina by whom it is solved, hardly with the usual skill; but there is much art in rendering his pretensions to the hand of Marion, whose husband he becomes after an interval of years, the means of closing against him all hope of success, in the very hour when her own act might seem to be opening it to him. During the same interval Grace, believing Marion to be gone with Warden, becomes Alfred's wife; and not until reunion after six years' absence is the truth entirely known to her. The struggle, to all of them, has been filled and chastened with sorrow; but joy revisits them at its close. Hearts are not broken by the duties laid upon them; nor is life shown to be such a perishable holiday, that amidst noble sorrow and generous self-denial it must lose its capacity for happiness. The tale thus justifies its place in the Christmas series. What Jeffrey says of Clemency, too, may suggest another word. The story would not be Dickens's if we could not discover in it the power peculiar to him of presenting the commonest objects with freshness and beauty, of detecting in the homeliest forms of life much of its rarest loveliness, and of springing easily upward from everyday realities into regions of imaginative thought. To this happiest direction of his art, Clemency and her husband render new tribute; and in her more especially, once again, we recognize one of those true souls who fill so large a space in his writings, for whom the lowest seats at life's feasts are commonly kept, but whom he moves and welcomes to a more fitting place among the prized and honoured at the upper tables.

"I wonder whether you foresaw the end of the Christmas book! There are two or three places in which I can make it prettier, I think, by slight alterations. . . . I trust to Heaven you may like it. What an affecting story I could have made of it in one octavo volume. Oh to think of the printers transforming my kindly cynical old father into Doctor Taddler!" (28th of October.)

"Do you think it worth while, in the illustrations, to throw the period back at all for the sake of anything

good in the costume? The story may have happened at any time within a hundred years. Is it worth having coats and gowns of dear old Goldsmith's day? or thereabouts? I really don't know what to say. The probability is, if it has not occurred to you or to the artists, that it is hardly worth considering; but I ease myself of it by throwing it out to you. It may be already too late, or you may see reason to think it best to 'stick to the last' (I feel it necessary to italicize the joke), and abide by the ladies' and gentlemen's spring and winter fashions of this time. Whatever you think best, in this as in all other things, is best, I am sure. . . . I would go, in the illustrations, for 'beauty' as much as possible; and I should like each part to have a general illustration to it at the beginning, shadowing out its drift and bearing: much as Browne goes at that kind of thing on Dombey covers. I don't think I should fetter your discretion in the matter farther. The better it is illustrated, the better I shall be pleased of course." (29th of October.)

". . . I only write to say that it is of no use my writing at length, until I have heard from you; and that I will wait until I shall have read your promised communication (as my father would call it) to-morrow. I have glanced over the proofs of the last part and really don't wonder, some of the most extravagant mistakes occurring in Clemency's account to Warden, that the marriage of Grace and Alfred should seem rather unsatisfactory to you. Whatever is done about that must be done with the lightest hand, for the reader MUST take something for granted; but I think it next to impossible, without dreadful injury to the effect, to introduce a scene between Marion and Michael. The introduction must be in the scene between the sisters, and must be put, mainly, into the mouth of Grace. Rely upon it there is no other way, in keeping with the spirit of the tale. With this amendment, and a touch here and there in the last part (I know exactly where they will come best), I think it may be pretty and affecting, and comfortable too. . . ." (31st of October.)

". . . I shall hope to touch upon the Christmas book as soon as I get your opinion. I wouldn't do it without. I am delighted to hear of noble old Stanny. Give my love to him, and tell him I think of turning Catholic. It strikes me (it may have struck you perhaps) that another good place for introducing a few lines of dialogue, is at the beginning of the scene between Grace and her husband, where he speaks about the messenger at the gate." (4th of November.)

"Before I reply to your questions I wish to remark generally of the third part that all the passion that can be got into it, through my interpretation at all events, is there. I know that, by what it cost me; and I take it to be, as a question of art and interest, in the very nature of the story that it should move at a swift pace after the sisters are in each other's arms again. Anything after that would drag like lead, and must. . . . Now for your questions. I don't think any little scene with Marion and anybody can prepare the way for the last paragraph of the tale: I don't think anything but a printer's line can go between it and Warden's speech. A less period than ten years? Yes. I see no objection to six. I have no doubt you are right. Any word from Alfred in his misery? Impossible: you might as well try to speak to somebody in an express train. The preparation for his change is in the first part, and he kneels down beside her in that return scene. He is left alone with her, as it were, in the world. I am quite confident it is wholly impossible for me to alter that. . . . BUT (keep your eye on me) when Marion went away, she left a letter for Grace in which she charged her to encourage the love that Alfred would conceive for her, and FOREWARNED her that years would pass before they met again, &c. &c. This coming out in the scene between the sisters, and something like it being expressed in the opening of the little scene between Grace and her husband before the messenger at the gate, will make (I hope) a prodigious difference; and I will try to put in something with Aunt Martha and the Doctor which shall carry the tale back more distinctly and unmistakeably to the battle-ground. I hope to make these alterations next week, and to send the third part back to you before I leave here. If you think it can still be improved after that, say so to me in Paris and I will go at it again. I wouldn't have it limp, if it can fly. I say nothing to you of a great deal of this being already expressed in the sentiment of the beginning, because your delicate perception knows all

that already. Observe for the artists. Grace will now only have one child--little Marion.". . . (At night, on same day.). . . "You recollect that I asked you to read it all together, for I knew that I was working for that? But I have no doubt of your doubts, and will do what I have said. . . . I had thought of marking the time in the little story, and will do so. . . . Think, once more, of the period between the second and third parts. I will do the same." (7th of November.)

"I hope you will think the third part (when you read it in type with these amendments) very much improved. I think it so. If there should still be anything wanting, in your opinion, pray suggest it to me in Paris. I am bent on having it right, if I can. . . . If in going over the proofs you find the tendency to blank verse (I cannot help it, when I am very much in earnest) too strong, knock out a word's brains here and there." (13th of November. Sending the proofs back.)

". . . Your Christmas book illustration-news makes me jump for joy. I will write you at length to-morrow. I should like this dedication: This Christmas Book is cordially inscribed To my English Friends in Switzerland. Just those two lines, and nothing more. When I get the proofs again I think I may manage another word or two about the battle-field, with advantage. I am glad you like the alterations. I feel that they make it complete, and that it would have been incomplete without your suggestions." (21st of November. From Paris.)

I had managed, as a glad surprise for him, to enlist both Stanfield and Maclise in the illustration of the story, in addition to the distinguished artists whom the publishers had engaged for it, Leech and Richard Doyle; and among the subjects contributed by Stanfield are three morsels of English landscape which had a singular charm for Dickens at the time, and seem to me still of their kind quite faultless. I may add a curious fact, never mentioned until now. In the illustration which closes the second part of the story, where the festivities to welcome the bridegroom at the top of the page contrast with the flight of the bride represented below, Leech made the mistake of supposing that Michael Warden had taken part in the elopement, and has introduced his figure with that of Marion. We did not discover this until too late for remedy, the publication having then been delayed, for these drawings, to the utmost limit; and it is highly characteristic of Dickens, and of the true regard he had for this fine artist, that, knowing the pain he must give in such circumstances by objection or complaint, he preferred to pass it silently. Nobody made remark upon it, and there the illustration still stands; but any one who reads the tale carefully will at once perceive what havoc it makes of one of the most delicate turns in it.

"When I first saw it, it was with a horror and agony not to be expressed. Of course I need not tell you, my dear fellow, Warden has no business in the elopement scene. He was never there! In the first hot sweat of this surprise and novelty, I was going to implore the printing of that sheet to be stopped, and the figure taken out of the block. But when I thought of the pain this might give to our kind-hearted Leech; and that what is such a monstrous enormity to me, as never having entered my brain, may not so present itself to others, I became more composed: though the fact is wonderful to me. No doubt a great number of copies will be printed by the time this reaches you, and therefore I shall take it for granted that it stands as it is. Leech otherwise is very good, and the illustrations altogether are by far the best that have been done for any of the Christmas books. You know how I build up temples in my mind that are not made with hands (or expressed with pen and ink, I am afraid), and how liable I am to be disappointed in these things. But I really am not disappointed in this case. Quietness and beauty are preserved throughout. Say everything to Mac and Stanny, more than everything! It is a delight to look at these little landscapes of the dear old boy. How gentle and elegant, and yet how manly and vigorous, they are! I have a perfect joy in them."

Of the few days that remained of his Lausanne life, before he journeyed to Paris, there is not much requiring to be said. His work had continued during the whole of the month before departure to occupy him so entirely as to leave room for little else, and even occasional letters to very dear friends at home

were intermitted. Here is one example of many. "I will write to Landor as soon as I can possibly make time, but I really am so much at my desk perforce, and so full of work, whether I am there or elsewhere, between the Christmas book and Dombey, that it is the most difficult thing in the world for me to make up my mind to write a letter to any one but you. I ought to have written to Macready. I wish you would tell him, with my love, how I am situated in respect of pen, ink, and paper. One of the Lausanne papers, treating of free trade, has been very copious lately in its mention of LORD GOBDEN. Fact; and I think it a good name." Then, as the inevitable time approached, he cast about him for such comfort as the coming change might bring, to set against the sorrow of it; and began to think of Paris, "'in a less romantic and more homely contemplation of the picture,' as not wholly undesirable. I have no doubt that constant change, too, is indispensable to me when I am at work: and at times something more than a doubt will force itself upon me whether there is not something in a Swiss valley that disagrees with me. Certainly, whenever I live in Switzerland again, it shall be on the hill-top. Something of the goitre and cretin influence seems to settle on my spirits sometimes, on the lower ground. How sorry, ah yes! how sorry I shall be to leave the little society nevertheless. We have been thoroughly good-humoured and agreeable together, and I'll always give a hurrah for the Swiss and Switzerland."

One or two English travelling by Lausanne had meanwhile greeted him as they were passing home, and a few days given him by Elliotson had been an enjoyment without a drawback. It was now the later autumn, very high winds were coursing through the valley, and his last letter but one described the change which these approaches of winter were making in the scene. "We have had some tremendous hurricanes at Lausanne. It is an extraordinary place now for wind, being peculiarly situated among mountains--between the Jura, and the Simplon, St. Gothard, St. Bernard, and Mont Blanc ranges; and at night you would swear (lying in bed) you were at sea. You cannot imagine wind blowing so, over earth. It is very fine to hear. The weather generally, however, has been excellent. There is snow on the tops of nearly all the hills, but none has fallen in the valley. On a bright day, it is quite hot between eleven and half past two. The nights and mornings are cold. For the last two or three days, it has been thick weather; and I can see no more of Mont Blanc from where I am writing now than if I were in Devonshire terrace, though last week it bounded all the Lausanne walks. I would give a great deal that you could take a walk with me about Lausanne on a clear cold day. It is impossible to imagine anything more noble and beautiful than the scene; and the autumn colours in the foliage are more brilliant and vivid now than any description could convey to you. I took Elliotson, when he was with us, up to a ravine I had found out in the hills eight hundred or a thousand feet deep! Its steep sides dyed bright yellow, and deep red, by the changing leaves; a sounding torrent rolling down below; the lake of Geneva lying at its foot; one enormous mass and chaos of trees at its upper end; and mountain piled on mountain in the distance, up into the sky! He really was struck silent by its majesty and splendour."

He had begun his third number of Dombey on the 26th of October, on the 4th of the following month he was half through it, on the 7th he was in the "agonies" of its last chapter, and on the 9th, one day before that proposed for its completion, all was done. This was marvellously rapid work, after what else he had undergone; but within a week, Monday the 16th being the day for departure, they were to strike their tents, and troubled and sad were the few days thus left him for preparation and farewell. He included in his leave-taking his deaf, dumb, and blind friends; and, to use his own homely phrase, was yet more terribly "down in the mouth" at taking leave of his hearing, speaking, and seeing friends. "I shall see you soon, please God, and that sets all to rights. But I don't believe there are many dots on the map of the world where we shall have left such affectionate remembrances behind us, as in Lausanne. It was quite miserable this last night, when we left them at Haldimand's."

He shall himself describe how they travelled post to Paris, occupying five days. "We got through the journey charmingly, though not quite so quickly as we hoped. The children as good as usual, and even

Skittles jolly to the last. (That name has long superseded Sampson Brass, by the bye. I call him so, from something skittle-playing and public-housey in his countenance.) We have been up at five every morning, and on the road before seven. We were three carriages: a sort of wagon, with a cabriolet attached, for the luggage; a ramshackle villainous old swing upon wheels (hired at Geneva), for the children; and for ourselves, that travelling chariot which I was so kind as to bring here for sale. It was very cold indeed crossing the Jura--nothing but fog and frost; but when we were out of Switzerland and across the French frontier, it became warmer, and continued so. We stopped at between six and seven each evening; had two rather queer inns, wild French country inns; but the rest good. They were three hours and a half examining the luggage at the frontier custom-house--atop of a mountain, in a hard and biting frost; where Anne and Roche had sharp work I assure you, and the latter insisted on volunteering the most astonishing and unnecessary lies about my books, for the mere pleasure of deceiving the officials. When we were out of the mountain country, we came at a good pace, but were a day late in getting to our hotel here."

They were in Paris when that was written; at the hotel Brighton; which they had reached in the evening of Friday the 20th of November.

Volume II, Chapter 15 (1846-1847): Three Months in Paris

Three Months in Paris

NO man enjoyed brief residence in a hotel more than Dickens, but "several tons of luggage, other tons of servants, and other tons of children" are not desirable accompaniments to this kind of life; and his first day in Paris did not close before he had offered for an "eligible mansion." That same Saturday night he took a "colossal" walk about the city, of which the brilliancy and brightness almost frightened him; and among other things that attracted his notice was "rather a good book announced in a bookseller's window as Les Mysteres de Londres par Sir Trollopp. Do you know him?" A countryman better known had given him earlier greeting. "The first man who took hold of me in the street, immediately outside this door, was Bruffum in his check trousers, and without the proper number of buttons on his shirt, who was going away this morning, he told me, but coming back in two months, when we would go and dine--at some place known to him and fame."

Next day he took another long walk about the streets, and lost himself fifty times. This was Sunday, and he hardly knew what to say of it, as he saw it there and then. The bitter observance of that day he always sharply resisted, believing a little rational enjoyment to be not opposed to either rest or religion; but here was another matter. "The dirty churches, and the clattering carts and waggons, and the open shops (I don't think I passed fifty shut up, in all my strollings in and out), and the work-a-day dresses and drudgeries, are not comfortable. Open theatres and so forth I am well used to, of course, by this time; but so much toil and sweat on what one would like to see, apart from religious observances, a sensible holiday, is painful."

The date of his letter was the 22nd of November, and it had three postscripts. The first, "Monday afternoon," told me a house was taken; that, unless the agreement should break off on any unforeseen fight between Roche and the agent ("a French Mrs. Gamp"), I was to address him at No. 48, Rue de Courcelles, Faubourg St. Honore; and that he would merely then advert to the premises as in his belief the "most ridiculous, extraordinary, unparalleled, and preposterous" in the whole world; being something between a baby-house, a "shades," a haunted castle, and a mad kind of clock. "They belong to a Marquis Castellan, and you will be ready to die of laughing when you go over them." The second P.S. declared that his lips should be sealed till I beheld for myself. "By Heaven it is not to be imagined by the mind of man!" The third P.S. closed the letter. "One room is a tent. Another room is a grove. Another room is a scene at the Victoria. The upstairs rooms are like fanlights over street-doors. The nurseries--but no, no, no, no more! . . ."

His following letter nevertheless sent more, even in the form of an additional protestation that never till I saw it should the place be described. "I will merely observe that it is fifty yards long, and eighteen feet high, and that the bedrooms are exactly like opera-boxes. It has its little courtyard and garden, and porter's house, and cordon to open the door, and so forth; and is a Paris mansion in little. There is a gleam of reason in the drawing-room. Being a gentleman's house, and not one furnished to let, it has some very curious things in it; some of the oddest things you ever beheld in your life; and an infinity of easy chairs and sofas. . . . Bad weather. It is snowing hard. There is not a door or window here--but that's nothing! there's not a door or window in all Paris--that shuts; not a chink in all the billions of trillions of chinks in the city that can he stopped to keep the wind out. And the cold!--but you shall judge for yourself; and also of this preposterous dining-room. The invention, sir, of Henry Bulwer, who when he had executed it (he used to live here), got frightened at what he had done, as well he might, and went away. . . . The Brave called me aside on Saturday night, and showed me an improvement he had effected in the decorative way. 'Which,' he said, 'will very much s'prize Mis'r Fors'er when he come.' You

are to be deluded into the belief that there is a perspective of chambers twenty miles in length, opening from the drawing-room. . . ."

My visit was not yet due, however, and what occupied or interested him in the interval may first be told. He had not been two days in Paris when a letter from his father made him very anxious for the health of his eldest sister. "I was going to the play (a melodrama in eight acts, five hours long), but hadn't the heart to leave home after my father's letter," he is writing on the 30th of November, "and sent Georgy and Kate by themselves. There seems to be no doubt whatever that Fanny is in a consumption." She had broken down in an attempt to sing at a party in Manchester; and subsequent examination by Sir Charles Bell's son, who was present and took much interest in her, too sadly revealed the cause. "He advised that neither she nor Burnett should be told the truth, and my father has not disclosed it. In worldly circumstances they are very comfortable, and they are very much respected. They seem to be happy together, and Burnett has a great deal of teaching. You remember my fears about her when she was in London the time of Alfred's marriage, and that I said she looked to me as if she were in a decline? Kate took her to Elliotson, who said that her lungs were certainly not affected then. And she cried for joy. Don't you think it would be better for her to be brought up, if possible, to see Elliotson again? I am deeply, deeply grieved about it." This course was taken, and for a time there seemed room for hope; but the result will be seen. In the same letter I heard of poor Charles Sheridan, well known to us both, dying of the same terrible disease; and his chief, Lord Normanby, whose many acts of sympathy and kindness had inspired strong regard in Dickens, he had already found "as informal and good-natured as ever, but not so gay as usual, and having an anxious, haggard way with him, as if his responsibilities were more than he had bargained for." Nor, to account for this, had Dickens far to seek, when a little leisure enabled him to see something of what was passing in Paris in that last year of Louis Philippe's reign. What first impressed him most unfavourably was a glimpse in the Champs Elysees, of the King himself coming in from the country. "There were two carriages. His was surrounded by horseguards. It went at a great pace, and he sat very far back in a corner of it, I promise you. It was strange to an Englishman to see the Prefet of Police riding on horseback some hundreds of yards in advance of the cortege, turning his head incessantly from side to side, like a figure in a Dutch clock, and scrutinizing everybody and everything, as if he suspected all the twigs in all the trees in the long avenue."

But these and other political indications were only, as they generally prove to be, the outward signs of maladies more deeply-seated. He saw almost everywhere signs of canker eating into the heart of the people themselves. "It is a wicked and detestable place, though wonderfully attractive; and there can be no better summary of it, after all, than Hogarth's unmentionable phrase." He sent me no letter that did not contribute something of observation or character. He went at first rather frequently to the Morgue, until shocked by something so repulsive that he had not courage for a long time to go back; and on that same occasion he had noticed the keeper smoking a short pipe at his little window, "and giving a bit of fresh turf to a linnet in a cage." Of the condition generally of the streets he reported badly; the quays on the other side of the Seine were not safe after dark; and here was his own night experience of one of the best quarters of the city. "I took Georgy out, the night before last, to show her the Palais Royal lighted up; and on the Boulevard, a street as bright as the brightest part of the Strand or Regent-street, we saw a man fall upon another, close before us, and try to tear the cloak off his back. It was in a little dark corner near the Porte St. Denis, which stands out in the middle of the street. After a short struggle, the thief fled (there were thousands of people walking about), and was captured just on the other side of the road."

An incident of that kind might mean little or much: but what he proceeded to remark of the ordinary Parisian workpeople and smaller shopkeepers, had a more grave complexion; and may be thought perhaps still to yield some illustration, not without value, to the story of the quarter of a century that has

passed since, and even to some of the appalling events of its latest year or two. "It is extraordinary what nonsense English people talk, write, and believe, about foreign countries. The Swiss (so much decried) will do anything for you, if you are frank and civil; they are attentive and punctual in all their dealings; and may be relied upon as steadily as the English. The Parisian workpeople and smaller shopkeepers are more like (and unlike) Americans than I could have supposed possible. To the American indifference and carelessness, they add a procrastination and want of the least heed about keeping a promise or being exact, which is certainly not surpassed in Naples. They have the American semi-sentimental independence too, and none of the American vigour or purpose. If they ever get free trade in France (as I suppose they will, one day), these parts of the population must, for years and years, be ruined. They couldn't get the means of existence, in competition with the English workmen. Their inferior manual dexterity, their lazy habits, perfect unreliability, and habitual insubordination, would ruin them in any such contest, instantly. They are fit for nothing but soldiering--and so far, I believe, the successors in the policy of your friend Napoleon have reason on their side. Eh bien, mon ami, quand vous venez a Paris, nous nous mettrons a quatre epingles, et nous verrons toutes les merveilles de la cite, et vous en jugerez. God bless me, I beg your pardon! It comes so natural."

On the 30th he wrote to me that he had got his papers into order and hoped to begin that day. But the same letter told me of the unsettlement thus early of his half-formed Paris plans. Three months sooner than he designed he should be due in London for family reasons; should have to keep within the limit of four months abroad; and as his own house would not be free till July, would have to hire one from the end of March. "In these circumstances I think I shall send Charley to King's-college after Christmas. I am sorry he should lose so much French, but don't you think to break another half-year's schooling would be a pity? Of my own will I would not send him to King's-college at all, but to Bruce-castle instead. I suppose, however, Miss Coutts is best. We will talk over all this when I come to London." The offer to take charge of his eldest son's education had been pressed upon Dickens by this true friend, to whose delicate and noble consideration for him it would hardly become me to make other allusion here. Munificent as the kindness was, however, it was yet only the smallest part of the obligation which Dickens felt that he owed this lady; to whose generous schemes for the neglected and uncared-for classes of the population, in all which he deeply sympathised, he did the very utmost to render, through many years, unstinted service of his time and his labour, with sacrifice unselfish as her own. His proposed early visit to London, named in this letter, was to see the rehearsal of his Christmas story, dramatised by Mr. Albert Smith for Mr. and Mrs. Keeley at the Lyceum; and my own proposed visit to Paris was to be in the middle of January. "It will then be the height of the season, and a good time for testing the unaccountable French vanity which really does suppose there are no fogs here, but that they are all in London."

The opening of his next letter, which bore date the 6th of December, and its amusing sequel, will sufficiently speak for themselves. "Cold intense. The water in the bedroom-jugs freezes into solid masses from top to bottom, bursts the jugs with reports like small cannon, and rolls out on the tables and wash-stands, hard as granite. I stick to the shower-bath, but have been most hopelessly out of sorts--writing sorts; that's all. Couldn't begin, in the strange place; took a violent dislike to my study, and came down into the drawing-room; couldn't find a corner that would answer my purpose; fell into a black contemplation of the waning month; sat six hours at a stretch, and wrote as many lines, &c. &c. &c. . . . Then, you know what arrangements are necessary with the chairs and tables; and then what correspondence had to be cleared off; and then how I tried to settle to my desk, and went about and about it, and dodged at it, like a bird at a lump of sugar. In short I have just begun; five printed pages finished, I should say; and hope I shall be blessed with a better condition this next week, or I shall be behind-hand. I shall try to go at it--hard. I can't do more. . . . There is rather a good man lives in this

street, and I have had a correspondence with him which is preserved for your inspection. His name is Barthelemy. He wears a prodigious Spanish cloak, a slouched hat, an immense beard, and long black hair. He called the other day and left his card. Allow me to enclose his card, which has originality and merit.

[Illustration: Rue de Courcelles

Barthelemy

49.]

Roche said I wasn't at home. Yesterday, he wrote me to say that he too was a 'Litterateur'--that he had called, in compliment to my distinguished reputation--'qu'il n'avait pas ete recu--qu'il n'etait pas habitue a cette sorte de procede--et qu'il pria Monsieur Dickens d'oublier son nom, sa memoire, sa carte, et sa visite, et de considerer qu'elle n'avait pas ete rendu!' Of course I wrote him a very polite reply immediately, telling him good-humouredly that he was quite mistaken, and that there were always two weeks in the beginning of every month when M. Dickens ne pouvait rendre visite a personne. He wrote back to say that he was more than satisfied; that it was his case too, at the end of every month; and that when busy himself, he not only can't receive or pay visits, but--'tombe, generalement, aussi, dans des humeurs noires qui approchent de l'anthropophagie!!!' I think that's pretty well."

He was in London eight days, from the 15th to the 23rd of December; and among the occupations of his visit, besides launching his little story on the stage, was the settlement of form for a cheap edition of his writings, which began in the following year. It was to be printed in double-columns, and issued weekly in three-halfpenny numbers; there were to be new prefaces, but no illustrations; and for each book something less than a fourth of the original price was to be charged. Its success was very good, but did not come even near to the mark of the later issues of his writings. His own feeling as to this, however, though any failure at the moment affected him on other grounds, was always that of a quiet confidence; and he had expressed this in a proposed dedication of this very edition, which for other reasons was ultimately laid aside. It will be worth preserving here. "This cheap edition of my books is dedicated to the English people, in whose approval, if the books be true in spirit, they will live, and out of whose memory, if they be false, they will very soon die."

Upon his return to Paris I had frequent report of his progress with his famous fifth number, on the completion of which I was to join him. The day at one time seemed doubtful. "It would be miserable to have to work while you were here. Still, I make such sudden starts, and am so possessed of what I am going to do, that the fear may prove to be quite groundless, and if any alteration would trouble you, let the 13th stand at all hazards." The cold he described as so intense, and the price of fuel so enormous, that though the house was not half warmed ("as you'll say, when you feel it") it cost him very near a pound a day. Begging-letter writers had found out "Monsieur Dickens, le romancier celebre," and waylaid him at the door and in the street as numerously as in London: their distinguishing peculiarity being that they were nearly all of them "Chevaliers de la Garde Imperiale de sa Majeste Napoleon le Grand," and that their letters bore immense seals with coats of arms as large as five-shilling pieces. His friends the Watsons passed new year's day with him on their way to Rockingham from Lausanne, leaving that country covered with snow and the Bise blowing cruelly over it, but describing it as nothing to the cold of Paris. On the day that closed the old year he had gone into the Morgue and seen an old man with grey head lying there. "It seemed the strangest thing in the world that it should have been necessary to take any trouble to stop such a feeble, spent, exhausted morsel of life. It was just dusk when I went in; the place was empty; and he lay there, all alone, like an impersonation of the wintry eighteen hundred and forty-six. . . . I find I am getting inimitable, so I'll stop."

The time for my visit having come, I had grateful proof of the minute and thoughtful provision characteristic of him in everything. My dinner had been ordered to the second at Boulogne, my place in the malle-poste taken, and these and other services announced in a letter, which, by way of doing its part also in the kindly work of preparation, broke out into French. He never spoke that language very well, his accent being somehow defective; but he practised himself into writing it with remarkable ease and fluency. "I have written to the Hotel des Bains at Boulogne to send on to Calais and take your place in the malle-poste. . . . Of course you know that you'll be assailed with frightful shouts all along the two lines of ropes from all the touters in Boulogne, and of course you'll pass on like the princess who went up the mountain after the talking bird; but don't forget quietly to single out the Hotel des Bains commissionnaire. The following circumstances will then occur. My experience is more recent than yours, and I will throw them into a dramatic form. . . . You are filtered into the little office, where there are some soldiers; and a gentleman with a black beard and a pen and ink sitting behind a counter. Barbe Noire (to the lord of L. I. F.). Monsieur, votre passeport. Monsieur._ Monsieur, le voici! Barbe Noire._ Ou allez-vous, monsieur? Monsieur._ Monsieur, je vais a Paris. Barbe Noire._ Quand allez-vous partir, monsieur? Monsieur._ Monsieur, je vais partir aujourd'hui. Avec la malle-poste. Barbe Noire._ C'est bien. (To Gendarme.) Laissez sortir monsieur! Gendarme._ Par ici, monsieur, s'il vous plait. Le gendarme ouvert une tres petite porte. Monsieur se trouve subitement entoure de tous les gamins, agents, commissionnaires, porteurs, et polissons, en general, de Boulogne, qui s'elancent sur lui, en poussant des cris epouvantables. Monsieur est, pour le moment, tout-a-fait effraye et bouleverse. Mais monsieur reprend ses forces et dit, de haute voix: 'Le Commissionnaire de l'Hotel des Bains!' Un petit homme (s'avancant rapidement, et en souriant doucement). Me voici, monsieur. Monsieur Fors Tair, n'est-ce pas? . . . Alors. . . . Alors monsieur se promene a l'Hotel des Bains, ou monsieur trouvera qu'un petit salon particulier, en haut, est deja prepare pour sa reception, et que son diner est deja commande, aux soins du brave Courier, a midi et demi. . . . Monsieur mangera son diner pres du feu, avec beaucoup de plaisir, et il boirera de vin rouge a la sante de Monsieur de Boze, et sa famille interessante et aimable. La malle-poste arrivera au bureau de la poste aux lettres a deux heures ou peut-etre un peu plus tard. Mais monsieur chargera le commissionnaire d'y l'accompagner de bonne heure, car c'est beaucoup mieux de l'attendre que de la perdre. La malle-poste arrive, monsieur s'assiera, aussi confortablement qu'il le peut, et il y restera jusqu'a son arrive au bureau de la poste aux lettres a Paris. Parceque, le convoi (train) n'est pas l'affaire de monsieur, qui continuera s'asseoir dans la malle-poste, sur le chemin de fer, et apres le chemin de fer, jusqu'il se trouve a la basse-cour du bureau de la poste aux lettres a Paris, ou il trouvera une voiture qui a ete depeche de la Rue de Courcelles, quarante-huit. Mais monsieur aura la bonte d'observer--Si le convoi arriverait a Amiens apres le depart du convoi a minuit, il faudra y rester jusqu'a l'arrive d'un autre convoi a trois heures moins un quart. En attendant, monsieur peut rester au buffet (refreshment room), ou l'on peut toujours trouver un bon feu, et du cafe chaud, et des tres bonnes choses a boire et a manger, pendant toute la nuit.--Est-ce que monsieur comprend parfaitement toutes ces regles pour sa guidance?--Vive le Roi des Francais! Roi de la nation la plus grande, et la plus noble, et la plus extraordinairement merveilleuse, du monde! A bas des Anglais!

"CHARLES DICKENS, "Francais naturalise, et Citoyen de Paris."

We passed a fortnight together, and crowded into it more than might seem possible to such a narrow space. With a dreadful insatiability we passed through every variety of sight-seeing, prisons, palaces, theatres, hospitals, the Morgue and the Lazare, as well as the Louvre, Versailles, St. Cloud, and all the spots made memorable by the first revolution. The excellent comedian Regnier, known to us through Macready and endeared by many kindnesses, incomparable for his knowledge of the city and unwearying in friendly service, made us free of the green-room of the Francais, where, on the birthday of Moliere, we saw his "Don Juan" revived. At the Conservatoire we witnessed the masterly teaching of

Samson; at the Odeon saw a new play by Ponsard, done but indifferently; at the Varietes "Gentil-Bernard," with four grisettes as if stepped out of a picture by Watteau; at the Gymnase "Clarisse Harlowe," with a death-scene of Rose Cheri which comes back to me, through the distance of time, as the prettiest piece of pure and gentle stage-pathos in my memory; at the Porte St. Martin "Lucretia Borgia" by Hugo; at the Cirque, scenes of the great revolution, and all the battles of Napoleon; at the Comic Opera, "Gibby"; and at the Palais Royal the usual new-year's piece, in which Alexandre Dumas was shown in his study beside a pile of quarto volumes five feet high, which proved to be the first tableau of the first act of the first piece to be played on the first night of his new theatre. That new theatre, the Historique, we also saw verging to a very short-lived completeness; and we supped with Dumas himself, and Eugene Sue, and met Theophile Gautier and Alphonse Karr. We saw Lamartine also, and had much friendly intercourse with Scribe, and with the kind good-natured Amedee Pichot. One day we visited in the Rue du Bac the sick and ailing Chateaubriand, whom we thought like Basil Montagu; found ourselves at the other extreme of opinion in the sculpture-room of David d'Angers; and closed that day at the house of Victor Hugo, by whom Dickens was received with infinite courtesy and grace. The great writer then occupied a floor in a noble corner-house in the Place Royale, the old quarter of Ninon l'Enclos and the people of the Regency, of whom the gorgeous tapestries, the painted ceilings, the wonderful carvings and old golden furniture, including a canopy of state out of some palace of the middle age, quaintly and grandly reminded us. He was himself, however, the best thing we saw; and I find it difficult to associate the attitudes and aspect in which the world has lately wondered at him, with the sober grace and self-possessed quiet gravity of that night of twenty-five years ago. Just then Louis Philippe had ennobled him, but the man's nature was written noble. Rather under the middle size, of compact close-buttoned-up figure, with ample dark hair falling loosely over his close-shaven face, I never saw upon any features so keenly intellectual such a soft and sweet gentility, and certainly never heard the French language spoken with the picturesque distinctness given to it by Victor Hugo. He talked of his childhood in Spain, and of his father having been Governor of the Tagus in Napoleon's wars; spoke warmly of the English people and their literature; declared his preference for melody and simplicity over the music then fashionable at the Conservatoire; referred kindly to Ponsard, laughed at the actors who had murdered his tragedy at the Odeon, and sympathized with the dramatic venture of Dumas. To Dickens he addressed very charming flattery, in the best taste; and my friend long remembered the enjoyment of that evening.

There is little to add of our Paris holiday, if indeed too much has not been said already. We had an adventure with a drunken coachman, of which the sequel showed at least the vigour and decisiveness of the police in regard to hired vehicles in those last days of the Orleans monarchy. At the Bibliotheque Royale we were much interested by seeing, among many other priceless treasures, Gutenberg's types, Racine's notes in his copy of Sophocles, Rousseau's music, and Voltaire's note upon Frederick of Prussia's letter. Nor should I omit that in what Dickens then told me, of even his small experience of the social aspects of Paris, there seemed but the same disease which raged afterwards through the second Empire. Not many days after I left, all Paris was crowding to the sale of a lady of the demi-monde, Marie du Plessis, who had led the most brilliant and abandoned of lives, and left behind her the most exquisite furniture and the most voluptuous and sumptuous bijouterie. Dickens wished at one time to have pointed the moral of this life and death of which there was great talk in Paris while we were together. The disease of satiety, which only less often than hunger passes for a broken heart, had killed her. "What do you want?" asked the most famous of the Paris physicians, at a loss for her exact complaint. At last she answered: "To see my mother." She was sent for; and there came a simple Breton peasant-woman clad in the quaint garb of her province, who prayed by her bed until she died. Wonderful was the admiration and sympathy; and it culminated when Eugene Sue bought her prayer-book at the sale. Our last talk before I quitted Paris, after dinner at the Embassy, was of the danger underlying all this, and of the signs

also visible everywhere of the Napoleon-worship which the Orleanists themselves had most favoured. Accident brought Dickens to England a fortnight later, when again we met together, at Gore-house, the self-contained reticent man whose doubtful inheritance was thus rapidly preparing to fall to him.

The accident was the having underwritten his number of Dombey by two pages, which there was not time to supply otherwise than by coming to London to write them. This was done accordingly; but another greater trouble followed. He had hardly returned to Paris when his eldest son, whom I had brought to England with me and placed in the house of Doctor Major, then head-master of King's-college-school, was attacked by scarlet fever; and this closed prematurely Dickens's residence in Paris. But though he and his wife at once came over, and were followed after some days by the children and their aunt, the isolation of the little invalid could not so soon be broken through. His father at last saw him, nearly a month before the rest, in a lodging in Albany-street, where his grandmother, Mrs. Hogarth, had devoted herself to the charge of him; and an incident of the visit, which amused us all very much, will not unfitly introduce the subject that waits me in my next chapter.

An elderly charwoman employed about the place had shown so much sympathy in the family trouble, that Mrs. Hogarth specially told her of the approaching visit, and who it was that was coming to the sick-room. "Lawk ma'am!" she said. "Is the young gentleman upstairs the son of the man that put together Dombey?" Reassured upon this point, she explained her question by declaring that she never thought there was a man that could have put together Dombey. Being pressed farther as to what her notion was of this mystery of a Dombey (for it was known she could not read), it turned out that she lodged at a snuff-shop kept by a person named Douglas, where there were several other lodgers; and that on the first Monday of every month there was a Tea, and the landlord read the month's number of Dombey, those only of the lodgers who subscribed to the tea partaking of that luxury, but all having the benefit of the reading; and the impression produced on the old charwoman revealed itself in the remark with which she closed her account of it. "Lawk ma'am! I thought that three or four men must have put together Dombey!"

Dickens thought there was something of a compliment in this, and was not ungrateful.

Volume II, Chapter 16 (1846-1848): Dombey and Son

Dombey and Son

THOUGH his proposed new "book in shilling numbers" had been mentioned to me three months before he quitted England, he knew little himself at that time or when he left excepting the fact, then also named, that it was to do with Pride what its predecessor had done with Selfishness. But this limit he soon overpassed; and the succession of independent groups of character, surprising for the variety of their forms and handling, with which he enlarged and enriched his plan, went far beyond the range of the passion of Mr. Dombey and Mr. Dombey's second wife.

Obvious causes have led to grave under-estimates of this novel. Its first five numbers forced up interest and expectation so high that the rest of necessity fell short; but it is not therefore true of the general conception that thus the wine of it had been drawn, and only the lees left. In the treatment of acknowledged masterpieces in literature it not seldom occurs that the genius and the art of the master have not pulled together to the close; but if a work of imagination is to forfeit its higher meed of praise because its pace at starting has not been uniformly kept, hard measure would have to be dealt to books of undeniable greatness. Among other critical severities it was said here, that Paul died at the beginning not for any need of the story, but only to interest its readers somewhat more; and that Mr. Dombey relented at the end for just the same reason. What is now to be told will show how little ground existed for either imputation. The so-called "violent change" in the hero has more lately been revived in the notices of Mr. Taine, who says of it that "it spoils a fine novel;" but it will be seen that in the apparent change no unnaturalness of change was involved, and certainly the adoption of it was not a sacrifice to "public morality." While every other portion of the tale had to submit to such varieties in development as the characters themselves entailed, the design affecting Paul and his father had been planned from the opening, and was carried without alteration to the close. And of the perfect honesty with which Dickens himself repelled such charges as those to which I have adverted, when he wrote the preface to his collected edition, remarkable proof appears in the letter to myself which accompanied the manuscript of his proposed first number. No other line of the tale had at this time been placed on paper.

When the first chapter only was done, and again when all was finished but eight slips, he had sent me letters formerly quoted. What follows came with the manuscript of the first four chapters on the 25th of July. "I will now go on to give you an outline of my immediate intentions in reference to Dombey. I design to show Mr. D. with that one idea of the Son taking firmer and firmer possession of him, and swelling and bloating his pride to a prodigious extent. As the boy begins to grow up, I shall show him quite impatient for his getting on, and urging his masters to set him great tasks, and the like. But the natural affection of the boy will turn towards the despised sister; and I purpose showing her learning all sorts of things, of her own application and determination, to assist him in his lessons; and helping him always. When the boy is about ten years old (in the fourth number), he will be taken ill, and will die; and when he is ill, and when he is dying, I mean to make him turn always for refuge to the sister still, and keep the stern affection of the father at a distance. So Mr. Dombey--for all his greatness, and for all his devotion to the child--will find himself at arms' length from him even then; and will see that his love and confidence are all bestowed upon his sister, whom Mr. Dombey has used--and so has the boy himself too, for that matter--as a mere convenience and handle to him. The death of the boy is a death-blow, of course, to all the father's schemes and cherished hopes; and 'Dombey and Son,' as Miss Tox will say at the end of the number, 'is a Daughter after all.'. . . From that time, I purpose changing his feeling of indifference and uneasiness towards his daughter into a positive hatred. For he will always remember how the boy had his arm round her neck when he was dying, and whispered to her, and would take things only from her

hand, and never thought of him. . . . At the same time I shall change her feeling towards him for one of a greater desire to love him, and to be loved by him; engendered in her compassion for his loss, and her love for the dead boy whom, in his way, he loved so well too. So I mean to carry the story on, through all the branches and offshoots and meanderings that come up; and through the decay and downfall of the house, and the bankruptcy of Dombey, and all the rest of it; when his only staff and treasure, and his unknown Good Genius always, will be this rejected daughter, who will come out better than any son at last, and whose love for him, when discovered and understood, will be his bitterest reproach. For the struggle with himself which goes on in all such obstinate natures, will have ended then; and the sense of his injustice, which you may be sure has never quitted him, will have at last a gentler office than that of only making him more harshly unjust. . . . I rely very much on Susan Nipper grown up, and acting partly as Florence's maid, and partly as a kind of companion to her, for a strong character throughout the book. I also rely on the Toodles, and on Polly, who, like everybody else, will be found by Mr. Dombey to have gone over to his daughter and become attached to her. This is what cooks call 'the stock of the soup.' All kinds of things will be added to it, of course." Admirable is the illustration thus afforded of his way of working, and very interesting the evidence it gives of the genuine feeling for his art with which this book was begun.

The close of the letter put an important question affecting gravely a leading person in the tale. . . . "About the boy, who appears in the last chapter of the first number, I think it would be a good thing to disappoint all the expectations that chapter seems to raise of his happy connection with the story and the heroine, and to show him gradually and naturally trailing away, from that love of adventure and boyish light-heartedness, into negligence, idleness, dissipation, dishonesty, and ruin. To show, in short, that common, every-day, miserable declension of which we know so much in our ordinary life; to exhibit something of the philosophy of it, in great temptations and an easy nature; and to show how the good turns into bad, by degrees. If I kept some little notion of Florence always at the bottom of it, I think it might be made very powerful and very useful. What do you think? Do you think it may be done, without making people angry? I could bring out Solomon Gills and Captain Cuttle well, through such a history; and I descry, anyway, an opportunity for good scenes between Captain Cuttle and Miss Tox. This question of the boy is very important. . . . Let me hear all you think about it. Hear! I wish I could.". . .

For reasons that need not be dwelt upon here, but in which Dickens ultimately acquiesced, Walter was reserved for a happier future; and the idea thrown out took subsequent shape, amid circumstances better suited to its excellent capabilities, in the striking character of Richard Carstone in the tale of Bleak House. But another point had risen meanwhile for settlement not admitting of delay. In the first enjoyment of writing after his long rest, to which a former letter has referred, he had over-written his number by nearly a fifth; and upon his proposal to transfer the fourth chapter to his second number, replacing it by another of fewer pages, I had to object that this might damage his interest at starting. Thus he wrote on the 7th of August: ". . . I have received your letter to-day with the greatest delight, and am overjoyed to find that you think so well of the number. I thought well of it myself, and that it was a great plunge into a story; but I did not know how far I might be stimulated by my paternal affection. . . . What should you say, for a notion of the illustrations, to 'Miss Tox introduces the Party?' and 'Mr. Dombey and family?' meaning Polly Toodle, the baby, Mr. Dombey, and little Florence: whom I think it would be well to have. Walter, his uncle, and Captain Cuttle, might stand over. It is a great question with me, now, whether I had not better take this last chapter bodily out, and make it the last chapter of the second number; writing some other new one to close the first number. I think it would be impossible to take out six pages without great pangs. Do you think such a proceeding as I suggest would weaken number one very much? I wish you would tell me, as soon as you can after receiving this, what your opinion is on the point. If you thought it would weaken the first number, beyond the counterbalancing

advantage of strengthening the second, I would cut down somehow or other, and let it go. I shall be anxious to hear your opinion. In the meanwhile I will go on with the second, which I have just begun. I have not been quite myself since we returned from Chamounix, owing to the great heat." Two days later: "I have begun a little chapter to end the first number, and certainly think it will be well to keep the ten pages of Wally and Co. entire for number two. But this is still subject to your opinion, which I am very anxious to know. I have not been in writing cue all the week; but really the weather has rendered it next to impossible to work." Four days later: "I shall send you with this (on the chance of your being favourable to that view of the subject) a small chapter to close the first number, in lieu of the Solomon Gills one. I have been hideously idle all the week, and have done nothing but this trifling interloper: but hope to begin again on Monday--ding dong. . . . The inkstand is to be cleaned out to-night, and refilled, preparatory to execution. I trust I may shed a good deal of ink in the next fortnight." Then, the day following, on arrival of my letter, he submitted to a hard necessity. "I received yours to-day. A decided facer to me! I had been counting, alas! with a miser's greed, upon the gained ten pages. . . . No matter. I have no doubt you are right, and strength is everything. The addition of two lines to each page, or something less,--coupled with the enclosed cuts, will bring it all to bear smoothly. In case more cutting is wanted, I must ask you to try your hand. I shall agree to whatever you propose." These cuttings, absolutely necessary as they were, were not without much disadvantage; and in the course of them he had to sacrifice a passage foreshadowing his final intention as to Dombey. It would have shown, thus early, something of the struggle with itself that such pride must always go through; and I think it worth preserving in a note.

Several letters now expressed his anxiety and care about the illustrations. A nervous dread of caricature in the face of his merchant-hero, had led him to indicate by a living person the type of city-gentleman he would have had the artist select; and this is all he meant by his reiterated urgent request, "I do wish he could get a glimpse of A, for he is the very Dombey." But as the glimpse of A was not to be had, it was resolved to send for selection by himself glimpses of other letters of the alphabet, actual heads as well as fanciful ones; and the sheetful I sent out, which he returned when the choice was made, I here reproduce in fac-simile. In itself amusing, it has now the important use of showing, once for all, in regard to Dickens's intercourse with his artists, that they certainly had not an easy time with him; that, even beyond what is ordinary between author and illustrator, his requirements were exacting; that he was apt, as he has said himself, to build up temples in his mind not always makeable with hands; that in the results he had rarely anything but disappointment; and that of all notions to connect with him the most preposterous would be that which directly reversed these relations, and depicted him as receiving from any artist the inspiration he was always vainly striving to give. An assertion of this kind was contradicted in my first volume; but it has since been repeated so explicitly, that to prevent any possible misconstruction from a silence I would fain have persisted in, the distasteful subject is again reluctantly introduced.

It originated with a literary friend of the excellent artist by whom Oliver Twist was illustrated from month to month, during the earlier part of its monthly issue. This gentleman stated, in a paper written and published in America, that Mr. Cruikshank, by executing the plates before opportunity was afforded him of seeing the letter press, had suggested to the writer the finest effects in his story; and to this, opposing my clear recollection of all the time the tale was in progress, it became my duty to say that within my own personal knowledge the alleged fact was not true. "Dickens," the artist is reported an saying to his admirer, "ferreted out that bundle of drawings, and when he came to the one which represents Fagin in the cell, he silently studied it for half an hour, and told me he was tempted to change the whole plot of his story. . . . I consented to let him write up to my designs; and that was the way in which Fagin, Sikes, and Nancy were created." Happily I was able to add the complete refutation of this folly by producing a letter

of Dickens written at the time, which proved incontestably that the closing illustrations, including the two specially named in support of the preposterous charge, Sikes and his Dog, and Fagin in his Cell, had not even been seen by Dickens until his finished book was on the eve of appearance. As however the distinguished artist, notwithstanding the refreshment of his memory by this letter, has permitted himself again to endorse the statement of his friend, I can only again print, on the same page which contains the strange language used by him, the words with which Dickens himself repels its imputation on his memory. To some it may be more satisfactory if I print the latter in fac-simile; and so leave for ever a charge in itself so incredible that nothing would have justified farther allusion to it but the knowledge of my friend's old and true regard for Mr. Cruikshank, of which evidence will shortly appear, and my own respect for an original genius well able to subsist of itself without taking what belongs to others.

[Illustration: My dear Cruikshank,

I returned suddenly to town yesterday afternoon to look at the latter ["last" crossed out] pages of Oliver Twist before it was delivered to the booksellers, when I saw the majority of the plates in the last volume for the first time.

With reference to the last one, Rose Maylie and Oliver. Without entering into the question of great haste or [word crossed out] any other cause which may have led to its being what it is. I am quite sure there can be little difference of opinion between us with [word crossed out] respect to the result--may]

[Illustration: I ask you whether you will object to designing [word crossed out] this plate afresh and doing so at once in order that as few impressions as possible of the present one may go forth?

I feel confident [words crossed out] you know me too well to feel hurt by this enquiry, and with that confidence in you I have lost no time in preparing it.]

Resuming the Dombey letters I find him on the 30th of August in better heart about his illustrator. "I shall gladly acquiesce in whatever more changes or omissions you propose. Browne seems to be getting on well. . . . He will have a good subject in Paul's christening. Mr. Chick is like D, if you'll mention that when you think of it. The little chapter of Miss Tox and the Major, which you alas! (but quite wisely) rejected from the first number, I have altered for the last of the second. I have not quite finished the middle chapter yet--having, I should say, three good days' work to do at it; but I hope it will be all a worthy successor to number one. I will send it as soon as finished." Then, a little later: "Browne is certainly interesting himself, and taking pains. I think the cover very good: perhaps with a little too much in it, but that is an ungrateful objection." The second week of September brought me the finished MS. of number two; and his letter of the 3rd of October, noticing objections taken to it, gives additional touches to this picture of him while at work. The matter that engages him is one of his masterpieces. There is nothing in all his writings more perfect, for what it shows of his best qualities, than the life and death of Paul Dombey. The comedy is admirable; nothing strained, everything hearty and wholesome in the laughter and fun; all who contribute to the mirth, Doctor Blimber and his pupils, Mr. Toots, the Chicks and the Toodles, Miss Tox and the Major, Paul and Mrs. Pipchin, up to his highest mark; and the serious scenes never falling short of it, from the death of Paul's mother in the first number, to that of Paul himself in the fifth, which, as a writer of genius with hardly exaggeration said, threw a whole nation into mourning. But see how eagerly this fine writer takes every suggestion, how little of self-esteem and self-sufficiency there is, with what a consciousness of the tendency of his humour to exuberance he surrenders what is needful to restrain it, and of what small account to him is any special piece of work in his care and his considerateness for the general design. I think of Ben Jonson's experience of the greatest of all writers. "He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature; had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." Who it was that stopped him, and the ease of doing it, no one will doubt. Whether he, as well

as the writer of later time, might not with more advantage have been left alone, will be the only question.

Thus ran the letter of the 3rd of October: "Miss Tox's colony I will smash. Walter's allusion to Carker (would you take it all out?) shall be dele'd. Of course, you understand the man! I turned that speech over in my mind; but I thought it natural that a boy should run on, with such a subject, under the circumstances: having the matter so presented to him. . . . I thought of the possibility of malice on christening points of faith, and put the drag on as I wrote. Where would you make the insertion, and to what effect? That shall be done too. I want you to think the number sufficiently good stoutly to back up the first. It occurs to me--might not your doubt about the christening be a reason for not making the ceremony the subject of an illustration? Just turn this over. Again: if I could do it (I shall have leisure to consider the possibility before I begin), do you think it would be advisable to make number three a kind of half-way house between Paul's infancy, and his being eight or nine years old?--In that case I should probably not kill him until the fifth number. Do you think the people so likely to be pleased with Florence, and Walter, as to relish another number of them at their present age? Otherwise, Walter will be two or three and twenty, straightway. I wish you would think of this. . . . I am sure you are right about the christening. It shall be artfully and easily amended. . . . Eh?"

Meanwhile, two days before this letter, his first number had been launched with a sale that transcended his hopes and brought back Nickleby days. The Dombey success "is BRILLIANT!" he wrote to me on the 11th. "I had put before me thirty thousand as the limit of the most extreme success, saying that if we should reach that, I should be more than satisfied and more than happy; you will judge how happy I am! I read the second number here last night to the most prodigious and uproarious delight of the circle. I never saw or heard people laugh so. You will allow me to observe that my reading of the Major has merit." What a valley of the shadow he had just been passing, in his journey through his Christmas book, has before been told; but always, and with only too much eagerness, he sprang up under pressure. "A week of perfect idleness," he wrote to me on the 26th, "has brought me round again--idleness so rusting and devouring, so complete and unbroken, that I am quite glad to write the heading of the first chapter of number three to-day. I shall be slow at first, I fear, in consequence of that change of the plan. But I allow myself nearly three weeks for the number; designing, at present, to start for Paris on the 16th of November. Full particulars in future bills. Just going to bed. I think I can make a good effect, on the after story, of the feeling created by the additional number before Paul's death." . . . Five more days confirmed him in this hope. "I am at work at Dombey with good speed, thank God. All well here. Country stupendously beautiful. Mountains covered with snow. Rich, crisp weather." There was one drawback. The second number had gone out to him, and the illustrations he found to be so "dreadfully bad" that they made him "curl his legs up." They made him also more than usually anxious in regard to a special illustration on which he set much store, for the part he had in hand.

The first chapter of it was sent me only four days later (nearly half the entire part, so freely his fancy was now flowing and overflowing), with intimation for the artist: "The best subject for Browne will be at Mrs. Pipchin's; and if he liked to do a quiet odd thing, Paul, Mrs. Pipchin, and the Cat, by the fire, would be very good for the story. I earnestly hope he will think it worth a little extra care. The second subject, in case he shouldn't take a second from that same chapter, I will shortly describe as soon as I have it clearly (to-morrow or next day), and send it to you by post." The result was not satisfactory; but as the artist more than redeemed it in the later course of the tale, and the present disappointment was mainly the incentive to that better success, the mention of the failure here will be excused for what it illustrates of Dickens himself. "I am really distressed by the illustration of Mrs. Pipchin and Paul. It is so frightfully and wildly wide of the mark. Good Heaven! in the commonest and most literal construction of the text, it is all wrong. She is described as an old lady, and Paul's 'miniature arm-chair' is mentioned more than once. He ought to be sitting in a little arm-chair down in the corner of the fireplace, staring up at her. I

can't say what pain and vexation it is to be so utterly misrepresented. I would cheerfully have given a hundred pounds to have kept this illustration out of the book. He never could have got that idea of Mrs. Pipchin if he had attended to the text. Indeed I think he does better without the text; for then the notion is made easy to him in short description, and he can't help taking it in."

He felt the disappointment more keenly, because the conception of the grim old boarding-house keeper had taken back his thoughts to the miseries of his own child-life, and made her, as her prototype in verity was, a part of the terrible reality. I had forgotten, until I again read this letter of the 4th of November 1846, that he thus early proposed to tell me that story of his boyish sufferings which a question from myself, of some months later date, so fully elicited. He was now hastening on with the close of his third number, to be ready for departure to Paris.

". . . I hope to finish the number by next Tuesday or Wednesday. It is hard writing under these bird-of-passage circumstances, but I have no reason to complain, God knows, having come to no knot yet. . . . I hope you will like Mrs. Pipchin's establishment. It is from the life, and I was there--I don't suppose I was eight years old; but I remember it all as well, and certainly understood it as well, as I do now. We should be devilish sharp in what we do to children. I thought of that passage in my small life, at Geneva. Shall I leave you my life in MS. when I die? There are some things in it that would touch you very much, and that might go on the same shelf with the first volume of Holcroft's._"

On the Monday week after that was written he left Lausanne for Paris, and my first letter to him there was to say that he had overwritten his number by three pages. "I have taken out about two pages and a half," he wrote by return from the hotel Brighton, "and the rest I must ask you to take out with the assurance that you will satisfy me in whatever you do. The sale, prodigious indeed! I am very thankful." Next day he wrote as to Walter. "I see it will be best as you advise, to give that idea up; and indeed I don't feel it would be reasonable to carry it out now. I am far from sure it could be wholesomely done, after the interest he has acquired. But when I have disposed of Paul (poor boy!) I will consider the subject farther." The subject was never resumed. He was at the opening of his admirable fourth part, when, on the 6th of December, he wrote from the Rue de Courcelles: "Here am I, writing letters, and delivering opinions, politico-economical and otherwise, as if there were no undone number, and no undone Dick! Well. Cosi va il mondo (God bless me! Italian! I beg your pardon)--and one must keep one's spirits up, if possible, even under Dombey pressure. Paul, I shall slaughter at the end of number five. His school ought to be pretty good, but I haven't been able to dash at it freely, yet. However, I have avoided unnecessary dialogue so far, to avoid overwriting; and all I have written is point."

And so, in "point," it went to the close; the rich humour of its picture of Doctor Blimber and his pupils alternating with the quaint pathos of its picture of little Paul; the first a good-natured exposure of the forcing-system and its fruits, as useful as the sterner revelation in Nickleby of the atrocities of Mr. Squeers, and the last even less attractive for the sweetness and sadness of its foreshadowing of a child's death, than for those strange images of a vague, deep thoughtfulness, of a shrewd unconscious intellect, of mysterious small philosophies and questionings, by which the young old-fashioned little creature has a glamour thrown over him as he is passing away. It was wonderfully original, this treatment of the part that thus preceded the close of Paul's little life; and of which the first conception, as I have shown, was an afterthought. It quite took the death itself out of the region of pathetic commonplaces, and gave to it the proper relation to the sorrow of the little sister that survives it. It is a fairy vision to a piece of actual suffering; a sorrow with heaven's hues upon it, to a sorrow with all the bitterness of earth.

The number had been finished, he had made his visit to London, and was again in the Rue de Courcelles, when on Christmas day he sent me its hearty old wishes, and a letter of Jeffrey's on his new story of which the first and second part had reached him. "Many merry Christmases, many happy new

years, unbroken friendship, great accumulation of cheerful recollections, affection on earth, and Heaven at last! . . . Is it not a strange example of the hazard of writing in parts, that a man like Jeffrey should form his notion of Dombey and Miss Tox on three months' knowledge? I have asked him the same question, and advised him to keep his eye on both of them as time rolls on. I do not at heart, however, lay much real stress on his opinion, though one is naturally proud of awakening such sincere interest in the breast of an old man who has so long worn the blue and yellow. . . . He certainly did some service in his old criticisms, especially to Crabbe. And though I don't think so highly of Crabbe as I once did (feeling a dreary want of fancy in his poems), I think he deserved the pains-taking and conscientious tracking with which Jeffrey followed him". . . . Six days later he described himself sitting down to the performance of one of his greatest achievements, his number five, "most abominably dull and stupid. I have only written a slip, but I hope to get to work in strong earnest to-morrow. It occurred to me on special reflection, that the first chapter should be with Paul and Florence, and that it should leave a pleasant impression of the little fellow being happy, before the reader is called upon to see him die. I mean to have a genteel breaking-up at Doctor Blimber's therefore, for the Midsummer vacation; and to show him in a little quiet light (now dawning through the chinks of my mind), which I hope will create an agreeable impression." Then, two days later: ". . . I am working very slowly. You will see in the first two or three lines of the enclosed first subject, with what idea I am ploughing along. It is difficult; but a new way of doing it, it strikes me, and likely to be pretty."

And then, after three days more, came something of a damper to his spirits, as he thus toiled along. He saw public allusion made to a review that had appeared in the Times of his Christmas book, and it momentarily touched what he too truly called his morbid susceptibility to exasperation. "I see that the 'good old Times' are again at issue with the inimitable B. Another touch of a blunt razor on B.'s nervous system.--Friday morning. Inimitable very mouldy and dull. Hardly able to work. Dreamed of Timeses all night. Disposed to go to New Zealand and start a magazine." But soon he sprang up, as usual, more erect for the moment's pressure; and after not many days I heard that the number was as good as done. His letter was very brief, and told me that he had worked so hard the day before (Tuesday, the 12th of January), and so incessantly, night as well as morning, that he had breakfasted and lain in bed till midday. "I hope I have been very successful." There was but one small chapter more to write, in which he and his little friend were to part company for ever; and the greater part of the night of the day on which it was written, Thursday the 14th, he was wandering desolate and sad about the streets of Paris. I arrived there the following morning on my visit; and as I alighted from the malle-poste, a little before eight o'clock, found him waiting for me at the gate of the post-office bureau.

I left him on the 2nd of February with his writing-table in readiness for number six; but on the 4th, enclosing me subjects for illustration, he told me he was "not under weigh yet. Can't begin." Then, on the 7th, his birthday, he wrote to warn me he should be late. "Could not begin before Thursday last, and find it very difficult indeed to fall into the new vein of the story. I see no hope of finishing before the 16th at the earliest, in which case the steam will have to be put on for this short month. But it can't be helped. Perhaps I shall get a rush of inspiration. . . . I will send the chapters as I write them, and you must not wait, of course, for me to read the end in type. To transfer to Florence, instantly, all the previous interest, is what I am aiming at. For that, all sorts of other points must be thrown aside in this number. . . . We are going to dine again at the Embassy to-day--with a very ill will on my part. All well. I hope when I write next I shall report myself in better cue. . . . I have had a tremendous outpouring from Jeffrey about the last part, which he thinks the best thing past, present, or to come." Three more days and I had the MS. of the completed chapter, nearly half the number (in which as printed it stands second, the small middle chapter having been transposed to its place). "I have taken the most prodigious pains with it; the difficulty, immediately after Paul's death, being very great. May you like it! My head aches over it now (I

write at one o'clock in the morning), and I am strange to it. . . . I think I shall manage Dombey's second wife (introduced by the Major), and the beginning of that business in his present state of mind, very naturally and well. . . . Paul's death has amazed Paris. All sorts of people are open-mouthed with admiration. . . . When I have done, I'll write you such a letter! Don't cut me short in your letters just now, because I'm working hard. . . . I'll make up. . . . Snow--snow--snow--a foot thick." The day after this, came the brief chapter which was printed as the first; and then, on the 16th, which he had fixed as his limit for completion, the close reached me; but I had meanwhile sent him out so much of the proof as convinced him that he had underwritten his number by at least two pages, and determined him to come to London. The incident has been told which soon after closed his residence abroad, and what remained of his story was written in England.

I shall not farther dwell upon it in any detail. It extended over the whole of the year; and the interest and passion of it, when to himself both became centred in Florence and in Edith Dombey, took stronger hold of him, and more powerfully affected him, than had been the case in any of his previous writings, I think, excepting only the close of the Old Curiosity Shop. Jeffrey compared Florence to little Nell, but the differences from the outset are very marked, and it is rather in what disunites or separates them that we seem to find the purpose aimed at. If the one, amid much strange and grotesque violence surrounding her, expresses the innocent, unconsciousness of childhood to such rough ways of the world, passing unscathed as Una to her home beyond it, the other is this character in action and resistance, a brave young resolute heart that will not be crushed, and neither sinks nor yields, but from earth's roughest trials works out her own redemption even here. Of Edith from the first Jeffrey judged more rightly; and, when the story was nearly half done, expressed his opinion about her, and about the book itself, in language that pleased Dickens for the special reason that at the time this part of the book had seemed to many to have fallen greatly short of the splendour of its opening. Jeffrey said however quite truly, claiming to be heard with authority as his "Critic-laureate," that of all his writings it was perhaps the most finished in diction, and that it equalled the best in the delicacy and fineness of its touches, "while it rises to higher and deeper passions, not resting, like most of the former, in sweet thoughtfulness, and thrilling and attractive tenderness, but boldly wielding all the lofty and terrible elements of tragedy, and bringing before us the appalling struggles of a proud, scornful, and repentant spirit." Not that she was exactly this. Edith's worst qualities are but the perversion of what should have been her best. A false education in her, and a tyrant passion in her husband, make them other than Nature meant; and both show how life may run its evil course against the higher dispensations.

As the catastrophe came in view, a nice point in the management of her character and destiny arose. I quote from a letter of the 19th of November, when he was busy with his fourteenth part. "Of course she hates Carker in the most deadly degree. I have not elaborated that, now, because (as I was explaining to Browne the other day) I have relied on it very much for the effect of her death. But I have no question that what you suggest will be an improvement. The strongest place to put it in, would be the close of the chapter immediately before this last one. I want to make the two first chapters as light as I can, but I will try to do it, solemnly, in that place." Then came the effect of this fourteenth number on Jeffrey; raising the question of whether the end might not come by other means than her death, and bringing with it a more bitter humiliation for her destroyer. While engaged on the fifteenth (21st December) Dickens thus wrote to me: "I am thoroughly delighted that you like what I sent. I enclose designs. Shadow-plate, poor. But I think Mr. Dombey admirable. One of the prettiest things in the book ought to be at the end of the chapter I am writing now. But in Florence's marriage, and in her subsequent return to her father, I see a brilliant opportunity. . . . Note from Jeffrey this morning, who won't believe (positively refuses) that Edith is Carker's mistress. What do you think of a kind of inverted Maid's Tragedy, and a tremendous scene of her undeceiving Carker, and giving him to know that she never meant that?" So it was done; and when

he sent me the chapter in which Edith says adieu to Florence, I had nothing but praise and pleasure to express. "I need not say," he wrote in reply, "I can't, how delighted and overjoyed I am by what you say and feel of it. I propose to show Dombey twice more; and in the end, leave him exactly as you describe." The end came; and, at the last moment when correction was possible, this note arrived. "I suddenly remember that I have forgotten Diogenes. Will you put him in the last little chapter? After the word 'favourite' in reference to Miss Tox, you can add, 'except with Diogenes, who is growing old and wilful.' Or, on the last page of all, after 'and with them two children: boy and girl' (I quote from memory), you might say 'and an old dog is generally in their company,' or to that effect. Just what you think best."

That was on Saturday the 25th of March, 1848, and may be my last reference to Dombey until the book, in its place with the rest, finds critical allusion when I close. But as the confidences revealed in this chapter have dealt wholly with the leading currents of interest, there is yet room for a word on incidental persons in the story, of whom I have seen other so-called confidences alleged which it will be only right to state have really no authority. And first let me say what unquestionable evidence these characters give of the unimpaired freshness, richness, variety, and fitness of Dickens's invention at this time. Glorious Captain Cuttle, laying his head to the wind and fighting through everything; his friend Jack Bunsby, with a head too ponderous to lay-to, and so falling victim to the inveterate MacStinger; good-hearted, modest, considerate Toots, whose brains rapidly go as his whiskers come, but who yet gets back from contact with the world, in his shambling way, some fragments of the sense pumped out of him by the forcing Blimbers; breathless Susan Nipper, beaming Polly Toodle, the plaintive Wickham, and the awful Pipchin, each with her duty in the starched Dombey household so nicely appointed as to seem born for only that; simple thoughtful old Gills and his hearty young lad of a nephew; Mr. Toodle and his children, with the charitable grinder's decline and fall; Miss Tox, obsequious flatterer from nothing but good-nature; spectacled and analytic, but not unkind Miss Blimber; and the good droning dull benevolent Doctor himself, withering even the fruits of his well-spread dinner-table with his It is remarkable, Mr. Feeder, that the Romans--"at the mention of which terrible people, their implacable enemies, every young gentleman fastened his gaze upon the Doctor, with an assumption of the deepest interest." So vivid and life-like were all these people, to the very youngest of the young gentlemen, that it became natural eagerly to seek out for them actual prototypes; but I think I can say with some confidence of them all, that, whatever single traits may have been taken from persons known to him (a practice with all writers, and very specially with Dickens), only two had living originals. His own experience of Mrs. Pipchin has been related; I had myself some knowledge of Miss Blimber; and the Little Wooden Midshipman did actually (perhaps does still) occupy his post of observation in Leadenhall-street. The names that have been connected, I doubt not in perfect good faith, with Sol Gills, Perch the messenger, and Captain Cuttle, have certainly not more foundation than the fancy a courteous correspondent favours me with, that the redoubtable Captain must have sat for his portrait to Charles Lamb's blustering, loud-talking, hook-handed Mr. Mingay. As to the amiable and excellent city-merchant whose name has been given to Mr. Dombey, he might with the same amount of justice or probability be supposed to have originated Coriolanus or Timon of Athens.

Volume II, Chapter 17 (1847-1852): Splendid Strolling

Splendid Strolling

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE remaining still in possession of Sir James Duke, a house was taken in Chester-place, Regent's-park, where, on the 18th of April, his fifth son, to whom he gave the name of Sydney Smith Haldimand, was born. Exactly a month before, we had attended together the funeral, at Highgate, of his publisher Mr. William Hall, his old regard for whom had survived the recent temporary cloud, and with whom he had the association as well of his first success, as of much kindly intercourse not forgotten at this sad time. Of the summer months that followed, the greater part was passed by him at Brighton or Broadstairs; and the chief employment of his leisure, in the intervals of Dombey, was the management of an enterprise originating in the success of our private play, of which the design was to benefit a great man of letters.

The purpose and the name had hardly been announced, when, with the statesmanlike attention to literature and its followers for which Lord John Russell has been eccentric among English politicians, a civil-list pension of two hundred a year was granted to Leigh Hunt; but though this modified our plan so far as to strike out of it performances meant to be given in London, so much was still thought necessary as might clear off past liabilities, and enable one of the most genuine of writers better to enjoy the easier future that had at last been opened to him. Reserving therefore anything realized beyond a certain sum for a dramatic author of merit, Mr. John Poole, to whom help had become also important, it was proposed to give, on Leigh Hunt's behalf, two representations of Ben Jonson's comedy, one at Manchester and the other at Liverpool, to be varied by different farces in each place; and with a prologue of Talfourd's which Dickens was to deliver in Manchester, while a similar address by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton was to be spoken by me in Liverpool. Among the artists and writers associated in the scheme were Mr. Frank Stone, Mr. Augustus Egg, Mr. John Leech, and Mr. George Cruikshank; Mr. Douglas Jerrold, Mr. Mark Lemon, Mr. Dudley Costello, and Mr. George Henry Lewes; the general management and supreme control being given to Dickens.

Leading men in both cities contributed largely to the design, and my friend Mr. Alexander Ireland of Manchester has lately sent me some letters not more characteristic of the energy of Dickens in regard to it than of the eagerness of every one addressed to give what help they could. Making personal mention of his fellow-sharers in the enterprise he describes the troop, in one of those letters, as "the most easily governable company of actors on earth;" and to this he had doubtless brought them, but not very easily. One or two of his managerial troubles at rehearsals remain on record in letters to myself, and may give amusement still. Comedy and farces are referred to indiscriminately, but the farces were the most recurring plague. "Good Heaven! I find that A. hasn't twelve words, and I am in hourly expectation of rebellion!"--"You were right about the green baize, that it would certainly muffle the voices; and some of our actors, by Jove, haven't too much of that commodity at the best."--"B. shocked me so much the other night by a restless, stupid movement of his hands in his first scene with you, that I took a turn of an hour with him yesterday morning, and I hope quieted his nerves a little."--"I made a desperate effort to get C. to give up his part. Yet in spite of all the trouble he gives me I am sorry for him, he is so evidently hurt by his own sense of not doing well. He clutched the part, however, tenaciously; and three weary times we dragged through it last night."--"That infernal E. forgets everything."--"I plainly see that F. when nervous, which he is sure to be, loses his memory. Moreover his asides are inaudible, even at Miss Kelly's; and as regularly as I stop him to say them again, he exclaims (with a face of agony) that 'he'll speak loud on the night,' as if anybody ever did without doing it always!"--"G. not born for it at all, and too innately conceited, I much fear, to do anything well. I thought him better last night, but I would as soon laugh at a

kitchen poker."--"Fancy H. ten days after the casting of that farce, wanting F.'s part therein! Having himself an excellent old man in it already, and a quite admirable part in the other farce." From which it will appear that my friend's office was not a sinecure, and that he was not, as few amateur-managers have ever been, without the experiences of Peter Quince. Fewer still, I suspect, have fought through them with such perfect success, for the company turned out at last would have done credit to any enterprise. They deserved the term applied to them by Maclise, who had invented it first for Macready, on his being driven to "star" in the provinces when his managements in London closed. They were "splendid strollers."

On Monday the 26th July we played at Manchester, and on Wednesday the 28th at Liverpool; the comedy being followed on the first night by A Good Night's Rest and Turning the Tables, and on the second by Comfortable Lodgings, or Paris in 1750_; and the receipts being, on the first night L440 12s._, and on the second, L463 8s._ 6d._ But though the married members of the company who took their wives defrayed that part of the cost, and every one who acted paid three pounds ten to the benefit-fund for his hotel charges, the expenses were necessarily so great that the profit was reduced to four hundred guineas, and, handsomely as this realised the design, expectations had been raised to five hundred. There was just that shade of disappointment, therefore, when, shortly after we came back and Dickens had returned to Broadstairs, I was startled by a letter from him. On the 3rd of August he had written: "All well. Children" (who had been going through whooping cough) "immensely improved. Business arising out of the late blaze of triumph, worse than ever." Then came what startled me, the very next day. As if his business were not enough, it had occurred to him that he might add the much longed-for hundred pounds to the benefit-fund by a little jeu d'esprit in form of a history of the trip, to be published with illustrations from the artists; and his notion was to write it in the character of Mrs. Gamp. It was to be, in the phraseology of that notorious woman, a new "Piljians Projiss;" and was to bear upon the title page its description as an Account of a late Expedition into the North, for an Amateur Theatrical Benefit, written by Mrs. Gamp (who was an eye-witness), Inscribed to Mrs. Harris, Edited by Charles Dickens, and published, with illustrations on wood by so and so, in aid of the Benefit-fund. "What do you think of this idea for it? The argument would be, that Mrs. Gamp, being on the eve of an excursion to Margate as a relief from her professional fatigues, comes to the knowledge of the intended excursion of our party; hears that several of the ladies concerned are in an interesting situation; and decides to accompany the party unbeknown, in a second-class carriage--'in case.' There, she finds a gentleman from the Strand in a checked suit, who is going down with the wigs"--the theatrical hair-dresser employed on these occasions, Mr. Wilson, had eccentric points of character that were a fund of infinite mirth to Dickens--"and to his politeness Mrs. Gamp is indebted for much support and countenance during the excursion. She will describe the whole thing in her own manner: sitting, in each place of performance, in the orchestra, next the gentleman who plays the kettle-drums. She gives her critical opinion of Ben Jonson as a literary character, and refers to the different members of the party, in the course of her description of the trip: having always an invincible animosity towards Jerrold, for Caudle reasons. She addresses herself, generally, to Mrs. Harris, to whom the book is dedicated,--but is discursive. Amount of matter, half a sheet of Dombey: may be a page or so more, but not less." Alas! it never arrived at even that small size, but perished prematurely, as I feared it would, from failure of the artists to furnish needful nourishment. Of course it could not live alone. Without suitable illustration it must have lost its point and pleasantry. "Mac will make a little garland of the ladies for the title-page. Egg and Stone will themselves originate something fanciful, and I will settle with Cruikshank and Leech. I have no doubt the little thing will be droll and attractive." So it certainly would have been, if the Thanes of art had not fallen from him; but on their desertion it had to be abandoned after the first few pages were written. They were placed at my disposal then; and, though the little jest has lost much of its flavour now, I cannot find it in my heart to

omit them here. There are so many friends of Mrs. Gamp who will rejoice at this unexpected visit from her!

"I. MRS. GAMP'S ACCOUNT OF HER CONNEXION WITH THIS AFFAIR.

"Which Mrs. Harris's own words to me, was these: 'Sairey Gamp,' she says, 'why not go to Margate? Srimps,' says that dear creetur, 'is to your liking, Sairey; why not go to Margate for a week, bring your constitootion up with srimps, and come back to them loving arts as knows and wallies of you, blooming? Sairey,' Mrs. Harris says, 'you are but poorly. Don't denige it, Mrs. Gamp, for books is in your looks. You must have rest. Your mind,' she says, 'is too strong for you; it gets you down and treads upon you, Sairey. It is useless to disguige the fact--the blade is a wearing out the sheets.' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'I could not undertake to say, and I will not deceive you ma'am, that I am the woman I could wish to be. The time of worrit as I had with Mrs. Colliber, the baker's lady, which was so bad in her mind with her first, that she would not so much as look at bottled stout, and kept to gruel through the month, has agued me, Mrs. Harris. But ma'am,' I says to her, 'talk not of Margate, for if I do go anywheres, it is elsewheres and not there.' 'Sairey,' says Mrs. Harris, solemn, 'whence this mystery? If I have ever deceived the hardest-working, soberest, and best of women, which her name is well beknown is S. Gamp Midwife Kingsgate Street High Holborn, mention it. If not,' says Mrs. Harris, with the tears a standing in her eyes, 'reweal your intentions.' 'Yes, Mrs. Harris,' I says, 'I will. Well I knows you Mrs. Harris; well you knows me; well we both knows wot the characters of one another is. Mrs. Harris then,' I says, 'I have heerd as there is a expedition going down to Manjestir and Liverspool, a play-acting. If I goes anywheres for change, it is along with that.' Mrs. Harris clasps her hands, and drops into a chair, as if her time was come--which I know'd it couldn't be, by rights, for six weeks odd. 'And have I lived to hear,' she says, 'of Sairey Gamp, as always kept hersef respectable, in company with play-actors!' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'be not alarmed--not reg'lar play-actors--hammertoors.' 'Thank Evans!' says Mrs. Harris, and bustiges into a flood of tears.

"When the sweet creetur had compoged hersef (which a sip of brandy and water warm, and sugared pleasant, with a little nutmeg did it), I proceeds in these words. 'Mrs. Harris, I am told as these hammertoors are litter'ry and artistickle.' 'Sairey,' says that best of wimmin, with a shiver and a slight relasp, 'go on, it might be worse.' 'I likewise hears,' I says to her, 'that they're agoin play-acting, for the benefit of two litter'ry men; one as has had his wrongs a long time ago, and has got his rights at last, and one as has made a many people merry in his time, but is very dull and sick and lonely his own sef, indeed.' 'Sairey,' says Mrs. Harris, 'you're an Inglish woman, and that's no business of you'rn.'

"'No, Mrs. Harris,' I says, 'that's very true; I hope I knows my dooty and my country. But,' I says, 'I am informed as there is Ladies in this party, and that half a dozen of 'em, if not more, is in various stages of a interesting state. Mrs. Harris, you and me well knows what Ingeins often does. If I accompanies this expedition, unbeknown and second cladge, may I not combine my calling with change of air, and prove a service to my feller creeturs?' 'Sairey,' was Mrs. Harris's reply, 'you was born to be a blessing to your sex, and bring 'em through it. Good go with you! But keep your distance till called in, Lord bless you Mrs. Gamp; for people is known by the company they keeps, and litterary and artistickle society might be the ruin of you before you was aware, with your best customers, both sick and monthly, if they took a pride in themselves.'

"II. MRS. GAMP IS DESCRIPTIVE.

"The number of the cab had a seven in it I think, and a ought I know--and if this should meet his eye (which it was a black 'un, new done, that he saw with; the other was tied up), I give him warning that he'd better take that umbereller and patten to the Hackney-coach Office before he repents it. He was a young man in a weskit with sleeves to it and strings behind, and needn't flatter himsef with a suppogition of

escape, as I gave this description of him to the Police the moment I found he had drove off with my property; and if he thinks there an't laws enough he's much mistook--I tell him that:

"I do assure you, Mrs. Harris, when I stood in the railways office that morning with my bundle on my arm and one patten in my hand, you might have knocked me down with a feather, far less porkmangers which was a lumping against me, continual and sewere all round. I was drove about like a brute animal and almost worritted into fits, when a gentleman with a large shirt-collar and a hook nose, and a eye like one of Mr. Sweedlepipes's hawks, and long locks of hair, and wiskers that I wouldn't have no lady as I was engaged to meet suddenly a turning round a corner, for any sum of money you could offer me, says, laughing, 'Halloa, Mrs. Gamp, what are you up to!' I didn't know him from a man (except by his clothes); but I says faintly, 'If you're a Christian man, show me where to get a second-cladge ticket for Manjester, and have me put in a carriage, or I shall drop!' Which he kindly did, in a cheerful kind of a way, skipping about in the strangest manner as ever I see, making all kinds of actions, and looking and vinking at me from under the brim of his hat (which was a good deal turned up), to that extent, that I should have thought he meant something but for being so flurried as not to have no thoughts at all until I was put in a carriage along with a individgle--the politest as ever I see--in a shepherd's plaid suit with a long gold watch-guard hanging round his neck, and his hand a trembling through nervousness worse than a aspian leaf.

"'I'm wery appy, ma'am,' he says--the politest vice as ever I heerd!--'to go down with a lady belonging to our party.'

"'Our party, sir!' I says.

"'Yes, m'am,' he says, 'I'm Mr. Wilson. I'm going down with the wigs.'

"Mrs. Harris, wen he said he was agoing down with the wigs, such was my state of confugion and worrit that I thought he must be connected with the Government in some ways or another, but directly moment he explains himsef, for he says:

"'There's not a theatre in London worth mentioning that I don't attend punctually. There's five-and-twenty wigs in these boxes, ma'am,' he says, a pinting towards a heap of luggage, 'as was worn at the Queen's Fancy Ball. There's a black wig, ma'am,' he says, 'as was worn by Garrick; there's a red one, ma'am,' he says, 'as was worn by Kean; there's a brown one, ma'am,' he says, 'as was worn by Kemble; there's a yellow one, ma'am,' he says, 'as was made for Cooke; there's a grey one, ma'am,' he says, 'as I measured Mr. Young for, mysef; and there's a white one, ma'am, that Mr. Macready went mad in. There's a flaxen one as was got up express for Jenny Lind the night she came out at the Italian Opera. It was very much applauded was that wig, ma'am, through the evening. It had a great reception. The audience broke out, the moment they see it.'

"'Are you in Mr. Sweedlepipes's line, sir?' I says.

"'Which is that, ma'am?' he says--the softest and genteelest vice I ever heerd, I do declare, Mrs. Harris!

"'Hair-dressing,' I says.

"'Yes, ma'am,' he replies, 'I have that honour. Do you see this, ma'am?' he says, holding up his right hand.

"'I never see such a trembling,' I says to him. And I never did!

"'All along of Her Majesty's Costume Ball, ma'am,' he says. 'The excitement did it. Two hundred and fifty-seven ladies of the first rank and fashion had their heads got up on that occasion by this hand, and my t'other one. I was at it eight-and-forty hours on my feet, ma'am, without rest. It was a Powder ball, ma'am. We have a Powder piece at Liverpool. Have I not the pleasure,' he says, looking at me curious,

'of addressing Mrs. Gamp?'

'"Gamp I am, sir,' I replies. 'Both by name and natur.'

'"Would you like to see your beeographer's moustache and wiskers, ma'am?' he says. 'I've got 'em in this box.'

'"Drat my beeographer, sir,' I says, 'he has given me no region to wish to know anythink about him.'

'"Oh, Missus Gamp, I ask your parden'--I never see such a polite man, Mrs. Harris! 'P'raps,' he says, 'if you're not of the party, you don't know who it was that assisted you into this carriage!'

'"No, Sir,' I says, 'I don't, indeed.'

'"Why, ma'am,' he says, a wisperin', 'that was George, ma'am.'

'"What George, sir? I don't know no George,' says I.

'"The great George, ma'am,' says he. 'The Crookshanks.'

"If you'll believe me, Mrs. Harris, I turns my head, and see the wery man a making picturs of me on his thumb nail, at the winder! while another of 'em--a tall, slim, melancolly gent, with dark hair and a bage vice--looks over his shoulder, with his head o' one side as if he understood the subject, and cooly says, 'I've draw'd her several times--in Punch,' he says too! The owdacious wretch!

'"Which I never touches, Mr. Wilson,' I remarks out loud--I couldn't have helped it, Mrs. Harris, if you had took my life for it!--'which I never touches, Mr. Wilson, on account of the lemon!'

'"Hush!' says Mr. Wilson. 'There he is!'

"I only see a fat gentleman with curly black hair and a merry face, a standing on the platform rubbing his two hands over one another, as if he was washing of 'em, and shaking his head and shoulders wery much; and I was a wondering wot Mr. Wilson meant, wen he says, 'There's Dougladge, Mrs. Gamp!' he says. 'There's him as wrote the life of Mrs. Caudle!'

"Mrs. Harris, wen I see that little willain bodily before me, it give me such a turn that I was all in a tremble. If I hadn't lost my umbereller in the cab, I must have done him a injury with it! Oh the bragian little traitor! right among the ladies, Mrs. Harris; looking his wickedest and deceitfullest of eyes while he was a talking to 'em; laughing at his own jokes as loud as you please; holding his hat in one hand to cool his-sef, and tossing back his iron-grey mop of a head of hair with the other, as if it was so much shavings--there, Mrs. Harris, I see him, getting encouragement from the pretty delooded creeturs, which never know'd that sweet saint, Mrs. C, as I did, and being treated with as much confidence as if he'd never wiolated none of the domestic ties, and never showed up nothing! Oh the aggrawation of that Dougladge! Mrs. Harris, if I hadn't apologiged to Mr. Wilson, and put a little bottle to my lips which was in my pocket for the journey, and which it is very rare indeed I have about me, I could not have abared the sight of him--there, Mrs. Harris! I could not!--I must have tore him, or have give way and fainted.

"While the bell was a ringing, and the luggage of the hammertoors in great confugion--all a litter'ry indeed--was handled up, Mr. Wilson demeens his-sef politer than ever. 'That,' he says, 'Mrs. Gamp,' a pinting to a officer-looking gentleman, that a lady with a little basket was a taking care on, 'is another of our party. He's a author too--continivally going up the walley of the Muses, Mrs. Gamp. There,' he says, alluding to a fine looking, portly gentleman, with a face like a amiable full moon, and a short mild gent, with a pleasant smile, 'is two more of our artists, Mrs G, well beknowed at the Royal Academy, as sure as stones is stones, and eggs is eggs. This resolute gent,' he says, 'a coming along here as is aperrently going to take the railways by storm--him with the tight legs, and his weskit very much buttoned, and his mouth very much shut, and his coat a flying open, and his heels a giving it to the platform, is a cricket

and beeographer, and our principal tragegian.' 'But who,' says I, when the bell had left off, and the train had begun to move, 'who, Mr. Wilson, is the wild gent in the prespiration, that's been a tearing up and down all this time with a great box of papers under his arm, a talking to everybody wery indistinct, and exciting of himself dreadful?' 'Why?' says Mr. Wilson, with a smile. 'Because, sir,' I says, 'he's being left behind.' 'Good God!' cries Mr. Wilson, turning pale and putting out his head, 'it's your beeographer--the Manager--and he has got the money, Mrs. Gamp!' Hous'ever, some one chucked him into the train and we went off. At the first shreek of the whistle, Mrs. Harris, I turned white, for I had took notice of some of them dear creeturs as was the cause of my being in company, and I know'd the danger that--but Mr. Wilson, which is a married man, puts his hand on mine, and says, 'Mrs. Gamp, calm yourself; it's only the Ingein.'"

Of those of the party with whom these humorous liberties were taken there are only two now living to complain of their friendly caricaturist, and Mr. Cruikshank will perhaps join me in a frank forgiveness not the less heartily for the kind words about himself that reached me from Broadstairs not many days after Mrs. Gamp. "At Canterbury yesterday" (2nd of September) "I bought George Cruikshank's Bottle. I think it very powerful indeed: the two last plates most admirable, except that the boy and girl in the very last are too young, and the girl more like a circus-phenomenon than that no-phenomenon she is intended to represent. I question, however, whether anybody else living could have done it so well. There is a woman in the last plate but one, garrulous about the murder, with a child in her arms, that is as good as Hogarth. Also, the man who is stooping down, looking at the body. The philosophy of the thing, as a great lesson, I think all wrong; because to be striking, and original too, the drinking should have begun in sorrow, or poverty, or ignorance--the three things in which, in its awful aspect, it does begin. The design would then have been a double-handed sword--but too 'radical' for good old George, I suppose."

The same letter made mention of other matters of interest. His accounts for the first half-year of Dombey were so much in excess of what had been expected from the new publishing arrangements, that from this date all embarrassments connected with money were brought to a close. His future profits varied of course with his varying sales, but there was always enough, and savings were now to begin. "The profits of the half-year are brilliant. Deducting the hundred pounds a month paid six times, I have still to receive two thousand two hundred and twenty pounds, which I think is tidy. Don't you? . . . Stone is still here, and I lamed his foot by walking him seventeen miles the day before yesterday; but otherwise he flourisheth. . . . Why don't you bring down a carpet-bag-full of books, and take possession of the drawing-room all the morning? My opinion is that Goldsmith would die more easy by the seaside. Charley and Walley have been taken to school this morning in high spirits, and at London Bridge will be folded in the arms of Blimber. The Government is about to issue a Sanitary commission, and Lord John, I am right well pleased to say, has appointed Henry Austin secretary." Mr. Austin, who afterwards held the same office under the Sanitary act, had married his youngest sister Letitia; and of his two youngest brothers I may add that Alfred, also a civil-engineer, became one of the sanitary inspectors, and that Augustus was now placed in a city employment by Mr. Thomas Chapman, which after a little time he surrendered, and then found his way to America.

The next Broadstairs letter (5th of September) resumed the subject of Goldsmith, whose life I was then bringing nearly to completion. "Supposing your Goldsmith made a general sensation, what should you think of doing a cheap edition of his works? I have an idea that we might do some things of that sort with considerable effect. There is really no edition of the great British novelists in a handy nice form, and would it not be a likely move to do it with some attractive feature that could not be given to it by the Teggs and such people? Supposing one wrote an essay on Fielding for instance, and another on Smollett, and another on Sterne, recalling how one read them as a child (no one read them younger than I, I think;) and how one gradually grew up into a different knowledge of them, and so forth--would it not

be interesting to many people? I should like to know if you descry anything in this. It is one of the dim notions fluctuating within me.. . . The profits, brave indeed, are four hundred pounds more than the utmost I expected. . . . The same yearnings have been mine, in reference to the Praslin business. It is pretty clear to me, for one thing, that the Duchess was one of the most uncomfortable women in the world, and that it would have been hard work for anybody to have got on with her. It is strange to see a bloody reflection of our friends Eugene Sue and Dumas in the whole melodrama. Don't you think so . . . remembering what we often said of the canker at the root of all that Paris life? I dreamed of you, in a wild manner, all last night. . . . A sea fog here, which prevents one's seeing the low-water mark. A circus on the cliff to the right, and of course I have a box to-night! Deep slowness in the inimitable's brain. A shipwreck on the Goodwin sands last Sunday, which WALLY, with a hawk's eye, SAW GO DOWN: for which assertion, subsequently confirmed and proved, he was horribly maltreated at the time."

Devonshire-terrace meanwhile had been left by his tenant; and coming up joyfully himself to take possession, he brought for completion in his old home an important chapter of Dombey. On the way he lost his portmanteau, but "Thank God! the MS. of the chapter wasn't in it. Whenever I travel, and have anything of that valuable article, I always carry it in my pocket." He had begun at this time to find difficulties in writing at Broadstairs, of which he told me on his return. "Vagrant music is getting to that height here, and is so impossible to be escaped from, that I fear Broadstairs and I must part company in time to come. Unless it pours of rain, I cannot write half-an-hour without the most excruciating organs, fiddles, bells, or glee-singers. There is a violin of the most torturing kind under the window now (time, ten in the morning) and an Italian box of music on the steps--both in full blast." He closed with a mention of improvements in the Margate theatre since his memorable last visit. In the past two years it had been managed by a son of the great comedian, Dowton, with whose name it is pleasant to connect this note. "We went to the manager's benefit on Wednesday" (10th of September): "As You Like It really very well done, and a most excellent house. Mr. Dowton delivered a sensible and modest kind of speech on the occasion, setting forth his conviction that a means of instruction and entertainment possessing such a literature as the stage in England, could not pass away; and, that what inspired great minds, and delighted great men, two thousand years ago, and did the same in Shakespeare's day, must have within itself a principle of life superior to the whim and fashion of the hour. And with that, and with cheers, he retired. He really seems a most respectable man, and he has cleared out this dust-hole of a theatre into something like decency."

He was to be in London at the end of the month: but I had from him meanwhile his preface for his first completed book in the popular edition (Pickwick being now issued in that form, with an illustration by Leslie); and sending me shortly after (12th of Sept.) the first few slips of the story of the Haunted Man proposed for his next Christmas book, he told me he must finish it in less than a month if it was to be done at all, Dombey having now become very importunate. This prepared me for his letter of a week's later date. "Have been at work all day, and am seedy in consequence. Dombey takes so much time, and requires to be so carefully done, that I really begin to have serious doubts whether it is wise to go on with the Christmas book. Your kind help is invoked. What do you think? Would there be any distinctly bad effect in holding this idea over for another twelvemonth? saying nothing whatever till November; and then announcing in the Dombey that its occupation of my entire time prevents the continuance of the Christmas series until next year, when it is proposed to be renewed. There might not be anything in that but a possibility of an extra lift for the little book when it did come--eh? On the other hand, I am very loath to lose the money. And still more so to leave any gap at Christmas firesides which I ought to fill. In short I am (forgive the expression) BLOWED if I know what to do. I am a literary Kitely--and you ought to sympathize and help. If I had no Dombey, I could write and finish the story with the bloom on--but there's the rub. . . . Which unfamiliar quotation reminds me of a Shakspearian (put an e before the s; I like it

much better) speculation of mine. What do you say to 'take arms against a sea of troubles' having been originally written 'make arms,' which is the action of swimming. It would get rid of a horrible grievance in the figure, and make it plain and apt. I think of setting up a claim to live in The House at Stratford, rent-free, on the strength of this suggestion. You are not to suppose that I am anything but disconcerted to-day, in the agitation of my soul concerning Christmas; but I have been brooding, like Dombey himself, over Dombey these two days, until I really can't afford to be depressed." To his Shakespearian suggestion I replied that it would hardly give him the claim he thought of setting up, for that swimming through your troubles would not be "opposing" them. And upon the other point I had no doubt of the wisdom of delay. The result was that the Christmas story was laid aside until the following year.

The year's closing incidents were his chairmanship at a meeting of the Leeds Mechanics' Society on the 1st of December, and his opening of the Glasgow Athenaeum on the 28th; where, to immense assemblages in both, he contrasted the obstinacy and cruelty of the Power of ignorance with the docility and gentleness of the Power of knowledge; pointed the use of popular institutes in supplementing what is learnt first in life, by the later education for its employments and equipment for its domesticities and virtues, which the grown person needs from day to day as much as the child its reading and writing; and he closed at Glasgow with allusion to a bazaar set on foot by the ladies of the city, under patronage of the Queen, for adding books to its Athenaeum library. "We never tire of the friendships we form with books," he said, "and here they will possess the added charm of association with their donors. Some neighbouring Glasgow widow will be mistaken for that remoter one whom Sir Roger de Coverley could not forget; Sophia's muff will be seen and loved, by another than Tom Jones, going down the High-street some winter day; and the grateful students of a library thus filled will be apt, as to the fair ones who have helped to people it, to couple them in their thoughts with Principles of the Population and Additions to the History of Europe, by an author of older date than Sheriff Alison." At which no one laughed so loudly as the Sheriff himself, who had cordially received Dickens as his guest, and stood with him on the platform.

On the last day but one of the old year he wrote to me from Edinburgh. "We came over this afternoon, leaving Glasgow at one o'clock. Alison lives in style in a handsome country house out of Glasgow, and is a capital fellow, with an agreeable wife, nice little daughter, cheerful niece, all things pleasant in his household. I went over the prison and lunatic asylum with him yesterday; at the Lord Provost's had gorgeous state-lunch with the Town Council; and was entertained at a great dinner-party at night. Unbounded hospitality and enthoozymoozy the order of the day, and I have never been more heartily received anywhere, or enjoyed myself more completely. The great chemist, Gregory, who spoke at the meeting, returned with us to Edinburgh to-day, and gave me many new lights on the road regarding the extraordinary pains Macaulay seems for years to have taken to make himself disagreeable and disliked here. No one else, on that side, would have had the remotest chance of being unseated at the last election; and, though Gregory voted for him, I thought he seemed quite as well pleased as anybody else that he didn't come in. . . . I am sorry to report the Scott Monument a failure. It is like the spire of a Gothic church taken off and stuck in the ground." On the first day of 1848, still in Edinburgh, he wrote again: "Jeffrey, who is obliged to hold a kind of morning court in his own study during the holidays, came up yesterday in great consternation, to tell me that a person had just been to make and sign a declaration of bankruptcy; and that on looking at the signature he saw it was James Sheridan Knowles. He immediately sent after, and spoke with him; and of what passed I am eager to talk with you." The talk will bring back the main subject of this chapter, from which another kind of strolling has led me away; for its results were other amateur performances, of which the object was to benefit Knowles.

This was the year when a committee had been formed for the purchase and preservation of Shakespeare's house at Stratford, and the performances in question took the form of contributions to the endowment of a curatorship to be held by the author of Virginius and the Hunchback. The endowment

was abandoned upon the town and council of Stratford finally (and very properly) taking charge of the house; but the sum realised was not withdrawn from the object really desired, and one of the finest of dramatists profited yet more largely by it than Leigh Hunt did by the former enterprise. It may be proper to remark also, that, like Leigh Hunt, Knowles received soon after, through Lord John Russell, the same liberal pension; and that smaller claims to which attention had been similarly drawn were not forgotten, Mr. Poole, after much kind help from the Bounty Fund, being in 1850 placed on the Civil List for half the amount by the same minister and friend of letters.

Dickens threw himself into the new scheme with all his old energy; and prefatory mention may be made of our difficulty in selection of a suitable play to alternate with our old Ben Jonson. The Alchemist had been such a favourite with some of us, that, before finally laying it aside, we went through two or three rehearsals, in which I recollect thinking Dickens's Sir Epicure Mammon as good as anything he had done; and now the same trouble, with the same result, arising from a vain desire to please everybody, was taken successively with Beaumont and Fletcher's Beggar's Bush, and Goldsmith's Good Natured Man, with Jerrold's characteristic drama of the Rent Day, and Bulwer's masterly comedy of Money. Choice was at last made of Shakespeare's Merry Wives, in which Lemon played Falstaff, I took again the jealous husband as in Jonson's play, and Dickens was Justice Shallow; to which was added a farce, Love, Law, and Physick, in which Dickens took the part he had acted long ago, before his days of authorship; and, besides the professional actresses engaged, we had for our Dame Quickly the lady to whom the world owes incomparably the best Concordance to Shakespeare that has ever been published, Mrs. Cowden Clarke. The success was undoubtedly very great. At Manchester, Liverpool, and Edinburgh there were single representations; but Birmingham and Glasgow had each two nights, and two were given at the Haymarket, on one of which the Queen and Prince were present. The gross receipts from the nine performances, before the necessary large deductions for London and local charges, were two thousand five hundred and fifty-one pounds and eightpence. The first representation was in London on the 15th of April, the last in Glasgow on the 20th of July, and everywhere Dickens was the leading figure. In the enjoyment as in the labour he was first. His animal spirits, unresting and supreme, were the attraction of rehearsal at morning, and of the stage at night. At the quiet early dinner, and the more jovial unrestrained supper, where all engaged were assembled daily, his was the brightest face, the lightest step, the pleasantest word. There seemed to be no rest needed for that wonderful vitality.

My allusion to the last of these splendid strollings in aid of what we believed to be the interests of men of letters, shall be as brief as I can make it. Two winters after the present, at the close of November 1850, in the great hall of Lord Lytton's old family mansion in Knebworth-park, there were three private performances by the original actors in Ben Jonson's Every Man in His Humour. All the circumstances and surroundings were very brilliant; some of the gentlemen of the county played both in the comedy and farces; our generous host was profuse of all noble encouragement; and amid the general pleasure and excitement hopes rose high. Recent experience had shown what the public interest in this kind of amusement might place within reach of its providers; and there came to be discussed the possibility of making permanent such help as had been afforded to fellow writers, by means of an endowment that should not be mere charity, but should combine indeed something of both pension-list and college-lectureship, without the drawbacks of either. It was not enough considered that schemes for self-help, to be successful, require from those they are meant to benefit, not only a general assent to their desirability, but zealous and active co-operation. Without discussing now, however, what will have to be stated hereafter, it suffices to say that the enterprise was set on foot, and the "Guild of Literature and Art" originated at Knebworth. A five-act comedy was to be written by Sir Edward Lytton, and, when a certain sum of money had been obtained by public representations of it, the details of the scheme were

to be drawn up, and appeal made to those whom it addressed more especially. In a very few months everything was ready, except a farce which Dickens was to have written to follow the comedy, and which unexpected cares of management and preparation were held to absolve him from. There were other reasons. "I have written the first scene," he told me (23rd March, 1851), "and it has droll points in it, more farcical points than you commonly find in farces, really better. Yet I am constantly striving, for my reputation's sake, to get into it a meaning that is impossible in a farce; constantly thinking of it, therefore, against the grain; and constantly impressed with a conviction that I could never act in it myself with that wild abandonment which can alone carry a farce off. Wherefore I have confessed to Bulwer Lytton and asked for absolution." There was substituted a new farce of Lemon's, to which, however, Dickens soon contributed so many jokes and so much Gampish and other fun of his own, that it came to be in effect a joint piece of authorship; and Gabblewig, which the manager took to himself, was one of those personation parts requiring five or six changes of face, voice, and gait in the course of it, from which, as we have seen, he derived all the early theatrical ambition that the elder Mathews had awakened in him. "You have no idea," he continued, "of the immensity of the work as the time advances, for the Duke even throws the whole of the audience on us, or he would get (he says) into all manner of scrapes." The Duke of Devonshire had offered his house in Piccadilly for the first representations, and in his princely way discharged all the expenses attending them. A moveable theatre was built and set up in the great drawing-room, and the library was turned into a green-room.

Not so Bad as We Seem was played for the first time at Devonshire-house on the 27th of May, 1851, before the Queen and Prince and as large an audience as places could be found for; Mr. Nightingale's Diary being the name given to the farce. The success abundantly realised the expectations formed; and, after many representations at the Hanover-square Rooms in London, strolling began in the country, and was continued at intervals for considerable portions of this and the following year. From much of it, illness and occupation disabled me, and substitutes had to be found; but to this I owe the opportunity now of closing with a characteristic picture of the course of the play, and of Dickens amid the incidents and accidents to which his theatrical career exposed him. The company carried with them, it should be said, the theatre constructed for Devonshire-house, as well as the admirable scenes which Stanfield, David Roberts, Thomas Grieve, Telbin, Absolon, and Louis Haghe had painted as their generous free-offerings to the comedy; of which the representations were thus rendered irrespective of theatres or their managers, and took place in the large halls or concert-rooms of the various towns and cities.

"The enclosure forgotten in my last" (Dickens writes from Sunderland on the 29th of August 1852), "was a little printed announcement which I have had distributed at the doors wherever we go, knocking Two o' Clock in the Morning bang out of the bills. Funny as it used to be, it is become impossible to get anything out of it after the scream of Mr. Nightingale's Diary. The comedy is so far improved by the reductions which your absence and other causes have imposed on us, that it acts now only two hours and twenty-five minutes, all waits included, and goes 'like wildfire,' as Mr. Tonson says. We have had prodigious houses, though smaller rooms (as to their actual size) than I had hoped for. The Duke was at Derby, and no end of minor radiances. Into the room at Newcastle (where Lord Carlisle was by the bye) they squeezed six hundred people, at twelve and sixpence, into a space reasonably capable of holding three hundred. Last night, in a hall built like a theatre, with pit, boxes, and gallery, we had about twelve hundred--I dare say more. They began with a round of applause when Coote's white waistcoat appeared in the orchestra, and wound up the farce with three deafening cheers. I never saw such good fellows. Stanny is their fellow-townsman; was born here; and they applauded his scene as if it were himself. But what I suffered from a dreadful anxiety that hung over me all the time, I can never describe. When we got here at noon, it appeared that the hall was a perfectly new one, and had only had the slates put upon the roof by torchlight over night. Farther, that the proprietors of some opposition rooms had declared the

building to be unsafe, and that there was a panic in the town about it; people having had their money back, and being undecided whether to come or not, and all kinds of such horrors. I didn't know what to do. The horrible responsibility of risking an accident of that awful nature seemed to rest wholly upon me; for I had only to say we wouldn't act, and there would be no chance of danger. I was afraid to take Sloman into council lest the panic should infect our men. I asked W. what he thought, and he consolingly observed that his digestion was so bad that death had no terrors for him! I went and looked at the place; at the rafters, walls, pillars, and so forth; and fretted myself into a belief that they really were slight! To crown all, there was an arched iron roof without any brackets or pillars, on a new principle! The only comfort I had was in stumbling at length on the builder, and finding him a plain practical north-countryman with a foot rule in his pocket. I took him aside, and asked him should we, or could we, prop up any weak part of the place: especially the dressing-rooms, which were under our stage, the weight of which must be heavy on a new floor, and dripping wet walls. He told me there wasn't a stronger building in the world; and that, to allay the apprehension, they had opened it, on Thursday night, to thousands of the working people, and induced them to sing, and beat with their feet, and make every possible trial of the vibration. Accordingly there was nothing for it but to go on. I was in such dread, however, lest a false alarm should spring up among the audience and occasion a rush, that I kept Catherine and Georgina out of the front. When the curtain went up and I saw the great sea of faces rolling up to the roof, I looked here and looked there, and thought I saw the gallery out of the perpendicular, and fancied the lights in the ceiling were not straight. Rounds of applause were perfect agony to me, I was so afraid of their effect upon the building. I was ready all night to rush on in case of an alarm--a false alarm was my main dread--and implore the people for God's sake to sit still. I had our great farce-bell rung to startle Sir Geoffrey instead of throwing down a piece of wood, which might have raised a sudden-apprehension. I had a palpitation of the heart, if any of our people stumbled up or down a stair. I am sure I never acted better, but the anxiety of my mind was so intense, and the relief at last so great, that I am half-dead to-day, and have not yet been able to eat or drink anything or to stir out of my room. I shall never forget it. As to the short time we had for getting the theatre up; as to the upsetting, by a runaway pair of horses, of one of the vans at the Newcastle railway station, with all the scenery in it, every atom of which was turned over; as to the fatigue of our carpenters, who have now been up four nights, and who were lying dead asleep in the entrances last night; I say nothing, after the other gigantic nightmare, except that Sloman's splendid knowledge of his business, and the good temper and cheerfulness of all the workmen, are capital. I mean to give them a supper at Liverpool, and address them in a neat and appropriate speech. We dine at two to-day (it is now one) and go to Sheffield at four, arriving there at about ten. I had been as fresh as a daisy; walked from Nottingham to Derby, and from Newcastle here; but seem to have had my nerves crumpled up last night, and have an excruciating headache. That's all at present. I shall never be able to bear the smell of new deal and fresh mortar again as long as I live."

Manchester and Liverpool closed the trip with enormous success at both places; and Sir Edward Lytton was present at a public dinner which was given in the former city, Dickens's brief word about it being written as he was setting foot in the train that was to bring him to London. "Bulwer spoke brilliantly at the Manchester dinner, and his earnestness and determination about the Guild was most impressive. It carried everything before it. They are now getting up annual subscriptions, and will give us a revenue to begin with. I swear I believe that people to be the greatest in the world. At Liverpool I had a Round Robin on the stage after the play was over, a place being left for your signature, and as I am going to have it framed, I'll tell Green to send it to Lincoln's-inn-fields. You have no idea how good Tenniel, Topham, and Collins have been in what they had to do."

These names, distinguished in art and letters, represent additions to the company who had joined the

enterprise; and the last of them, Mr. Wilkie Collins, became, for all the rest of the life of Dickens, one of his dearest and most valued friends.

Volume II, Chapter 18 (1848-1851): Seaside Holidays (Part 1)

Seaside Holidays

THE portion of Dickens's life over which his adventures of strolling extended was in other respects not without interest; and this chapter will deal with some of his seaside holidays before I pass to the publication in 1848 of the story of The Haunted Man, and to the establishment in 1850 of the Periodical which had been in his thoughts for half a dozen years before, and has had foreshadowings nearly as frequent in my pages.

Among the incidents of 1848 before the holiday season came, were the dethronement of Louis Philippe, and birth of the second French republic: on which I ventured to predict that a Gore-house friend of ours, and his friend, would in three days be on the scene of action. The three days passed, and I had this letter. "Mardi, Fevrier 29, 1848. MON CHER. Vous etes homme de la plus grande penetration! Ah, mon Dieu, que vous etes absolument magnifique! Vous prevoyez presque toutes les choses qui vont arriver; et aux choses qui viennent d'arriver vous etes merveilleusement au-fait. Ah, cher enfant, quelle idee sublime vous vous aviez a la tete quand vous prevites si clairement que M. le Comte Alfred d'Orsay se rendrait au pays de sa naissance! Quel magicien! Mais--c'est tout egal, mais--il n'est pas parti. Il reste a Gore-house, ou, avant-hier, il y avait un grand diner a tout le monde. Mais quel homme, quel ange, neanmoins! MON AMI, je trouve que j'aime tant la Republique, qu'il me faut renoncer ma langue et ecrire seulement le langage de la Republique de France--langage des Dieux et des Anges--langage, en un mot, des Francais! Hier au soir je rencontrai a l'Athenaeum Monsieur Mack Leese, qui me dit que MM. les Commissionnaires des Beaux Arts lui avaient ecrit, par leur secretaire, un billet de remerciements a propos de son tableau dans la Chambre des Deputes, et qu'ils lui avaient prie de faire l'autre tableau en fresque, dont on y a besoin. Ce qu'il a promis. Voici des nouvelles pour les champs de Lincoln's Inn! Vive la gloire de France! Vive la Republique! Vive le Peuple! Plus de Royaute! Plus des Bourbons! Plus de Guizot! Mort aux traitres! Faisons couler le sang pour la liberte, la justice, la cause populaire! Jusqu'a cinq heures et demie, adieu, mon brave! Recevez l'assurance de ma consideration distinguee, et croyez-moi, CONCITOYEN! votre tout devoue, CITOYEN CHARLES DICKENS." I proved to be not quite so wrong, nevertheless, as my friend supposed.

Somewhat earlier than usual this summer, on the close of the Shakespeare-house performances, he tried Broadstairs once more, having no important writing in hand: but in the brief interval before leaving he saw a thing of celebrity in those days, the Chinese Junk; and I had all the details in so good a description that I could not resist the temptation of using some parts of it at the time. "Drive down to the Blackwall railway," he wrote to me, "and for a matter of eighteen-pence you are at the Chinese Empire in no time. In half a score of minutes, the tiles and chimney-pots, backs of squalid houses, frowsy pieces of waste ground, narrow courts and streets, swamps, ditches, masts of ships, gardens of dockweed, and unwholesome little bowers of scarlet beans, whirl away in a flying dream, and nothing is left but China. How the flowery region ever came into this latitude and longitude is the first thing one asks; and it is not certainly the least of the marvel. As Aladdin's palace was transported hither and thither by the rubbing of a lamp, so the crew of Chinamen aboard the Keying devoutly believed that their good ship would turn up, quite safe, at the desired port, if they only tied red rags enough upon the mast, rudder, and cable. Somehow they did not succeed. Perhaps they ran short of rag; at any rate they hadn't enough on board to keep them above water; and to the bottom they would undoubtedly have gone but for the skill and coolness of a dozen English sailors, who brought them over the ocean in safety. Well, if there be any one thing in the world that this extraordinary craft is not at all like, that thing is a ship of any kind. So narrow, so long, so grotesque; so low in the middle, so high at each end, like a China pen-tray; with no rigging,

with nowhere to go to aloft; with mats for sails, great warped cigars for masts, gaudy dragons and sea-monsters disporting themselves from stem to stern, and on the stern a gigantic cock of impossible aspect, defying the world (as well he may) to produce his equal,--it would look more at home at the top of a public building, or at the top of a mountain, or in an avenue of trees, or down in a mine, than afloat on the water. As for the Chinese lounging on the deck, the most extravagant imagination would never dare to suppose them to be mariners. Imagine a ship's crew, without a profile among them, in gauze pinafores and plaited hair; wearing stiff clogs a quarter of a foot thick in the sole; and lying at night in little scented boxes, like backgammon men or chess-pieces, or mother-of-pearl counters! But by Jove! even this is nothing to your surprise when you go down into the cabin. There you get into a torture of perplexity. As, what became of all those lanterns hanging to the roof when the Junk was out at sea? Whether they dangled there, banging and beating against each other, like so many jesters' baubles? Whether the idol Chin Tee, of the eighteen arms, enshrined in a celestial Punch's Show, in the place of honour, ever tumbled out in heavy weather? Whether the incense and the joss-stick still burnt before her, with a faint perfume and a little thread of smoke, while the mighty waves were roaring all around? Whether that preposterous tissue-paper umbrella in the corner was always spread, as being a convenient maritime instrument for walking about the decks with in a storm? Whether all the cool and shiny little chairs and tables were continually sliding about and bruising each other, and if not why not? Whether anybody on the voyage ever read those two books printed in characters like bird-cages and fly-traps? Whether the Mandarin passenger, He Sing, who had never been ten miles from home in his life before, lying sick on a bamboo couch in a private china closet of his own (where he is now perpetually writing autographs for inquisitive barbarians), ever began to doubt the potency of the Goddess of the Sea, whose counterfeit presentment, like a flowery monthly nurse, occupies the sailors' joss-house in the second gallery? Whether it is possible that the said Mandarin, or the artist of the ship, Sam Sing, Esquire, R.A. of Canton, can ever go ashore without a walking-staff of cinnamon, agreeably to the usage of their likenesses in British tea-shops? Above all, whether the hoarse old ocean could ever have been seriously in earnest with this floating toy-shop; or had merely played with it in lightness of spirit--roughly, but meaning no harm--as the bull did with another kind of china-shop on St. Patrick's day in the morning."

The reply made on this brought back comment and sequel not less amusing. "Yes, there can be no question that this is Finality in perfection; and it is a great advantage to have the doctrine so beautifully worked out, and shut up in a corner of a dock near a fashionable white-bait house for the edification of man. Thousands of years have passed away since the first junk was built on this model, and the last junk ever launched was no better for that waste and desert of time. The mimic eye painted on their prows to assist them in finding their way, has opened as wide and seen as far as any actual organ of sight in all the interval through the whole immense extent of that strange country. It has been set in the flowery head to as little purpose for thousands of years. With all their patient and ingenious but never advancing art, and with all their rich and diligent agricultural cultivation, not a new twist or curve has been given to a ball of ivory, and not a blade of experience has been grown. There is a genuine finality in that; and when one comes from behind the wooden screen that encloses the curious sight, to look again upon the river and the mighty signs on its banks of life, enterprise, and progress, the question that comes nearest is beyond doubt a home one. Whether we ever by any chance, in storms, trust to red flags; or burn joss-sticks before idols; or grope our way by the help of conventional eyes that have no sight in them; or sacrifice substantial facts for absurd forms? The ignorant crew of the Keying refused to enter on the ships' books, until 'a considerable amount of silvered-paper, tin-foil, and joss-stick' had been laid in by the owners for the purposes of their worship. And I wonder whether our seamen, let alone our bishops and deacons, ever stand out upon points of silvered-paper and tin-foil and joss-sticks. To be sure Christianity is not Chin-Teeism, and that I suppose is why we never lose sight of the end in contemptible

and insignificant quarrels about the means. There is enough matter for reflection aboard the Keying at any rate to last one's voyage home to England again."

Other letters of the summer from Broadstairs will complete what he wrote from the same place last year on Mr. Cruikshank's efforts in the cause of temperance, and will enable me to say, what I know he wished to be remembered in his story, that there was no subject on which through his whole life he felt more strongly than this. No man advocated temperance, even as far as possible its legislative enforcement, with greater earnestness; but he made important reservations. Not thinking drunkenness to be a vice inborn, or incident to the poor more than to other people, he never would agree that the existence of a gin-shop was the alpha and omega of it. Believing it to be, the "national horror," he also believed that many operative causes had to do with having made it so; and his objection to the temperance agitation was that these were left out of account altogether. He thought the gin-shop not fairly to be rendered the exclusive object of attack, until, in connection with the classes who mostly made it their resort, the temptations that led to it, physical and moral, should have been more bravely dealt with. Among the former he counted foul smells, disgusting habitations, bad workshops and workshop-customs, scarcity of light, air, and water, in short the absence of all easy means of decency and health; and among the latter, the mental weariness and languor so induced, the desire of wholesome relaxation, the craving for some stimulus and excitement, not less needful than the sun itself to lives so passed, and last, and inclusive of all the rest, ignorance, and the want of rational mental training, generally applied. This was consistently Dickens's "platform" throughout the years he was known to me; and holding it to be within the reach as well as the scope of legislation, which even our political magnates have been discovering lately, he thought intemperance to be but the one result that, out of all those arising from the absence of legislation, was the most wretched. For him, drunkenness had a teeming and reproachful history anterior to the drunken stage; and he thought it the first duty of the moralist bent upon annihilating the gin-shop, to "strike deep and spare not" at those previous remediable evils. Certainly this was not the way of Mr. Cruikshank, any more than it is that of the many excellent people who take part in temperance agitations. His former tale of the Bottle, as told by his admirable pencil, was that of a decent working man, father of a boy and a girl, living in comfort and good esteem until near the middle age, when, happening unluckily to have a goose for dinner one day in the bosom of his thriving family, he jocularly sends out for a bottle of gin, persuades his wife, until then a picture of neatness and good housewifery, to take a little drop after the stuffing, and the whole family from that moment drink themselves to destruction. The sequel, of which Dickens now wrote to me, traced the lives of the boy and girl after the wretched deaths of their drunken parents, through gin-shop, beer-shop, and dancing-rooms, up to their trial for robbery, when the boy is convicted, dying aboard the hulks; and the girl, desolate and mad after her acquittal, flings herself from London-bridge into the night-darkened river.

"I think," said Dickens, "the power of that closing scene quite extraordinary. It haunts the remembrance like an awful reality. It is full of passion and terror, and I doubt very much whether any hand but his could so have rendered it. There are other fine things too. The death-bed scene on board the hulks; the convict who is composing the face, and the other who is drawing the screen round the bed's head; seem to me masterpieces worthy of the greatest painter. The reality of the place, and the fidelity with which every minute object illustrative of it is presented, are surprising. I think myself no bad judge of this feature, and it is remarkable throughout. In the trial scene at the Old Bailey, the eye may wander round the Court, and observe everything that is a part of the place. The very light and atmosphere are faithfully reproduced. So, in the gin-shop and the beer-shop. An inferior hand would indicate a fragment of the fact, and slur it over; but here every shred is honestly made out. The man behind the bar in the gin-shop, is as real as the convicts at the hulks, or the barristers round the table in the Old Bailey. I found it quite curious, as I closed the book, to recall the number of faces I had seen of individual identity, and to think what a

chance they have of living, as the Spanish friar said to Wilkie, when the living have passed away. But it only makes more exasperating to me the obstinate one-sidedness of the thing. When a man shows so forcibly the side of the medal on which the people in their faults and crimes are stamped, he is the more bound to help us to a glance at that other side on which the faults and vices of the governments placed over the people are not less gravely impressed."

This led to some remark on Hogarth's method in such matters, and I am glad to be able to preserve this fine criticism of that great Englishman, by a writer who closely resembled him in genius; as another generation will be probably more apt than our own to discover. "Hogarth avoided the Drunkard's Progress, I conceive, precisely because the causes of drunkenness among the poor were so numerous and widely spread, and lurked so sorrowfully deep and far down in all human misery, neglect, and despair, that even his pencil could not bring them fairly and justly into the light. It was never his plan to be content with only showing the effect. In the death of the miser-father, his shoe new-soled with the binding of his bible, before the young Rake begins his career; in the worldly father, listless daughter, impoverished young lord, and crafty lawyer, of the first plate of Marriage-a-la mode; in the detestable advances through the stages of Cruelty; and in the progress downward of Thomas Idle; you see the effects indeed, but also the causes. He was never disposed to spare the kind of drunkenness that was of more 'respectable' engenderment, as one sees in his midnight modern conversation, the election plates, and crowds of stupid aldermen and other guzzlers. But after one immortal journey down Gin-lane, he turned away in pity and sorrow--perhaps in hope of better things, one day, from better laws and schools and poor men's homes--and went back no more. The scene of Gin-lane, you know, is that just cleared away for the extension of Oxford-street, which we were looking at the other day; and I think it a remarkable trait of Hogarth's picture, that while it exhibits drunkenness in the most appalling forms, it also forces on attention a most neglected wretched neighbourhood, and an unwholesome, indecent, abject condition of life that might be put as frontispiece to our sanitary report of a hundred years later date. I have always myself thought the purpose of this fine piece to be not adequately stated even by CHARLES LAMB. 'The very houses seem absolutely reeling' it is true; but beside that wonderful picture of what follows intoxication, we have indication quite as powerful of what leads to it among the neglected classes. There is no evidence that any of the actors in the dreary scene have ever been much better than we see them there. The best are pawning the commonest necessaries, and tools of their trades; and the worst are homeless vagrants who give us no clue to their having been otherwise in bygone days. All are living and dying miserably. Nobody is interfering for prevention or for cure, in the generation going out before us, or the generation coming in. The beadle is the only sober man in the composition except the pawnbroker, and he is mightily indifferent to the orphan-child crying beside its parent's coffin. The little charity-girls are not so well taught or looked after, but that they can take to dram-drinking already. The church indeed is very prominent and handsome; but as, quite passive in the picture, it coldly surveys these things in progress under shadow of its tower, I cannot but bethink me that it was not until this year of grace 1848 that a Bishop of London first came out respecting something wrong in poor men's social accommodations, and I am confirmed in my suspicion that Hogarth had many meanings which have not grown obsolete in a century."

Another art-criticism by Dickens should be added. Upon a separate publication by Leech of some drawings on stone called the Rising Generation, from designs done for Mr. Punch's gallery, he wrote at my request a little essay of which a few sentences will find appropriate place with his letter on the other great caricaturist of his time. I use that word, as he did, only for want of a better. Dickens was of opinion that, in this particular line of illustration, while he conceded all his fame to the elder and stronger contemporary, Mr. Leech was the very first Englishman who had made Beauty a part of his art; and he held, that, by striking out this course, and setting the successful example of introducing always into his

most whimsical pieces some beautiful faces or agreeable forms, he had done more than any other man of his generation to refine a branch of art to which the facilities of steam-printing and wood-engraving were giving almost unrivalled diffusion and popularity. His opinion of Leech in a word was that he turned caricature into character; and would leave behind him not a little of the history of his time and its follies, sketched with inimitable grace.

"If we turn back to a collection of the works of Rowlandson or Gilray, we shall find, in spite of the great humour displayed in many of them, that they are rendered wearisome and unpleasant by a vast amount of personal ugliness. Now, besides that it is a poor device to represent what is satirized as being necessarily ugly, which is but the resource of an angry child or a jealous woman, it serves no purpose but to produce a disagreeable result. There is no reason why the farmer's daughter in the old caricature who is squalling at the harpsichord (to the intense delight, by the bye, of her worthy father, whom it is her duty to please) should be squab and hideous. The satire on the manner of her education, if there be any in the thing at all, would be just as good, if she were pretty. Mr. Leech would have made her so. The average of farmers' daughters in England are not impossible lumps of fat. One is quite as likely to find a pretty girl in a farm-house, as to find an ugly one; and we think, with Mr. Leech, that the business of this Style of art is with the pretty one. She is not only a pleasanter object, but we have more interest in her. We care more about what does become her, and does not become her. Mr. Leech represented the other day certain delicate creatures with bewitching countenances encased in several varieties of that amazing garment, the ladies' paletot. Formerly those fair creatures would have been made as ugly and ungainly as possible, and then the point would have been lost. The spectator, with a laugh at the absurdity of the whole group, would not have cared how such uncouth creatures disguised themselves, or how ridiculous they became. . . . But to represent female beauty as Mr. Leech represents it, an artist must have, a most delicate perception of it; and the gift of being able to realise it to us with two or three slight, sure touches of his pencil. This power Mr. Leech possesses, in an extraordinary degree. . . . For this reason, we enter our protest against those of the Rising Generation who are precociously in love being made the subject of merriment by a pitiless and unsympathizing world. We never saw a boy more distinctly in the right than the young gentleman kneeling on the chair to beg a lock of hair from his pretty cousin, to take back to school. Madness is in her apron, and Virgil dog's-eared and defaced is in her ringlets. Doubts may suggest themselves of the perfect disinterestedness of the other young gentleman contemplating the fair girl at the piano--doubts engendered by his worldly allusion to 'tin'; though even that may have arisen in his modest consciousness of his own inability to support an establishment--but that he should be 'deucedly inclined to go and cut that fellow out,' appears to us one of the most natural emotions of the human breast. The young gentleman with the dishevelled hair and clasped hands who loves the transcendant beauty with the bouquet, and can't be happy without her, is to us a withering and desolate spectacle. Who could be happy without her? . . . The growing youths are not less happily observed and agreeably depicted than the grown women. The languid little creature who 'hasn't danced since he was quite a boy,' is perfect; and the eagerness of the small dancer whom he declines to receive for a partner at the hands of the glorious old lady of the house (the little feet quite ready for the first position, the whole heart projected into the quadrille, and the glance peeping timidly at the desired one out of a flutter of hope and doubt) is quite delightful to look at. The intellectual juvenile who awakens the tremendous wrath of a Norma of private life by considering woman an inferior animal, is lecturing at the present moment, we understand, on the Concrete in connexion with the Will. The legs of the young philosopher who considers Shakespeare an over-rated man, were seen by us dangling over the side of an omnibus last Tuesday. We have no acquaintance with the scowling young gentleman who is clear that 'if his Governor don't like the way he goes on in, why he must have chambers and so much a week;' but if he is not by this time in Van Diemen's land, he will certainly go to it through Newgate. We should exceedingly

dislike to have personal property in a strong box, to live in the suburb of Camberwell, and to be in the relation of bachelor-uncle to that youth. . . . In all his designs, whatever Mr. Leech desires to do, he does. His drawing seems to us charming; and the expression indicated, though by the simplest means, is exactly the natural expression, and is recognised as such immediately. Some forms of our existing life will never have a better chronicler. His wit is good-natured, and always the wit of a gentleman. He has a becoming sense of responsibility and self-restraint; he delights in agreeable things; he imparts some pleasant air of his own to things not pleasant in themselves; he is suggestive and full of matter; and he is always improving. Into the tone as well as into the execution of what he does, he has brought a certain elegance which is altogether new, without involving any compromise of what is true. Popular art in England has not had so rich an acquisition." Dickens's closing allusion was to a remark made by Mr. Ford in a review of Oliver Twist formerly referred to. "It is eight or ten years since a writer in the Quarterly Review, making mention of MR. GEORGE CRUIKSHANK, commented on the absurdity of excluding such a man from the Royal Academy, because his works were not produced in certain materials, and did not occupy a certain space in its annual shows. Will no Associates be found upon its books one of these days, the labours of whose oil and brushes will have sunk into the profoundest obscurity, when many pencil-marks of MR. CRUIKSHANK and of MR. LEECH will be still fresh in half the houses in the land?"

Of what otherwise occupied him at Broadstairs in 1848 there is not much to mention until the close of his holiday. He used to say that he never went for more than a couple of days from his own home without something befalling him that never happened to anyone else, and his Broadstairs adventure of the present summer verged closer on tragedy than comedy. Returning there one day in August after bringing up his boys to school, it had been arranged that his wife should meet him at Margate; but he had walked impatiently far beyond the place for meeting when at last he caught sight of her, not in the small chaise but in a large carriage and pair followed by an excited crowd, and with the youth that should have been driving the little pony bruised and bandaged on the box behind the two prancing horses. "You may faintly imagine my amazement at encountering this carriage, and the strange people, and Kate, and the crowd, and the bandaged one, and all the rest of it." And then in a line or two I had the story. "At the top of a steep hill on the road, with a ditch on each side, the pony bolted, upon which what does John do but jump out! He says he was thrown out, but it cannot be. The reins immediately became entangled in the wheels, and away went the pony down the hill madly, with Kate inside rending the Isle of Thanet with her screams. The accident might have been a fearful one, if the pony had not, thank Heaven, on getting to the bottom, pitched over the side; breaking the shaft and cutting her hind legs, but in the most extraordinary manner smashing her own way apart. She tumbled down, a bundle of legs with her head tucked underneath, and left the chaise standing on the bank! A Captain Devaynes and his wife were passing in their carriage at the moment, saw the accident with no power of preventing it, got Kate out, laid her on the grass, and behaved with infinite kindness. All's well that ends well, and I think she's really none the worse for the fright. John is in bed a good deal bruised, but without any broken bone, and likely soon to come right; though for the present plastered all over, and, like Squeers, a brown-paper parcel chock-full of nothing but groans. The women generally have no sympathy for him whatever; and the nurse says, with indignation, how could he go and leave an unprotected female in the shay!"

Holiday incidents there were many, but none that need detain us. This was really a summer idleness: for it was the interval between two of his important undertakings, there was no periodical yet to make demands on him, and only the task of finishing his Haunted Man for Christmas lay ahead. But he did even his nothings in a strenuous way, and on occasion could make gallant fight against the elements themselves. He reported himself, to my horror, thrice wet through on a single day, "dressed four times," and finding all sorts of great things, brought out by the rains, among the rocks on the sea-beach. He also sketched now and then morsels of character for me, of which I will preserve one. "F is philosophical, from

sunrise to bedtime: chiefly in the French line, about French women going mad, and in that state coming to their husbands, and saying, 'Mon ami, je vous ai trompe. Voici les lettres de mon amant!' Whereupon the husbands take the letters and think them waste paper, and become extra-philosophical at finding that they really were the lover's effusions: though what there is of philosophy in it all, or anything but unwholesomeness, it is not easy to see." (A remark that it might not be out of place to offer to Mr. Taine's notice.) "Likewise about dark shades coming over our wedded Emmeline's face at parties; and about F handing her to her carriage, and saying, 'May I come in, for a lift homeward?' and she bending over him out of window, and saying in a low voice, I DARE NOT! And then of the carriage driving away like lightning, leaving F more philosophical than ever on the pavement." Not till the close of September I heard of work intruding itself, in a letter twitting me for a broken promise in not joining him: "We are reasonably jolly, but rurally so; going to bed o' nights at ten, and bathing o' mornings at half-past seven; and not drugging ourselves with those dirty and spoiled waters of Lethe that flow round the base of the great pyramid." Then, after mention of the friends who had left him, Sheriff Gordon, the Leeches, Lemon, Egg and Stone: "reflection and pensiveness are coming. I have NOT

'--seen Fancy write With a pencil of light On the blotter so solid, commanding the sea!'

but I shouldn't wonder if she were to do it, one of these days. Dim visions of divers things are floating around me; and I must go to work, head foremost, when I get home. I am glad, after all, that I have not been at it here; for I am all the better for my idleness, no doubt. . . . Roche was very ill last night, and looks like one with his face turned to the other world, this morning. When are you coming? Oh what days and nights there have been here, this week past!" My consent to a suggestion in his next letter, that I should meet him on his way back, and join him in a walking-excursion home, got me full absolution for broken promises; and the way we took will remind friends of his later life, when he was lord of Gadshill, of an object of interest which he delighted in taking them to see. "You will come down booked for Maidstone (I will meet you at Paddock-wood), and we will go thither in company over a most beautiful little line of railroad. The eight miles walk from Maidstone to Rochester, and the visit to the Druidical altar on the wayside, are charming. This could be accomplished on the Tuesday; and Wednesday we might look about us at Chatham, coming home by Cobham on Thursday. . . ."

His first seaside holiday in 1849 was at Brighton, where he passed some weeks in February; and not, I am bound to add, without the usual unusual adventure to signalize his visit. He had not been a week in his lodgings, where Leech and his wife joined him, when both his landlord and the daughter of his landlord went raving mad, and the lodgers were driven away to the Bedford hotel. "If you could have heard the cursing and crying of the two; could have seen the physician and nurse quoited out into the passage by the madman at the hazard of their lives; could have seen Leech and me flying to the doctor's rescue; could have seen our wives pulling us back; could have seen the M.D. faint with fear; could have seen three other M.D.'s come to his aid; with an atmosphere of Mrs. Gamps, strait-waistcoats, struggling friends and servants, surrounding the whole; you would have said it was quite worthy of me, and quite in keeping with my usual proceedings." The letter ended with a word on what then his thoughts were full of, but for which no name had yet been found. "A sea-fog to-day, but yesterday inexpressibly delicious. My mind running, like a high sea, on names--not satisfied yet, though." When he next wrote from the seaside, in the beginning of July, he had found the name; had started his book; and was "rushing to Broadstairs" to write the fourth number of David Copperfield.

Volume II, Chapter 18 (1848-1851): Seaside Holidays (Part 2)

In this came the childish experiences which had left so deep an impression upon him, and over which he had some difficulty in throwing the needful disguises. "Fourteen miles to-day in the country," he had written to me on the 21st of June, "revolving number four!" Still he did not quite see his way. Three days later he wrote: "On leaving you last night, I found myself summoned on a special jury in the Queen's Bench to-day. I have taken no notice of the document, and hourly expect to be dragged forth to a dungeon for contempt of court. I think I should rather like it. It might help me with a new notion or two in my difficulties. Meanwhile I shall take a stroll to-night in the green fields from 7 to 10, if you feel inclined to join." His troubles ended when he got to Broadstairs, from which he wrote on the tenth of July to tell me that agreeably to the plan we had discussed he had introduced a great part of his MS. into the number. "I really think I have done it ingeniously, and with a very complicated interweaving of truth and fiction. Vous verrez. I am getting on like a house afire in point of health, and ditto ditto in point of number."

In the middle of July the number was nearly done, and he was still doubtful where to pass his longer summer holiday. Leech wished to join him in it, and both desired a change from Broadstairs. At first he thought of Folkestone, but disappointment there led to a sudden change. "I propose" (15th of July) "returning to town to-morrow by the boat from Ramsgate, and going off to Weymouth or the Isle of Wight, or both, early the next morning." A few days after, his choice was made.

He had taken a house at Bonchurch, attracted there by the friend who had made it a place of interest for him during the last few years, the Reverend James White, with whose name and its associations my mind connects inseparably many of Dickens's happiest hours. To pay him fitting tribute would not be easy, if here it were called for. In the kindly shrewd Scotch face, a keen sensitiveness to pleasure and pain was the first thing that struck any common observer. Cheerfulness and gloom coursed over it so rapidly that no one could question the tale they told. But the relish of his life had outlived its more than usual share of sorrows; and quaint sly humour, love of jest and merriment, capital knowledge of books, and sagacious quips at men, made his companionship delightful. Like his life, his genius was made up of alternations of mirth and melancholy. He would be immersed, at one time, in those darkest Scottish annals from which he drew his tragedies; and overflowing, at another, into Sir Frizzle Pumpkin's exuberant farce. The tragic histories may probably perish with the actor's perishable art; but three little abstracts of history written at a later time in prose, with a sunny clearness of narration and a glow of picturesque interest to my knowledge unequalled in books of such small pretension, will find, I hope, a lasting place in literature. They are filled with felicities of phrase, with breadth of understanding and judgment, with manful honesty, quiet sagacity, and a constant cheerful piety, valuable for all and priceless for the young. Another word I permit myself to add. With Dickens, White was popular supremely for his eager good fellowship; and few men brought him more of what he always liked to receive. But he brought nothing so good as his wife. "He is excellent, but she is better," is the pithy remark of his first Bonchurch letter; and the true affection and respect that followed is happily still borne her by his daughters.

Of course there is something strange to be recorded of the Bonchurch holiday, but it does not come till nearer the ending; and, with more attention to Mrs. Malaprop's advice to begin with a little aversion, might probably not have come at all. He began with an excess of liking. Of the Undercliff he was full of admiration. "From the top of the highest downs," he wrote in his second letter (28th of July) "there are views which are only to be equalled on the Genoese shore of the Mediterranean; the variety of walks is extraordinary; things are cheap, and everybody is civil. The waterfall acts wonderfully, and the sea

bathing is delicious. Best of all, the place is certainly cold rather than hot, in the summer time. The evenings have been even chilly. White very jovial, and emulous of the inimitable in respect of gin-punch. He had made some for our arrival. Ha! ha! not bad for a beginner. . . . I have been, and am, trying to work this morning; but I can't make anything of it, and am going out to think. I am invited by a distinguished friend to dine with you on the first of August, but I have pleaded distance and the being resident in a cave on the sea shore; my food, beans; my drink, the water from the rock. . . . I must pluck up heart of grace to write to Jeffrey, of whom I had but poor accounts from Gordon just before leaving. Talfourd delightful, and amuses me mightily. I am really quite enraptured at his success, and think of his happiness with uncommon pleasure." Our friend was now on the bench; which he adorned with qualities that are justly the pride of that profession, and with accomplishments that have become more rare in its highest places than they were in former times. His elevation only made those virtues better known. Talfourd assumed nothing with the ermine but the privilege of more frequent intercourse with the tastes and friends he loved, and he continued to be the most joyous and least affected of companions. Such small oddities or foibles as he had made him secretly only dearer to Dickens, who had no friend he was more attached to; and the many happy nights made happier by the voice so affluent in generous words, and the face so bright with ardent sensibility, come back to me sorrowfully now. "Deaf the prais'd ear, and mute the tuneful tongue." The poet's line has a double application and sadness.

He wrote again on the first of August. "I have just begun to get into work. We are expecting the Queen to come by very soon, in grand array, and are going to let off ever so many guns. I had a letter from Jeffrey yesterday morning, just as I was going to write to him. He has evidently been very ill, and I begin to have fears for his recovery. It is a very pathetic letter, as to his state of mind; but only in a tranquil contemplation of death, which I think very noble." His next letter, four days later, described himself as continuing still at work; but also taking part in dinners at Blackgang, and picnics of "tremendous success" on Shanklin Down. "Two charity sermons for the school are preached to-day, and I go to the afternoon one. The examination of said school t'other day was very funny. All the boys made Buckstone's bow in the Rough Diamond, and some in a very wonderful manner recited pieces of poetry, about a clock, and may we be like the clock, which is always a going and a doing of its duty, and always tells the truth (supposing it to be a slap-up chronometer I presume, for the American clock in the school was lying frightfully at that moment); and after being bothered to death by the multiplication table, they were refreshed with a public tea in Lady Jane Swinburne's garden." (There was a reference in one of his letters, but I have lost it, to a golden-haired lad of the Swinburnes whom his own boys used to play with, since become more widely known.) "The rain came in with the first tea-pot, and has been active ever since. On Friday we had a grand, and what is better, a very good dinner at 'parson' Fielden's, with some choice port. On Tuesday we are going on another picnic; with the materials for a fire, at my express stipulation; and a great iron pot to boil potatoes in. These things, and the eatables, go to the ground in a cart. Last night we had some very good merriment at White's, where pleasant Julian Young and his wife (who are staying about five miles off) showed some droll new games"--and roused the ambition in my friend to give a "mighty conjuring performance for all the children in Bonchurch," for which I sent him the materials and which went off in a tumult of wild delight. To the familiar names in this letter I will add one more, grieving freshly even now to connect it with suffering. "A letter from Poole has reached me since I began this letter, with tidings in it that you will be very sorry to hear. Poor Regnier has lost his only child; the pretty daughter who dined with us that nice day at your house, when we all pleased the poor mother by admiring her so much. She died of a sudden attack of malignant typhus. Poole was at the funeral, and writes that he never saw, or could have imagined, such intensity of grief as Regnier's at the grave. How one loves him for it. But is it not always true, in comedy and in tragedy, that the more real the man the more genuine the actor?"

After a few more days I heard of progress with his writing in spite of all festivities. "I have made it a rule that the inimitable is invisible, until two every day. I shall have half the number done, please God, to-morrow. I have not worked quickly here yet, but I don't know what I may do. Divers cogitations have occupied my mind at intervals, respecting the dim design." The design was the weekly periodical so often in his thoughts, of which more will appear in my next chapter. His letter closed with intimations of discomfort in his health; of an obstinate cough; and of a determination he had formed to mount daily to the top of the downs. "It makes a great difference in the climate to get a blow there and come down again." Then I heard of the doctor "stethoscoping" him, of his hope that all was right in that quarter, and of rubbings "a la St. John Long" being ordered for his chest. But the mirth still went on. "There has been a Doctor Lankester at Sandown, a very good merry fellow, who has made one at the picnics, and whom I went over and dined with, along with Danby (I remember your liking for Danby, and don't wonder at it), Leech, and White." A letter towards the close of August resumed yet more of his ordinary tone. "We had games and forfeits last night at White's. Davy Roberts's pretty little daughter is there for a week, with her husband, Bicknell's son. There was a dinner first to say good-bye to Danby, who goes to other clergyman's-duty, and we were very merry. Mrs. White unchanging; White comically various in his moods. Talfourd comes down next Tuesday, and we think of going over to Ryde on Monday, visiting the play, sleeping there (I don't mean at the play), and bringing the Judge back. Browne is coming down when he has done his month's work. Should you like to go to Alum Bay while you are here? It would involve a night out, but I think would be very pleasant; and if you think so too, I will arrange it sub rosa, so that we may not be, like Bobadil, 'oppressed by numbers.' I mean to take a fly over from Shanklin to meet you at Ryde; so that we can walk back from Shanklin over the landslip, where the scenery is wonderfully beautiful. Stone and Egg are coming next month, and we hope to see Jerrold before we go." Such notices from his letters may be thought hardly worth preserving; but a wonderful vitality in every circumstance, as long as life under any conditions remained to the writer, is the picture they contribute to; nor would it be complete without the addition, that fond as he was, in the intervals of his work, of this abundance and variety of enjoyments, to no man were so essential also those quieter hours of thought, and talk, not obtainable when "oppressed by numbers."

My visit was due at the opening of September, but a few days earlier came the full revelation of which only a passing shadow had reached in two or three previous letters. "Before I think of beginning my next number, I perhaps cannot do better than give you an imperfect description of the results of the climate of Bonchurch after a few weeks' residence. The first salubrious effect of which the Patient becomes conscious is an almost continual feeling of sickness, accompanied with great prostration of strength, so that his legs tremble under him, and his arms quiver when he wants to take hold of any object. An extraordinary disposition to sleep (except at night, when his rest, in the event of his having any, is broken by incessant dreams) is always present at the same time; and, if he have anything to do requiring thought and attention, this overpowers him to such a degree that he can only do it in snatches: lying down on beds in the fitful intervals. Extreme depression of mind, and a disposition to shed tears from morning to night, developes itself at the same period. If the Patient happen to have been a good walker, he finds ten miles an insupportable distance; in the achievement of which his legs are so unsteady, that he goes from side to side of the road, like a drunken man. If he happen to have ever possessed any energy of any kind, he finds it quenched in a dull, stupid languor. He has no purpose, power, or object in existence whatever. When he brushes his hair in the morning, he is so weak that he is obliged to sit upon a chair to do it. He is incapable of reading, at all times. And his bilious system is so utterly overthrown, that a ball of boiling fat appears to be always behind the top of the bridge of his nose, simmering between his haggard eyes. If he should have caught a cold, he will find it impossible to get rid of it, as his system is wholly incapable of making any effort. His cough will be deep, monotonous, and constant. 'The

faithful watch-dog's honest bark' will be nothing to it. He will abandon all present idea of overcoming it, and will content himself with keeping an eye upon his blood-vessels to preserve them whole and sound. Patient's name, Inimitable B._ . . . It's a mortal mistake!--That's the plain fact. Of all the places I ever have been in, I have never been in one so difficult to exist in, pleasantly. Naples is hot and dirty, New York feverish, Washington bilious, Genoa exciting, Paris rainy--but Bonchurch, smashing. I am quite convinced that I should die here, in a year. It's not hot, it's not close, I don't know what it is, but the prostration of it is awful. Nobody here has the least idea what I think of it; but I find, from all sorts of hints from Kate, Georgina, and the Leeches, that they are all affected more or less in the same way, and find it very difficult to make head against. I make no sign, and pretend not to know what is going on. But they are right. I believe the Leeches will go soon, and small blame to 'em!--For me, when I leave here at the end of this September, I must go down to some cold place; as Ramsgate for example, for a week or two; or I seriously believe I shall feel the effects of it for a long time. . . . What do you think of that? . . . The longer I live, the more I doubt the doctors. I am perfectly convinced, that, for people suffering under a wasting disease, this Undercliff is madness altogether. The doctors, with the old miserable folly of looking at one bit of a subject, take the patient's lungs and the Undercliff's air, and settle solemnly that they are fit for each other. But the whole influence of the place, never taken into consideration, is to reduce and overpower vitality. I am quite confident that I should go down under it, as if it were so much lead, slowly crushing me. An American resident in Paris many years, who brought me a letter from Olliffe, said, the day before yesterday, that he had always had a passion for the sea never to be gratified enough, but that after living here a month, he could not bear to look at it; he couldn't endure the sound of it; he didn't know how it was, but it seemed associated with the decay of his whole powers." These were grave imputations against one of the prettiest places in England; but of the generally depressing influence of that Undercliff on particular temperaments, I had already enough experience to abate something of the surprise with which I read the letter. What it too bluntly puts aside are the sufferings other than his own, projected and sheltered by what only aggravated his; but my visit gave me proof that he had really very little overstated the effect upon himself. Making allowance, which sometimes he failed to do, for special peculiarities, and for the excitability never absent when he had in hand an undertaking such as Copperfield, I observed a nervous tendency to misgivings and apprehensions to the last degree unusual with him, which seemed to make the commonest things difficult; and though he stayed out his time, and brought away nothing that his happier associations with the place and its residents did not long survive, he never returned to Bonchurch.

In the month that remained he completed his fifth number, and with the proof there came the reply to some questions of which I hardly remember more than that they referred to doubts of mine; one being as to the propriety of the kind of delusion he had first given to poor Mr. Dick, which I thought a little too farcical for that really touching delineation of character. "Your suggestion is perfectly wise and sound," he wrote back (22nd of August). "I have acted on it. I have also, instead of the bull and china-shop delusion, given Dick the idea, that, when the head of king Charles the First was cut off, some of the trouble was taken out of it, and put into his (Dick's)". When he next wrote, there was news very welcome to me for the pleasure to himself it involved. "Browne has sketched an uncommonly characteristic and capital Mr. Micawber for the next number. I hope the present number is a good one. I hear nothing but pleasant accounts of the general satisfaction." The same letter told me of an intention to go to Broadstairs, put aside by doubtful reports of its sanitary condition; but it will be seen presently that there was another graver interruption. With his work well off his hands, however, he had been getting on better where he was; and they had all been very merry. "Yes," he said, writing after a couple of days (23rd of September), "we have been sufficiently rollicking since I finished the number; and have had great games at rounders every afternoon, with all Bonchurch looking on; but I begin to long for a little peace and

solitude. And now for my less pleasing piece of news. The sea has been running very high, and Leech, while bathing, was knocked over by a bad blow from a great wave on the forehead. He is in bed, and had twenty of his namesakes on his temples this morning. When I heard of him just now, he was asleep--which he had not been all night." He closed his letter hopefully, but next day (24th September) I had less favourable report. "Leech has been very ill with congestion of the brain ever since I wrote, and being still in excessive pain has had ice to his head continuously, and been bled in the arm besides. Beard and I sat up there, all night." On the 26th he wrote, "My plans are all unsettled by Leech's illness; as of course I do not like to leave this place while I can be of any service to him and his good little wife. But all visitors are gone to-day, and Winterbourne once more left to the engaging family of the inimitable B. Ever since I wrote to you Leech has been seriously worse, and again very heavily bled. The night before last he was in such an alarming state of restlessness, which nothing could relieve, that I proposed to Mrs. Leech to try magnetism. Accordingly, in the middle of the night I fell to; and after a very fatiguing bout of it, put him to sleep for an hour and thirty-five minutes. A change came on in the sleep, and he is decidedly better. I talked to the astounded little Mrs. Leech across him, when he was asleep, as if he had been a truss of hay. . . . What do you think of my setting up in the magnetic line with a large brass plate? 'Terms, twenty-five guineas per nap.'" When he wrote again on the 30th, he had completed his sixth number; and his friend was so clearly on the way to recovery that he was next day to leave for Broadstairs with his wife, her sister, and the two little girls. "I will merely add that I entreat to be kindly remembered to Thackeray" (who had a dangerous illness at this time); "that I think I have, without a doubt, got the Periodical notion; and that I am writing under the depressing and discomforting influence of paying off the tribe of bills that pour in upon an unfortunate family-young-man on the eve of a residence like this. So no more at present from the disgusted, though still inimitable, and always affectionate B."

He stayed at Broadstairs till he had finished his number seven, and what else chiefly occupied him were thoughts about the Periodical of which account will presently be given. "Such a night and day of rain," ran his first letter, "I should think the oldest inhabitant never saw! and yet, in the ould formiliar Broadstairs, I somehow or other don't mind it much. The change has done Mamey a world of good, and I have begun to sleep again. As for news, you might as well ask me for dolphins. Nobody in Broadstairs--to speak of. Certainly nobody in Ballard's. We are in the part, which is the house next door to the hotel itself, that we once had for three years running, and just as quiet and snug now as it was then. I don't think I shall return before the 20th or so, when the number is done; but I may, in some inconstant freak, run up to you before. Preliminary despatches and advices shall be forwarded in any case to the fragrant neighbourhood of Clare-market and the Portugal-street burying-ground." Such was his polite designation of my whereabouts: for which nevertheless he had secret likings. "On the Portsmouth railway, coming here, encountered Kenyon. On the ditto ditto at Reigate, encountered young Dilke, and took him in tow to Canterbury. On the ditto ditto at ditto (meaning Reigate), encountered Fox, M. P. for Oldham, and his daughter. All within an hour. Young Dilke great about the proposed Exposition under the direction of H. R. H. Prince Albert, and evincing, very pleasantly to me, unbounded faith in our old friend his father." There was one more letter, taking a rather gloomy view of public affairs in connection with an inflated pastoral from Doctor Wiseman "given out of the Flaminian Gate," and speaking dolefully of some family matters; which was subscribed, each word forming a separate line, "Yours Despondently, And Disgustedly, Wilkins Micawber."

His visit to the little watering-place in the following year was signalised by his completion of the most famous of his novels, and his letters otherwise were occupied by elaborate managerial preparation for the private performances at Knebworth. But again the plague of itinerant music flung him into such fevers of irritation, that he finally resolved against any renewed attempt to carry on important work here; and the

summer of 1851, when he was only busy with miscellaneous writing, was the last of his regular residences in the place. He then let his London house for the brief remainder of its term; ran away at the end of May, when some grave family sorrows had befallen him, from the crowds and excitements of the Great Exhibition; and with intervals of absence, chiefly at the Guild representations, stayed in his favourite Fort-house by the sea until October, when he took possession of Tavistock-house. From his letters may be added a few notices of this last holiday at Broadstairs, which he had always afterwards a kindly word for; and to which he said pleasant adieu in the sketch of "Our Watering-place," written shortly before he left.

"It is more delightful here" (1st of June) "than I can express. Corn growing, larks singing, garden full of flowers, fresh air on the sea--O it is wonderful! Why can't you come down next Saturday (bringing work) and go back with me on Wednesday for the Copperfield banquet? Concerning which, of course, I say yes to Talfourd's kind proposal. Lemon by all means. And--don't you think? Browne? Whosoever, besides, pleases Talfourd will please me." Great was the success of that banquet. The scene was the Star-and-Garter at Richmond; Thackeray and Alfred Tennyson joined in the celebration; and the generous giver was in his best vein. I have rarely seen Dickens happier than he was amid the sunshine of that day. Jerrold and Thackeray returned to town with us; and a little argument between them about money and its uses, led to an avowal of Dickens about himself to which I may add the confirmation of all our years of intercourse. "No man," he said, "attaches less importance to the possession of money, or less disparagement to the want of it, than I do."

Vague mention of a "next book" escaped in a letter at the end of July, on which I counselled longer abstinence. "Good advice," he replied, "but difficult: I wish you'd come to us and preach another kind of abstinence. Fancy the Preventive men finding a lot of brandy in barrels on the rocks here, the day before yesterday! Nobody knows anything about the barrels, of course. They were intended to have been landed with the next tide, and to have been just covered at low water. But the water being unusually low, the tops of the barrels became revealed to Preventive telescopes, and descent was made upon the brandy. They are always at it, hereabouts, I have no doubt. And of course B would not have had any of it. O dear no! certainly not."

His reading was considerable and very various at these intervals of labour, and in this particular summer took in all the minor tales as well as the plays of Voltaire, several of the novels (old favourites with him) of Paul de Kock, Ruskin's Lamps of Architecture, and a surprising number of books of African and other travel for which he had insatiable relish: but the notices of all this in his letters were few. "By the bye, I observe, reading that wonderful book the French Revolution again, for the 500th time, that Carlyle, who knows everything, don't know what Mumbo Jumbo is. It is not an Idol. It is a secret preserved among the men of certain African tribes, and never revealed by any of them, for the punishment of their women. Mumbo Jumbo comes in hideous form out of the forest, or the mud, or the river, or where not, and flogs some woman who has been backbiting, or scolding, or with some other domestic mischief disturbing the general peace. Carlyle seems to confound him with the common Fetish; but he is quite another thing. He is a disguised man; and all about him is a freemasons' secret among the men."--"I finished the Scarlet Letter yesterday. It falls off sadly after that fine opening scene. The psychological part of the story is very much over-done, and not truly done I think. Their suddenness of meeting and agreeing to go away together, after all those years, is very poor. Mr. Chillingworth ditto. The child out of nature altogether. And Mr. Dimmisdale certainly never could have begotten her." In Mr. Hawthorne's earlier books he had taken especial pleasure; his Mosses from an Old Manse having been the first book he placed in my hands on his return from America, with reiterated injunctions to read it. I will add a word or two of what he wrote of the clever story of another popular writer, because it hits well the sort of ability that has become so common, which escapes the highest point of cleverness, but stops short only at the very verge of it. "The

story extremely good indeed; but all the strongest things of which it is capable, missed. It shows just how far that kind of power can go. It is more like a note of the idea than anything else. It seems to me as if it were written by somebody who lived next door to the people, rather than inside of 'em."

I joined him for the August regatta and stayed a pleasant fortnight. His paper on "Our Watering-place" appeared while I was there, and great was the local excitement. His own restlessness with fancies for a new book had now risen beyond bounds, and for the time he was eager to open it in that prettiest quaintest bit of English landscape, Strood valley, which reminded him always of a Swiss scene. I had not left him many days when these lines followed me. "I very nearly packed up a portmanteau and went away, the day before yesterday, into the mountains of Switzerland, alone! Still the victim of an intolerable restlessness, I shouldn't be at all surprised if I wrote to you one of these mornings from under Mont Blanc. I sit down between whiles to think of a new story, and, as it begins to grow, such a torment of a desire to be anywhere but where I am; and to be going I don't know where, I don't know why; takes hold of me, that it is like being driven away. If I had had a passport, I sincerely believe I should have gone to Switzerland the night before last. I should have remembered our engagement--say, at Paris, and have come back for it; but should probably have left by the next express train."

At the end of November, when he had settled himself in his new London abode, the book was begun; and as generally happened with the more important incidents of his life, but always accidentally, begun on a Friday.

Volume II, Chapter 19 (1848-1850): Haunted Man and Household Words

Haunted Man and Household Words

IT has been seen that his fancy for his Christmas book of 1848 first arose to him at Lausanne in the summer of 1846, and that, after writing its opening pages in the autumn of the following year, he laid it aside under the pressure of his Dombey. These lines were in the letter that closed his 1848 Broadstairs holiday. "At last I am a mentally matooring of the Christmas book--or, as poor Macrone used to write, 'booke,' 'boke,' 'buke,' &c." It was the first labour to which he applied himself at his return.

In London it soon came to maturity; was published duly as The Haunted Man, or the Ghost's Bargain; sold largely, beginning with a subscription of twenty thousand; and had a great success on the Adelphi stage, to which it was rather cleverly adapted by Lemon. He had placed on its title page originally four lines from Tennyson's "Departure,"

"And o'er the hills, and far away Beyond their utmost purple rim, Beyond the night, across the day, Thro' all the world IT follow'd him;"

but they were less applicable to the close than to the opening of the tale, and were dropped before publication. The hero is a great chemist, a lecturer at an old foundation, a man of studious philosophic habits, haunted with recollections of the past "o'er which his melancholy sits on brood," thinking his knowledge of the present a worthier substitute, and at last parting with that portion of himself which he thinks he can safely cast away. The recollections are of a great wrong done him in early life, and of all the sorrow consequent upon it; and the ghost he holds nightly conference with, is the darker presentiment of himself embodied in those bitter recollections. This part is finely managed. Out of heaped-up images of gloomy and wintry fancies, the supernatural takes a shape which is not forced or violent; and the dialogue which is no dialogue, but a kind of dreary dreamy echo, is a piece of ghostly imagination better than Mrs. Radcliffe. The boon desired is granted and the bargain struck. He is not only to lose his own recollection of grief and wrong, but to destroy the like memory in all whom he approaches. By this means the effect is shown in humble as well as higher minds, in the worst poverty as in competence or ease, always with the same result. The over-thinking sage loses his own affections and sympathy, sees them crushed in others, and is brought to the level of the only creature whom he cannot change or influence, an outcast of the streets, a boy whom the mere animal appetites have turned into a small fiend. Never having had his mind awakened, evil is this creature's good; avarice, irreverence, and vindictiveness, are his nature; sorrow has no place in his memory; and from his brutish propensities the philosopher can take nothing away. The juxtaposition of two people whom such opposite means have put in the same moral position is a stroke of excellent art. There are plenty of incredibilities and inconsistencies, just as in the pleasant Cricket on the Hearth, which one does not care about, but enjoy rather than otherwise; and, as in that charming little book, there were minor characters as delightful as anything in Dickens. The Tetterby group, in whose humble, homely, kindly, ungainly figures there is everything that could suggest itself to a clear eye, a piercing wit, and a loving heart, became enormous favourites. Tilly Slowboy and her little dot of a baby, charging folks with it as if it were an offensive instrument, or handing it about as if it were something to drink, were not more popular than poor Johnny Tetterby staggering under his Moloch of an infant, the Juggernaut that crushes all his enjoyments. The story itself consists of nothing more than the effects of the Ghost's gift upon the various groups of people introduced, and the way the end is arrived at is very specially in Dickens's manner. What the highest exercise of the intellect had missed is found in the simplest form of the affections. The

wife of the custodian of the college where the chemist is professor, in whom are all the unselfish virtues that can beautify and endear the humblest condition, is the instrument of the change. Such sorrow as she had suffered had made her only zealous to relieve others' sufferings: and the discontented wise man learns from her example that the world is, after all, a much happier compromise than it seems to be, and life easier than wisdom is apt to think it; that grief gives joy its relish, purifying what it touches truly; and that "sweet are the uses of adversity" when its clouds are not the shadow of dishonour. All this can be shown but lightly within such space, it is true; and in the machinery a good deal has to be taken for granted. But Dickens was quite justified in turning aside from objections of that kind. "You must suppose," he wrote to me (21st of November), "that the Ghost's saving clause gives him those glimpses without which it would be impossible to carry out the idea. Of course my point is that bad and good are inextricably linked in remembrance, and that you could not choose the enjoyment of recollecting only the good. To have all the best of it you must remember the worst also. My intention in the other point you mention is, that he should not know himself how he communicates the gift, whether by look or touch; and that it should diffuse itself in its own way in each case. I can make this clearer by a very few lines in the second part. It is not only necessary to be so, for the variety of the story, but I think it makes the thing wilder and stranger." Critical niceties are indeed out of place, where wildness and strangeness in the means matter less than that there should be clearness in the drift and intention. Dickens leaves no doubt as to this. He thoroughly makes out his fancy, that no man should so far question the mysterious dispensations of evil in this world as to desire to lose the recollection of such injustice or misery as he may suppose it to have done to himself. There may have been sorrow, but there was the kindness that assuaged it; there may have been wrong, but there was the charity that forgave it; and with both are connected inseparably so many thoughts that soften and exalt whatever else is in the sense of memory, that what is good and pleasurable in life would cease to continue so if these were forgotten. The old proverb does not tell you to forget that you may forgive, but to forgive that you may forget. It is forgiveness of wrong, for forgetfulness of the evil that was in it; such as poor old Lear begged of Cordelia.

The design for his much-thought-of new Periodical was still "dim," as we have seen, when the first cogitation of it at Bonchurch occupied him; but the expediency of making it clearer came soon after with a visit from Mr. Evans, who brought his half-year's accounts of sales, and some small disappointment for him in those of Copperfield. "The accounts are rather shy, after Dombey, and what you said comes true after all. I am not sorry I cannot bring myself to care much for what opinions people may form; and I have a strong belief, that, if any of my books are read years hence, Dombey will be remembered as among the best of them: but passing influences are important for the time, and as Chuzzlewit with its small sale sent me up, Dombey's large sale has tumbled me down. Not very much, however, in real truth. These accounts only include the first three numbers, have of course been burdened with all the heavy expenses of number one, and ought not in reason to be complained of. But it is clear to me that the Periodical must be set agoing in the spring; and I have already been busy, at odd half-hours, in shadowing forth a name and an idea. Evans says they have but one opinion repeated to them of Copperfield, and they feel very confident about it. A steady twenty-five thousand, which it is now on the verge of, will do very well. The back numbers are always going off. Read the enclosed."

It was a letter from a Russian man of letters, dated from St. Petersburg and signed "Trinarch Ivansvitch Wredenskii," sending him a translation of Dombey into Russian; and informing him that his works, which before had only been translated in the journals, and with certain omissions, had now been translated in their entire form by his correspondent, though even he had found an omission to be necessary in his version of Pickwick. He adds, with an exquisite courtesy to our national tongue which is yet not forgetful of the claims of his own nationality, that his difficulties (in the Sam Weller direction and others) had

arisen from the "impossibility of portraying faithfully the beauties of the original in the Russian language, which, though the richest in Europe in its expressiveness, is far from being elaborate enough for literature like other civilized languages." He had however, he assured Dickens, been unremitting in his efforts to live with his thoughts; and the exalted opinion he had formed of them was attended by only one wish, that such a writer "could but have expanded under a Russian sky!" Still, his fate was an enviable one. "For the last eleven years your name has enjoyed a wide celebrity in Russia, and from the banks of the Neva to the remotest parts of Siberia you are read with avidity. Your Dombey continues to inspire with enthusiasm the whole of the literary Russia." Much did we delight in the good Wredenskii; and for a long time, on anything going "contrairy" in the public or private direction with him, he would tell me he had ordered his portmanteau to be packed for the more sympathizing and congenial climate of "the remotest parts of Siberia."

The week before he left Bonchurch I again had news of the old and often recurring fancy. "The old notion of the Periodical, which has been agitating itself in my mind for so long, I really think is at last gradually growing into form." That was on the 24th of September; and on the 7th of October, from Broadstairs, I had something of the form it had been taking. "I do great injustice to my floating ideas (pretty speedily and comfortably settling down into orderly arrangement) by saying anything about the Periodical now: but my notion is a weekly journal, price either three-halfpence or two-pence, matter in part original and in part selected, and always having, if possible, a little good poetry. . . . Upon the selected matter, I have particular notions. One is, that it should always be a subject. For example, a history of Piracy; in connexion with which there is a vast deal of extraordinary, romantic, and almost unknown matter. A history of Knight-errantry, and the wild old notion of the Sangreal. 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. A history of remarkable characters, good and bad, in history; to assist the reader's judgment in his observation of men, and in his estimates of the truth of many characters in fiction. All these things, and fifty others that I have already thought of, would be compilations; through the whole of which the general intellect and purpose of the paper should run, and in which there would be scarcely less interest than in the original matter. The original matter to be essays, reviews, letters, theatrical criticisms, &c, &c, as amusing as possible, but all distinctly and boldly going to what in one's own view ought to be the spirit of the people and the time. . . . Now to bind all this together, and to get a character established as it were which any of the writers may maintain without difficulty, I want to suppose a certain SHADOW, which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight, and be in all homes, and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty. Which may be in the Theatre, the Palace, the House of Commons, the Prisons, the Unions, the Churches, on the Railroad, on the Sea, abroad and at home: a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature. I don't think it would do to call the paper THE SHADOW: but I want something tacked to that title, to express the notion of its being a cheerful, useful, and always welcome Shadow. I want to open the first number with this Shadow's account of himself and his family. I want to have all the correspondence addressed to him. I want him to issue his warnings from time to time, that he is going to fall on such and such a subject; or to expose such and such a piece of humbug; or that he may be expected shortly in such and such a place. I want the compiled part of the paper to express the idea of this Shadow's having been in libraries, and among the books referred to. I want him to loom as a fanciful thing all over London; and to get up a general notion of 'What will the Shadow say about this, I wonder? What will the Shadow say about that? Is the Shadow here?' and so forth. Do you understand? . . . I have an enormous difficulty in expressing what I mean, in this stage of the business; but I think the importance of the idea is, that once stated on paper, there is no difficulty in keeping it up. That it presents an odd, unsubstantial, whimsical, new thing:

a sort of previously unthought-of Power going about. That it will concentrate into one focus all that is done in the paper. That it sets up a creature which isn't the Spectator, and isn't Isaac Bickerstaff, and isn't anything of that kind: but in which people will be perfectly willing to believe, and which is just mysterious and quaint enough to have a sort of charm for their imagination, while it will represent common-sense and humanity. I want to express in the title, and in the grasp of the idea to express also, that it is the Thing at everybody's elbow, and in everybody's footsteps. At the window, by the fire, in the street, in the house, from infancy to old age, everyone's inseparable companion. . . . Now do you make anything out of this? which I let off as if I were a bladder full of it, and you had punctured me. I have not breathed the idea to any one; but I have a lively hope that it is an idea, and that out of it the whole scheme may be hammered."

Excellent the idea doubtless, and so described in his letter that hardly anything more characteristic survives him. But I could not make anything out of it that had a quite feasible look. The ordinary ground of miscellaneous reading, selection, and compilation out of which it was to spring, seemed to me no proper soil for the imaginative produce it was meant to bear. As his fancies grew and gathered round it, they had given it too much of the range and scope of his own exhaustless land of invention and marvel; and the very means proposed for letting in the help of others would only more heavily have weighted himself. Not to trouble the reader now with objections given him in detail, my judgment was clear against his plan; less for any doubt of the effect if its parts could be brought to combine, than for my belief that it was not in that view practicable; and though he did not immediately accept my reasons, he acquiesced in them ultimately. "I do not lay much stress on your grave doubts about Periodical, but more anon." The more anon resolved itself into conversations out of which the shape given to the project was that which it finally took.

It was to be a weekly miscellany of general literature; and its stated objects were to be, to contribute to the entertainment and instruction of all classes of readers, and to help in the discussion of the more important social questions of the time. It was to comprise short stories by others as well as himself; matters of passing interest in the liveliest form that could be given to them; subjects suggested by books that might most be attracting attention; and poetry in every number if possible, but in any case something of romantic fancy. This was to be a cardinal point. There was to be no mere utilitarian spirit; with all familiar things, but especially those repellent on the surface, something was to be connected that should be fanciful or kindly; and the hardest workers were to be taught that their lot is not necessarily excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination. This was all finally settled by the close of 1849, when a general announcement of the intended adventure was made. There remained only a title and an assistant editor; and I am happy now to remember that for the latter important duty Mr. Wills was chosen at my suggestion. He discharged his duties with admirable patience and ability for twenty years, and Dickens's later life had no more intimate friend.

The title took some time and occupied many letters. One of the first thought-of has now the curious interest of having foreshadowed, by the motto proposed to accompany it, the title of the series of All the Year Round which he was led to substitute for the older series in 1859. "THE ROBIN. With this motto from Goldsmith. 'The redbreast, celebrated for its affection to mankind, continues with us, the year round._'" That however was rejected. Then came: "MANKIND. This I think very good." It followed the other nevertheless. After it came: "And here a strange idea, but with decided advantages. 'CHARLES DICKENS. A weekly journal designed for the instruction and entertainment of all classes of readers. CONDUCTED BY HIMSELF.'" Still, there was something wanting in that also. Next day arrived: "I really think if there be anything wanting in the other name, that this is very pretty, and just supplies it. THE HOUSEHOLD VOICE. I have thought of many others, as--THE HOUSEHOLD GUEST. THE HOUSEHOLD FACE. THE COMRADE. THE MICROSCOPE. THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE. THE LEVER.

THE ROLLING YEARS. THE HOLLY TREE (with two lines from Southey for a motto). EVERYTHING, But I rather think the VOICE is it." It was near indeed; but the following day came, "HOUSEHOLD WORDS. This is a very pretty name:" and the choice was made.

The first number appeared on Saturday the 30th of March 1850, and contained among other things the beginning of a story by a very original writer, Mrs. Gaskell, for whose powers he had a high admiration, and with whom he had friendly intercourse during many years. Other opportunities will arise for mention of those with whom this new labour brought him into personal communication, but I may at once say that of all the writers, before unknown, whom his journal helped to make familiar to a wide world of readers, he had the strongest personal interest in Mr. Sala, and placed at once in the highest rank his capabilities of help in such an enterprise. An illustrative trait of what I have named as its cardinal point to him will fitly close my account of its establishment. Its first number, still unpublished, had not seemed to him quite to fulfil his promise, "tenderly to cherish the light of fancy inherent in all breasts;" and, as soon as he received the proof of the second, I heard from him. "Looking over the suggested contents of number two at breakfast this morning" (Brighton: 14th of March 1850) "I felt an uneasy sense of there being a want of something tender, which would apply to some universal household knowledge. Coming down in the railroad the other night (always a wonderfully suggestive place to me when I am alone) I was looking at the stars, and revolving a little idea about them. Putting now these two things together, I wrote the enclosed little paper, straightway; and should like you to read it before you send it to the printers (it will not take you five minutes), and let me have a proof by return." This was the child's "dream of a star," which opened his second number; and, not appearing among his reprinted pieces, may justify a word or two of description. It is of a brother and sister, constant child-companions, who used to make friends of a star, watching it together until they knew when and where it would rise, and always bidding it good-night; so that when the sister dies the lonely brother still connects her with the star, which he then sees opening as a world of light, and its rays making a shining pathway from earth to heaven; and he also sees angels waiting to receive travellers up that sparkling road, his little sister among them; and he thinks ever after that he belongs less to the earth than to the star where his sister is; and he grows up to youth and through manhood and old age, consoled still under the successive domestic bereavements that fall to his earthly lot by renewal of that vision of his childhood; until at last, lying on his own bed of death, he feels that he is moving as a child to his child-sister, and he thanks his heavenly father that the star had so often opened before to receive the dear ones who awaited him.

His sister Fanny and himself, he told me long before this paper was written, used to wander at night about a churchyard near their house, looking up at the stars; and her early death, of which I am now to speak, had vividly reawakened all the childish associations which made her memory dear to him.

Volume II, Chapter 20 (1848-1851): Last Years in Devonshire Terrace (Part 1)

Last Years in Devonshire Terrace

EXCEPTING always the haunts and associations of his childhood, Dickens had no particular sentiment of locality, and any special regard for houses he had lived in was not a thing noticeable in him. But he cared most for Devonshire-terrace, perhaps for the bit of ground attached to it; and it was with regret he suddenly discovered, at the close of 1847, that he should have to resign it "next lady-day three years. I had thought the lease two years more." To that brief remaining time belong some incidents of which I have still to give account; and I connect them with the house in which he lived during the progress of what is generally thought his greatest book, and of what I think were his happiest years.

We had never had such intimate confidences as in the interval since his return from Paris; but these have been used in my narrative of the childhood and boyish experiences, and what remain are incidental only. Of the fragment of autobiography there also given, the origin has been told; but the intention of leaving such a record had been in his mind, we now see, at an earlier date; and it was the very depth of our interest in the opening of his fragment that led to the larger design in which it became absorbed. "I hardly know why I write this," was his own comment on one of his personal revelations, "but the more than friendship which has grown between us seems to force it on me in my present mood. We shall speak of it all, you and I, Heaven grant, wisely and wonderingly many and many a time in after years. In the meanwhile I am more at rest for having opened all my heart and mind to you. . . . This day eleven years, poor dear Mary died."

That was written on the seventh of May 1848, but another sadness impending at the time was taking his thoughts still farther back; to when he trotted about with his little elder sister in the small garden to the house at Portsea. The faint hope for her which Elliotson had given him in Paris had since completely broken down; and I was to hear, in less than two months after the letter just quoted, how nearly the end was come. "A change took place in poor Fanny," he wrote on the 5th of July, "about the middle of the day yesterday, which took me out there last night. Her cough suddenly ceased almost, and, strange to say, she immediately became aware of her hopeless state; to which she resigned herself, after an hour's unrest and struggle, with extraordinary sweetness and constancy. The irritability passed, and all hope faded away; though only two nights before, she had been planning for 'after Christmas.' She is greatly changed. I had a long interview with her to-day, alone; and when she had expressed some wishes about the funeral, and her being buried in unconsecrated ground" (Mr. Burnett's family were dissenters), "I asked her whether she had any care or anxiety in the world. She said No, none. It was hard to die at such a time of life, but she had no alarm whatever in the prospect of the change; felt sure we should meet again in a better world; and although they had said she might rally for a time, did not really wish it. She said she was quite calm and happy, relied upon the mediation of Christ, and had no terror at all. She had worked very hard, even when ill; but believed that was in her nature, and neither regretted nor complained of it. Burnett had been always very good to her; they had never quarrelled; she was sorry to think of his going back to such a lonely home; and was distressed about her children, but not painfully so. She showed me how thin and worn she was; spoke about an invention she had heard of that she would like to have tried, for the deformed child's back; called to my remembrance all our sister Letitia's patience and steadiness; and, though she shed tears sometimes, clearly impressed upon me that her mind was made up, and at rest. I asked her very often, if she could ever recall anything that she could leave to my doing, to put it down, or mention it to somebody if I was not there; and she said she would,

but she firmly believed that there was nothing--nothing. Her husband being young, she said, and her children infants, she could not help thinking sometimes, that it would be very long in the course of nature before they were reunited; but she knew that was a mere human fancy, and could have no reality after she was dead. Such an affecting exhibition of strength and tenderness, in all that early decay, is quite indescribable. I need not tell you how it moved me. I cannot look round upon the dear children here, without some misgiving that this sad disease will not perish out of our blood with her; but I am sure I have no selfishness in the thought, and God knows how small the world looks to one who comes out of such a sick-room on a bright summer day. I don't know why I write this before going to bed. I only know that in the very pity and grief of my heart, I feel as if it were doing something." After not many weeks she died, and the little child who was her last anxiety did not long survive her.

In all the latter part of the year Dickens's thoughts were turning much to the form his next book should assume. A suggestion that he should write it in the first person, by way of change, had been thrown out by me, which he took at once very gravely; and this, with other things, though as yet not dreaming of any public use of his own personal and private recollections, conspired to bring about that resolve. The determination once taken, with what a singular truthfulness he contrived to blend the fact with the fiction may be shown by a small occurrence of this time. It has been inferred, from the vividness of the boy-impressions of Yarmouth in David's earliest experiences, that the place must have been familiar to his own boyhood: but the truth was that at the close of 1848 he first saw that celebrated sea-port. One of its earlier months had been signalised by an adventure in which Leech, Lemon, and myself took part with him, when, obtaining horses from Salisbury, we passed the whole of a March day in riding over every part of the Plain; visiting Stonehenge, and exploring Hazlitt's "hut" at Winterslow, birthplace of some of his finest essays; altogether with so brilliant a success that now (13th of November) he proposed to "repeat the Salisbury Plain idea in a new direction in mid-winter, to wit, Blackgang Chine in the Isle of Wight, with dark winter cliffs and roaring oceans." But mid-winter brought with it too much dreariness of its own, to render these stormy accompaniments to it very palatable; and on the last day of the year he bethought him "it would be better to make an outburst to some old cathedral city we don't know, and what do you say to Norwich and Stanfield-hall?" Thither accordingly the three friends went, illness at the last disabling me; and of the result I heard (12th of January, 1849) that Stanfield-hall, the scene of a recent frightful tragedy, had nothing attractive unless the term might be applied to "a murderous look that seemed to invite such a crime. We arrived," continued Dickens, "between the Hall and Potass farm, as the search was going on for the pistol in a manner so consummately stupid, that there was nothing on earth to prevent any of Rush's labourers from accepting five pounds from Rush junior to find the weapon and give it to him. Norwich, a disappointment" (one pleasant face "transformeth a city," but he was unable yet to connect it with our delightful friend Elwin); "all save its place of execution, which we found fit for a gigantic scoundrel's exit. But the success of the trip, for me, was to come. Yarmouth, sir, where we went afterwards, is the strangest place in the wide world: one hundred and forty-six miles of hill-less marsh between it and London. More when we meet. I shall certainly try my hand at it." He made it the home of his "little Em'ly."

Everything now was taking that direction with him; and soon, to give his own account of it, his mind was upon names "running like a high sea." Four days after the date of the last-quoted letter ("all over happily, thank God, by four o'clock this morning") there came the birth of his eighth child and sixth son; whom at first he meant to call by Oliver Goldsmith's name, but settled afterwards into that of Henry Fielding; and to whom that early friend Ainsworth who had first made us known to each other, welcome and pleasant companion always, was asked to be godfather. Telling me of the change in the name of the little fellow, which he had made in a kind of homage to the style of work he was now so bent on beginning, he added, "What should you think of this for a notion of a character? 'Yes, that is very true: but now, What's his

motive?_' I fancy I could make something like it into a kind of amusing and more innocent Pecksniff. 'Well now, yes--no doubt that was a fine thing to do! But now, stop a moment, let us see--What's his motive?_'" Here again was but one of the many outward signs of fancy and fertility that accompanied the outset of all his more important books; though, as in their cases also, other moods of the mind incident to such beginnings were less favourable. "Deepest despondency, as usual, in commencing, besets me;" is the opening of the letter in which he speaks of what of course was always one of his first anxieties, the selection of a name. In this particular instance he had been undergoing doubts and misgivings to more than the usual degree. It was not until the 23rd of February he got to anything like the shape of a feasible title. "I should like to know how the enclosed (one of those I have been thinking of) strikes you, on a first acquaintance with it. It is odd, I think, and new; but it may have A's difficulty of being 'too comic, my boy.' I suppose I should have to add, though, by way of motto, 'And in short it led to the very Mag's Diversions. Old Saying._' Or would it be better, there being equal authority for either, 'And in short they all played Mag's Diversions. Old Saying?_'

Mag's Diversions._ Being the personal history of MR. THOMAS MAG THE YOUNGER, Of Blunderstone House."

This was hardly satisfactory, I thought; and it soon became apparent that he thought so too, although within the next three days I had it in three other forms. "Mag's Diversions, being the Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of Mr. David Mag the Younger, of Blunderstone House." The second omitted Adventures, and called his hero Mr. David Mag the Younger, of Copperfield House. The third made nearer approach to what the destinies were leading him to, and transformed Mr. David Mag into Mr. David Copperfield the Younger and his great-aunt Margaret; retaining still as his leading title, Mag's Diversions. It is singular that it should never have occurred to him, while the name was thus strangely as by accident bringing itself together, that the initials were but his own reversed; but he was much startled when I pointed this out, and protested it was just in keeping with the fates and chances which were always befalling him. "Why else," he said, "should I so obstinately have kept to that name when once it turned up?"

It was quite true that he did so, as I had curious proof following close upon the heels of that third proposal. "I wish," he wrote on the 26th of February, "you would look over carefully the titles now enclosed, and tell me to which you most incline. You will see that they give up Mag altogether, and refer exclusively to one name--that which I last sent you. I doubt whether I could, on the whole, get a better name.

"1. The Copperfield Disclosures._ Being the personal history, experience, and observation, of Mr. David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone House.

"2. The Copperfield Records._ Being the personal history, experience, and observation, of Mr. David Copperfield the Younger, of Copperfield Cottage.

"3. The Last Living Speech and Confession of David Copperfield Junior, of Blunderstone Lodge, who was never executed at the Old Bailey. Being his personal history found among his papers.

"4. The Copperfield Survey of the World as it Rolled._ Being the personal history, experience, and observation, of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery.

"5. The Last Will and Testament of Mr. David Copperfield._ Being his personal history left as a legacy.

"6. Copperfield, Complete._ Being the whole personal history and experience of Mr. David Copperfield of Blunderstone House, which he never meant to be published on any account.

Or, the opening words of No. 6 might be Copperfield's Entire; and The Copperfield Confessions might open Nos. 1 and 2. Now, WHAT SAY YOU?"

What I said is to be inferred from what he wrote back on the 28th. "The Survey has been my favourite from the first. Kate picked it out from the rest, without my saying anything about it. Georgy too. You hit upon it, on the first glance. Therefore I have no doubt that it is indisputably the best title; and I will stick to it." There was a change nevertheless. His completion of the second chapter defined to himself, more clearly than before, the character of the book; and the propriety of rejecting everything not strictly personal from the name given to it. The words proposed, therefore, became ultimately these only: "The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery, which he never meant to be published on any account." And the letter which told me that with this name it was finally to be launched on the first of May, told me also (19th April) the difficulties that still beset him at the opening. "My hand is out in the matter of Copperfield. To-day and yesterday I have done nothing. Though I know what I want to do, I am lumbering on like a stage-waggon. I can't even dine at the Temple to-day, I feel it so important to stick at it this evening, and make some head. I am quite aground; quite a literary Benedict, as he appeared when his heels wouldn't stay upon the carpet; and the long Copperfieldian perspective looks snowy and thick, this fine morning." The allusion was to a dinner at his house the night before; when not only Rogers had to be borne out, having fallen sick at the table, but, as we rose soon after to quit the dining-room, Mr. Jules Benedict had quite suddenly followed the poet's lead, and fallen prostrate on the carpet in the midst of us. Amid the general consternation there seemed a want of proper attendance on the sick: the distinguished musician faring in this respect hardly so well as the famous bard, by whose protracted sufferings in the library, whither he had been removed, the sanitary help available on the establishment was still absorbed; and as Dickens had been eloquent during dinner on the atrocities of a pauper-farming case at Tooting which was then exciting a fury of indignation, Fonblanque now declared him to be no better himself than a second Drouet, reducing his guests to a lamentable state by the food he had given them, and aggravating their sad condition by absence of all proper nursing. The joke was well kept up by Quin and Edwin Landseer, Lord Strangford joining in with a tragic sympathy for his friend the poet; and the banquet so dolefully interrupted ended in uproarious mirth. For nothing really serious had happened. Benedict went laughing away with his wife, and I helped Rogers on with his overshoes for his usual night-walk home. "Do you know how many waistcoats I wear?" asked the poet of me, as I was doing him this service. I professed my inability to guess. "Five!" he said: "and here they are!" Upon which he opened them, in the manner of the gravedigger in Hamlet, and showed me every one.

That dinner was in the April of 1849, and among others present were Mrs. Procter and Mrs. Macready, dear and familiar names always in his house. No swifter or surer perception than Dickens's for what was solid and beautiful in character; he rated it higher than intellectual effort; and the same lofty place, first in his affection and respect, would have been Macready's and Procter's, if the one had not been the greatest of actors, and the other a poet as genuine as old Fletcher or Beaumont. There were present at this dinner also the American minister and Mrs. Bancroft (it was the year of that visit of Macready to America, which ended in the disastrous Forrest riots); and it had among its guests Lady Graham, the wife of Sir James Graham, than whom not even the wit and beauty of her nieces, Mrs. Norton and Lady Dufferin, better represented the brilliant family of the Sheridans; so many of whose members, and these three above all, Dickens prized among his friends. The table that day will be "full" if I add the celebrated singer Miss Catherine Hayes, and her homely good-natured Irish mother, who startled us all very much by complimenting Mrs. Dickens on her having had for her father so clever a painter as Mr. Hogarth.

Others familiar to Devonshire-terrace in these years will be indicated if I name an earlier dinner (3rd of January), for the "christening" of the Haunted Man, when, besides Lemons, Evanses, Leeches, Bradburys, and Stanfields, there were present Tenniel, Topham, Stone, Robert Bell, and Thomas Beard. Next month (24th of March) I met at his table, Lord and Lady Lovelace; Milner Gibson, Mowbray Morris,

Horace Twiss, and their wives; Lady Molesworth and her daughter (Mrs. Ford); John Hardwick, Charles Babbage, and Dr. Locock. That distinguished physician had attended the poor girl, Miss Abercrombie, whose death by strychnine led to the exposure of Wainewright's murders; and the opinion he had formed of her chances of recovery, the external indications of that poison being then but imperfectly known, was first shaken, he told me, by the gloomy and despairing cries of the old family nurse, that her mother and her uncle had died exactly so! These, it was afterwards proved, had been among the murderer's former victims. The Lovelaces were frequent guests after the return from Italy, Sir George Crawford, so friendly in Genoa, having married Lord Lovelace's sister; and few had a greater warmth of admiration for Dickens than Lord Byron's "Ada," on whom Paul Dombey's death laid a strange fascination. They were again at a dinner got up in the following year for Scribe and the composer Halevy, who had come over to bring out the Tempest at Her Majesty's-theatre, then managed by Mr. Lumley, who with M. Van de Weyer, Mrs. Gore and her daughter, the Hogarths, and I think the fine French comedian, Samson, were also among those present. Earlier that year there were gathered at his dinner-table the John Delanes, Isambard Brunels, Thomas Longmans (friends since the earliest Broadstairs days, and special favourites always), Lord Mulgrave, and Lord Carlisle, with all of whom his intercourse was intimate and frequent, and became especially so with Delane in later years. Lord Carlisle amused us that night, I remember, by repeating what the good old Brougham had said to him of "those Punch people," expressing what was really his fixed belief. "They never get my face, and are obliged" (which, like Pope, he always pronounced obleeged), "to put up with my plaid trousers!" Of Lord Mulgrave, pleasantly associated with the first American experiences, let me add that he now went with us to several outlying places of amusement of which he wished to acquire some knowledge, and which Dickens knew better than any man; small theatres, saloons, and gardens in city or borough, to which the Eagle and Britannia were as palaces; and I think he was of the party one famous night in the summer of 1849 (29th of June), when with Talfourd, Edwin Landseer, and Stanfield, we went to the Battle of Waterloo at Vauxhall, and were astounded to see pass in immediately before us, in a bright white overcoat, the great Duke himself, Lady Douro on his arm, the little Ladies Ramsay by his side, and everybody cheering and clearing the way before him. That the old hero enjoyed it all, there could be no doubt, and he made no secret of his delight in "Young Hernandez;" but the "Battle" was undeniably tedious, and it was impossible not to sympathize with the repeatedly and very audibly expressed wish of Talfourd, that "the Prussians would come up!"

The preceding month was that of the start of David Copperfield, and to one more dinner (on the 12th) I may especially refer for those who were present at it. Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle came, Thackeray and Rogers, Mrs. Gaskell and Kenyon, Jerrold and Hablot Browne, with Mr. and Mrs. Tagart; and it was a delight to see the enjoyment of Dickens at Carlyle's laughing reply to questions about his health, that he was, in the language of Mr. Peggotty's housekeeper, a lorn lone creature and everything went contrairy with him. Things were not likely to go better, I thought, as I saw the great writer,--kindest as well as wisest of men, but not very patient under sentimental philosophies,--seated next the good Mr. Tagart, who soon was heard launching at him various metaphysical questions in regard to heaven and such like; and the relief was great when Thackeray introduced, with quaint whimsicality, a story which he and I had heard Macready relate in talking to us about his boyish days, of a country actor who had supported himself for six months on his judicious treatment of the "tag" to the Castle Spectre. In the original it stands that you are to do away with suspicion, banish vile mistrust, and, almost in the words we had just heard from the minister to the philosopher, "Believe there is a Heaven nor Doubt that Heaven is just!" in place of which Macready's friend, observing that the drop fell for the most part quite coldly, substituted one night the more telling appeal, "And give us your Applause, for that is ALWAYS JUST!" which brought down the house with rapture.

This chapter would far outrun its limits if I spoke of other as pleasant gatherings under Dickens's roof

during the years which I am now more particularly describing; when, besides the dinners, the musical enjoyments and dancings, as his children became able to take part in them, were incessant. "Remember that for my Biography!" he said to me gravely on twelfth-day in 1849, after telling me what he had done the night before; and as gravely I now redeem my laughing promise that I would. Little Mary and her sister Kate had taken much pains to teach their father the polka, that he might dance it with them at their brother's birthday festivity (held this year on the 7th, as the 6th was a Sunday); and in the middle of the previous night as he lay in bed, the fear had fallen on him suddenly that the step was forgotten, and then and there, in that wintry dark cold night, he got out of bed to practise it. Anything more characteristic could certainly not be told; unless I could have shown him dancing it afterwards, and far excelling the youngest performer in untiring vigour and vivacity. There was no one who approached him on these occasions excepting only our attached friend Captain Marryat, who had a frantic delight in dancing, especially with children, of whom and whose enjoyments he was as fond as it became so thoroughly good hearted a man to be. His name would have stood first among those I have been recalling, as he was among the first in Dickens's liking; but in the autumn of 1848 he had unexpectedly passed away. Other names however still reproach me for omission as my memory goes back. With Marryat's on the earliest page of this volume stands that of Monckton Milnes, familiar with Dickens over all the time it covers, and still more prominent in Tavistock-house days when with Lady Houghton he brought fresh claims to my friend's admiration and regard. Of Bulwer Lytton's frequent presence in all his houses, and of Dickens's admiration for him as one of the supreme masters in his art, so unswerving and so often publicly declared, it would be needless again to speak. Nor shall I dwell upon his interchange of hospitalities with distinguished men in the two great professions so closely allied to literature and its followers; Denmans, Pollocks, Campbells, and Chittys; Watsons, Southwood Smiths, Lococks, and Elliotsons. To Alfred Tennyson, through all the friendly and familiar days I am describing, he gave full allegiance and honoured welcome. Tom Taylor was often with him; and there was a charm for him I should find it difficult to exaggerate in Lord Dudley Stuart's gentle yet noble character, his refined intelligence and generous public life, expressed so perfectly in his chivalrous face. Incomplete indeed would be the list if I did not add to it the frank and hearty Lord Nugent, who had so much of his grandfather, Goldsmith's friend, in his lettered tastes and jovial enjoyments. Nor should I forget occasional days with dear old Charles Kemble and one or other of his daughters; with Alexander Dyce; and with Harness and his sister, or his niece and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Archdale; made especially pleasant by talk about great days of the stage. It was something to hear Kemble on his sister's Mrs. Beverley; or to see Harness and Dyce exultant in recollecting her Volumnia. The enchantment of the Mrs. Beverley, her brother would delightfully illustrate by imitation of her manner of restraining Beverley's intemperance to their only friend, "You are too busy, sir!" when she quietly came down the stage from a table at which she had seemed to be occupying herself, laid her hand softly on her husband's arm, and in a gentle half-whisper "No, not too busy; mistaken perhaps; but----" not only stayed his temper but reminded him of obligations forgotten in the heat of it. Up to where the tragic terror began, our friend told us, there was nothing but this composed domestic sweetness, expressed even in the simplicity and neat arrangement of her dress, her cap with the strait band, and her hair gathered up underneath; but all changing when the passion did begin; one single disordered lock escaping at the first outbreak, and, in the final madness, all of it streaming dishevelled down her beautiful face. Kemble made no secret of his belief that his sister had the higher genius of the two; but he spoke with rapture of "John's" Macbeth and parts of his Othello; comparing his "Farewell the tranquil mind" to the running down of a clock, an image which he did not know that Hazlitt had applied to the delivery of "To-morrow and to-morrow," in the other tragedy. In all this Harness seemed to agree; and I thought a distinction was not ill put by him, on the night of which I speak, in his remark that the nature in Kemble's acting only supplemented his

magnificent art, whereas, though the artist was not less supreme in his sister, it was on nature she most relied, bringing up the other power only to the aid of it. "It was in another sense like your writing," said Harness to Dickens, "the commonest natural feelings made great, even when not rendered more refined, by art." Her Constance would have been fishwify, he declared, if its wonderful truth had not overborne every other feeling; and her Volumnia escaped being vulgar only by being so excessively grand. But it was just what was so called "vulgarity" that made its passionate appeal to the vulgar in a better meaning of the word. When she first entered, Harness said, swaying and surging from side to side with every movement of the Roman crowd itself, as it went out and returned in confusion, she so absorbed her son into herself as she looked at him, so swelled and amplified in her pride and glory for him, that "the people in the pit blubbered all round," and he could no more help it than the rest.

There are yet some other names that should have place in these rambling recollections, though I by no means affect to remember all. One Sunday evening Mazzini made memorable by taking us to see the school he had established in Clerkenwell for the Italian organ-boys. This was after dining with Dickens, who had been brought into personal intercourse with the great Italian by having given money to a begging impostor who made unauthorized use of his name. Edinburgh friends made him regular visits in the spring time: not Jeffrey and his family alone, but sheriff Gordon and his, with whom he was not less intimate, Lord Murray and his wife, Sir William Allan and his niece, Lord Robertson with his wonderful Scotch mimicries, and Peter Fraser with his enchanting Scotch songs; our excellent friend Liston the surgeon, until his fatal illness came in December 1848, being seldom absent from those assembled to bid such visitors welcome. Allan's name may remind me of other artists often at his house, Eastlakes, Leslies, Friths, and Wards, besides those who have had frequent mention, and among whom I should have included Charles as well as Edwin Landseer, and William Boxall. Nor should I drop from this section of his friends, than whom none were more attractive to him, such celebrated names in the sister arts as those of Miss Helen Faucit, an actress worthily associated with the brightest days of our friend Macready's managements, Mr. Sims Reeves, Mr. John Parry, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Webster, Mr. Harley, Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, Mr. Whitworth, and Miss Dolby. Mr. George Henry Lewes he had an old and great regard for; among other men of letters should not be forgotten the cordial Thomas Ingoldsby, and many-sided true-hearted Charles Knight; Mr. R. H. Horne and his wife were frequent visitors both in London and at seaside holidays; and I have met at his table Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall. There were the Duff Gordons too, the Lyells, and, very old friends of us both, the Emerson Tennents; there was the good George Raymond, Mr. Frank Beard and his wife; the Porter Smiths, valued for Macready's sake as well as their own; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Black, near connections by marriage of George Cattermole, with whom there was intimate intercourse both before and during the residence in Italy; Mr. Thompson, brother of Mrs. Smithson formerly named, and his wife, whose sister Frederick Dickens married; Mr. Mitton, his own early companion; and Mrs. Torrens, who had played with the amateurs in Canada. These are all in my memory so connected with Devonshire-terrace, as friends or familiar acquaintance, that they claim this word before leaving it; and visitors from America, I may remark, had always a grateful reception. Of the Bancrofts mention has been made, and with them should be coupled the Abbot Lawrences, Prescott, Hillard, George Curtis, and Felton's brother. Felton himself did not visit England until the Tavistock-house time. In 1847 there was a delightful day with the Coldens and the Wilkses, relatives by marriage of Jeffrey; in the following year, I think at my rooms because of some accident that closed Devonshire-terrace that day (25th of April), Dickens, Carlyle, and myself foregathered with the admirable Emerson; and M. Van de Weyer will probably remember a dinner where he took joyous part with Dickens in running down a phrase which the learned in books, Mr. Cogswell, on a mission here for the Astor library, had startled us by denouncing as an uncouth Scotch barbarism--open up. You found it constantly in Hume, he said, but hardly anywhere else; and he defied us to find it more than once

through the whole of the volumes of Gibbon. Upon this, after brief wonder and doubt, we all thought it best to take part in a general assault upon open up, by invention of phrases on the same plan that should show it in exaggerated burlesque, and support Mr. Cogswell's indictment. Then came a struggle who should carry the absurdity farthest; and the victory remained with M. Van de Weyer until Dickens surpassed even him, and "opened up" depths of almost frenzied absurdity that would have delighted the heart of Leigh Hunt. It will introduce the last and not least honoured name into my list of his acquaintance and friends, if I mention his amusing little interruption one day to Professor Owen's description of a telescope of huge dimensions built by an enterprising clergyman who had taken to the study of the stars; and who was eager, said Owen, to see farther into heaven--he was going to say, than Lord Rosse; if Dickens had not drily interposed, "than his professional studies had enabled him to penetrate."

Volume II, Chapter 20 (1848-1851): Last Years in Devonshire Terrace (Part 2)

Some incidents that belong specially to the three years that closed his residence in the home thus associated with not the least interesting part of his career, will farther show what now were his occupations and ways of life. In the summer of 1849 he came up from Broadstairs to attend a Mansion-house dinner, which the lord mayor of that day had been moved by a laudable ambition to give to "literature and art," which he supposed would be adequately represented by the Royal Academy, the contributors to Punch, Dickens, and one or two newspaper men. On the whole the result was not cheering; the worthy chief magistrate, no doubt quite undesignedly, expressing too much surprise at the unaccustomed faces around him to be altogether complimentary. In general (this was the tone) we are in the habit of having princes, dukes, ministers, and what not for our guests, but what a delight, all the greater for being unusual, to see gentlemen like you! In other words, what could possibly be pleasanter than for people satiated with greatness to get for a while by way of change into the butler's pantry? This in substance was Dickens's account to me next day, and his reason for having been very careful in his acknowledgment of the toast of "the Novelists." He was nettled not a little therefore by a jesting allusion to himself in the Daily News in connection with the proceedings, and asked me to forward a remonstrance. Having a strong dislike to all such displays of sensitiveness, I suppressed the letter; but it is perhaps worth printing now. Its date is Broadstairs, Wednesday 11th of July 1849. "I have no other interest in, or concern with, a most facetious article on last Saturday's dinner at the Mansion-house, which appeared in your paper of yesterday, and found its way here to-day, than that it misrepresents me in what I said on the occasion. If you should not think it at all damaging to the wit of that satire to state what I did say, I shall be much obliged to you. It was this. . . . That I considered the compliment of a recognition of Literature by the citizens of London the more acceptable to us because it was unusual in that hall, and likely to be an advantage and benefit to them in proportion as it became in future less unusual. That, on behalf of the novelists, I accepted the tribute as an appropriate one; inasmuch as we had sometimes reason to hope that our imaginary worlds afforded an occasional refuge to men busily engaged in the toils of life, from which they came forth none the worse to a renewal of its strivings; and certainly that the chief magistrate of the greatest city in the world might be fitly regarded as the representative of that class of our readers."

Of an incident towards the close of the year, though it had important practical results, brief mention will here suffice. We saw the Mannings executed on the walls of Horsemonger-lane gaol; and with the letter which Dickens wrote next day to the Times descriptive of what we had witnessed on that memorable morning, there began an active agitation against public executions which never ceased until the salutary change was effected which has worked so well. Shortly after this he visited Rockingham-castle, the seat of Mr. and Mrs. Watson, his Lausanne friends; and I must preface by a word or two the amusing letter in which he told me of this visit. It was written in character, and the character was that of an American visitor to England.

"I knew him, Horatio;" and a very kindly honest man he was, who had come to England authorised to make enquiry into our general agricultural condition, and who discharged his mission by publishing some reports extremely creditable to his good sense and ability, expressed in a plain nervous English that reminded one of the rural writings of Cobbett. But in an evil hour he published also a series of private letters to friends written from the various residences his introductions had opened to him; and these were filled with revelations as to the internal economy of English noblemen's country houses, of a highly startling description. As for example, how, on arrival at a house your "name is announced, and your

portmanteau immediately taken into your chamber, which the servant shows you, with every convenience." How "you are asked by the servant at breakfast what you will have, or you get up and help yourself." How at dinner you don't dash at the dishes, or contend for the "fixings," but wait till "his portion is handed by servants to every one." How all the wines, fruit, glasses, candlesticks, lamps, and plate are "taken care of" by butlers, who have under-butlers for their "adjuncts;" how ladies never wear "white satin shoes or white gloves more than once;" how dinner napkins are "never left upon the table, but either thrown into your chair or on the floor under the table;" how no end of pains are taken to "empty slops;" and above all what a national propensity there is to brush a man's clothes and polish his boots, whensoever and wheresoever the clothes and boots can be seized without the man. This was what Dickens good-humouredly laughs at.

"Rockingham Castle: Friday, thirtieth of November, 1849. Picture to yourself, my dear F, a large old castle, approached by an ancient keep, portcullis, &c, &c, filled with company, waited on by six-and-twenty servants; the slops (and wine-glasses) continually being emptied; and my clothes (with myself in them) always being carried off to all sorts of places; and you will have a faint idea of the mansion in which I am at present staying. I should have written to you yesterday, but for having had a very busy day. Among the guests is a Miss B, sister of the Honourable Miss B (of Salem, Mass.), whom we once met at the house of our distinguished literary countryman Colonel Landor. This lady is renowned as an amateur actress, so last night we got up in the great hall some scenes from the School for Scandal; the scene with the lunatic on the wall, from the Nicholas Nickleby of Major-General the Hon. C. Dickens (Richmond, Va.); some conjuring; and then finished off with country-dances; of which we had two admirably good ones, quite new to me, though really old. Getting the words, and making the preparations, occupied (as you may believe) the whole day; and it was three o'clock before I got to bed. It was an excellent entertainment, and we were all uncommonly merry. . . . I had a very polite letter from our enterprising countryman Major Bentley (of Lexington, Ky.), which I shall show you when I come home. We leave here this afternoon, and I shall expect you according to appointment, at a quarter past ten A.M. to-morrow. Of all the country-houses and estates I have yet seen in England, I think this is by far the best. Everything undertaken eventuates in a most magnificent hospitality; and you will be pleased to hear that our celebrated fellow citizen General Boxall (Pittsburg, Penn.) is engaged in handing down to posterity the face of the owner of the mansion and of his youthful son and daughter. At a future time it will be my duty to report on the turnips, mangel-wurzel, ploughs, and live stock; and for the present I will only say that I regard it as a fortunate circumstance for the neighbouring community that this patrimony should have fallen to my spirited and enlightened host. Every one has profited by it, and the labouring people in especial are thoroughly well cared-for and looked after. To see all the household, headed by an enormously fat housekeeper, occupying the back benches last night, laughing and applauding without any restraint; and to see a blushing sleek-headed footman produce, for the watch-trick, a silver watch of the most portentous dimensions, amidst the rapturous delight of his brethren and sisterhood; was a very pleasant spectacle, even to a conscientious republican like yourself or me, who cannot but contemplate the parent country with feelings of pride in our own land, which (as was well observed by the Honorable Elias Deeze, of Hertford, Conn.) is truly the land of the free. Best remembrances from Columbia's daughters. Ever thine, my dear F,--C.H." Dickens, during the too brief time this excellent friend was spared to him, often repeated his visits to Rockingham, always a surpassing enjoyment; and in the winter of 1851 he accomplished there, with help of the country carpenter, "a very elegant little theatre," of which he constituted himself manager, and had among his actors a brother of the lady referred to in his letter, "a very good comic actor, but loose in words;" poor Augustus Stafford "more than passable;" and "a son of Vernon Smith's, really a capital low comedian." It will be one more added to the many examples I have given of his untiring energy both in work and play, if I mention the fact that this theatre was opened at

Rockingham for their first representation on Wednesday the 15th of January; that after the performance there was a country dance which lasted far into the morning; and that on the next evening, after a railway journey of more than 120 miles, he dined in London with the prime minister, Lord John Russell.

A little earlier in that winter we had together taken his eldest son to Eton, and a little later he had a great sorrow. "Poor dear Jeffrey!" he wrote to me on the 29th January, 1850. "I bought a Times at the station yesterday morning, and was so stunned by the announcement, that I felt it in that wounded part of me, almost directly; and the bad symptoms (modified) returned within a few hours. I had a letter from him in extraordinary good spirits within this week or two--he was better, he said, than he had been for a long time--and I sent him proof-sheets of the number only last Wednesday. I say nothing of his wonderful abilities and great career, but he was a most affectionate and devoted friend to me; and though no man could wish to live and die more happily, so old in years and yet so young in faculties and sympathies, I am very very deeply grieved for his loss." He was justly entitled to feel pride in being able so to word his tribute of sorrowing affection. Jeffrey had completed with consummate success, if ever man did, the work appointed him in this world; and few, after a life of such activities, have left a memory so unstained and pure. But other and sharper sorrows awaited Dickens.

The chief occupation of the past and present year, David Copperfield, will have a chapter to itself, and in this may be touched but lightly. Once fairly in it, the story bore him irresistibly along; certainly with less trouble to himself in the composition, beyond that ardent sympathy with the creatures of the fancy which always made so absolutely real to him their sufferings or sorrows; and he was probably never less harassed by interruptions or breaks in his invention. His principal hesitation occurred in connection with the child-wife Dora, who had become a great favourite as he went on; and it was shortly after her fate had been decided, in the early autumn of 1850, but before she breathed her last, that a third daughter was born to him, to whom he gave his dying little heroine's name. On these and other points, without forestalling what waits to be said of the composition of this fine story, a few illustrative words from his letters will properly find a place here. "Copperfield half done," he wrote of the second number on the 6th of June. "I feel, thank God, quite confident in the story. I have a move in it ready for this month; another for next; and another for the next." "I think it is necessary" (15th of November) "to decide against the special pleader. Your reasons quite suffice. I am not sure but that the banking house might do. I will consider it in a walk." "Banking business impracticable" (17th of November) "on account of the confinement: which would stop the story, I foresee. I have taken, for the present at all events, the proctor. I am wonderfully in harness, and nothing galls or frets." "Copperfield done" (20th of November) "after two days' very hard work indeed; and I think a smashing number. His first dissipation I hope will be found worthy of attention, as a piece of grotesque truth." "I feel a great hope" (23rd of January, 1850) "that I shall be remembered by little Em'ly, a good many years to come." "I begin to have my doubts of being able to join you" (20th of February), "for Copperfield runs high, and must be done to-morrow. But I'll do it if possible, and strain every nerve. Some beautiful comic love, I hope, in the number." "Still undecided about Dora" (7th of May), "but MUST decide to-day." "I have been" (Tuesday, 20th of August) "very hard at work these three days, and have still Dora to kill. But with good luck, I may do it to-morrow. Obliged to go to Shepherd's-bush to-day, and can consequently do little this morning. Am eschewing all sorts of things that present themselves to my fancy--coming in such crowds!" "Work in a very decent state of advancement" (13th of August) "domesticity notwithstanding. I hope I shall have a splendid number. I feel the story to its minutest point." "Mrs. Micawber is still" (15th of August), "I regret to say, in statu quo. Ever yours, WILKINS MICAWBER." The little girl was born the next day, the 16th, and received the name of Dora Annie. The most part of what remained of the year was passed away from home.

The year following did not open with favourable omen, both the child and its mother having severe illness. The former rallied however, and "little Dora is getting on bravely, thank God!" was his bulletin of

the early part of February. Soon after, it was resolved to make trial of Great Malvern for Mrs. Dickens; and lodgings were taken there in March, Dickens and her sister accompanying her, and the children being left in London. "It is a most beautiful place," he wrote to me (15th of March). "O Heaven, to meet the Cold Waterers (as I did this morning when I went out for a shower-bath) dashing down the hills, with severe expressions on their countenances, like men doing matches and not exactly winning! Then, a young lady in a grey polka going up the hills, regardless of legs; and meeting a young gentleman (a bad case, I should say) with a light black silk cap on under his hat, and the pimples of I don't know how many douches under that. Likewise an old man who ran over a milk-child, rather than stop!--with no neckcloth, on principle; and with his mouth wide open, to catch the morning air." This was the month, as we have seen, when the performances for the Guild were in active preparation, and it was also the date of the farewell dinner to our friend Macready on his quitting the stage. Dickens and myself came up for it from Malvern, to which he returned the next day; and from the spirited speech in which he gave the health of the chairman at the dinner, I will add a few words for the sake of the truth expressed in them. "There is a popular prejudice, a kind of superstition, that authors are not a particularly united body, and I am afraid that this may contain half a grain or so of the veracious. But of our chairman I have never in my life made public mention without adding what I can never repress, that in the path we both tread I have uniformly found him to be, from the first, the most generous of men; quick to encourage, slow to disparage, and ever anxious to assert the order of which he is so great an ornament. That we men of letters are, or have been, invariably or inseparably attached to each other, it may not be possible to say, formerly or now; but there cannot now be, and there cannot ever have been, among the followers of literature, a man so entirely without the grudging little jealousies that too often disparage its brightness, as Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton." That was as richly merited as it is happily said.

Dickens had to return to London after the middle of March for business connected with a charitable Home established at Shepherd's-bush by Miss Coutts, in the benevolent hope of rescuing fallen women by testing their fitness for emigration, of which future mention will be made, and which largely and regularly occupied his time for several years. On this occasion his stay was prolonged by the illness of his father. His health had been failing latterly, and graver symptoms were now spoken of. "I saw my poor father twice yesterday," he wrote to me on the 27th, "the second time between ten and eleven at night. In the morning I thought him not so well. At night, as well as any one in such a situation could be." Next day he was so much better that his son went back to Malvern, and even gave us grounds for hope that we might yet have his presence in Hertfordshire to advise on some questions connected with the comedy which Sir Edward Lytton had written for the Guild. But the end came suddenly. I returned from Knebworth to London, supposing that some accident had detained him at Malvern; and at my house this letter waited me. "Devonshire-terrace, Monday, thirty-first of March 1851. . . . My poor father died this morning at five and twenty minutes to six. They had sent for me to Malvern, but I passed John on the railway; for I came up with the intention of hurrying down to Bulwer Lytton's to-day before you should have left. I arrived at eleven last night, and was in Keppel-street at a quarter past eleven. But he did not know me, nor any one. He began to sink at about noon yesterday, and never rallied afterwards. I remained there until he died--O so quietly. . . . I hardly know what to do. I am going up to Highgate to get the ground. Perhaps you may like to go, and I should like it if you do. I will not leave here before two o'clock. I think I must go down to Malvern again, at night, to know what is to be done about the children's mourning; and as you are returning to Bulwer's I should like to have gone that way, if Bradshaw gave me any hope of doing it. I wish most particularly to see you, I needn't say. I must not let myself be distracted by anything--and God knows I have left a sad sight!--from the scheme on which so much depends. Most part of the alterations proposed I think good." Mr. John Dickens was laid in Highgate Cemetery on the 5th of April; and the stone placed over him by the son who has made his name a famous one in England,

bore tribute to his "zealous, useful, cheerful spirit." What more is to be said of him will be most becomingly said in speaking of David Copperfield. While the book was in course of being written, all that had been best in him came more and more vividly back to its author's memory; as time wore on, nothing else was remembered; and five years before his own death, after using in one of his letters to me a phrase rather out of the common with him, this was added: "I find this looks like my poor father, whom I regard as a better man the longer I live."

He was at this time under promise to take the chair at the General Theatrical Fund on the 14th of April. Great efforts were made to relieve him from the promise; but such special importance was attached to his being present, and the Fund so sorely then required help, that, no change of day being found possible for the actors who desired to attend, he yielded to the pressure put upon him; of which the result was to throw upon me a sad responsibility. The reader will understand why, even at this distance of time; my allusion to it is brief.

The train from Malvern brought him up only five minutes short of the hour appointed for the dinner, and we first met that day at the London Tavern. I never heard him to greater advantage than in the speech that followed. His liking for this Fund was the fact of its not confining its benefits to any special or exclusive body of actors, but opening them generously to all; and he gave a description of the kind of actor, going down to the infinitesimally small, not omitted from such kind help, which had a half-pathetic humour in it that makes it charming still. "In our Fund," he said, "the word exclusiveness is not known. We include every actor, whether he be Hamlet or Benedict: the ghost, the bandit, or the court physician; or, in his one person, the whole king's army. He may do the light business, or the heavy, or the comic, or the eccentric. He may be the captain who courts the young lady, whose uncle still unaccountably persists in dressing himself in a costume one hundred years older than his time. Or he may be the young lady's brother in the white gloves and inexpressibles, whose duty in the family appears to be to listen to the female members of it whenever they sing, and to shake hands with everybody between all the verses. Or he may be the baron who gives the fete, and who sits uneasily on the sofa under a canopy with the baroness while the fete is going on. Or he may be the peasant at the fete who comes on the stage to swell the drinking chorus, and who, it may be observed, always turns his glass upside down before he begins to drink out of it. Or he may be the clown who takes away the doorstep of the house where the evening party is going on. Or he may be the gentleman who issues out of the house on the false alarm, and is precipitated into the area. Or, if an actress, she may be the fairy who resides for ever in a revolving star with an occasional visit to a bower or a palace. Or again, if an actor, he may be the armed head of the witch's cauldron; or even that extraordinary witch, concerning whom I have observed in country places, that he is much less like the notion formed from the description of Hopkins than the Malcolm or Donalbain of the previous scenes. This society, in short, says, 'Be you what you may, be you actor or actress, be your path in your profession never so high or never so low, never so haughty or never so humble, we offer you the means of doing good to yourselves, and of doing good to your brethren.'"

Half an hour before he rose to speak I had been called out of the room. It was the servant from Devonshire-terrace to tell me his child Dora was suddenly dead. She had not been strong from her birth; but there was just at this time no cause for special fear, when unexpected convulsions came, and the frail little life passed away. My decision had to be formed at once; and I satisfied myself that it would be best to permit his part of the proceedings to close before the truth was told to him. But as he went on, after the sentences I have quoted, to speak of actors having to come from scenes of sickness, of suffering, aye, even of death itself, to play their parts before us, my part was very difficult. "Yet how often is it with all of us," he proceeded to say, and I remember to this hour with what anguish I listened to words that had for myself alone, in all the crowded room, their full significance: "how often is it with all of

us, that in our several spheres we have to do violence to our feelings, and to hide our hearts in carrying on this fight of life, if we would bravely discharge in it our duties and responsibilities." In the disclosure that followed when he left the chair, Mr. Lemon, who was present, assisted me; and I left this good friend with him next day, when I went myself to Malvern and brought back Mrs. Dickens and her sister. The little child lies in a grave at Highgate near that of Mr. and Mrs. John Dickens; and on the stone which covers her is now written also her father's name, and those of two of her brothers.

One more public discussion he took part in, before quitting London for the rest of the summer; and what he said (it was a meeting, with Lord Carlisle in the chair, in aid of Sanitary reform) very pregnantly illustrates what was remarked by me on a former page. He declared his belief that neither education nor religion could do anything really useful in social improvement until the way had been paved for their ministrations by cleanliness and decency. He spoke warmly of the services of Lord Ashley in connection with ragged schools, but he put the case of a miserable child tempted into one of those schools out of the noisome places in which his life was passed, and he asked what a few hours' teaching could effect against the ever-renewed lesson of a whole existence. "But give him, and his, a glimpse of heaven through a little of its light and air; give them water; help them to be clean; lighten the heavy atmosphere in which their spirits flag, and which makes them the callous things they are; take the body of the dead relative from the room where the living live with it, and where such loathsome familiarity deprives death itself of awe; and then, but not before, they will be brought willingly to hear of Him whose thoughts were so much with the wretched, and who had compassion for all human sorrow." He closed by proposing Lord Ashley's health as having preferred the higher ambition of labouring for the poor to that of pursuing the career open to him in the service of the State; and as having also had "the courage on all occasions to face the cant which is the worst and commonest of all, the cant about the cant of philanthropy." Lord Shaftesbury first dined with him in the following year at Tavistock-house.

Shortly after the Sanitary meeting came the first Guild performances; and then Dickens left Devonshire-terrace, never to return to it. What occupied him in the interval before he took possession of his new abode, has before been told; but two letters were overlooked in describing his progress in the labour of the previous year, and brief extracts from them will naturally lead me to the subject of my next chapter. "I have been" (15th of September) "tremendously at work these two days; eight hours at a stretch yesterday, and six hours and a half to-day, with the Ham and Steerforth chapter, which has completely knocked me over--utterly defeated me!" "I am" (21st of October) "within three pages of the shore; and am strangely divided, as usual in such cases, between sorrow and joy. Oh, my dear Forster, if I were to say half of what Copperfield makes me feel to-night, how strangely, even to you, I should be turned inside out! I seem to be sending some part of myself into the Shadowy World."

Volume III, Chapter 1 (1850-1853): David Copperfield and Bleak House

Volume III: 1852-1870

David Copperfield and Bleak House

DICKENS never stood so high in reputation as at the completion of Copperfield. The popularity it obtained at the outset increased to a degree not approached by any previous book excepting Pickwick. "You gratify me more than I can tell you," he wrote to Bulwer Lytton (July 1850), "by what you say about Copperfield, because I hope myself that some heretofore deficient qualities are there." If the power was not greater than in Chuzzlewit, the subject had more attractiveness; there was more variety of incident, with a freer play of character; and there was withal a suspicion, which though general and vague had sharpened interest not a little, that underneath the fiction lay something of the author's life. How much, was not known by the world until he had passed away.

To be acquainted with English literature is to know, that, into its most famous prose fiction, autobiography has entered largely in disguise, and that the characters most familiar to us in the English novel had originals in actual life. Smollett never wrote a story that was not in some degree a recollection of his own adventures; and Fielding, who put something of his wife into all his heroines, had been as fortunate in finding, not Trulliber only, but Parson Adams himself, among his living experiences. To come later down, there was hardly any one ever known to Scott of whom his memory had not treasured up something to give minuter reality to the people of his fancy; and we know exactly whom to look for in Dandie Dinmont and Jonathan Oldbuck, in the office of Alan Fairford and the sick room of Crystal Croftangry. We are to observe also that it is never anything complete that is thus taken from life by a genuine writer, but only leading traits, or such as may give greater finish; that the fine artist will embody in his portraiture of one person his experiences of fifty; and that this would have been Fielding's answer to Trulliber if he had objected to the pigstye, and to Adams if he had sought to make a case of scandal out of the affair in Mrs. Slipslop's bedroom. Such questioning befell Dickens repeatedly in the course of his writings, where he freely followed, as we have seen, the method thus common to the masters in his art; but there was an instance of alleged wrong in the course of Copperfield where he felt his vindication to be hardly complete, and what he did thereupon was characteristic.

"I have had the queerest adventure this morning," he wrote (28th of December 1849) on the eve of his tenth number, "the receipt of the enclosed from Miss Moucher! It is serio-comic, but there is no doubt one is wrong in being tempted to such a use of power." Thinking a grotesque little oddity among his acquaintance to be safe from recognition, he had done what Smollett did sometimes, but never Fielding, and given way, in the first outburst of fun that had broken out around the fancy, to the temptation of copying too closely peculiarities of figure and face amounting in effect to deformity. He was shocked at discovering the pain he had given, and a copy is before me of the assurances by way of reply which he at once sent to the complainant. That he was grieved and surprised beyond measure. That he had not intended her altogether. That all his characters, being made up out of many people, were composite, and never individual. That the chair (for table) and other matters were undoubtedly from her, but that other traits were not hers at all; and that in Miss Moucher's "Ain't I volatile" his friends had quite correctly recognized the favourite utterance of a different person. That he felt nevertheless he had done wrong, and would now do anything to repair it. That he had intended to employ the character in an unpleasant way, but he would, whatever the risk or inconvenience, change it all, so that nothing but an agreeable

impression should be left. The reader will remember how this was managed, and that the thirty-second chapter went far to undo what the twenty-second had done.

A much earlier instance is the only one known to me where a character in one of his books intended to be odious was copied wholly from a living original. The use of such material, never without danger, might have been justifiable here if anywhere, and he had himself a satisfaction in always admitting the identity of Mr. Fang in Oliver Twist with Mr. Laing of Hatton-garden. But the avowal of his purpose in that case, and his mode of setting about it, mark strongly a difference of procedure from that which, following great examples, he adopted in his later books. An allusion to a common friend in one of his letters of the present date--"A dreadful thought occurs to me! how brilliant in a book!"--expresses both the continued strength of his temptations and the dread he had brought himself to feel of immediately yielding to them; but he had no such misgivings in the days of Oliver Twist. Wanting an insolent and harsh police-magistrate, he bethought him of an original ready to his hand in one of the London offices; and instead of pursuing his later method of giving a personal appearance that should in some sort render difficult the identification of mental peculiarities, he was only eager to get in the whole man complete upon his page, figure and face as well as manners and mind.

He wrote accordingly (from Doughty-street on the 3rd of June 1837) to Mr. Haines, a gentleman who then had general supervision over the police reports for the daily papers. "In my next number of Oliver Twist I must have a magistrate; and, casting about for a magistrate whose harshness and insolence would render him a fit subject to be shown up, I have as a necessary consequence stumbled upon Mr. Laing of Hatton-garden celebrity. I know the man's character perfectly well; but as it would be necessary to describe his personal appearance also, I ought to have seen him, which (fortunately or unfortunately as the case may be) I have never done. In this dilemma it occurred to me that perhaps I might under your auspices be smuggled into the Hatton-garden office for a few moments some morning. If you can further my object I shall be really very greatly obliged to you." The opportunity was found; the magistrate was brought up before the novelist; and shortly after, on some fresh outbreak of intolerable temper, the home-secretary found it an easy and popular step to remove Mr. Laing from the bench.

This was a comfort to everybody, saving only the principal person; but the instance was highly exceptional, and it rarely indeed happens that to the individual objection natural in every such case some consideration should not be paid. In the book that followed Copperfield, two characters appeared having resemblances in manner and speech to two distinguished writers too vivid to be mistaken by their personal friends. To Lawrence Boythorn, under whom Landor figured, no objection was made; but Harold Skimpole, recognizable for Leigh Hunt, led to much remark; the difference being, that ludicrous traits were employed in the first to enrich without impairing an attractive person in the tale, whereas to the last was assigned a part in the plot which no fascinating foibles or gaieties of speech could redeem from contempt. Though a want of consideration was thus shown to the friend whom the character would be likely to recall to many readers, it is nevertheless very certain that the intention of Dickens was not at first, or at any time, an unkind one. He erred from thoughtlessness only. What led him to the subject at all, he has himself stated. Hunt's philosophy of moneyed obligations, always, though loudly, half jocosely proclaimed, and his ostentatious wilfulness in the humouring of that or any other theme on which he cared for the time to expatiate, had so often seemed to Dickens to be whimsical and attractive that, wanting an "airy quality" for the man he invented, this of Hunt occurred to him; and "partly for that reason, and partly, he has since often grieved to think, for the pleasure it afforded to find a delightful manner reproducing itself under his hand, he yielded to the temptation of too often making the character speak like his old friend." This apology was made after Hunt's death, and mentioned a revision of the first sketch, so as to render it less like, at the suggestion of two other friends of Hunt. The friends were Procter (Barry Cornwall) and myself; the feeling having been mine from the first that the likeness was too

like. Procter did not immediately think so, but a little reflection brought him to that opinion. "You will see from the enclosed," Dickens wrote (17th of March 1852), "that Procter is much of my mind. I will nevertheless go through the character again in the course of the afternoon, and soften down words here and there." But before the day closed Procter had again written to him, and next morning this was the result. "I have again gone over every part of it very carefully, and I think I have made it much less like. I have also changed Leonard to Harold. I have no right to give Hunt pain, and I am so bent upon not doing it that I wish you would look at all the proof once more, and indicate any particular place in which you feel it particularly like. Whereupon I will alter that place."

Upon the whole the alterations were considerable, but the radical wrong remained. The pleasant sparkling airy talk, which could not be mistaken, identified with odious qualities a friend only known to the writer by attractive ones; and for this there was no excuse. Perhaps the only person acquainted with the original who failed to recognize the copy, was the original himself (a common case); but good-natured friends in time told Hunt everything, and painful explanations followed, where nothing was possible to Dickens but what amounted to a friendly evasion of the points really at issue. The time for redress had gone. I yet well remember with what eager earnestness, on one of these occasions, he strove to set Hunt up again in his own esteem. "Separate in your own mind," he said to him, "what you see of yourself from what other people tell you that they see. As it has given you so much pain, I take it at its worst, and say I am deeply sorry, and that I feel I did wrong in doing it. I should otherwise have taken it at its best, and ridden off upon what I strongly feel to be the truth, that there is nothing in it that should have given you pain. Every one in writing must speak from points of his experience, and so I of mine with you: but when I have felt it was going too close I stopped myself, and the most blotted parts of my MS. are those in which I have been striving hard to make the impression I was writing from, unlike you. The diary-writing I took from Haydon, not from you. I now first learn from yourself that you ever set anything to music, and I could not have copied that from you. The character is not you, for there are traits in it common to fifty thousand people besides, and I did not fancy you would ever recognize it. Under similar disguises my own father and mother are in my books, and you might as well see your likeness in Micawber." The distinction is that the foibles of Mr. Micawber and of Mrs. Nickleby, however laughable, make neither of them in speech or character less loveable; and that this is not to be said of Skimpole's. The kindly or unkindly impression makes all the difference where liberties are taken with a friend; and even this entirely favourable condition will not excuse the practice to many, where near relatives are concerned.

For what formerly was said of the Micawber resemblances, Dickens has been sharply criticized; and in like manner it was thought objectionable in Scott that for the closing scenes of Crystal Croftangry he should have found the original of his fretful patient at the death-bed of his own father. Lockhart, who tells us this, adds with a sad significance that he himself lived to see the curtain fall at Abbotsford upon even such another scene. But to no purpose will such objections still be made. All great novelists will continue to use their experiences of nature and fact, whencesoever derivable; and a remark made to Lockhart by Scott himself suggests their vindication. "If a man will paint from nature, he will be most likely to interest and amuse those who are daily looking at it."

The Micawber offence otherwise was not grave. We have seen in what way Dickens was moved or inspired by the rough lessons of his boyhood, and the groundwork of the character was then undoubtedly laid; but the rhetorical exuberance impressed itself upon him later, and from this, as it expanded and developed in a thousand amusing ways, the full-length figure took its great charm. Better illustration of it could not perhaps be given than by passages from letters of Dickens, written long before Micawber was thought of, in which this peculiarity of his father found frequent and always agreeable expression. Several such have been given in this work from time to time, and one or two more may here be added. It

is proper to preface them by saying that no one could know the elder Dickens without secretly liking him the better for these flourishes of speech, which adapted themselves so readily to his gloom as well as to his cheerfulness, that it was difficult not to fancy they had helped him considerably in both, and had rendered more tolerable to him, if also more possible, the shade and sunshine of his chequered life. "If you should have an opportunity pendente lite, as my father would observe--indeed did on some memorable ancient occasions when he informed me that the ban-dogs would shortly have him at bay"--Dickens wrote in December 1847. "I have a letter from my father" (May 1841) "lamenting the fine weather, invoking congenial tempests, and informing me that it will not be possible for him to stay more than another year in Devonshire, as he must then proceed to Paris to consolidate Augustus's French." "There has arrived," he writes from the Peschiere in September 1844, "a characteristic letter for Kate from my father. He dates it Manchester, and says he has reason to believe that he will be in town with the pheasants, on or about the first of October. He has been with Fanny in the Isle of Man for nearly two months: finding there, as he goes on to observe, troops of friends, and every description of continental luxury at a cheap rate." Describing in the same year the departure from Genoa of an English physician and acquaintance, he adds: "We are very sorry to lose the benefit of his advice--or, as my father would say, to be deprived, to a certain extent, of the concomitant advantages, whatever they may be, resulting from his medical skill, such as it is, and his professional attendance, in so far as it may be so considered." Thus also it delighted Dickens to remember that it was of one of his connections his father wrote a celebrated sentence; "And I must express my tendency to believe that his longevity is (to say the least of it) extremely problematical:" and that it was to another, who had been insisting somewhat obtrusively on dissenting and nonconformist superiorities, he addressed words which deserve to be no less celebrated; "The Supreme Being must be an entirely different individual from what I have every reason to believe him to be, if He would care in the least for the society of your relations." There was a laugh in the enjoyment of all this, no doubt, but with it much personal fondness; and the feeling of the creator of Micawber as he thus humoured and remembered the foibles of his original, found its counterpart in that of his readers for the creation itself, as its part was played out in the story. Nobody likes Micawber less for his follies; and Dickens liked his father more, the more he recalled his whimsical qualities. "The longer I live, the better man I think him," he exclaimed afterwards. The fact and the fancy had united whatever was most grateful to him in both.

It is a tribute to the generally healthful and manly tone of the story of Copperfield that such should be the outcome of the eccentricities of this leading personage in it; and the superiority in this respect of Micawber over Skimpole is one of many indications of the inferiority of Bleak House to its predecessor. With leading resemblances that make it difficult to say which character best represents the principle or no principle of impecuniosity, there cannot be any doubt which has the advantage in moral and intellectual development. It is genuine humour against personal satire. Between the worldly circumstances of the two, there is nothing to choose; but as to everything else it is the difference between shabbiness and greatness. Skimpole's sunny talk might be expected to please as much as Micawber's gorgeous speech, the design of both being to take the edge off poverty. But in the one we have no relief from attendant meanness or distress, and we drop down from the airiest fancies into sordidness and pain; whereas in the other nothing pitiful or merely selfish ever touches us. At its lowest depth of what is worst, we never doubt that something better must turn up; and of a man who sells his bedstead that he may entertain his friend, we altogether refuse to think nothing but badly. This is throughout the free and cheery style of Copperfield. The masterpieces of Dickens's humour are not in it; but he has nowhere given such variety of play to his invention, and the book is unapproached among his writings for its completeness of effect and uniform pleasantness of tone.

What has to be said hereafter of those writings generally, will properly restrict what is said here, as in

previous instances, mainly to personal illustration. The Copperfield disclosures formerly made will for ever connect the book with the author's individual story; but too much has been assumed, from those revelations, of a full identity of Dickens with his hero, and of a supposed intention that his own character as well as parts of his career should be expressed in the narrative. It is right to warn the reader as to this. He can judge for himself how far the childish experiences are likely to have given the turn to Dickens's genius; whether their bitterness had so burnt into his nature, as, in the hatred of oppression, the revolt against abuse of power, and the war with injustice under every form displayed in his earliest books, to have reproduced itself only; and to what extent mere compassion for his own childhood may account for the strange fascination always exerted over him by child-suffering and sorrow. But, many as are the resemblances in Copperfield's adventures to portions of those of Dickens, and often as reflections occur to David which no one intimate with Dickens could fail to recognize as but the reproduction of his, it would be the greatest mistake to imagine anything like a complete identity of the fictitious novelist with the real one, beyond the Hungerford scenes; or to suppose that the youth, who then received his first harsh schooling in life, came out of it as little harmed or hardened as David did. The language of the fiction reflects only faintly the narrative of the actual fact; and the man whose character it helped to form was expressed not less faintly in the impulsive impressionable youth, incapable of resisting the leading of others, and only disciplined into self-control by the later griefs of his entrance into manhood. Here was but another proof how thoroughly Dickens understood his calling, and that to weave fact with fiction unskilfully would be only to make truth less true.

The character of the hero of the novel finds indeed his right place in the story he is supposed to tell, rather by unlikeness than by likeness to Dickens, even where intentional resemblance might seem to be prominent. Take autobiography as a design to show that any man's life may be as a mirror of existence to all men, and the individual career becomes altogether secondary to the variety of experiences received and rendered back in it. This particular form in imaginative literature has too often led to the indulgence of mental analysis, metaphysics, and sentiment, all in excess: but Dickens was carried safely over these allurements by a healthy judgment and sleepless creative fancy; and even the method of his narrative is more simple here than it generally is in his books. His imaginative growths have less luxuriance of underwood, and the crowds of external images always rising so vividly before him are more within control.

Consider Copperfield thus in his proper place in the story, and sequence as well as connection will be given to the varieties of its childish adventure. The first warm nest of love in which his vain fond mother, and her quaint kind servant, cherish him; the quick-following contrast of hard dependence and servile treatment; the escape from that premature and dwarfed maturity by natural relapse into a more perfect childhood; the then leisurely growth of emotions and faculties into manhood; these are component parts of a character consistently drawn. The sum of its achievement is to be a successful cultivation of letters; and often as such imaginary discipline has been the theme of fiction, there are not many happier conceptions of it. The ideal and real parts of the boy's nature receive development in the proportions which contribute best to the end desired; the readiness for impulsive attachments that had put him into the leading of others, has underneath it a base of truthfulness on which at last he rests in safety; the practical man is the outcome of the fanciful youth; and a more than equivalent for the graces of his visionary days, is found in the active sympathies that life has opened to him. Many experiences have come within its range, and his heart has had room for all. Our interest in him cannot but be increased by knowing how much he expresses of what the author had himself gone through; but David includes far less than this, and infinitely more.

That the incidents arise easily, and to the very end connect themselves naturally and unobtrusively with the characters of which they are a part, is to be said perhaps more truly of this than of any other of

Dickens's novels. There is a profusion of distinct and distinguishable people, and a prodigal wealth of detail; but unity of drift or purpose is apparent always, and the tone is uniformly right. By the course of the events we learn the value of self-denial and patience, quiet endurance of unavoidable ills, strenuous effort against ills remediable; and everything in the fortunes of the actors warns us, to strengthen our generous emotions and to guard the purities of home. It is easy thus to account for the supreme popularity of Copperfield, without the addition that it can hardly have had a reader, man or lad, who did not discover that he was something of a Copperfield himself. Childhood and youth live again for all of us in its marvellous boy-experiences. Mr. Micawber's presence must not prevent my saying that it does not take the lead of the other novels in humorous creation; but in the use of humour to bring out prominently the ludicrous in any object or incident without excluding or weakening its most enchanting sentiment, it stands decidedly first. It is the perfection of English mirth. We are apt to resent the exhibition of too much goodness, but it is here so qualified by oddity as to become not merely palatable but attractive; and even pathos is heightened by what in other hands would only make it comical. That there are also faults in the book is certain, but none that are incompatible with the most masterly qualities; and a book becomes everlasting by the fact, not that faults are not in it, but that genius nevertheless is there.

Of its method, and its author's generally, in the delineation of character, something will have to be said on a later page. The author's own favourite people in it, I think, were the Peggotty group; and perhaps he was not far wrong. It has been their fate, as with all the leading figures of his invention, to pass their names into the language, and become types; and he has nowhere given happier embodiment to that purity of homely goodness, which, by the kindly and all-reconciling influences of humour, may exalt into comeliness and even grandeur the clumsiest forms of humanity. What has been indicated in the style of the book as its greatest charm is here felt most strongly. The ludicrous so helps the pathos, and the humour so uplifts and refines the sentiment, that mere rude affection and simple manliness in these Yarmouth boatmen, passed through the fires of unmerited suffering and heroic endurance, take forms half-chivalrous half-sublime. It is one of the cants of critical superiority to make supercilious mention of the serious passages in this great writer; but the storm and shipwreck at the close of Copperfield, when the body of the seducer is flung dead upon the shore amid the ruins of the home he has wasted and by the side of the man whose heart he has broken, the one as unconscious of what he had failed to reach as the other of what he has perished to save, is a description that may compare with the most impressive in the language. There are other people drawn into this catastrophe who are among the failures of natural delineation in the book. But though Miss Dartle is curiously unpleasant, there are some natural traits in her (which Dickens's least life-like people are never without); and it was from one of his lady friends, very familiar to him indeed, he copied her peculiarity of never saying anything outright, but hinting it merely, and making more of it that way. Of Mrs. Steerforth it may also be worth remembering that Thackeray had something of a fondness for her. "I knew how it would be when I began," says a pleasant letter all about himself written immediately after she appeared in the story. "My letters to my mother are like this, but then she likes 'em--like Mrs. Steerforth: don't you like Mrs. Steerforth?"

Turning to another group there is another elderly lady to be liked without a shadow of misgiving; abrupt, angular, extravagant, but the very soul of magnanimity and rectitude; a character thoroughly made out in all its parts; a gnarled and knotted piece of female timber, sound to the core; a woman Captain Shandy would have loved for her startling oddities, and who is linked to the gentlest of her sex by perfect womanhood. Dickens has done nothing better, for solidness and truth all round, than Betsey Trotwood. It is one of her oddities to have a fool for a companion; but this is one of them that has also most pertinence and wisdom. By a line thrown out in Wilhelm Meister, that the true way of treating the insane was, in all respects possible, to act to them as if they were sane, Goethe anticipated what it took a century to apply to the most terrible disorder of humanity; and what Mrs. Trotwood does for Mr. Dick

goes a step farther, by showing how often asylums might be dispensed with, and how large might be the number of deficient intellects manageable with patience in their own homes. Characters hardly less distinguishable for truth as well as oddity are the kind old nurse and her husband the carrier, whose vicissitudes alike of love and of mortality are condensed into the three words since become part of universal speech, Barkis is willin'_. There is wholesome satire of much utility in the conversion of the brutal schoolmaster of the earlier scenes into the tender Middlesex magistrate at the close. Nor is the humour anywhere more subtle than in the country undertaker, who makes up in fullness of heart for scantness of breath, and has so little of the vampire propensity of the town undertaker in Chuzzlewit, that he dares not even inquire after friends who are ill for fear of unkindly misconstruction. The test of a master in creative fiction, according to Hazlitt, is less in contrasting characters that are unlike than in distinguishing those that are like; and to many examples of the art in Dickens, such as the Shepherd and Chadband, Creakle and Squeers, Charley Bates and the Dodger, the Guppys and the Wemmicks, Mr. Jaggers and Mr. Vholes, Sampson Brass and Conversation Kenge, Jack Bunsby, Captain Cuttle, and Bill Barley, the Perkers and Pells, the Dodsons and Fogs, Sarah Gamp and Betsy Prig, and a host of others, is to be added the nicety of distinction between those eminent furnishers of funerals, Mr. Mould and Messrs. Omer and Joram. All the mixed mirth and sadness of the story are skilfully drawn into the handling of this portion of it; and, amid wooings and preparations for weddings and church-ringing bells for baptisms, the steadily-going rat-tat of the hammer on the coffin is heard.

Of the heroines who divide so equally between them the impulsive, easily swayed, not disloyal but sorely distracted affections of the hero, the spoilt foolishness and tenderness of the loving little child-wife, Dora, is more attractive than the too unfailing wisdom and self-sacrificing goodness of the angel-wife, Agnes. The scenes of the courtship and housekeeping are matchless; and the glimpses of Doctors' Commons, opening those views, by Mr. Spenlow, of man's vanity of expectation and inconsistency of conduct in neglecting the sacred duty of making a will, on which he largely moralizes the day before he dies intestate, form a background highly appropriate to David's domesticities. This was among the reproductions of personal experience in the book; but it was a sadder knowledge that came with the conviction some years later, that David's contrasts in his earliest married life between his happiness enjoyed and his happiness once anticipated, the "vague unhappy loss or want of something" of which he so frequently complains, reflected also a personal experience which had not been supplied in fact so successfully as in fiction. (A closing word may perhaps be allowed, to connect with Devonshire-terrace the last book written there. On the page opposite is engraved a drawing by Maclise of the house where so many of Dickens's masterpieces were composed, done on the first anniversary of the day when his daughter Kate was born.)

Bleak House followed Copperfield, which in some respects it copied in the autobiographical form by means of extracts from the personal relation of its heroine. But the distinction between the narrative of David and the diary of Esther, like that between Micawber and Skimpole, marks the superiority of the first to its successor. To represent a storyteller as giving the most surprising vividness to manners, motives, and characters of which we are to believe her, all the time, as artlessly unconscious, as she is also entirely ignorant of the good qualities in herself she is naively revealing in the story, was a difficult enterprise, full of hazard in any case, not worth success, and certainly not successful. Ingenuity is more apparent than freshness, the invention is neither easy nor unstrained, and though the old marvellous power over the real is again abundantly manifest, there is some alloy of the artificial. Nor can this be said of Esther's relation without some general application to the book of which it forms so large a part. The novel is nevertheless, in the very important particular of construction, perhaps the best thing done by Dickens.

In his later writings he had been assiduously cultivating this essential of his art, and here he brought it

very nearly to perfection. Of the tendency of composing a story piecemeal to induce greater concern for the part than for the whole, he had been always conscious; but I remember a remark also made by him to the effect that to read a story in parts had no less a tendency to prevent the reader's noticing how thoroughly a work so presented might be calculated for perusal as a whole. Look back from the last to the first page of the present novel, and not even in the highest examples of this kind of elaborate care will it be found, that event leads more closely to event, or that the separate incidents have been planned with a more studied consideration of the bearing they are severally to have on the general result. Nothing is introduced at random, everything tends to the catastrophe, the various lines of the plot converge and fit to its centre, and to the larger interest all the rest is irresistibly drawn. The heart of the story is a Chancery suit. On this the plot hinges, and on incidents connected with it, trivial or important, the passion and suffering turn exclusively. Chance words, or the deeds of chance people, to appearance irrelevant, are found everywhere influencing the course taken by a train of incidents of which the issue is life or death, happiness or misery, to men and women perfectly unknown to them, and to whom they are unknown. Attorneys of all possible grades, law clerks of every conceivable kind, the copyist, the law stationer, the usurer, all sorts of money lenders, suitors of every description, haunters of the Chancery court and their victims, are for ever moving round about the lives of the chief persons in the tale, and drawing them on insensibly, but very certainly, to the issues that await them. Even the fits of the little law-stationer's servant help directly in the chain of small things that lead indirectly to Lady Dedlock's death. One strong chain of interest holds together Chesney Wold and its inmates, Bleak House and the Jarndyce group, Chancery with its sorry and sordid neighbourhood. The characters multiply as the tale advances, but in each the drift is the same. "There's no great odds betwixt my noble and learned brother and myself," says the grotesque proprietor of the rag and bottle shop under the wall of Lincoln's-inn, "they call me Lord Chancellor and my shop Chancery, and we both of us grub on in a muddle." Edax rerum the motto of both, but with a difference. Out of the lumber of the shop emerge slowly some fragments of evidence by which the chief actors in the story are sensibly affected, and to which Chancery itself might have succumbed if its devouring capacities had been less complete. But by the time there is found among the lumber the will which puts all to rights in the Jarndyce suit, it is found to be too late to put anything to rights. The costs have swallowed up the estate, and there is an end of the matter.

What in one sense is a merit however may in others be a defect, and this book has suffered by the very completeness with which its Chancery moral is worked out. The didactic in Dickens's earlier novels derived its strength from being merely incidental to interest of a higher and more permanent kind, and not in a small degree from the playful sportiveness and fancy that lighted up its graver illustrations. Here it is of sterner stuff, too little relieved, and all-pervading. The fog so marvellously painted in the opening chapter has hardly cleared away when there arises, in Jarndyce v. Jarndyce, as bad an atmosphere to breathe in; and thenceforward to the end, clinging round the people of the story as they come or go, in dreary mist or in heavy cloud, it is rarely absent. Dickens has himself described his purpose to have been to dwell on the romantic side of familiar things. But it is the romance of discontent and misery, with a very restless dissatisfied moral, and is too much brought about by agencies disagreeable and sordid. The Guppys, Weevles, Snagsbys, Chadbands, Krooks, and Smallweeds, even the Kenges, Vholeses, and Tulkinghorns, are much too real to be pleasant; and the necessity becomes urgent for the reliefs and contrasts of a finer humanity. These last are not wanting; yet it must be said that we hardly escape, even with them, into the old freedom and freshness of the author's imaginative worlds, and that the too conscious unconsciousness of Esther flings something of a shade on the radiant goodness of John Jarndyce himself. Nevertheless there are very fine delineations in the story. The crazed little Chancery lunatic, Miss Flite; the loud-voiced tender-souled Chancery victim, Gridley; the poor good-hearted youth Richard, broken up in life and character by the suspense of the Chancery suit on whose success he is to

"begin the world," believing himself to be saving money when he is stopped from squandering it, and thinking that having saved it he is entitled to fling it away; trooper George, with the Bagnets and their household, where the most ludicrous points are more forcible for the pathetic touches underlying them; the Jellyby interior, and its philanthropic strong-minded mistress, placid and smiling amid a household muddle outmuddling Chancery itself; the model of deportment, Turveydrop the elder, whose relations to the young people, whom he so superbly patronizes by being dependent on them for everything, touch delightfully some subtle points of truth; the inscrutable Tulkinghorn, and the immortal Bucket; all these, and especially the last, have been added by this book to the list of people more intimately and permanently known to us than the scores of actual familiar acquaintance whom we see around us living and dying.

But how do we know them? There are plenty to tell us that it is by vividness of external observation rather than by depth of imaginative insight, by tricks of manner and phrase rather than by truth of character, by manifestation outwardly rather than by what lies behind. Another opportunity will present itself for some remark on this kind of criticism, which has always had a special pride in the subtlety of its differences from what the world may have shown itself prone to admire. "In my father's library," wrote Landor to Southey's daughter Edith, "was the Critical Review from its commencement; and it would have taught me, if I could not even at a very early age teach myself better, that Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith were really worth nothing." It is a style that will never be without cultivators, and its frequent application to Dickens will be shown hereafter. But in speaking of a book in which some want of all the freshness of his genius first became apparent, it would be wrong to omit to add that his method of handling a character is as strongly impressed on the better portions of it as on the best of his writings. It is difficult to say when a peculiarity becomes too grotesque, or an extravagance too farcical, to be within the limits of art, for it is the truth of these as of graver things that they exist in the world in just the proportions and degree in which genius can discover them. But no man had ever so surprising a faculty as Dickens of becoming himself what he was representing; and of entering into mental phases and processes so absolutely, in conditions of life the most varied, as to reproduce them completely in dialogue without need of an explanatory word. (He only departed from this method once, with a result which will then be pointed out.) In speaking on a former page of the impression of reality thus to a singular degree conveyed by him, it was remarked that where characters so revealed themselves the author's part in them was done; and in the book under notice there is none, not excepting those least attractive which apparently present only prominent or salient qualities, in which it will not be found that the characteristic feature embodied, or the main idea personified, contains as certainly also some human truth universally applicable. To expound or discuss his creations, to lay them psychologically bare, to analyse their organisms, to subject to minute demonstration their fibrous and other tissues, was not at all Dickens's way. His genius was his fellow feeling with his race; his mere personality was never the bound or limit to his perceptions, however strongly sometimes it might colour them; he never stopped to dissect or anatomize his own work; but no man could better adjust the outward and visible oddities in a delineation to its inner and unchangeable veracities. The rough estimates we form of character, if we have any truth of perception, are on the whole correct: but men touch and interfere with one another by the contact of their extremes, and it may very often become necessarily the main business of a novelist to display the salient points, the sharp angles, or the prominences merely.

The pathetic parts of Bleak House do not live largely in remembrance, but the deaths of Richard and of Gridley, the wandering fancies of Miss Flite, and the extremely touching way in which the gentleman-nature of the pompous old baronet, Dedlock, asserts itself under suffering, belong to a high order of writing. There is another most affecting example, taking the lead of the rest, in the poor street-sweeper Jo; which has made perhaps as deep an impression as anything in Dickens. "We have

been reading Bleak House aloud," the good Dean Ramsay wrote to me very shortly before his death. "Surely it is one of his most powerful and successful! What a triumph is Jo! Uncultured nature is there indeed; the intimations of true heart-feeling, the glimmerings of higher feeling, all are there; but everything still consistent and in harmony. Wonderful is the genius that can show all this, yet keep it only and really part of the character itself, low or common as it may be, and use no morbid or fictitious colouring. To my mind, nothing in the field of fiction is to be found in English literature surpassing the death of Jo!" What occurs at and after the inquest is as worth remembering. Jo's evidence is rejected because he cannot exactly say what will be done to him after he is dead if he should tell a lie; but he manages to say afterwards very exactly what the deceased while he lived did to him. That one cold winter night, when he was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, a man turned to look at him, and came back, and, having questioned him and found he had not a friend in the world, said, "Neither have I. Not one!" and gave him the price of a supper and a night's lodging. That the man had often spoken to him since, and asked him if he slept of a night, and how he bore cold and hunger, or if he ever wished to die; and would say in passing "I am as poor as you to-day, Jo" when he had no money, but when he had any would always give some. "He wos wery good to me," says the boy, wiping his eyes with his wretched sleeve. "Wen I see him a-layin' so stritched out just now, I wished he could have heerd me tell him so. He wos werry good to me, he wos!" The inquest over, the body is flung into a pestiferous churchyard in the next street, houses overlooking it on every side, and a reeking little tunnel of a court giving access to its iron gate. "With the night, comes a slouching figure through the tunnel-court, to the outside of the iron gate. It holds the gate with its hands, and looks in within the bars; stands looking in, for a little while. It then, with an old broom it carries, softly sweeps the step, and makes the archway clean. It does so, very busily, and trimly; looks in again, a little while; and so departs." These are among the things in Dickens that cannot be forgotten; and if Bleak House had many more faults than have been found in it, such salt and savour as this might freshen it for some generations.

The first intention was to have made Jo more prominent in the story, and its earliest title was taken from the tumbling tenements in Chancery, "Tom-all-Alone's," where he finds his wretched habitation; but this was abandoned. On the other hand, Dickens was encouraged and strengthened in his design of assailing Chancery abuses and delays by receiving, a few days after the appearance of his first number, a striking pamphlet on the subject containing details so apposite that he took from them, without change in any material point, the memorable case related in his fifteenth chapter. Any one who examines the tract will see how exactly true is the reference to it made by Dickens in his preface. "The case of Gridley is in no essential altered from one of actual occurrence, made public by a disinterested person who was professionally acquainted with the whole of the monstrous wrong from beginning to end." The suit, of which all particulars are given, affected a single farm, in value not more than L1200, but all that its owner possessed in the world, against which a bill had been filed for a L300 legacy left in the will bequeathing the farm. In reality there was only one defendant, but in the bill, by the rule of the Court, there were seventeen; and, after two years had been occupied over the seventeen answers, everything had to begin over again because an eighteenth had been accidentally omitted. "What a mockery of justice this is," says Mr. Challinor, "the facts speak for themselves, and I can personally vouch for their accuracy. The costs already incurred in reference to this L300 legacy are not less than from L800 to L900, and the parties are no forwarder. Already near five years have passed by, and the plaintiff would be glad to give up his chance of the legacy if he could escape from his liability to costs, while the defendants who own the little farm left by the testator, have scarce any other prospect before them than ruin."

Volume III, Chapter 2 (1853-1855): Home Incidents and Hard Times

Home Incidents and Hard Times

DAVID COPPERFIELD had been written, in Devonshire-terrace for the most part, between the opening of 1849 and October 1850, its publication covering that time; and its sale, which has since taken the lead of all his books but Pickwick, never then exceeding twenty-five thousand. But though it remained thus steady for the time, the popularity of the book added largely to the sale of its successor. Bleak House was begun in his new abode of Tavistock House at the end of November 1851; was carried on, amid the excitements of the Guild performances, through the following year; was finished at Boulogne in the August of 1853; and was dedicated to "his friends and companions in the Guild of Literature and Art."

In March 1852 the first number appeared, and its sale was mentioned in the same letter from Tavistock House (7th of March) which told of his troubles in the story at its outset, and of other anxieties incident to the common lot and inseparable equally from its joys and sorrows, through which his life was passing at the time. "My Highgate journey yesterday was a sad one. Sad to think how all journeys tend that way. I went up to the cemetery to look for a piece of ground. In no hope of a Government bill, and in a foolish dislike to leaving the little child shut up in a vault there, I think of pitching a tent under the sky. . . . Nothing has taken place here: but I believe, every hour, that it must next hour. Wild ideas are upon me of going to Paris--Rouen--Switzerland--somewhere--and writing the remaining two-thirds of the next No. aloft in some queer inn room. I have been hanging over it, and have got restless. Want a change I think. Stupid. We were at 30,000 when I last heard. . . . I am sorry to say that after all kinds of evasions, I am obliged to dine at Lansdowne House to-morrow. But maybe the affair will come off to-night and give me an excuse! I enclose proofs of No. 2. Browne has done Skimpole, and helped to make him singularly unlike the great original. Look it over, and say what occurs to you. . . . Don't you think Mrs. Gaskell charming? With one ill-considered thing that looks like a want of natural perception, I think it masterly." His last allusion is to the story by a delightful writer then appearing in Household Words; and of the others it only needs to say that the family affair which might have excused his absence at the Lansdowne dinner did not come off until four days later. On the 13th of March his last child was born; and the boy, his seventh son, bears his godfather's distinguished name, Edward Bulwer Lytton.

The inability to "grind sparks out of his dull blade," as he characterized his present labour at Bleak House, still fretting him, he struck out a scheme for Paris. "I could not get to Switzerland very well at this time of year. The Jura would be covered with snow. And if I went to Geneva I don't know where I might not go to." It ended at last in a flight to Dover; but he found time before he left, amid many occupations and some anxieties, for a good-natured journey to Walworth to see a youth rehearse who was supposed to have talents for the stage, and he was able to gladden Mr. Toole's friends by thinking favourably of his chances of success. "I remember what I once myself wanted in that way," he said, "and I should like to serve him."

At one of the last dinners in Tavistock House before his departure, Mr. Watson of Rockingham was present; and he was hardly settled in Camden-crescent, Dover, when he had news of the death of that excellent friend. "Poor dear Watson! It was this day two weeks when you rode with us and he dined with us. We all remarked after he had gone how happy he seemed to have got over his election troubles, and how cheerful he was. He was full of Christmas plans for Rockingham, and was very anxious that we should get up a little French piece I had been telling him the plot of. He went abroad next day to join Mrs. Watson and the children at Homburg, and then go to Lausanne, where they had taken a house for a

month. He was seized at Homburg with violent internal inflammation, and died--without much pain--in four days. . . . I was so fond of him that I am sorry you didn't know him better. I believe he was as thoroughly good and true a man as ever lived; and I am sure I can have felt no greater affection for him than he felt for me. When I think of that bright house, and his fine simple honest heart, both so open to me, the blank and loss are like a dream." Other deaths followed. "Poor d'Orsay!" he wrote after only seven days (8th of August). "It is a tremendous consideration that friends should fall around us in such awful numbers as we attain middle life. What a field of battle it is!" Nor had another month quite passed before he lost, in Mrs. Macready, a very dear family friend. "Ah me! ah me!" he wrote. "This tremendous sickle certainly does cut deep into the surrounding corn, when one's own small blade has ripened. But this is all a Dream, may be, and death will wake us."

Able at last to settle to his work, he stayed in Dover three months; and early in October, sending home his family caravan, crossed to Boulogne to try it as a resort for seaside holiday. "I never saw a better instance of our countrymen than this place. Because it is accessible it is genteel to say it is of no character, quite English, nothing continental about it, and so forth. It is as quaint, picturesque, good a place as I know; the boatmen and fishing-people quite a race apart, and some of their villages as good as the fishing-villages on the Mediterranean. The Haute Ville, with a walk all round it on the ramparts, charming. The country walks, delightful. It is the best mixture of town and country (with sea air into the bargain) I ever saw; everything cheap, everything good; and please God I shall be writing on those said ramparts next July!"

Before the year closed, the time to which his publishing arrangements with Messrs. Bradbury and Evans were limited had expired, but at his suggestion the fourth share in such books as he might write, which they had now received for eight years, was continued to them on the understanding that the publishers' percentage should no longer be charged in the partnership accounts, and with a power reserved to himself to withdraw when he pleased. In the new year his first adventure was an ovation in Birmingham, where a silver-gilt salver and a diamond ring were presented to him, as well for eloquent service specially rendered to the Institution, as in general testimony of "varied literary acquirements, genial philosophy, and high moral teaching." A great banquet followed on Twelfth Night, made memorable by an offer to give a couple of readings from his books at the following Christmas, in aid of the new Midland Institute. It might seem to have been drawn from him as a grateful return for the enthusiastic greeting of his entertainers, but it was in his mind before he left London. It was his first formal undertaking to read in public.

His eldest son had now left Eton, and, the boy's wishes pointing at the time to a mercantile career, he was sent to Leipzig for completion of his education. At this date it seemed to me that the overstrain of attempting too much, brought upon him by the necessities of his weekly periodical, became first apparent in Dickens. Not unfrequently a complaint strange upon his lips fell from him. "Hypochondriacal whisperings tell me that I am rather overworked. The spring does not seem to fly back again directly, as it always did when I put my own work aside, and had nothing else to do. Yet I have everything to keep me going with a brave heart, Heaven knows!" Courage and hopefulness he might well derive from the increasing sale of Bleak House, which had risen to nearly forty thousand; but he could no longer bear easily what he carried so lightly of old, and enjoyments with work were too much for him. "What with Bleak House, and Household Words, and Child's History" (he dictated from week to week the papers which formed that little book, and cannot be said to have quite hit the mark with it), "and Miss Coutts's Home, and the invitations to feasts and festivals, I really feel as if my head would split like a fired shell if I remained here." He tried Brighton first, but did not find it answer, and returned. A few days of unalloyed enjoyment were afterwards given to the visit of his excellent American friend Felton; and on the 13th of June he was again in Boulogne, thanking heaven for escape from a breakdown. "If I had substituted

anybody's knowledge of myself for my own, and lingered in London, I never could have got through."

What befell him in Boulogne will be given, with the incidents of his second and third summer visits to the place, on a later page. He completed, by the third week of August, his novel of Bleak House; and it was resolved to celebrate the event by a two months' trip to Italy, in company with Mr. Wilkie Collins and Mr. Augustus Egg. The start was to be made from Boulogne in the middle of October, when he would send his family home; and he described the intervening weeks as a fearful "reaction and prostration of laziness" only broken by the Child's History. At the end of September he wrote: "I finished the little History yesterday, and am trying to think of something for the Christmas number. After which I shall knock off; having had quite enough to do, small as it would have seemed to me at any other time, since I finished Bleak House." He added, a week before his departure: "I get letters from Genoa and Lausanne as if I were going to stay in each place at least a month. If I were to measure my deserts by people's remembrance of me, I should be a prodigy of intolerability. Have recovered my Italian, which I had all but forgotten, and am one entire and perfect chrysolite of idleness."

From this trip, of which the incidents have an interest independent of my ordinary narrative, Dickens was home again in the middle of December 1853, and kept his promise to his Birmingham friends by reading in their Town Hall his Christmas Carol on the 27th, and his Cricket on the Hearth on the 29th. The enthusiasm was great, and he consented to read his Carol a second time, on Friday the 30th, if seats were reserved for working men at prices within their means. The result was an addition of between four and five hundred pounds to the funds for establishment of the new Institute; and a prettily worked flower-basket in silver, presented to Mrs. Dickens, commemorated these first public readings "to nearly six thousand people," and the design they had generously helped. Other applications then followed to such extent that limits to compliance had to be put; and a letter of the 16th of May 1854 is one of many that express both the difficulty in which he found himself, and his much desired expedient for solving it. "The objection you suggest to paid public lecturing does not strike me at all. It is worth consideration, but I do not think there is anything in it. On the contrary, if the lecturing would have any motive power at all (like my poor father this, in the sound!) I believe it would tend the other way. In the Colchester matter I had already received a letter from a Colchester magnate; to whom I had honestly replied that I stood pledged to Christmas readings at Bradford and at Reading, and could in no kind of reason do more in the public way." The promise to the people of Reading was for Talfourd's sake; the other was given after the Birmingham nights, when an institute in Bradford asked similar help, and offered a fee of fifty pounds. At first this was entertained; but was abandoned, with some reluctance, upon the argument that to become publicly a reader must alter without improving his position publicly as a writer, and that it was a change to be justified only when the higher calling should have failed of the old success. Thus yielding for the time, he nevertheless soon found the question rising again with the same importunity; his own position to it being always that of a man assenting against his will that it should rest in abeyance. But nothing farther was resolved on yet. The readings mentioned came off as promised, in aid of public objects; and besides others two years later for the family of a friend, he had given the like liberal help to institutes in Folkestone, Chatham, and again in Birmingham, Peterborough, Sheffield, Coventry, and Edinburgh, before the question settled itself finally in the announcement for paid public readings issued by him in 1858.

Carrying memory back to his home in the first half of 1854, there are few things that rise more pleasantly in connection with it than the children's theatricals. These began with the first Twelfth Night at Tavistock House, and were renewed until the principal actors ceased to be children. The best of the performances were Tom Thumb and Fortunio, in '54 and '55; Dickens now joining first in the revel, and Mr. Mark Lemon bringing into it his own clever children and a very mountain of child-pleasing fun in himself. Dickens had become very intimate with him, and his merry genial ways had given him unbounded popularity with the

"young 'uns," who had no such favourite as "Uncle Mark." In Fielding's burlesque he was the giantess Glumdalca, and Dickens was the ghost of Gaffer Thumb; the names by which they respectively appeared being the Infant Phenomenon and the Modern Garrick. But the younger actors carried off the palm. There was a Lord Grizzle, at whose ballad of Miss Villikins, introduced by desire, Thackeray rolled off his seat in a burst of laughter that became absurdly contagious. Yet even this, with hardly less fun from the Noodles, Doodles, and King Arthurs, was not so good as the pretty, fantastic, comic grace of Dollalolla, Huncamunca, and Tom. The girls wore steadily the grave airs irresistible when put on by little children; and an actor not out of his fourth year, who went through the comic songs and the tragic exploits without a wrong note or a victim unslain, represented the small helmeted hero. He was in the bills as Mr. H----, but bore in fact the name of the illustrious author whose conception he embodied; and who certainly would have hugged him for Tom's opening song, delivered in the arms of Huncamunca, if he could have forgiven the later master in his own craft for having composed it afresh to the air of a ditty then wildly popular at the "Coal Hole." The encores were frequent, and for the most part the little fellow responded to them; but the misplaced enthusiasm that took similar form at the heroic intensity with which he stabbed Dollalolla, he rebuked by going gravely on to the close. His Fortunio, the next Twelfth Night, was not so great; yet when, as a prelude to getting the better of the Dragon, he adulterated his drink (Mr. Lemon played the Dragon) with sherry, the sly relish with which he watched the demoralization, by this means, of his formidable adversary into a helpless imbecility, was perfect. Here Dickens played the testy old Baron, and took advantage of the excitement against the Czar raging in 1855 to denounce him (in a song) as no other than own cousin to the very Bear that Fortunio had gone forth to subdue. He depicted him, in his desolation of autocracy, as the Robinson Crusoe of absolute state, who had at his court many a show-day and many a high-day, but hadn't in all his dominions a Friday. The bill, which attributed these interpolations to "the Dramatic Poet of the Establishment," deserves also mention for the fun of the six large-lettered announcements which stood at the head of it, and could not have been bettered by Mr. Crummles himself. "Re-engagement of that irresistible comedian" (the performer of Lord Grizzle) "Mr. Ainger!" "Reappearance of Mr. H. who created so powerful an impression last year!" "Return of Mr. Charles Dickens Junior from his German engagements!" "Engagement of Miss Kate, who declined the munificent offers of the Management last season!" "Mr. Passe, Mr. Mudperiod, Mr. Measly Servile, and Mr. Wilkini Collini!" "First appearance on any stage of Mr. Plornishmaroontigoonter (who has been kept out of bed at a vast expense)." The last performer mentioned was yet at some distance from the third year of his age. Dickens was Mr. Passe.

Gravities were mixed with these gaieties. "I wish you would look" (20th of January 1854) "at the enclosed titles for the H. W._ story, between this and two o'clock or so, when I will call. It is my usual day, you observe, on which I have jotted them down--Friday! It seems to me that there are three very good ones among them. I should like to know whether you hit upon the same." On the paper enclosed was written: 1. According to Cocker. 2. Prove it. 3. Stubborn Things. 4. Mr. Gradgrind's Facts. 5. The Grindstone. 6. Hard Times. 7. Two and Two are Four. 8. Something Tangible. 9. Our Hard-headed Friend. 10. Rust and Dust. 11. Simple Arithmetic. 12. A Matter of Calculation. 13. A Mere Question of Figures. 14. The Gradgrind Philosophy. The three selected by me were 2, 6, and 11; the three that were his own favourites were 6, 13, and 14; and as 6 had been chosen by both, that title was taken.

It was the first story written by him for Household Words; and in the course of it the old troubles of the Clock came back, with the difference that the greater brevity of the weekly portions made it easier to write them up to time, but much more difficult to get sufficient interest into each. "The difficulty of the space," he wrote after a few weeks' trial, "is CRUSHING. Nobody can have an idea of it who has not had an experience of patient fiction-writing with some elbow-room always, and open places in perspective. In this form, with any kind of regard to the current number, there is absolutely no such thing." He went on,

however; and, of the two designs he started with, accomplished one very perfectly and the other at least partially. He more than doubled the circulation of his journal; and he wrote a story which, though not among his best, contains things as characteristic as any he has written. I may not go as far as Mr. Ruskin in giving it a high place; but to anything falling from that writer, however one may differ from it, great respect is due, and every word here said of Dickens's intention is in the most strict sense just. "The essential value and truth of Dickens's writings," he says, "have been unwisely lost sight of by many thoughtful persons, merely because he presents his truth with some colour of caricature. Unwisely, because Dickens's caricature, though often gross, is never mistaken. Allowing for his manner of telling them, the things he tells us are always true. I wish that he could think it right to limit his brilliant exaggeration to works written only for public amusement; and when he takes up a subject of high national importance, such as that which he handled in Hard Times, that he would use severer and more accurate analysis. The usefulness of that work (to my mind, in several respects, the greatest he has written) is with many persons seriously diminished, because Mr. Bounderby is a dramatic monster, instead of a characteristic example of a worldly master; and Stephen Blackpool a dramatic perfection, instead of a characteristic example of an honest workman. But let us not lose the use of Dickens's wit and insight, because he chooses to speak in a circle of stage fire. He is entirely right in his main drift and purpose in every book he has written; and all of them, but especially Hard Times, should be studied with close and earnest care by persons interested in social questions. They will find much that is partial, and, because partial, apparently unjust; but if they examine all the evidence on the other side, which Dickens seems to overlook, it will appear, after all their trouble, that his view was the finally right one, grossly and sharply told." The best points in it, out of the circle of stage fire (an expression of wider application to this part of Dickens's life than its inventor supposed it to be), were the sketches of the riding-circus people and the Bounderby household; but it is a wise hint of Mr. Ruskin's that there may be, in the drift of a story, truths of sufficient importance to set against defects of workmanship; and here they challenged wide attention. You cannot train any one properly, unless you cultivate the fancy, and allow fair scope to the affections. You cannot govern men on a principle of averages; and to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market is not the summum bonum of life. You cannot treat the working man fairly unless, in dealing with his wrongs and his delusions, you take equally into account the simplicity and tenacity of his nature, arising partly from limited knowledge, but more from honesty and singleness of intention. Fiction cannot prove a case, but it can express forcibly a righteous sentiment; and this is here done unsparingly upon matters of universal concern. The book was finished at Boulogne in the middle of July, and is inscribed to Carlyle.

An American admirer accounted for the vivacity of the circus-scenes by declaring that Dickens had "arranged with the master of Astley's Circus to spend many hours behind the scenes with the riders and among the horses;" a thing just as likely as that he went into training as a stroller to qualify for Mr. Crummles in Nickleby. Such successes belonged to the experiences of his youth; he had nothing to add to what his marvellous observation had made familiar from almost childish days; and the glimpses we get of them in the Sketches by Boz are in these points as perfect as anything his later experience could supply. There was one thing nevertheless which the choice of his subject made him anxious to verify while Hard Times was in hand; and this was a strike in a manufacturing town. He went to Preston to see one at the end of January, and was somewhat disappointed. "I am afraid I shall not be able to get much here. Except the crowds at the street-corners reading the placards pro and con; and the cold absence of smoke from the mill-chimneys; there is very little in the streets to make the town remarkable. I am told that the people 'sit at home and mope.' The delegates with the money from the neighbouring places come in to-day to report the amounts they bring; and to-morrow the people are paid. When I have seen both these ceremonies, I shall return. It is a nasty place (I thought it was a model town); and I am in the

Bull Hotel, before which some time ago the people assembled supposing the masters to be here, and on demanding to have them out were remonstrated with by the landlady in person. I saw the account in an Italian paper, in which it was stated that 'the populace then environed the Palazzo Bull, until the padrona of the Palazzo heroically appeared at one of the upper windows and addressed them!' One can hardly conceive anything less likely to be represented to an Italian mind by this description, than the old, grubby, smoky, mean, intensely formal red brick house with a narrow gateway and a dingy yard, to which it applies. At the theatre last night I saw Hamlet, and should have done better to 'sit at home and mope' like the idle workmen. In the last scene, Laertes on being asked how it was with him replied (verbatim) 'Why, like a woodcock--on account of my treachery.'" (29th Jan.)

The home incidents of the summer and autumn of 1855 may be mentioned briefly. It was a year of much unsettled discontent with him, and upon return from a short trip to Paris with Mr. Wilkie Collins, he flung himself rather hotly into agitation with the administrative reformers, and spoke at one of the great meetings in Drury-lane Theatre. In the following month (April) he took occasion, even from the chair of the General Theatrical Fund, to give renewed expression to political dissatisfactions. In the summer he threw open to many friends his Tavistock House Theatre, having secured for its "lessee and manager Mr. Crummles;" for its poet Mr. Wilkie Collins, in an "entirely new and original domestic melodrama;" and for its scene-painter "Mr. Stanfield, R.A." The Lighthouse, by Mr. Wilkie Collins, was then produced, its actors being Mr. Crummles the manager (Dickens in other words), the Author of the play, Mr. Lemon and Mr. Egg, and the manager's sister-in-law and eldest daughter. It was followed by the Guild farce of Mr. Nightingale's Diary, in which besides the performers named, and Dickens in his old personation part, the manager's youngest daughter and Mr. Frank Stone assisted. The success was wonderful; and in the three delighted audiences who crowded to what the bills described as "the smallest theatre in the world," were not a few of the notabilities of London. Mr. Carlyle compared Dickens's wild picturesqueness in the old lighthouse keeper to the famous figure in Nicholas Poussin's bacchanalian dance in the National Gallery; and at one of the joyous suppers that followed on each night of the play, Lord Campbell told the company that he had much rather have written Pickwick than be Chief Justice of England and a peer of parliament.

Then came the beginning of Nobody's Fault, as Little Dorrit continued to be called by him up to the eve of its publication; a flight to Folkestone to help his sluggish fancy; and his return to London in October to preside at a dinner to Thackeray on his going to lecture in America. It was a muster of more than sixty admiring entertainers, and Dickens's speech gave happy expression to the spirit that animated all, telling Thackeray not alone how much his friendship was prized by those present, and how proud they were of his genius, but offering him in the name of the tens of thousands absent who had never touched his hand or seen his face, life-long thanks for the treasures of mirth, wit, and wisdom within the yellow-covered numbers of Pendennis and Vanity Fair. Peter Cunningham, one of the sons of Allan, was secretary to the banquet; and for many pleasures given to the subject of this memoir, who had a hearty regard for him, should have a few words to his memory.

His presence was always welcome to Dickens, and indeed to all who knew him, for his relish of social life was great, and something of his keen enjoyment could not but be shared by his company. His geniality would have carried with it a pleasurable glow even if it had stood alone, and it was invigorated by very considerable acquirements. He had some knowledge of the works of eminent authors and artists; and he had an eager interest in their lives and haunts, which he had made the subject of minute and novel enquiry. This store of knowledge gave substance to his talk, yet never interrupted his buoyancy and pleasantry, because only introduced when called for, and not made matter of parade or display. But the happy combination of qualities that rendered him a favourite companion, and won him many friends, proved in the end injurious to himself. He had done much while young in certain lines of investigation

which he had made almost his own, and there was every promise that, in the department of biographical and literary research, he would have produced much weightier works with advancing years. This however was not to be. The fascinations of good fellowship encroached more and more upon literary pursuits, until he nearly abandoned his former favourite studies, and sacrificed all the deeper purposes of his life to the present temptation of a festive hour. Then his health gave way, and he became lost to friends as well as to literature. But the impression of the bright and amiable intercourse of his better time survived, and his old associates never ceased to think of Peter Cunningham with regret and kindness.

Dickens went to Paris early in October, and at its close was brought again to London by the sudden death of a friend, much deplored by himself, and still more so by a distinguished lady who had his loyal service at all times. An incident before his return to France is worth brief relation. He had sallied out for one of his night walks, full of thoughts of his story, one wintery rainy evening (the 8th of November), and "pulled himself up," outside the door of Whitechapel Workhouse, at a strange sight which arrested him there. Against the dreary enclosure of the house were leaning, in the midst of the downpouring rain and storm, what seemed to be seven heaps of rags: "dumb, wet, silent horrors" he described them, "sphinxes set up against that dead wall, and no one likely to be at the pains of solving them until the General Overthrow." He sent in his card to the Master. Against him there was no ground of complaint; he gave prompt personal attention; but the casual ward was full, and there was no help. The rag-heaps were all girls, and Dickens gave each a shilling. One girl, "twenty or so," had been without food a day and night. "Look at me," she said, as she clutched the shilling, and without thanks shuffled off. So with the rest. There was not a single "thank you." A crowd meanwhile, only less poor than these objects of misery, had gathered round the scene; but though they saw the seven shillings given away they asked for no relief to themselves, they recognized in their sad wild way the other greater wretchedness, and made room in silence for Dickens to walk on.

Not more tolerant of the way in which laws meant to be most humane are too often administered in England, he left in a day or two to resume his Little Dorrit in Paris. But before his life there is described, some sketches from his holiday trip to Italy with Mr. Wilkie Collins and Mr. Augustus Egg, and from his three summer visits to Boulogne, claim to themselves two intervening chapters.

Volume III, Chapter 3 (1853): Switzerland and Italy Revisited

Switzerland and Italy Revisited

THE first news of the three travellers was from Chamounix, on the 20th of October; and in it there was little made of the fatigue, and much of the enjoyment, of their Swiss travel. Great attention and cleanliness at the inns, very small windows and very bleak passages, doors opening to wintery blasts, overhanging eaves and external galleries, plenty of milk, honey, cows, and goats, much singing towards sunset on mountain sides, mountains almost too solemn to look at--that was the picture of it, with the country everywhere in one of its finest aspects, as winter began to close in. They had started from Geneva the previous morning at four, and in their day's travel Dickens had again noticed what he spoke of formerly, the ill-favoured look of the people in the valleys owing to their hard and stern climate. "All the women were like used-up men, and all the men like a sort of fagged dogs. But the good, genuine, grateful Swiss recognition of the commonest kind word--not too often thrown to them by our countrymen--made them quite radiant. I walked the greater part of the way, which was like going up the Monument." On the day the letter was written they had been up to the Mer de Glace, finding it not so beautiful in colour as in summer, but grander in its desolation; the green ice, like the greater part of the ascent, being covered with snow. "We were alarmingly near to a very dismal accident. We were a train of four mules and two guides, going along an immense height like a chimney-piece, with sheer precipice below, when there came rolling from above, with fearful velocity, a block of stone about the size of one of the fountains in Trafalgar-square, which Egg, the last of the party, had preceded by not a yard, when it swept over the ledge, breaking away a tree, and rolled and tumbled down into the valley. It had been loosened by the heavy rains, or by some wood-cutters afterwards reported to be above." The only place new to Dickens was Berne: "a surprisingly picturesque old Swiss town, with a view of the Alps from the outside of it singularly beautiful in the morning light." Everything else was familiar to him: though at that winter season, when the inns were shutting up, and all who could afford it were off to Geneva, most things in the valley struck him with a new aspect. From such of his old friends as he found at Lausanne, where a day or two's rest was taken, he had the gladdest of greetings; "and the wonderful manner in which they turned out in the wettest morning ever beheld for a Godspeed down the Lake was really quite pathetic."

He had found time to see again the deaf, dumb, and blind youth at Mr. Haldimand's Institution who had aroused so deep an interest in him seven years before, but, in his brief present visit, the old associations would not reawaken. "Tremendous efforts were made by Hertzel to impress him with an idea of me, and the associations belonging to me; but it seemed in my eyes quite a failure, and I much doubt if he had the least perception of his old acquaintance. According to his custom, he went on muttering strange eager sounds like Town and Down and Mown, but nothing more. I left ten francs to be spent in cigars for my old friend. If I had taken one with me, I think I could, more successfully than his master, have established my identity." The child similarly afflicted, the little girl whom he saw at the same old time, had been after some trial discharged as an idiot.

Before October closed, the travellers had reached Genoa, having been thirty-one consecutive hours on the road from Milan. They arrived in somewhat damaged condition, and took up their lodging in the top rooms of the Croce di Malta, "overlooking the port and sea pleasantly and airily enough, but it was no joke to get so high, and the apartment is rather vast and faded." The warmth of personal greeting that here awaited Dickens was given no less to the friends who accompanied him, and though the reader may not share in such private confidences as would show the sensation created by his reappearance, and the jovial hours that were passed among old associates, he will perhaps be interested to know how

far the intervening years had changed the aspect of things and places made pleasantly familiar to us in his former letters. He wrote to his sister-in-law that the old walks were pretty much the same as ever except that there had been building behind the Peschiere up the San Bartolomeo hill, and the whole town towards San Pietro d'Arena had been quite changed. The Bisagno looked just the same, stony just then, having very little water in it; the vicoli were fragrant with the same old flavour of "very rotten cheese kept in very hot blankets;" and everywhere he saw the mezzaro as of yore. The Jesuits' College in the Strada Nuova was become, under the changed government, the Hotel de Ville, and a splendid caffe with a terrace-garden had arisen between it and Palaviccini's old palace. "Pal himself has gone to the dogs." Another new and handsome caffe had been built in the Piazza Carlo Felice, between the old one of the Bei Arti and the Strada Carlo Felice; and the Teatro Diurno had now stone galleries and seats, like an ancient amphitheatre. "The beastly gate and guardhouse in the Albaro road are still in their dear old beastly state; and the whole of that road is just as it was. The man without legs is still in the Strada Nuova; but the beggars in general are all cleared off, and our old one-arm'd Belisario made a sudden evaporation a year or two ago. I am going to the Peschiere to-day." To myself he described his former favourite abode as converted into a girls' college; all the paintings of gods and goddesses canvassed over, and the gardens gone to ruin; "but O! what a wonderful place!" He observed an extraordinary increase everywhere else, since he was last in the splendid city, of "life, growth, and enterprise;" and he declared his old conviction to be confirmed that for picturesque beauty and character there was nothing in Italy, Venice excepted, "near brilliant old Genoa."

The voyage thence to Naples, written from the latter place, is too capital a description to be lost. The steamer in which they embarked was "the new express English ship," but they found her to be already more than full of passengers from Marseilles (among them an old friend, Sir Emerson Tennent, with his family), and everything in confusion. There were no places at the captain's table, dinner had to be taken on deck, no berth or sleeping accommodation was available, and heavy first-class fares had to be paid. Thus they made their way to Leghorn, where worse awaited them. The authorities proved to be not favourable to the "crack" English-officered vessel (she had just been started for the India mail); and her papers not being examined in time, it was too late to steam away again that day, and she had to lie all night long off the lighthouse. "The scene on board beggars description. Ladies on the tables; gentlemen under the tables; bed-room appliances not usually beheld in public airing themselves in positions where soup-tureens had been lately developing themselves; and ladies and gentlemen lying indiscriminately on the open deck, arranged like spoons on a sideboard. No mattresses, no blankets, nothing. Towards midnight attempts were made, by means of awning and flags, to make this latter scene remotely approach an Australian encampment; and we three (Collins, Egg, and self) lay together on the bare planks covered with our coats. We were all gradually dozing off, when a perfectly tropical rain fell, and in a moment drowned the whole ship. The rest of the night we passed upon the stairs, with an immense jumble of men and women. When anybody came up for any purpose we all fell down, and when anybody came down we all fell up again. Still, the good-humour in the English part of the passengers was quite extraordinary. . . . There were excellent officers aboard, and, in the morning, the first mate lent me his cabin to wash in--which I afterwards lent to Egg and Collins. Then we, the Emerson Tennents, the captain, the doctor, and the second officer, went off on a jaunt together to Pisa, as the ship was to lie all day at Leghorn. The captain was a capital fellow, but I led him, facetiously, such a life the whole day, that I got most things altered at night. Emerson Tennent's son, with the greatest amiability, insisted on turning out of his state-room for me, and I got a good bed there. The store-room down by the hold was opened for Collins and Egg; and they slept with the moist sugar, the cheese in cut, the spices, the cruets, the apples and pears, in a perfect chandler's shop--in company with what a friend of ours would call a hold gent, who had been so horribly wet through over night that his condition frightened the authorities; a cat;

and the steward, who dozed in an arm-chair, and all-night-long fell head foremost, once every five minutes, on Egg, who slept on the counter or dresser. Last night, I had the steward's own cabin, opening on deck, all to myself. It had been previously occupied by some desolate lady who went ashore at Civita Vecchia. There was little or no sea, thank Heaven, all the trip; but the rain was heavier than any I have ever seen, and the lightning very constant and vivid. We were, with the crew, some 200 people--provided with boats, at the utmost stretch, for one hundred perhaps. I could not help thinking what would happen if we met with any accident: the crew being chiefly Maltese, and evidently fellows who would cut off alone in the largest boat, on the least alarm; the speed very high; and the running, thro' all the narrow rocky channels. Thank God, however, here we are."

A whimsical postscript closed the amusing narrative. "We towed from Civita Vecchia the entire Greek navy, I believe; consisting of a little brig of war with no guns, fitted as a steamer, but disabled by having burnt the bottoms of her boilers out, in her first run. She was just big enough to carry the captain and a crew of six or so: but the captain was so covered with buttons and gold that there never would have been room for him on board to put those valuables away, if he hadn't worn them--which he consequently did, all night. Whenever anything was wanted to be done, as slackening the tow-rope or anything of that sort, our officers roared at this miserable potentate, in violent English, through a speaking trumpet; of which he couldn't have understood a word in the most favourable circumstances. So he did all the wrong things first, and the right thing always last. The absence of any knowledge of anything but English on the part of the officers and stewards was most ridiculous. I met an Italian gentleman on the cabin steps yesterday morning, vainly endeavouring to explain that he wanted a cup of tea for his sick wife. And when we were coming out of the harbour at Genoa, and it was necessary to order away that boat of music you remember, the chief officer (called 'aft' for the purpose, as 'knowing something of Italian') delivered himself in this explicit and clear Italian to the principal performer--'Now Signora, if you don't sheer off you'll be run down, so you had better trice up that guitar of yours and put about.'"

At Naples some days were passed very merrily; going up Vesuvius and into the buried cities, with Layard who had joined them, and with the Tennents. Here a small adventure befell Dickens specially, in itself extremely unimportant; but told by him with delightful humour in a letter to his sister-in-law. The old idle Frenchman, to whom all things are possible, with his snuff-box and dusty umbrella, and all the delicate and kindly observation, would have enchanted Leigh Hunt, and made his way to the heart of Charles Lamb. After mentioning Mr. Lowther, then English charge d'affaires in Naples, as a very agreeable fellow who had been at the Rockingham play, he alludes to a meeting at his house. "We had an exceedingly pleasant dinner of eight, preparatory to which I was near having the ridiculous adventure of not being able to find the house and coming back dinnerless. I went in an open carriage from the hotel in all state, and the coachman to my surprise pulled up at the end of the Chiaja. 'Behold the house,' says he, 'of Il Signor Larthoor!'--at the same time pointing with his whip into the seventh heaven where the early stars were shining. 'But the Signor Larthorr,' says I, 'lives at Pausilippo.' 'It is true,' says the coachman (still pointing to the evening star), 'but he lives high up the Salita Sant' Antonio where no carriage ever yet ascended, and that is the house' (evening star as aforesaid), 'and one must go on foot. Behold the Salita Sant' Antonio!' I went up it, a mile and a half I should think, I got into the strangest places among the wildest Neapolitans; kitchens, washing-places, archways, stables, vineyards; was baited by dogs, and answered, in profoundly unintelligible language, from behind lonely locked doors in cracked female voices, quaking with fear; but could hear of no such Englishman, nor any Englishman. Bye and bye, I came upon a polenta-shop in the clouds, where an old Frenchman with an umbrella like a faded tropical leaf (it had not rained in Naples for six weeks) was staring at nothing at all, with a snuff-box in his hand. To him I appealed, concerning the Signor Larthoor. 'Sir,' said he, with the sweetest politeness, 'can you speak French?' 'Sir,' said I, 'a little.' 'Sir,' said he, 'I presume the Signer Loothere'--you will observe that

he changed the name according to the custom of his country--'is an Englishman?' I admitted that he was the victim of circumstances and had that misfortune. 'Sir,' said he, 'one word more. Has he a servant with a wooden leg?' 'Great heaven, sir,' said I, 'how do I know? I should think not, but it is possible.' 'It is always,' said the Frenchman, 'possible. Almost all the things of the world are always possible.' 'Sir,' said I--you may imagine my condition and dismal sense of my own absurdity, by this time--'that is true.' He then took an immense pinch of snuff wiped the dust off his umbrella, led me to an arch commanding a wonderful view of the Bay of Naples, and pointed deep into the earth from which I had mounted. 'Below there, near the lamp, one finds an Englishman with a servant with a wooden leg. It is always possible that he is the Signor Loothore.' I had been asked at six o'clock, and it was now getting on for seven. I went back in a state of perspiration and misery not to be described, and without the faintest hope of finding the spot. But as I was going farther down to the lamp, I saw the strangest staircase up a dark corner, with a man in a white waistcoat (evidently hired) standing on the top of it fuming. I dashed in at a venture, found it was the house, made the most of the whole story, and achieved much popularity. The best of it was that as nobody ever did find the place, Lowther had put a servant at the bottom of the Salita to wait 'for an English gentleman;' but the servant (as he presently pleaded), deceived by the moustache, had allowed the English gentleman to pass unchallenged."

From Naples they went to Rome, where they found Lockhart, "fearfully weak and broken, yet hopeful of himself too" (he died the following year); smoked and drank punch with David Roberts, then painting everyday with Louis Haghe in St. Peter's; and took the old walks. The Coliseum, Appian Way, and Streets of Tombs, seemed desolate and grand as ever; but generally, Dickens adds, "I discovered the Roman antiquities to be smaller than my imagination in nine years had made them. The Electric Telegraph now goes like a sunbeam through the cruel old heart of the Coliseum--a suggestive thing to think about, I fancied. The Pantheon I thought even nobler than of yore." The amusements were of course an attraction; and nothing at the Opera amused the party of three English more, than another party of four Americans who sat behind them in the pit. "All the seats are numbered arm-chairs, and you buy your number at the pay-place, and go to it with the easiest direction on the ticket itself. We were early, and the four places of the Americans were on the next row behind us--all together. After looking about them for some time, and seeing the greater part of the seats empty (because the audience generally wait in a caffe which is part of the theatre), one of them said 'Waal I dunno--I expect we aint no call to set so nigh to one another neither--will you scatter Kernel, will you scatter sir?--' Upon this the Kernel 'scattered' some twenty benches off; and they distributed themselves (for no earthly reason apparently but to get rid of one another) all over the pit. As soon as the overture began, in came the audience in a mass. Then the people who had got the numbers into which they had 'scattered,' had to get them out; and as they understood nothing that was said to them, and could make no reply but 'A-mericani,' you may imagine the number of cocked hats it took to dislodge them. At last they were all got back into their right places, except one. About an hour afterwards when Moses (Moses in Egypt was the opera) was invoking the darkness, and there was a dead silence all over the house, unwonted sounds of disturbance broke out from a distant corner of the pit, and here and there a beard got up to look. 'What is it neow sir?' said one of the Americans to another;--'some person seems to be getting along, again streeem.' 'Waal sir' he replied 'I dunno. But I xpect 'tis the Kernel sir, a holdin on.' So it was. The Kernel was ignominiously escorted back to his right place, not in the least disconcerted, and in perfectly good spirits and temper." The opera was excellently done, and the price of the stalls one and threepence English. At Milan, on the other hand, the Scala was fallen from its old estate, dirty, gloomy, dull, and the performance execrable.

Another theatre of the smallest pretension Dickens sought out with avidity in Rome, and eagerly enjoyed. He had heard it said in his old time in Genoa that the finest Marionetti were here; and now, after great

difficulty, he discovered the company in a sort of stable attached to a decayed palace. "It was a wet night, and there was no audience but a party of French officers and ourselves. We all sat together. I never saw anything more amazing than the performance--altogether only an hour long, but managed by as many as ten people, for we saw them all go behind, at the ringing of a bell. The saving of a young lady by a good fairy from the machinations of an enchanter, coupled with the comic business of her servant Pulcinella (the Roman Punch) formed the plot of the first piece. A scolding old peasant woman, who always leaned forward to scold and put her hands in the pockets of her apron, was incredibly natural. Pulcinella, so airy, so merry, so life-like, so graceful, he was irresistible. To see him carrying an umbrella over his mistress's head in a storm, talking to a prodigious giant whom he met in the forest, and going to bed with a pony, were things never to be forgotten. And so delicate are the hands of the people who move them, that every puppet was an Italian, and did exactly what an Italian does. If he pointed at any object, if he saluted anybody, if he laughed, if he cried, he did it as never Englishman did it since Britain first at Heaven's command arose--arose--arose, &c. There was a ballet afterwards, on the same scale, and we really came away quite enchanted with the delicate drollery of the thing. French officers more than ditto."

Of the great enemy to the health of the now capital of the kingdom of Italy, Dickens remarked in the same letter. "I have been led into some curious speculations by the existence and progress of the Malaria about Rome. Isn't it very extraordinary to think of its encroaching and encroaching on the Eternal City as if it were commissioned to swallow it up. This year it has been extremely bad, and has long outstayed its usual time. Rome has been very unhealthy, and is not free now. Few people care to be out at the bad times of sunset and sunrise, and the streets are like a desert at night. There is a church, a very little way outside the walls, destroyed by fire some 16 or 18 years ago, and now restored and re-created at an enormous expense. It stands in a wilderness. For any human creature who goes near it, or can sleep near it, after nightfall, it might as well be at the bottom of the uppermost cataract of the Nile. Along the whole extent of the Pontine Marshes (which we came across the other day), no creature in Adam's likeness lives, except the sallow people at the lonely posting-stations. I walk out from the Coliseum through the Street of Tombs to the ruins of the old Appian Way--pass no human being, and see no human habitation but ruined houses from which the people have fled, and where it is Death to sleep: these houses being three miles outside a gate of Rome at its farthest extent. Leaving Rome by the opposite side, we travel for many many hours over the dreary Campagna, shunned and avoided by all but the wretched shepherds. Thirteen hours' good posting brings us to Bolsena (I slept there once before), on the margin of a stagnant lake whence the workpeople fly as the sun goes down--where it is a risk to go; where from a distance we saw a mist hang on the place; where, in the inconceivably wretched inn, no window can be opened; where our dinner was a pale ghost of a fish with an oily omelette, and we slept in great mouldering rooms tainted with ruined arches and heaps of dung--and coming from which we saw no colour in the cheek of man, woman, or child for another twenty miles. Imagine this phantom knocking at the gates of Rome; passing them; creeping along the streets; haunting the aisles and pillars of the churches; year by year more encroaching, and more impossible of avoidance."

From Rome they posted to Florence, reaching it in three days and a half, on the morning of the 20th of November; having then been out six weeks, with only three days' rain; and in another week they were at Venice. "The fine weather has accompanied us here," Dickens wrote on the 28th of November, "the place of all others where it is necessary, and the city has been a blaze of sunlight and blue sky (with an extremely clear cold air) ever since we have been in it. If you could see it at this moment you would never forget it. We live in the same house that I lived in nine years ago, and have the same sitting-room--close to the Bridge of Sighs and the Palace of the Doges. The room is at the corner of the house, and there is a narrow street of water running round the side: so that we have the Grand Canal

before the two front windows, and this wild little street at the corner window: into which, too, our three bedrooms look. We established a gondola as soon as we arrived, and we slide out of the hall on to the water twenty times a day. The gondoliers have queer old customs that belong to their class, and some are sufficiently disconcerting. . . . It is a point of honour with them, while they are engaged, to be always at your disposal. Hence it is no use telling them they may go home for an hour or two--for they won't go. They roll themselves in shaggy capuccins, great coats with hoods, and lie down on the stone or marble pavement until they are wanted again. So that when I come in or go out, on foot--which can be done from this house for some miles, over little bridges and by narrow ways--I usually walk over the principal of my vassals, whose custom it is to snore immediately across the doorway. Conceive the oddity of the most familiar things in this place, from one instance: Last night we go downstairs at half-past eight, step into the gondola, slide away on the black water, ripple and plash swiftly along for a mile or two, land at a broad flight of steps, and instantly walk into the most brilliant and beautiful theatre conceivable--all silver and blue, and precious little fringes made of glittering prisms of glass. There we sit until half-past eleven, come out again (gondolier asleep outside the box-door), and in a moment are on the black silent water, floating away as if there were no dry building in the world. It stops, and in a moment we are out again, upon the broad solid Piazza of St. Mark, brilliantly lighted with gas, very like the Palais Royal at Paris, only far more handsome, and shining with no end of caffes. The two old pillars and the enormous bell-tower are as gruff and solid against the exquisite starlight as if they were a thousand miles from the sea or any undermining water: and the front of the cathedral, overlaid with golden mosaics and beautiful colours, is like a thousand rainbows even in the night."

His formerly expressed notions as to art and pictures in Italy received confirmation at this visit. "I am more than ever confirmed in my conviction that one of the great uses of travelling is to encourage a man to think for himself, to be bold enough always to declare without offence that he does think for himself, and to overcome the villainous meanness of professing what other people have professed when he knows (if he has capacity to originate an opinion) that his profession is untrue. The intolerable nonsense against which genteel taste and subserviency are afraid to rise, in connection with art, is astounding. Egg's honest amazement and consternation when he saw some of the most trumpeted things was what the Americans call 'a caution.' In the very same hour and minute there were scores of people falling into conventional raptures with that very poor Apollo, and passing over the most beautiful little figures and heads in the whole Vatican because they were not expressly set up to be worshipped. So in this place. There are pictures by Tintoretto in Venice, more delightful and masterly than it is possible sufficiently to express. His Assembly of the Blest I do believe to be, take it all in all, the most wonderful and charming picture ever painted. Your guide-book writer, representing the general swarming of humbugs, rather patronizes Tintoretto as a man of some sort of merit; and (bound to follow Eustace, Forsyth, and all the rest of them) directs you, on pain of being broke for want of gentility in appreciation, to go into ecstacies with things that have neither imagination, nature, proportion, possibility, nor anything else in them. You immediately obey, and tell your son to obey. He tells his son, and he tells his, and so the world gets at three-fourths of its frauds and miseries."

The last place visited was Turin, where the travellers arrived on the 5th of December, finding it, with a brightly shining sun, intensely cold and freezing hard. "There are double windows to all the rooms, but the Alpine air comes down and numbs my feet as I write (in a cap and shawl) within six feet of the fire." There was yet something better than this to report of that bracing Alpine air. To Dickens's remarks on the Sardinian race, and to what he says of the exile of the noblest Italians, the momentous events of the few following years gave striking comment; nor could better proof be afforded of the judgment he brought to the observation of what passed before him. The letter had in all respects much interest and attractiveness. "This is a remarkably agreeable place. A beautiful town, prosperous, thriving, growing

prodigiously, as Genoa is; crowded with busy inhabitants; full of noble streets and squares. The Alps, now covered deep with snow, are close upon it, and here and there seem almost ready to tumble into the houses. The contrast this part of Italy presents to the rest, is amazing. Beautifully made railroads, admirably managed; cheerful, active people; spirit, energy, life, progress. In Milan, in every street, the noble palace of some exile is a barrack, and dirty soldiers are lolling out of the magnificent windows--it seems as if the whole place were being gradually absorbed into soldiers. In Naples, something like a hundred thousand troops. 'I knew,' I said to a certain Neapolitan Marchese there whom I had known before, and who came to see me the night after I arrived, 'I knew a very remarkable gentleman when I was last here; who had never been out of his own country, but was perfectly acquainted with English literature, and had taught himself to speak English in that wonderful manner that no one could have known him for a foreigner; I am very anxious to see him again, but I forget his name.'--He named him, and his face fell directly. 'Dead?' said I.--'In exile.'--'O dear me!' said I, 'I had looked forward to seeing him again, more than any one I was acquainted with in the country!'--'What would you have!' says the Marchese in a low-voice. 'He was a remarkable man--full of knowledge, full of spirit, full of generosity. Where should he be but in exile! Where could he be!' We said not another word about it, but I shall always remember the short dialogue."

On the other hand there were incidents of the Austrian occupation as to which Dickens thought the ordinary style of comment unfair; and his closing remark on their police is well worth preserving. "I am strongly inclined to think that our countrymen are to blame in the matter of the Austrian vexations to travellers that have been complained of. Their manner is so very bad, they are so extraordinarily suspicious, so determined to be done by everybody, and give so much offence. Now, the Austrian police are very strict, but they really know how to do business, and they do it. And if you treat them like gentlemen, they will always respond. When we first crossed the Austrian frontier, and were ushered into the police office, I took off my hat. The officer immediately took off his, and was as polite--still doing his duty, without any compromise--as it was possible to be. When we came to Venice, the arrangements were very strict, but were so business-like that the smallest possible amount of inconvenience consistent with strictness ensued. Here is the scene. A soldier has come into the railway carriage (a saloon on the American plan) some miles off, has touched his hat, and asked for my passport. I have given it. Soldier has touched his hat again, and retired as from the presence of superior officer. Alighted from carriage, we pass into a place like a banking-house, lighted up with gas. Nobody bullies us or drives us there, but we must go, because the road ends there. Several soldierly clerks. One very sharp chief. My passport is brought out of an inner room, certified to be en regle. Very sharp chief takes it, looks at it (it is rather longer, now, than Hamlet), calls out--'Signor Carlo Dickens!' 'Here I am sir.' 'Do you intend remaining long in Venice sir?' 'Probably four days sir!' 'Italian is known to you sir. You have been in Venice before?' 'Once before sir.' 'Perhaps you remained longer then sir?' 'No indeed; I merely came to see, and went as I came.' 'Truly sir? Do I infer that you are going by Trieste?' 'No. I am going to Parma, and Turin, and by Paris home.' 'A cold journey sir, I hope it may be a pleasant one.' 'Thank you.'--He gives me one very sharp look all over, and wishes me a very happy night. I wish him a very happy night and it's done. The thing being done at all, could not be better done, or more politely--though I dare say if I had been sucking a gentish cane all the time, or talking in English to my compatriots, it might not unnaturally have been different. At Turin and at Genoa there are no such stoppages at all; but in any other part of Italy, give me an Austrian in preference to a native functionary. At Naples it is done in a beggarly, shambling, bungling, tardy, vulgar way; but I am strengthened in my old impression that Naples is one of the most odious places on the face of the earth. The general degradation oppresses me like foul air."

Volume III, Chapter 4 (1853, 1854, and 1856): Three Summers at Boulogne

Three Summers at Boulogne

DICKENS was in Boulogne, in 1853, from the middle of June to the end of September, and for the next three months, as we have seen, was in Switzerland and Italy. In the following year he went again to Boulogne in June, and stayed, after finishing Hard Times, until far into October. In February of 1855 he was for a fortnight in Paris with Mr. Wilkie Collins; not taking up his more prolonged residence there until the winter. From November 1855 to the end of April 1856 he made the French capital his home, working at Little Dorrit during all those months. Then, after a month's interval in Dover and London, he took up his third summer residence in Boulogne, whither his younger children had gone direct from Paris; and stayed until September, finishing Little Dorrit in London in the spring of 1857.

Of the first of these visits, a few lively notes of humour and character out of his letters will tell the story sufficiently. The second and third had points of more attractiveness. Those were the years of the French-English alliance, of the great exposition of English paintings, of the return of the troops from the Crimea, and of the visit of the Prince Consort to the Emperor; such interest as Dickens took in these several matters appearing in his letters with the usual vividness, and the story of his continental life coming out with amusing distinctness in the successive pictures they paint with so much warmth and colour. Another chapter will be given to Paris. This deals only with Boulogne.

For his first summer residence, in June 1853, he had taken a house on the high ground near the Calais road; an odd French place with the strangest little rooms and halls, but standing in the midst of a large garden, with wood and waterfall, a conservatory opening on a great bank of roses, and paths and gates on one side to the ramparts, on the other to the sea. Above all there was a capital proprietor and landlord, by whom the cost of keeping up gardens and wood (which he called a forest) was defrayed, while he gave his tenant the whole range of both and all the flowers for nothing, sold him the garden produce as it was wanted, and kept a cow on the estate to supply the family milk. "If this were but 300 miles farther off," wrote Dickens, "how the English would rave about it! I do assure you that there are picturesque people, and town, and country, about this place, that quite fill up the eye and fancy. As to the fishing people (whose dress can have changed neither in colour nor in form for many many years), and their quarter of the town cobweb-hung with great brown nets across the narrow up-hill streets, they are as good as Naples, every bit." His description both of house and landlord, of which I tested the exactness when I visited him, was in the old pleasant vein; requiring no connection with himself to give it interest, but, by the charm and ease with which everything picturesque or characteristic was disclosed, placed in the domain of art.

"O the rain here yesterday!" (26th of June.) "A great sea-fog rolling in, a strong wind blowing, and the rain coming down in torrents all day long. . . . This house is on a great hill-side, backed up by woods of young trees. It faces the Haute Ville with the ramparts and the unfinished cathedral--which capital object is exactly opposite the windows. On the slope in front, going steep down to the right, all Boulogne is piled and jumbled about in a very picturesque manner. The view is charming--closed in at last by the tops of swelling hills; and the door is within ten minutes of the post-office, and within quarter of an hour of the sea. The garden is made in terraces up the hill-side, like an Italian garden; the top walks being in the before-mentioned woods. The best part of it begins at the level of the house, and goes up at the back, a couple of hundred feet perhaps. There are at present thousands of roses all about the house, and no end of other flowers. There are five great summer-houses, and (I think) fifteen fountains--not one of

which (according to the invariable French custom) ever plays. The house is a doll's house of many rooms. It is one story high, with eight and thirty steps up and down--tribune wise--to the front door: the noblest French demonstration I have ever seen I think. It is a double house; and as there are only four windows and a pigeon-hole to be beheld in front, you would suppose it to contain about four rooms. Being built on the hill-side, the top story of the house at the back--there are two stories there--opens on the level of another garden. On the ground floor there is a very pretty hall, almost all glass; a little dining-room opening on a beautiful conservatory, which is also looked into through a great transparent glass in a mirror-frame over the chimney-piece, just as in Paxton's room at Chatsworth; a spare bed-room, two little drawing-rooms opening into one another, the family bed-rooms, a bath-room, a glass corridor, an open yard, and a kind of kitchen with a machinery of stoves and boilers. Above, there are eight tiny bed-rooms all opening on one great room in the roof, originally intended for a billiard-room. In the basement there is an admirable kitchen with every conceivable requisite in it, a noble cellar, first-rate man's room and pantry; coach-house, stable, coal-store and wood-store; and in the garden is a pavilion, containing an excellent spare bed-room on the ground floor. The getting-up of these places, the looking-glasses, clocks, little stoves, all manner of fittings, must be seen to be appreciated. The conservatory is full of choice flowers and perfectly beautiful."

Then came the charm of the letter, his description of his landlord, lightly sketched by him in print as M. Loyal-Devasseur, but here filled in with the most attractive touches his loving hand could give. "But the landlord--M. Beaucourt--is wonderful. Everybody here has two surnames (I cannot conceive why), and M. Beaucourt, as he is always called, is by rights M. Beaucourt-Mutuel. He is a portly jolly fellow with a fine open face; lives on the hill behind, just outside the top of the garden; and was a linen draper in the town, where he still has a shop, but is supposed to have mortgaged his business and to be in difficulties--all along of this place, which he has planted with his own hands; which he cultivates all day; and which he never on any consideration speaks of but as 'the Property.' He is extraordinarily popular in Boulogne (the people in the shops invariably brightening up at the mention of his name, and congratulating us on being his tenants), and really seems to deserve it. He is such a liberal fellow that I can't bear to ask him for anything, since he instantly supplies it whatever it is. The things he has done in respect of unreasonable bedsteads and washing-stands, I blush to think of. I observed the other day in one of the side gardens--there are gardens at each side of the house too--a place where I thought the Comic Countryman" (a name he was giving just then to his youngest boy) "must infallibly trip over, and make a little descent of a dozen feet. So I said, 'M. Beaucourt'--who instantly pulled off his cap and stood bareheaded--'there are some spare pieces of wood lying by the cow-house, if you would have the kindness to have one laid across here I think it would be safer.' 'Ah, mon dieu sir,' said M. Beaucourt, 'it must be iron. This is not a portion of the property where you would like to see wood.' 'But iron is so expensive,' said I, 'and it really is not worth while----' 'Sir, pardon me a thousand times,' said M. Beaucourt, 'it shall be iron. Assuredly and perfectly it shall be iron.' 'Then M. Beaucourt,' said I, 'I shall be glad to pay a moiety of the cost.' 'Sir,' said M. Beaucourt, 'Never!' Then to change the subject, he slided from his firmness and gravity into a graceful conversational tone, and said, 'In the moonlight last night, the flowers on the property appeared, O Heaven, to be bathing themselves in the sky. You like the property?' 'M. Beaucourt,' said I, 'I am enchanted with it; I am more than satisfied with everything.' 'And I sir,' said M. Beaucourt, laying his cap upon his breast, and kissing his hand--'I equally!' Yesterday two blacksmiths came for a day's work, and put up a good solid handsome bit of iron-railing, morticed into the stone parapet. . . . If the extraordinary things in the house defy description, the amazing phenomena in the gardens never could have been dreamed of by anybody but a Frenchman bent upon one idea. Besides a portrait of the house in the dining-room, there is a plan of the property in the hall. It looks about the size of Ireland; and to every one of the extraordinary objects, there is a reference with some

portentous name. There are fifty-one such references, including the Cottage of Tom Thumb, the Bridge of Austerlitz, the Bridge of Jena, the Hermitage, the Bower of the Old Guard, the Labyrinth (I have no idea which is which); and there is guidance to every room in the house, as if it were a place on that stupendous scale that without such a clue you must infallibly lose your way, and perhaps perish of starvation between bedroom and bedroom."

On the 3rd of July there came a fresh trait of the good fellow of a landlord. "Fancy what Beaucourt told me last night. When he 'conceived the inspiration' of planting the property ten years ago, he went over to England to buy the trees, took a small cottage in the market-gardens at Putney, lived there three months, held a symposium every night attended by the principal gardeners of Fulham, Putney, Kew, and Hammersmith (which he calls Hamsterdam), and wound up with a supper at which the market-gardeners rose, clinked their glasses, and exclaimed with one accord (I quote him exactly) VIVE BEAUCOURT! He was a captain in the National Guard, and Cavaignac his general. Brave Capitaine Beaucourt! said Cavaignac, you must receive a decoration. My General, said Beaucourt, No! It is enough for me that I have done my duty. I go to lay the first stone of a house upon a Property I have--that house shall be my decoration. (Regard that house!)" Addition to the picture came in a letter of the 24th of July: with a droll glimpse of Shakespeare at the theatre, and of the Saturday's pig-market.

"I may mention that the great Beaucourt daily changes the orthography of this place. He has now fixed it, by having painted up outside the garden gate, 'Entree particuliere de la Villa des Moulineaux.' On another gate a little higher up, he has had painted 'Entree des Ecuries de la Villa des Moulineaux.' On another gate a little lower down (applicable to one of the innumerable buildings in the garden), 'Entree du Tom Pouce.' On the highest gate of the lot, leading to his own house, 'Entree du Chateau Napoleonienne.' All of which inscriptions you will behold in black and white when you come. I see little of him now, as, all things being 'bien arrangees,' he is delicate of appearing. His wife has been making a trip in the country during the last three weeks, but (as he mentioned to me with his hat in his hand) it was necessary that he should remain here, to be continually at the disposition of the tenant of the Property. (The better to do this, he has had roaring dinner parties of fifteen daily; and the old woman who milks the cows has been fainting up the hill under vast burdens of champagne.)

"We went to the theatre last night, to see the Midsummer Night's Dream--of the Opera Comique. It is a beautiful little theatre now, with a very good company; and the nonsense of the piece was done with a sense quite confounding in that connexion. Willy Am Shay Kes Peer; Sirzhon Foll Stayffe; Lor Lattimeer; and that celebrated Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, Meees Oleeveeir--were the principal characters.

"Outside the old town, an army of workmen are (and have been for a week or so, already) employed upon an immense building which I supposed might be a Fort, or a Monastery, or a Barrack, or other something designed to last for ages. I find it is for the annual fair, which begins on the fifth of August and lasts a fortnight. Almost every Sunday we have a fete, where there is dancing in the open air, and where immense men with prodigious beards revolve on little wooden horses like Italian irons, in what we islanders call a roundabout, by the hour together. But really the good humour and cheerfulness are very delightful. Among the other sights of the place, there is a pig-market every Saturday, perfectly insupportable in its absurdity. An excited French peasant, male or female, with a determined young pig, is the most amazing spectacle. I saw a little Drama enacted yesterday week, the drollery of which was perfect. Dram. Pers._ 1. A pretty young woman with short petticoats and trim blue stockings, riding a donkey with two baskets and a pig in each. 2. An ancient farmer in a blouse, driving four pigs, his four in hand, with an enormous whip--and being drawn against walls and into smoking shops by any one of the four. 3. A cart, with an old pig (manacled) looking out of it, and terrifying six hundred and fifty young pigs in the market by his terrific grunts. 4. Collector of Octroi in an immense cocked hat, with a stream of

young pigs running, night and day, between his military boots and rendering accounts impossible. 5. Inimitable, confronted by a radiation of elderly pigs, fastened each by one leg to a bunch of stakes in the ground. 6. John Edmund Reade, poet, expressing eternal devotion to and admiration of Landor, unconscious of approaching pig recently escaped from barrow. 7. Priests, peasants, soldiers, &c. &c."

He had meanwhile gathered friendly faces round him. Frank Stone went over with his family to a house taken for him on the St. Omer road by Dickens, who was joined in the chateau by Mr. and Mrs. Leech and Mr. Wilkie Collins. "Leech says that when he stepped from the boat after their stormy passage, he was received by the congregated spectators with a distinct round of applause as by far the most intensely and unutterably miserable looking object that had yet appeared. The laughter was tumultuous, and he wishes his friends to know that altogether he made an immense hit." So passed the summer months: excursions with these friends to Amiens and Beauvais relieving the work upon his novel, and the trip to Italy, already described, following on its completion.

In June, 1854, M. Beaucourt had again received his famous tenant, but in another cottage or chateau (to him convertible terms) on the much cherished property, placed on the very summit of the hill with a private road leading out to the Column, a really pretty place, rooms larger than in the other house, a noble sea view, everywhere nice prospects, good garden, and plenty of sloping turf. It was called the Villa du Camp de Droite, and here Dickens stayed, as I have intimated, until the eve of his winter residence in Paris.

The formation of the Northern Camp at Boulogne began the week after he had finished Hard Times, and he watched its progress, as it increased and extended itself along the cliffs towards Calais, with the liveliest amusement. At first he was startled by the suddenness with which soldiers overran the roads, became billeted in every house, made the bridges red with their trowsers, and "sprang upon the pier like fantastic mustard and cress when boats were expected, many of them never having seen the sea before." But the good behaviour of the men had a reconciling effect, and their ingenuity delighted him. The quickness with which they raised whole streets of mud-huts, less picturesque than the tents, but (like most unpicturesque things) more comfortable, was like an Arabian Nights' tale. "Each little street holds 144 men, and every corner-door has the number of the street upon it as soon as it is put up; and the postmen can fall to work as easily as in the Rue de Rivoli at Paris." His patience was again a little tried when he found baggage-wagons ploughing up his favourite walks, and trumpeters in twos and threes teaching newly-recruited trumpeters in all the sylvan places, and making the echoes hideous. But this had its amusement too. "I met to-day a weazen sun-burnt youth from the south with such an immense regimental shako on, that he looked like a sort of lucifer match-box, evidently blowing his life rapidly out, under the auspices of two magnificent creatures all hair and lungs, of such breadth across the shoulders that I couldn't see their breast-buttons when I stood in front of them."

The interest culminated as the visit of the Prince Consort approached with its attendant glories of illuminations and reviews. Beaucourt's excitement became intense. The Villa du Camp de Droite was to be a blaze of triumph on the night of the arrival; Dickens, who had carried over with him the meteor flag of England and set it streaming over a haystack in his field, now hoisted the French colours over the British Jack in honour of the national alliance; the Emperor was to subside to the station of a general officer, so that all the rejoicings should be in honour of the Prince; and there was to be a review in the open country near Wimereux, when "at one stage of the maneuvres (I am too excited to spell the word but you know what I mean)" the whole hundred thousand men in the camp of the North were to be placed before the Prince's eyes, to show him what a division of the French army might be. "I believe everything I hear," said Dickens. It was the state of mind of Hood's country gentleman after the fire at the Houses of Parliament. "Beaucourt, as one of the town council, receives summonses to turn out and

debate about something, or receive somebody, every five minutes. Whenever I look out of window, or go to the door, I see an immense black object at Beaucourt's porch like a boat set up on end in the air with a pair of white trowsers below it. This is the cocked hat of an official Huissier, newly arrived with a summons, whose head is thrown back as he is in the act of drinking Beaucourt's wine." The day came at last, and all Boulogne turned out for its holiday; "but I" Dickens wrote, "had by this cooled down a little, and, reserving myself for the illuminations, I abandoned the great men and set off upon my usual country walk. See my reward. Coming home by the Calais road, covered with dust, I suddenly find myself face to face with Albert and Napoleon, jogging along in the pleasantest way, a little in front, talking extremely loud about the view, and attended by a brilliant staff of some sixty or seventy horsemen, with a couple of our royal grooms with their red coats riding oddly enough in the midst of the magnates. I took off my wide-awake without stopping to stare, whereupon the Emperor pulled off his cocked hat; and Albert (seeing, I suppose, that it was an Englishman) pulled off his. Then we went our several ways. The Emperor is broader across the chest than in the old times when we used to see him so often at Gore-house, and stoops more in the shoulders. Indeed his carriage thereabouts is like Fonblanque's." The town he described as "one great flag" for the rest of the visit; and to the success of the illuminations he contributed largely himself by leading off splendidly with a hundred and twenty wax candles blazing in his seventeen front windows, and visible from that great height over all the place. "On the first eruption Beaucourt danced and screamed on the grass before the door; and when he was more composed, set off with Madame Beaucourt to look at the house from every possible quarter, and, he said, collect the suffrages of his compatriots."

Their suffrages seem to have gone, however, mainly in another direction. "It was wonderful," Dickens wrote, "to behold about the streets the small French soldiers of the line seizing our Guards by the hand and embracing them. It was wonderful, too, to behold the English sailors in the town, shaking hands with everybody and generally patronizing everything. When the people could not get hold of either a soldier or a sailor, they rejoiced in the royal grooms, and embraced them. I don't think the Boulogne people were surprised by anything so much, as by the three cheers the crew of the yacht gave when the Emperor went aboard to lunch. The prodigious volume of them, and the precision, and the circumstance that no man was left straggling on his own account either before or afterwards, seemed to strike the general mind with amazement. Beaucourt said it was like boxing." That was written on the 10th of September; but in a very few days Dickens was unwillingly convinced that whatever the friendly disposition to England might be, the war with Russia was decidedly unpopular. He was present when the false report of the taking of Sebastopol reached the Emperor and Empress. "I was at the Review" (8th of October) "yesterday week, very near the Emperor and Empress, when the taking of Sebastopol was announced. It was a magnificent show on a magnificent day; and if any circumstance could make it special, the arrival of the telegraphic despatch would be the culminating point one might suppose. It quite disturbed and mortified me to find how faintly, feebly, miserably, the men responded to the call of the officers to cheer, as each regiment passed by. Fifty excited Englishmen would make a greater sign and sound than a thousand of these men do. . . . The Empress was very pretty, and her slight figure sat capitally on her grey horse. When the Emperor gave her the despatch to read, she flushed and fired up in a very pleasant way, and kissed it with as natural an impulse as one could desire to see."

On the night of that day Dickens went up to see a play acted at a cafe at the camp, and found himself one of an audience composed wholly of officers and men, with only four ladies among them, officers' wives. The steady, working, sensible faces all about him told their own story; "and as to kindness and consideration towards the poor actors, it was real benevolence." Another attraction at the camp was a conjuror, who had been called to exhibit twice before the imperial party, and whom Dickens always afterwards referred to as the most consummate master of legerdemain he had seen. Nor was he a mean

authority as to this, being himself, with his tools at hand, a capital conjuror; but the Frenchman scorned help, stood among the company without any sort of apparatus, and, by the mere force of sleight of hand and an astonishing memory, performed feats having no likeness to anything Dickens had ever seen done, and totally inexplicable to his most vigilant reflection. "So far as I know, a perfectly original genius, and that puts any sort of knowledge of legerdemain, such as I supposed that I possessed, at utter defiance." The account he gave dealt with two exploits only, the easiest to describe, and, not being with cards, not the most remarkable; for he would also say of this Frenchman that he transformed cards into very demons. He never saw a human hand touch them in the same way, fling them about so amazingly, or change them in his, one's own, or another's hand, with a skill so impossible to follow.

"You are to observe that he was with the company, not in the least removed from them; and that we occupied the front row. He brought in some writing paper with him when he entered, and a black-lead pencil; and he wrote some words on half-sheets of paper. One of these half-sheets he folded into two, and gave to Catherine to hold. Madame, he says aloud, will you think of any class of objects? I have done so.--Of what class, Madame? Animals.--Will you think of a particular animal, Madame? I have done so.--Of what animal? The Lion.--Will you think of another class of objects, Madame? I have done so.--Of what class? Flowers.--The particular flower? The Rose.--Will you open the paper you hold in your hand? She opened it, and there was neatly and plainly written in pencil--The Lion._ The Rose._ Nothing whatever had led up to these words, and they were the most distant conceivable from Catherine's thoughts when she entered the room. He had several common school-slates about a foot square. He took one of these to a field-officer from the camp, decore and what not, who sat about six from us, with a grave saturnine friend next him. My General, says he, will you write a name on this slate, after your friend has done so? Don't show it to me. The friend wrote a name, and the General wrote a name. The conjuror took the slate rapidly from the officer, threw it violently down on the ground with its written side to the floor, and asked the officer to put his foot upon it and keep it there: which he did. The conjuror considered for about a minute, looking devilish hard at the General.--My General, says he, your friend wrote Dagobert, upon the slate under your foot. The friend admits it.--And you, my General, wrote Nicholas. General admits it, and everybody laughs and applauds.--My General, will you excuse me, if I change that name into a name expressive of the power of a great nation, which, in happy alliance with the gallantry and spirit of France will shake that name to its centre? Certainly I will excuse it.--My General, take up the slate and read. General reads: DAGOBERT, VICTORIA. The first in his friend's writing; the second in a new hand. I never saw anything in the least like this; or at all approaching to the absolute certainty, the familiarity, quickness, absence of all machinery, and actual face-to-face, hand-to-hand fairness between the conjuror and the audience, with which it was done. I have not the slightest idea of the secret.--One more. He was blinded with several table napkins, and then a great cloth was bodily thrown over them and his head too, so that his voice sounded as if he were under a bed. Perhaps half a dozen dates were written on a slate. He takes the slate in his hand, and throws it violently down on the floor as before, remains silent a minute, seems to become agitated, and bursts out thus: 'What is this I see? A great city, but of narrow streets and old-fashioned houses, many of which are of wood, resolving itself into ruins! How is it falling into ruins? Hark! I hear the crackling of a great conflagration, and, looking up, I behold a vast cloud of flame and smoke. The ground is covered with hot cinders too, and people are flying into the fields and endeavouring to save their goods. This great fire, this great wind, this roaring noise! This is the great fire of London, and the first date upon the slate must be one, six, six, six--the year in which it happened!' And so on with all the other dates. There! Now, if you will take a cab and impart these mysteries to Rogers, I shall be very glad to have his opinion of them." Rogers had taxed our credulity with some wonderful clairvoyant experiences of his own in Paris to which here was a parallel at last!

When leaving Paris for his third visit to Boulogne, at the beginning of June 1856, he had not written a word of the ninth number of his new book, and did not expect for another month to "see land from the running sea of Little Dorrit." He had resumed the house he first occupied, the cottage or villa "des Moulineaux," and after dawdling about his garden for a few days with surprising industry in a French farmer garb of blue blouse, leathern belt, and military cap, which he had mounted as "the only one for complete comfort," he wrote to me that he was getting "Now to work again--to work! The story lies before me, I hope, strong and clear. Not to be easily told; but nothing of that sort IS to be easily done that I know of." At work it became his habit to sit late, and then, putting off his usual walk until night, to lie down among the roses reading until after tea ("middle-aged Love in a blouse and belt"), when he went down to the pier. "The said pier at evening is a phase of the place we never see, and which I hardly knew. But I never did behold such specimens of the youth of my country, male and female, as pervade that place. They are really, in their vulgarity and insolence, quite disheartening. One is so fearfully ashamed of them, and they contrast so very unfavourably with the natives." Mr. Wilkie Collins was again his companion in the summer weeks, and the presence of Jerrold for the greater part of the time added much to his enjoyment.

The last of the camp was now at hand. It had only a battalion of men in it, and a few days would see them out. At first there was horrible weather, "storms of wind, rushes of rain, heavy squalls, cold airs, sea fogs, banging shutters, flapping doors, and beaten down rose-trees by the hundred; but then came a delightful week among the corn fields and bean fields, and afterwards the end. It looks very singular and very miserable. The soil being sand, and the grass having been trodden away these two years, the wind from the sea carries the sand into the chinks and ledges of all the doors and windows, and chokes them;--just as if they belonged to Arab huts in the desert. A number of the non-commissioned officers made turf-couches outside their huts, and there were turf orchestras for the bands to play in; all of which are fast getting sanded over in a most Egyptian manner. The Fair is on, under the walls of the haute ville over the way. At one popular show, the Malakhoff is taken every half-hour between 4 and 11. Bouncing explosions announce every triumph of the French arms (the English have nothing to do with it); and in the intervals a man outside blows a railway whistle--straight into the dining-room. Do you know that the French soldiers call the English medal 'The Salvage Medal'--meaning that they got it for saving the English army? I don't suppose there are a thousand people in all France who believe that we did anything but get rescued by the French. And I am confident that the no-result of our precious Chelsea enquiry has wonderfully strengthened this conviction. Nobody at home has yet any adequate idea, I am deplorably sure, of what the Barnacles and the Circumlocution Office have done for us. But whenever we get into war again, the people will begin to find out."

His own household had got into a small war already, of which the commander-in-chief was his man-servant "French," the bulk of the forces engaged being his children, and the invaders two cats. Business brought him to London on the hostilities breaking out, and on his return after a few days the story of the war was told. "Dick," it should be said, was a canary very dear both to Dickens and his eldest daughter, who had so tamed to her loving hand its wild little heart that it was become the most docile of companions. "The only thing new in this garden is that war is raging against two particularly tigerish and fearful cats (from the mill, I suppose), which are always glaring in dark corners, after our wonderful little Dick. Keeping the house open at all points, it is impossible to shut them out, and they hide themselves in the most terrific manner: hanging themselves up behind draperies, like bats, and tumbling out in the dead of night with frightful caterwaulings. Hereupon, French borrows Beaucourt's gun, loads the same to the muzzle, discharges it twice in vain and throws himself over with the recoil, exactly like a clown. But at last (while I was in town) he aims at the more amiable cat of the two, and shoots that animal dead. Insufferably elated by this victory, he is now engaged from morning to night in hiding behind bushes to

get aim at the other. He does nothing else whatever. All the boys encourage him and watch for the enemy--on whose appearance they give an alarm which immediately serves as a warning to the creature, who runs away. They are at this moment (ready dressed for church) all lying on their stomachs in various parts of the garden. Horrible whistles give notice to the gun what point it is to approach. I am afraid to go out, lest I should be shot. Mr. Plornish says his prayers at night in a whisper, lest the cat should overhear him and take offence. The tradesmen cry out as they come up the avenue, 'Me voici! C'est moi--boulanger--ne tirez pas, Monsieur Franche!' It is like living in a state of siege; and the wonderful manner in which the cat preserves the character of being the only person not much put out by the intensity of this monomania, is most ridiculous." (6th of July.) . . . "About four pounds of powder and half a ton of shot have been (13th of July) fired off at the cat (and the public in general) during the week. The finest thing is that immediately after I have heard the noble sportsman blazing away at her in the garden in front, I look out of my room door into the drawing-room, and am pretty sure to see her coming in after the birds, in the calmest manner, by the back window. Intelligence has been brought to me from a source on which I can rely, that French has newly conceived the atrocious project of tempting her into the coach-house by meat and kindness, and there, from an elevated portmanteau, blowing her head off. This I mean sternly to interdict, and to do so to-day as a work of piety."

Besides the graver work which Mr. Wilkie Collins and himself were busy with, in these months, and by which Household Words mainly was to profit, some lighter matters occupied the leisure of both. There were to be, at Christmas, theatricals again at Tavistock House; in which the children, with the help of their father and other friends, were to follow up the success of the Lighthouse by again acquitting themselves as grown-up actors; and Mr. Collins was busy preparing for them a new drama to be called The Frozen Deep, while Dickens was sketching a farce for Mr. Lemon to fill in. But this pleasant employment had sudden and sad interruption.

An epidemic broke out in the town, affecting the children of several families known to Dickens, among them that of his friend Mr. Gilbert A'Becket; who, upon arriving from Paris, and finding a favourite little son stricken dangerously, sank himself under an illness from which he had been suffering, and died two days after the boy. "He had for three days shown symptoms of rallying, and we had some hope of his recovery; but he sank and died, and never even knew that the child had gone before him. A sad, sad story." Dickens meanwhile had sent his own children home with his wife, and the rest soon followed. Poor M. Beaucourt was inconsolable. "The desolation of the place is wretched. When Mamey and Katey went, Beaucourt came in and wept. He really is almost broken-hearted about it. He had planted all manner of flowers for next month, and has thrown down the spade and left off weeding the garden, so that it looks something like a dreary bird-cage with all manner of grasses and chickweeds sticking through the bars and lying in the sand. 'Such a loss too,' he says, 'for Monsieur Dickens!' Then he looks in at the kitchen window (which seems to be his only relief), and sighs himself up the hill home."

The interval of residence in Paris between these two last visits to Boulogne is now to be described.

Volume III, Chapter 5 (1855, 1856): Residence in Paris

Residence in Paris

IN Paris Dickens's life was passed among artists, and in the exercise of his own art. His associates were writers, painters, actors, or musicians, and when he wanted relief from any strain of work he found it at the theatre. The years since his last residence in the great city had made him better known, and the increased attentions pleased him. He had to help in preparing for a translation of his books into French; and this, with continued labour at the story he had in hand, occupied him as long as he remained. It will be all best told by extracts from his letters; in which the people he met, the theatres he visited, and the incidents, public or private, that seemed to him worthy of mention, reappear with the old force and liveliness.

Nor is anything better worth preserving from them than choice bits of description of an actor or a drama, for this perishable enjoyment has only so much as may survive out of such recollections to witness for itself to another generation; and an unusually high place may be challenged for the subtlety and delicacy of what is said in these letters of things theatrical, when the writer was especially attracted by a performer or a play. Frederic Lemaitre has never had a higher tribute than Dickens paid to him during his few days' earlier stay at Paris in the spring.

"Incomparably the finest acting I ever saw, I saw last night at the Ambigu. They have revived that old piece, once immensely popular in London under the name of Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life. Old Lemaitre plays his famous character, and never did I see anything, in art, so exaltedly horrible and awful. In the earlier acts he was so well made up, and so light and active, that he really looked sufficiently young. But in the last two, when he had grown old and miserable, he did the finest things, I really believe, that are within the power of acting. Two or three times, a great cry of horror went all round the house. When he met, in the inn yard, the traveller whom he murders, and first saw his money, the manner in which the crime came into his head--and eyes--was as truthful as it was terrific. This traveller, being a good fellow, gives him wine. You should see the dim remembrance of his better days that comes over him as he takes the glass, and in a strange dazed way makes as if he were going to touch the other man's, or do some airy thing with it; and then stops and flings the contents down his hot throat, as if he were pouring it into a lime-kiln. But this was nothing to what follows after he has done the murder, and comes home, with a basket of provisions, a ragged pocket full of money, and a badly-washed bloody right hand--which his little girl finds out. After the child asked him if he had hurt his hand, his going aside, turning himself round, and looking over all his clothes for spots, was so inexpressibly dreadful that it really scared one. He called for wine, and the sickness that came upon him when he saw the colour, was one of the things that brought out the curious cry I have spoken of, from the audience. Then he fell into a sort of bloody mist, and went on to the end groping about, with no mind for anything, except making his fortune by staking this money, and a faint dull kind of love for the child. It is quite impossible to satisfy one's-self by saying enough of such a magnificent performance. I have never seen him come near its finest points, in anything else. He said two things in a way that alone would put him far apart from all other actors. One to his wife, when he has exultingly shewn her the money and she has asked him how he got it--'I found it'--and the other to his old companion and tempter, when he charged him with having killed that traveller, and he suddenly went headlong mad and took him by the throat and howled out, 'It wasn't I who murdered him--it was Misery!' And such a dress; such a face; and, above all, such an extraordinary guilty wicked thing as he made of a knotted branch of a tree which was his walking-stick, from the moment when the idea of the murder came into his head! I could write pages about him. It is an impression quite ineffaceable. He got half-boastful of that walking-staff to himself, and half-afraid of it;

and didn't know whether to be grimly pleased that it had the jagged end, or to hate it and be horrified at it. He sat at a little table in the inn-yard, drinking with the traveller; and this horrible stick got between them like the Devil, while he counted on his fingers the uses he could put the money to."

That was at the close of February. In October, Dickens's longer residence began. He betook himself with his family, after two unsuccessful attempts in the new region of the Rue Balzac and Rue Lord Byron, to an apartment in the Avenue des Champs Elysees. Over him was an English bachelor with an establishment consisting of an English groom and five English horses. "The concierge and his wife told us that his name was Six, which drove me nearly mad until we discovered it to be Sykes." The situation was a good one, very cheerful for himself and with amusement for his children. It was a quarter of a mile above Franconi's on the other side of the way, and within a door or two of the Jardin d'Hiver. The Exposition was just below; the Barriere de l'Etoile from a quarter to half a mile below; and all Paris, including Emperor and Empress coming from and returning to St. Cloud, thronged past the windows in open carriages or on horseback, all day long. Now it was he found himself more of a celebrity than when he had wintered in the city nine years before; the feuilleton of the Moniteur was filled daily with a translation of Chuzzlewit; and he had soon to consider the proposal I have named, to publish in French his collected novels and tales. Before he had been a week in his new abode, Ary Scheffer, "a frank and noble fellow," had made his acquaintance; introduced him to several distinguished Frenchmen; and expressed the wish to paint him. To Scheffer was also due an advantage obtained for my friend's two little daughters of which they may always keep the memory with pride. "Mamey and Katey are learning Italian, and their master is Manin of Venetian fame, the best and the noblest of those unhappy gentlemen. He came here with a wife and a beloved daughter, and they are both dead. Scheffer made him known to me, and has been, I understand, wonderfully generous and good to him." Nor may I omit to state the enjoyment afforded him, not only by the presence in Paris during the winter of Mr. Wilkie Collins and of Mr. and Mrs. White of Bonchurch, but by the many friends from England whom the Art Exposition brought over. Sir Alexander Cockburn was one of these; Edwin Landseer, Charles Robert Leslie, and William Boxall, were others. Macready left his retreat at Sherborne to make him a visit of several days. Thackeray went to and fro all the time between London and his mother's house, also in the Champs Elysees, where his daughters were. And Paris for the time was the home of Robert Lytton, who belonged to the Embassy, of the Sartorises, of the Brownings, and of others whom Dickens liked and cared for.

At the first play he went to, the performance was stopped while the news of the last Crimean engagement, just issued in a supplement to the Moniteur, was read from the stage. "It made not the faintest effect upon the audience; and even the hired claqueurs, who had been absurdly loud during the piece, seemed to consider the war not at all within their contract, and were as stagnant as ditch-water. The theatre was full. It is quite impossible to see such apathy, and suppose the war to be popular, whatever may be asserted to the contrary." The day before, he had met the Emperor and the King of Sardinia in the streets, "and, as usual, no man touching his hat, and very very few so much as looking round."

The success of a most agreeable little piece by our old friend Regnier took him next to the Francais, where Plessy's acting enchanted him. "Of course the interest of it turns upon a flawed piece of living china (that seems to be positively essential), but, as in most of these cases, if you will accept the position in which you find the people, you have nothing more to bother your morality about." The theatre in the Rue Richelieu, however, was not generally his favourite resort. He used to talk of it whimsically as a kind of tomb, where you went, as the Eastern people did in the stories, to think of your unsuccessful loves and dead relations. "There is a dreary classicality at that establishment calculated to freeze the marrow. Between ourselves, even one's best friends there are at times very aggravating. One tires of seeing a man, through any number of acts, remembering everything by patting his forehead with the flat of his

hand, jerking out sentences by shaking himself, and piling them up in pyramids over his head with his right forefinger. And they have a generic small comedy-piece, where you see two sofas and three little tables, to which a man enters with his hat on, to talk to another man--and in respect of which you know exactly when he will get up from one sofa to sit on the other, and take his hat off one table to put it upon the other--which strikes one quite as ludicrously as a good farce.. . . There seems to be a good piece at the Vaudeville, on the idea of the Town and Country Mouse. It is too respectable and inoffensive for me to-night, but I hope to see it before I leave . . . I have a horrible idea of making friends with Franconi, and sauntering when I am at work into their sawdust green-room."

At a theatre of a yet heavier school than the Francais he had a drearier experience. "On Wednesday we went to the Odeon to see a new piece, in four acts and in verse, called Michel Cervantes. I suppose such an infernal dose of ditch water never was concocted. But there were certain passages, describing the suppression of public opinion in Madrid, which were received with a shout of savage application to France that made one stare again! And once more, here again, at every pause, steady, compact, regular as military drums, the Ca Ira!" On another night, even at the Porte St. Martin, drawn there doubtless by the attraction of repulsion, he supped full with the horrors of classicality at a performance of Orestes versified by Alexandre Dumas. "Nothing have I ever seen so weighty and so ridiculous. If I had not already learnt to tremble at the sight of classic drapery on the human form, I should have plumbed the utmost depths of terrified boredom in this achievement. The chorus is not preserved otherwise than that bits of it are taken out for characters to speak. It is really so bad as to be almost good. Some of the Frenchified classical anguish struck me as so unspeakably ridiculous that it puts me on the broad grin as I write."

At the same theatre, in the early spring, he had a somewhat livelier entertainment. "I was at the Porte St. Martin last night, where there is a rather good melodrama called Sang Mele, in which one of the characters is an English Lord--Lord William Falkland--who is called throughout the piece Milor Williams Fack Lorn, and is a hundred times described by others and described by himself as Williams. He is admirably played; but two English travelling ladies are beyond expression ridiculous, and there is something positively vicious in their utter want of truth. One 'set,' where the action of a whole act is supposed to take place in the great wooden verandah of a Swiss hotel overhanging a mountain ravine, is the best piece of stage carpentering I have seen in France. Next week we are to have at the Ambigu Paradise Lost, with the murder of Abel, and the Deluge. The wildest rumours are afloat as to the un-dressing of our first parents." Anticipation far outdoes a reality of this kind; and at the fever-pitch to which rumours raised it here, Dickens might vainly have attempted to get admission on the first night, if Mr. Webster, the English manager and comedian, had not obtained a ticket for him. He went with Mr. Wilkie Collins. "We were rung in (out of the cafe below the Ambigu) at 8, and the play was over at half-past 1; the waits between the acts being very much longer than the acts themselves. The house was crammed to excess in every part, and the galleries awful with Blouses, who again, during the whole of the waits, beat with the regularity of military drums the revolutionary tune of famous memory--Ca Ira! The play is a compound of Paradise Lost and Byron's Cain; and some of the controversies between the archangel and the devil, when the celestial power argues with the infernal in conversational French, as 'Eh bien! Satan, crois-tu donc que notre Seigneur t'aurait expose aux tourments que t'endures a present, sans avoir prevu,' &c. &c. are very ridiculous. All the supernatural personages are alarmingly natural (as theatre nature goes), and walk about in the stupidest way. Which has occasioned Collins and myself to institute a perquisition whether the French ever have shown any kind of idea of the supernatural; and to decide this rather in the negative. The people are very well dressed, and Eve very modestly. All Paris and the provinces had been ransacked for a woman who had brown hair that would fall to the calves of her legs--and she was found at last at the Odeon. There was nothing attractive until the 4th act, when

there was a pretty good scene of the children of Cain dancing in, and desecrating, a temple, while Abel and his family were hammering hard at the Ark, outside; in all the pauses of the revel. The Deluge in the fifth act was up to about the mark of a drowning scene at the Adelphi; but it had one new feature. When the rain ceased, and the ark drove in on the great expanse of water, then lying waveless as the mists cleared and the sun broke out, numbers of bodies drifted up and down. These were all real men and boys, each separate, on a new kind of horizontal sloat. They looked horrible and real. Altogether, a merely dull business; but I dare say it will go for a long while."

A piece of honest farce is a relief from these profane absurdities. "An uncommonly droll piece with an original comic idea in it has been in course of representation here. It is called Les Cheveux de ma Femme. A man who is dotingly fond of his wife, and who wishes to know whether she loved anybody else before they were married, cuts off a lock of her hair by stealth, and takes it to a great mesmeriser, who submits it to a clairvoyante who never was wrong. It is discovered that the owner of this hair has been up to the most frightful dissipations, insomuch that the clairvoyante can't mention half of them. The distracted husband goes home to reproach his wife, and she then reveals that she wears a wig, and takes it off."

The last piece he went to see before leaving Paris was a French version of As You Like It; but he found two acts of it to be more than enough. "In Comme il vous Plaira nobody had anything to do but to sit down as often as possible on as many stones and trunks of trees as possible. When I had seen Jacques seat himself on 17 roots of trees, and 25 grey stones, which was at the end of the second act, I came away." Only one more sketch taken in a theatre, and perhaps the best, I will give from these letters. It simply tells us what is necessary to understand a particular "tag" to a play, but it is related so prettily that the thing it celebrates could not have a nicer effect than is produced by this account of it. The play in question, Memoires du Diable, and another piece of enchanting interest, the Medecin des Enfants, were his favourites among all he saw at this time. "As I have no news, I may as well tell you about the tag that I thought so pretty to the Memoires du Diable; in which piece by the way, there is a most admirable part, most admirably played, in which a man says merely 'Yes' or 'No' all through the piece, until the last scene. A certain M. Robin has got hold of the papers of a deceased lawyer, concerning a certain estate which has been swindled away from its rightful owner, a Baron's widow, into other hands. They disclose so much roguery that he binds them up into a volume lettered 'Memoires du Diable.' The knowledge he derives from these papers not only enables him to unmask the hypocrites all through the piece (in an excellent manner), but induces him to propose to the Baroness that if he restores to her her estate and good name--for even her marriage to the deceased Baron is denied--she shall give him her daughter in marriage. The daughter herself, on hearing the offer, accepts it; and a part of the plot is, her going to a masked ball, to which he goes as the Devil, to see how she likes him (when she finds, of course, that she likes him very much). The country people about the Chateau in dispute, suppose him to be really the Devil, because of his strange knowledge, and his strange comings and goings; and he, being with this girl in one of its old rooms, in the beginning of the 3rd act, shews her a little coffer on the table with a bell in it. 'They suppose,' he tells her, 'that whenever this bell is rung, I appear and obey the summons. Very ignorant, isn't it? But, if you ever want me particularly--very particularly--ring the little bell and try.' The plot proceeds to its development. The wrong-doers are exposed; the missing document, proving the marriage, is found; everything is finished; they are all on the stage; and M. Robin hands the paper to the Baroness. 'You are reinstated in your rights, Madame; you are happy; I will not hold you to a compact made when you didn't know me; I release you and your fair daughter; the pleasure of doing what I have done, is my sufficient reward; I kiss your hand and take my leave. Farewell!' He backs himself courteously out; the piece seems concluded, everybody wonders, the girl (little Mdlle. Luther) stands amazed; when she suddenly remembers the little bell. In the prettiest way possible, she runs to the coffer

on the table, takes out the little bell, rings it, and he comes rushing back and folds her to his heart. I never saw a prettier thing in my life. It made me laugh in that most delightful of ways, with the tears in my eyes; so that I can never forget it, and must go and see it again."

But great as was the pleasure thus derived from the theatre, he was, in the matter of social intercourse, even more indebted to distinguished men connected with it by authorship or acting. At Scribe's he was entertained frequently; and "very handsome and pleasant" was his account of the dinners, as of all the belongings, of the prolific dramatist--a charming place in Paris, a fine estate in the country, capital carriage, handsome pair of horses, "all made, as he says, by his pen." One of the guests the first evening was Auber, "a stolid little elderly man, rather petulant in manner," who told Dickens he had once lived "at Stock Noonton" (Stoke Newington) to study English, but had forgotten it all. "Louis Philippe had invited him to meet the Queen of England, and when L. P. presented him, the Queen said, 'We are such old acquaintances through M. Auber's works, that an introduction is quite unnecessary.'" They met again a few nights later, with the author of the History of the Girondins, at the hospitable table of M. Pichot, to whom Lamartine had expressed a strong desire again to meet Dickens as "un des grands amis de son imagination." "He continues to be precisely as we formerly knew him, both in appearance and manner; highly prepossessing, and with a sort of calm passion about him, very taking indeed. We talked of De Foe and Richardson, and of that wonderful genius for the minutest details in a narrative, which has given them so much fame in France. I found him frank and unaffected, and full of curious knowledge of the French common people. He informed the company at dinner that he had rarely met a foreigner who spoke French so easily as your inimitable correspondent, whereat your correspondent blushed modestly, and almost immediately afterwards so nearly choked himself with the bone of a fowl (which is still in his throat), that he sat in torture for ten minutes with a strong apprehension that he was going to make the good Pichot famous by dying like the little Hunchback at his table. Scribe and his wife were of the party, but had to go away at the ice-time because it was the first representation at the Opera Comique of a new opera by Auber and himself, of which very great expectations have been formed. It was very curious to see him--the author of 400 pieces--getting nervous as the time approached, and pulling out his watch every minute. At last he dashed out as if he were going into what a friend of mine calls a plunge-bath. Whereat she rose and followed. She is the most extraordinary woman I ever beheld; for her eldest son must be thirty, and she has the figure of five-and-twenty, and is strikingly handsome. So graceful too, that her manner of rising, curtseying, laughing, and going out after him, was pleasanter than the pleasantest thing I have ever seen done on the stage." The opera Dickens himself saw a week later, and wrote of it as "most charming. Delightful music, an excellent story, immense stage tact, capital scenic arrangements, and the most delightful little prima donna ever seen or heard, in the person of Marie Cabel. It is called Manon Lescaut--from the old romance--and is charming throughout. She sings a laughing song in it which is received with madness, and which is the only real laughing song that ever was written. Auber told me that when it was first rehearsed, it made a great effect upon the orchestra; and that he could not have had a better compliment upon its freshness than the musical director paid him, in coming and clapping him on the shoulder with 'Bravo, jeune homme! Cela promet bien!'"

At dinner at Regnier's he met M. Legouvet, in whose tragedy Rachel, after its acceptance, had refused to act Medea; a caprice which had led not only to her condemnation in costs of so much a night until she did act it, but to a quasi rivalry against her by Ristori, who was now on her way to Paris to play it in Italian. To this performance Dickens and Macready subsequently went together, and pronounced it to be hopelessly bad. "In the day entertainments, and little melodrama theatres, of Italy, I have seen the same thing fifty times, only not at once so conventional and so exaggerated. The papers have all been in fits respecting the sublimity of the performance, and the genuineness of the applause--particularly of the bouquets; which were thrown on at the most preposterous times in the midst of agonizing scenes, so that

the characters had to pick their way among them, and a certain stout gentleman who played King Creon was obliged to keep a wary eye, all night, on the proscenium boxes, and dodge them as they came down. Now Scribe, who dined here next day (and who follows on the Ristori side, being offended, as everybody has been, by the insolence of Rachel), could not resist the temptation of telling us, that, going round at the end of the first act to offer his congratulations, he met all the bouquets coming back in men's arms to be thrown on again in the second act. . . . By the bye, I see a fine actor lost in Scribe. In all his pieces he has everything done in his own way; and on that same night he was showing what Rachel did not do, and wouldn't do, in the last scene of Adrienne Lecouvreur, with extraordinary force and intensity."

At the house of another great artist, Madame Viardot, the sister of Malibran, Dickens dined to meet Georges Sands, that lady having appointed the day and hour for the interesting festival, which came off duly on the 10th of January. "I suppose it to be impossible to imagine anybody more unlike my preconceptions than the illustrious Sand. Just the kind of woman in appearance whom you might suppose to be the Queen's monthly nurse. Chubby, matronly, swarthy, black-eyed. Nothing of the blue-stocking about her, except a little final way of settling all your opinions with hers, which I take to have been acquired in the country where she lives, and in the domination of a small circle. A singularly ordinary woman in appearance and manner. The dinner was very good and remarkably unpretending. Ourselves, Madame and her son, the Scheffers, the Sartorises, and some Lady somebody (from the Crimea last) who wore a species of paletot, and smoked. The Viardots have a house away in the new part of Paris, which looks exactly as if they had moved into it last week and were going away next. Notwithstanding which, they have lived in it eight years. The opera the very last thing on earth you would associate with the family. Piano not even opened. Her husband is an extremely good fellow, and she is as natural as it is possible to be."

Dickens was hardly the man to take fair measure of Madame Dudevant in meeting her thus. He was not familiar with her writings, and had no very special liking for such of them as he knew. But no disappointment, nothing but amazement, awaited him at a dinner that followed soon after. Emile de Girardin gave a banquet in his honour. His description of it, which he declares to be strictly prosaic, sounds a little Oriental, but not inappropriately so. "No man unacquainted with my determination never to embellish or fancify such accounts, could believe in the description I shall let off when we meet of dining at Emile Girardin's--of the three gorgeous drawing rooms with ten thousand wax candles in golden sconces, terminating in a dining-room of unprecedented magnificence with two enormous transparent plate-glass doors in it, looking (across an ante-chamber full of clean plates) straight into the kitchen, with the cooks in their white paper caps dishing the dinner. From his seat in the midst of the table, the host (like a Giant in a Fairy story) beholds the kitchen, and the snow-white tables, and the profound order and silence there prevailing. Forth from the plate-glass doors issues the Banquet--the most wonderful feast ever tasted by mortal: at the present price of Truffles, that article alone costing (for eight people) at least five pounds. On the table are ground glass jugs of peculiar construction, laden with the finest growth of Champagne and the coolest ice. With the third course is issued Port Wine (previously unheard of in a good state on this continent), which would fetch two guineas a bottle at any sale. The dinner done, Oriental flowers in vases of golden cobweb are placed upon the board. With the ice is issued Brandy, buried for 100 years. To that succeeds Coffee, brought by the brother of one of the convives from the remotest East, in exchange for an equal quantity of California gold dust. The company being returned to the drawing-room--tables roll in by unseen agency, laden with Cigarettes from the Hareem of the Sultan, and with cool drinks in which the flavour of the Lemon arrived yesterday from Algeria, struggles voluptuously with the delicate Orange arrived this morning from Lisbon. That period past, and the guests reposing on Divans worked with many-coloured blossoms, big table rolls in, heavy with massive furniture of silver, and breathing incense in the form of a little present of Tea direct from China--table and all, I

believe; but cannot swear to it, and am resolved to be prosaic. All this time the host perpetually repeats 'Ce petit diner-ci n'est que pour faire la connaissance de Monsieur Dickens; il ne compte pas; ce n'est rien.' And even now I have forgotten to set down half of it--in particular the item of a far larger plum pudding than ever was seen in England at Christmas time, served with a celestial sauce in colour like the orange blossom, and in substance like the blossom powdered and bathed in dew, and called in the carte (carte in a gold frame like a little fish-slice to be handed about) 'Hommage a l'illustre ecrivain d'Angleterre.' That illustrious man staggered out at the last drawing-room door, speechless with wonder, finally; and even at that moment his host, holding to his lips a chalice set with precious stones and containing nectar distilled from the air that blew over the fields of beans in bloom for fifteen summers, remarked 'Le diner que nous avons eu, mon cher, n'est rien--il ne compte pas--il a ete tout-a-fait en famille--il faut diner (en verite, diner) bientot. Au plaisir! Au revoir! Au diner!'"

The second dinner came, wonderful as the first; among the company were Regnier, Jules Sandeau, and the new Director of the Francais; and his host again played Lucullus in the same style, with success even more consummate. The only absolutely new incident however was that "After dinner he asked me if I would come into another room and smoke a cigar? and on my saying Yes, coolly opened a drawer, containing about 5000 inestimable cigars in prodigious bundles--just as the Captain of the Robbers in Ali Baba might have gone to a corner of the cave for bales of brocade. A little man dined who was blacking shoes 8 years ago, and is now enormously rich--the richest man in Paris--having ascended with rapidity up the usual ladder of the Bourse. By merely observing that perhaps he might come down again, I clouded so many faces as to render it very clear to me that everybody present was at the same game for some stake or other!" He returned to that subject in a letter a few days later. "If you were to see the steps of the Bourse at about 4 in the afternoon, and the crowd of blouses and patches among the speculators there assembled, all howling and haggard with speculation, you would stand aghast at the consideration of what must be going on. Concierges and people like that perpetually blow their brains out, or fly into the Seine, 'a cause des pertes sur la Bourse.' I hardly ever take up a French paper without lighting on such a paragraph. On the other hand, thoroughbred horses without end, and red velvet carriages with white kid harness on jet black horses, go by here all day long; and the pedestrians who turn to look at them, laugh, and say 'C'est la Bourse!' Such crashes must be staved off every week as have not been seen since Law's time."

Another picture connects itself with this, and throws light on the speculation thus raging. The French loans connected with the war, so much puffed and praised in England at the time for the supposed spirit in which they were taken up, had in fact only ministered to the commonest and lowest gambling; and the war had never in the least been popular. "Emile Girardin," wrote Dickens on the 23rd of March, "was here yesterday, and he says that Peace is to be formally announced at Paris to-morrow amid general apathy." But the French are never wholly apathetic to their own exploits; and a display with a touch of excitement in it had been witnessed a couple of months before on the entry of the troops from the Crimea, when the Zouaves, as they marched past, pleased Dickens most. "A remarkable body of men," he wrote, "wild, dangerous, and picturesque. Close-cropped head, red skull cap, Greek jacket, full red petticoat trowsers trimmed with yellow, and high white gaiters--the most sensible things for the purpose I know, and coming into use in the line. A man with such things on his legs is always free there, and ready for a muddy march; and might flounder through roads two feet deep in mud, and, simply by changing his gaiters (he has another pair in his haversack), be clean and comfortable and wholesome again, directly. Plenty of beard and moustache, and the musket carried reverse-wise with the stock over the shoulder, make up the sunburnt Zouave. He strides like Bobadil, smoking as he goes; and when he laughs (they were under my window for half-an-hour or so), plunges backward in the wildest way, as if he were going to throw a sommersault. They have a black dog belonging to the regiment, and, when they now marched

along with their medals, this dog marched after the one non-commissioned officer he invariably follows with a profound conviction that he was decorated. I couldn't see whether he had a medal, his hair being long; but he was perfectly up to what had befallen his regiment; and I never saw anything so capital as his way of regarding the public. Whatever the regiment does, he is always in his place; and it was impossible to mistake the air of modest triumph which was now upon him. A small dog corporeally, but of a great mind." On that night there was an illumination in honour of the army, when the "whole of Paris, bye streets and lanes and all sorts of out of the way places, was most brilliantly illuminated. It looked in the dark like Venice and Genoa rolled into one, and split up through the middle by the Corso at Rome in the carnival time. The French people certainly do know how to honour their own countrymen, in a most marvellous way." It was the festival time of the New Year, and Dickens was fairly lost in a mystery of amazement at where the money could come from that everybody was spending on the etrennes they were giving to everybody else. All the famous shops on the Boulevards had been blockaded for more than a week. "There is now a line of wooden stalls, three miles long, on each side of that immense thoroughfare; and wherever a retiring house or two admits of a double line, there it is. All sorts of objects from shoes and sabots, through porcelain and crystal, up to live fowls and rabbits which are played for at a sort of dwarf skittles (to their immense disturbance, as the ball rolls under them and shakes them off their shelves and perches whenever it is delivered by a vigorous hand), are on sale in this great Fair. And what you may get in the way of ornament for two-pence, is astounding." Unhappily there came dark and rainy weather, and one of the improvements of the Empire ended, as so many others did, in slush and misery.

Some sketches connected with the Art Exposition in the winter of 1855, and with the fulfilment of Ary Scheffer's design to paint the portrait of Dickens, may close these Paris pictures. He did not think that English art showed to advantage beside the French. It seemed to him small, shrunken, insignificant, "niggling." He thought the general absence of ideas horribly apparent; "and even when one comes to Mulready, and sees two old men talking over a much-too-prominent table-cloth, and reads the French explanation of their proceedings, 'La discussion sur les principes de Docteur Whiston,' one is dissatisfied. Somehow or other they don't tell. Even Leslie's Sancho wants go, and Stanny is too much like a set-scene. It is of no use disguising the fact that what we know to be wanting in the men is wanting in their works--character, fire, purpose, and the power of using the vehicle and the model as mere means to an end. There is a horrible respectability about most of the best of them--a little, finite, systematic routine in them, strangely expressive to me of the state of England itself. As a mere fact, Frith, Ward, and Egg, come out the best in such pictures as are here, and attract to the greatest extent. The first, in the picture from the Good-natured Man; the second, in the Royal Family in the Temple; the third, in the Peter the Great first seeing Catherine--which I always thought a good picture, and in which foreigners evidently descry a sudden dramatic touch that pleases them. There are no end of bad pictures among the French, but, Lord! the goodness also!--the fearlessness of them; the bold drawing; the dashing conception; the passion and action in them! The Belgian department is full of merit. It has the best landscape in it, the best portrait, and the best scene of homely life, to be found in the building. Don't think it a part of my despondency about public affairs, and my fear that our national glory is on the decline, when I say that mere form and conventionalities usurp, in English art, as in English government and social relations, the place of living force and truth. I tried to resist the impression yesterday, and went to the English gallery first, and praised and admired with great diligence; but it was of no use. I could not make anything better of it than what I tell you. Of course this is between ourselves. Friendship is better than criticism, and I shall steadily hold my tongue. Discussion is worse than useless when you cannot agree about what you are going to discuss." French nature is all wrong, said the English artists whom Dickens talked to; but surely not because it is French, was his reply. The English point of view is not the only one to take men

and women from. The French pictures are "theatrical," was the rejoinder. But the French themselves are a demonstrative and gesticulating people, was Dickens's retort; and what thus is rendered by their artists is the truth through an immense part of the world. "I never saw anything so strange. They seem to me to have got a fixed idea that there is no natural manner but the English manner (in itself so exceptional that it is a thing apart, in all countries); and that unless a Frenchman--represented as going to the guillotine for example--is as calm as Clapham, or as respectable as Richmond-hill, he cannot be right."

To the sittings at Ary Scheffer's some troubles as well as many pleasures were incident, and both had mention in his letters. "You may faintly imagine what I have suffered from sitting to Scheffer every day since I came back. He is a most noble fellow, and I have the greatest pleasure in his society, and have made all sorts of acquaintances at his house; but I can scarcely express how uneasy and unsettled it makes me to have to sit, sit, sit, with Little Dorrit on my mind, and the Christmas business too--though that is now happily dismissed. On Monday afternoon, and all day on Wednesday, I am going to sit again. And the crowning feature is, that I do not discern the slightest resemblance, either in his portrait or his brother's! They both peg away at me at the same time." The sittings were varied by a special entertainment, when Scheffer received some sixty people in his "long atelier"--"including a lot of French who say (but I don't believe it) that they know English"--to whom Dickens, by special entreaty, read his Cricket on the Hearth.

That was at the close of November. January came, and the end of the sittings was supposed to be at hand. "The nightmare portrait is nearly done; and Scheffer promises that an interminable sitting next Saturday, beginning at 10 o'clock in the morning, shall finish it. It is a fine spirited head, painted at his very best, and with a very easy and natural appearance in it. But it does not look to me at all like, nor does it strike me that if I saw it in a gallery I should suppose myself to be the original. It is always possible that I don't know my own face. It is going to be engraved here, in two sizes and ways--the mere head and the whole thing." A fortnight later, the interminable sitting came. "Imagine me if you please with No. 5 on my head and hands, sitting to Scheffer yesterday four hours! At this stage of a story, no one can conceive how it distresses me." Still this was not the last. March had come before the portrait was done. "Scheffer finished yesterday; and Collins, who has a good eye for pictures, says that there is no man living who could do the painting about the eyes. As a work of art I see in it spirit combined with perfect ease, and yet I don't see myself. So I come to the conclusion that I never do see myself. I shall be very curious to know the effect of it upon you." March had then begun; and at its close Dickens, who had meanwhile been in England, thus wrote: "I have not seen Scheffer since I came back, but he told Catherine a few days ago that he was not satisfied with the likeness after all, and thought he must do more to it. My own impression of it, you remember?" In these few words he anticipated the impression made upon myself. I was not satisfied with it. The picture had much merit, but not as a portrait. From its very resemblance in the eyes and mouth one derived the sense of a general unlikeness. But the work of the artist's brother, Henri Scheffer, painted from the same sittings, was in all ways greatly inferior.

Before Dickens left Paris in May he had sent over two descriptions that the reader most anxious to follow him to a new scene would perhaps be sorry to lose. A Duchess was murdered in the Champs Elysees. "The murder over the way (the third or fourth event of that nature in the Champs Elysees since we have been here) seems to disclose the strangest state of things. The Duchess who is murdered lived alone in a great house which was always shut up, and passed her time entirely in the dark. In a little lodge outside lived a coachman (the murderer), and there had been a long succession of coachmen who had been unable to stay there, and upon whom, whenever they asked for their wages, she plunged out with an immense knife, by way of an immediate settlement. The coachman never had anything to do, for the coach hadn't been driven out for years; neither would she ever allow the horses to be taken out for exercise. Between the lodge and the house, is a miserable bit of garden, all overgrown with long rank

grass, weeds, and nettles; and in this, the horses used to be taken out to swim--in a dead green vegetable sea, up to their haunches. On the day of the murder, there was a great crowd, of course; and in the midst of it up comes the Duke her husband (from whom she was separated), and rings at the gate. The police open the grate. 'C'est vrai donc,' says the Duke, 'que Madame la Duchesse n'est plus?'--'C'est trop vrai, Monseigneur.'--'Tant mieux,' says the Duke, and walks off deliberately, to the great satisfaction of the assemblage."

The second description relates an occurrence in England of only three years previous date, belonging to that wildly improbable class of realities which Dickens always held, with Fielding, to be (properly) closed to fiction. Only, he would add, critics should not be so eager to assume that what had never happened to themselves could not, by any human possibility, ever be supposed to have happened to anybody else. "B. was with me the other day, and, among other things that he told me, described an extraordinary adventure in his life, at a place not a thousand miles from my 'property' at Gadshill, three years ago. He lived at the tavern and was sketching one day when an open carriage came by with a gentleman and lady in it. He was sitting in the same place working at the same sketch, next day, when it came by again. So, another day, when the gentleman got out and introduced himself. Fond of art; lived at the great house yonder, which perhaps he knew; was an Oxford man and a Devonshire squire, but not resident on his estate, for domestic reasons; would be glad to see him to dinner to-morrow. He went, and found among other things a very fine library. 'At your disposition,' said the Squire, to whom he had now described himself and his pursuits. 'Use it for your writing and drawing. Nobody else uses it.' He stayed in the house six months. The lady was a mistress, aged five-and-twenty, and very beautiful, drinking her life away. The Squire was drunken, and utterly depraved and wicked; but an excellent scholar, an admirable linguist, and a great theologian. Two other mad visitors stayed the six months. One, a man well known in Paris here, who goes about the world with a crimson silk stocking in his breast pocket, containing a tooth-brush and an immense quantity of ready money. The other, a college chum of the Squire's, now ruined; with an insatiate thirst for drink; who constantly got up in the middle of the night, crept down to the dining-room, and emptied all the decanters. . . . B. stayed on in the place, under a sort of devilish fascination to discover what might come of it. . . . Tea or coffee never seen in the house, and very seldom water. Beer, champagne, and brandy, were the three drinkables. Breakfast: leg of mutton, champagne, beer, and brandy. Lunch: shoulder of mutton, champagne, beer, and brandy. Dinner: every conceivable dish (Squire's income, L7,000 a-year), champagne, beer, and brandy. The Squire had married a woman of the town from whom he was now separated, but by whom he had a daughter. The mother, to spite the father, had bred the daughter in every conceivable vice. Daughter, then 13, came from school once a month. Intensely coarse in talk, and always drunk. As they drove about the country in two open carriages, the drunken mistress would be perpetually tumbling out of one, and the drunken daughter perpetually tumbling out of the other. At last the drunken mistress drank her stomach away, and began to die on the sofa. Got worse and worse, and was always raving about Somebody's where she had once been a lodger, and perpetually shrieking that she would cut somebody else's heart out. At last she died on the sofa, and, after the funeral, the party broke up. A few months ago, B. met the man with the crimson silk stocking at Brighton, who told him that the Squire was dead 'of a broken heart'; that the chum was dead of delirium tremens; and that the daughter was heiress to the fortune. He told me all this, which I fully believe to be true, without any embellishment--just in the off-hand way in which I have told it to you."

Dickens left Paris at the end of April, and, after the summer in Boulogne which has been described, passed the winter in London, giving to his theatrical enterprise nearly all the time that Little Dorrit did not claim from him. His book was finished in the following spring; was inscribed to Clarkson Stanfield; and now claims to have something said about it.

Volume III, Chapter 6 (1855-1857): Little Dorrit, and a Lazy Tour

Little Dorrit, and a Lazy Tour

BETWEEN Hard Times and Little Dorrit, Dickens's principal literary work had been the contribution to Household Words of two tales for Christmas (1854 and 1855) which his readings afterwards made widely popular, the Story of Richard Doubledick, and Boots at the Holly-Tree Inn. In the latter was related, with a charming naturalness and spirit, the elopement, to get married at Gretna Green, of two little children of the mature respective ages of eight and seven. At Christmas 1855 came out the first number of Little Dorrit, and in April 1857 the last.

The book took its origin from the notion he had of a leading man for a story who should bring about all the mischief in it, lay it all on Providence, and say at every fresh calamity, "Well it's a mercy, however, nobody was to blame you know!" The title first chosen, out of many suggested, was Nobody's Fault; and four numbers had been written, of which the first was on the eve of appearance, before this was changed. When about to fall to work he excused himself from an engagement he should have kept because "the story is breaking out all round me, and I am going off down the railroad to humour it." The humouring was a little difficult, however; and such indications of a droop in his invention as presented themselves in portions of Bleak House, were noticeable again. "As to the story I am in the second number, and last night and this morning had half a mind to begin again, and work in what I have done, afterwards." It had occurred to him, that, by making the fellow-travellers at once known to each other, as the opening of the story stands, he had missed an effect. "It struck me that it would be a new thing to show people coming together, in a chance way, as fellow-travellers, and being in the same place, ignorant of one another, as happens in life; and to connect them afterwards, and to make the waiting for that connection a part of the interest." The change was not made; but the mention of it was one of several intimations to me of the altered conditions under which he was writing, and that the old, unstinted, irrepressible flow of fancy had received temporary check. In this view I have found it very interesting to compare the original notes, which as usual he prepared for each number of the tale, and which with the rest are in my possession, with those of Chuzzlewit or Copperfield; observing in the former the labour and pains, and in the latter the lightness and confidence of handling. "I am just now getting to work on number three: sometimes enthusiastic, more often dull enough. There is an enormous outlay in the Father of the Marshalsea chapter, in the way of getting a great lot of matter into a small space. I am not quite resolved, but I have a great idea of overwhelming that family with wealth. Their condition would be very curious. I can make Dorrit very strong in the story, I hope." The Marshalsea part of the tale undoubtedly was excellent, and there was masterly treatment of character in the contrasts of the brothers Dorrit; but of the family generally it may be said that its least important members had most of his genius in them. The younger of the brothers, the scapegrace son, and "Fanny dear," are perfectly real people in what makes them unattractive; but what is meant for attractiveness in the heroine becomes often tiresome by want of reality.

The first number appeared in December 1855, and on the 2nd there was an exultant note. "Little Dorrit has beaten even Bleak House out of the field. It is a most tremendous start, and I am overjoyed at it;" to which he added, writing from Paris on the 6th of the month following, "You know that they had sold 35,000 of number two on new year's day." He was still in Paris on the day of the appearance of that portion of the tale by which it will always be most vividly remembered, and thus wrote on the 30th of January 1856: "I have a grim pleasure upon me to-night in thinking that the Circumlocution Office sees

the light, and in wondering what effect it will make. But my head really stings with the visions of the book, and I am going, as we French say, to disembarrass it by plunging out into some of the strange places I glide into of nights in these latitudes." The Circumlocution heroes led to the Society scenes, the Hampton-court dowager-sketches, and Mr. Gowan; all parts of one satire levelled against prevailing political and social vices. Aim had been taken, in the course of it, at some living originals, disguised sufficiently from recognition to enable him to make his thrust more sure; but there was one exception self-revealed. "I had the general idea," he wrote while engaged on the sixth number, "of the Society business before the Sadleir affair, but I shaped Mr. Merdle himself out of that precious rascality. Society, the Circumlocution Office, and Mr. Gowan, are of course three parts of one idea and design. Mr. Merdle's complaint, which you will find in the end to be fraud and forgery, came into my mind as the last drop in the silver cream-jug on Hampstead-heath. I shall beg, when you have read the present number, to enquire whether you consider 'Bar' an instance, in reference to K F, of a suggested likeness in not many touches!" The likeness no one could mistake; and, though that particular Bar has since been moved into a higher and happier sphere, Westminster-hall is in no danger of losing "the insinuating Jury-droop, and persuasive double-eyeglass," by which this keen observer could express a type of character in half a dozen words.

Of the other portions of the book that had a strong personal interest for him I have spoken on a former page, and I will now only add an allusion of his own. "There are some things in Flora in number seven that seem to me to be extraordinarily droll, with something serious at the bottom of them after all. Ah, well! was there not something very serious in it once? I am glad to think of being in the country with the long summer mornings as I approach number ten, where I have finally resolved to make Dorrit rich. It should be a very fine point in the story. . . . Nothing in Flora made me laugh so much as the confusion of ideas between gout flying upwards, and its soaring with Mr. F---- to another sphere." He had himself no inconsiderable enjoyment also of Mr. F.'s aunt; and in the old rascal of a patriarch, the smooth-surfaced Casby, and other surroundings of poor Flora, there was fun enough to float an argosy of second-rates, assuming such to have formed the staple of the tale. It would be far from fair to say they did. The defect in the book was less the absence of excellent character or keen observation, than the want of ease and coherence among the figures of the story, and of a central interest in the plan of it. The agencies that bring about its catastrophe, too, are less agreeable even than in Bleak House; and, most unlike that well-constructed story, some of the most deeply considered things that occur in it have really little to do with the tale itself. The surface-painting of both Miss Wade and Tattycoram, to take an instance, is anything but attractive, yet there is under it a rare force of likeness in the unlikeness between the two which has much subtlety of intention; and they must both have had, as well as Mr. Gowan himself, a striking effect in the novel, if they had been made to contribute in a more essential way to its interest or development. The failure nevertheless had not been for want of care and study, as well of his own design as of models by masters in his art. A happier hint of apology, for example, could hardly be given for Fielding's introduction of such an episode as the Man of the Hill between the youth and manhood of Blifil and Tom Jones, than is suggested by what Dickens wrote of the least interesting part of Little Dorrit. In the mere form, Fielding of course was only following the lead of Cervantes and Le Sage; but Dickens rightly judged his purpose also to have been, to supply a kind of connection between the episode and the story. "I don't see the practicability of making the History of a Self-Tormentor, with which I took great pains, a written narrative. But I do see the possibility" (he saw the other practicability before the number was published) "of making it a chapter by itself, which might enable me to dispense with the necessity of the turned commas. Do you think that would be better? I have no doubt that a great part of Fielding's reason for the introduced story, and Smollett's also, was, that it is sometimes really impossible to present, in a full book, the idea it contains (which yet it may be on all accounts desirable to present),

without supposing the reader to be possessed of almost as much romantic allowance as would put him on a level with the writer. In Miss Wade I had an idea, which I thought a new one, of making the introduced story so fit into surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the blood of the book circulate through both. But I can only suppose, from what you say, that I have not exactly succeeded in this."

Shortly after the date of his letter he was in London on business connected with the purchase of Gadshill Place, and he went over to the Borough to see what traces were left of the prison of which his first impression was taken in his boyhood, which had played so important a part in this latest novel, and every brick and stone of which he had been able to rebuild in his book by the mere vividness of his marvellous memory. "Went to the Borough yesterday morning before going to Gadshill, to see if I could find any ruins of the Marshalsea. Found a great part of the original building--now 'Marshalsea Place.' Found the rooms that have been in my mind's eye in the story. Found, nursing a very big boy, a very small boy, who, seeing me standing on the Marshalsea pavement, looking about, told me how it all used to be. God knows how he learned it (for he was a world too young to know anything about it), but he was right enough. . . . There is a room there--still standing, to my amazement--that I think of taking! It is the room through which the ever-memorable signers of Captain Porter's petition filed off in my boyhood. The spikes are gone, and the wall is lowered, and anybody can go out now who likes to go, and is not bedridden; and I said to the boy 'Who lives there?' and he said, 'Jack Pithick.' 'Who is Jack Pithick?' I asked him. And he said, 'Joe Pithick's uncle.'"

Mention was made of this visit in the preface that appeared with the last number; and all it is necessary to add of the completed book will be, that, though in the humour and satire of its finer parts not unworthy of him, and though it had the clear design, worthy of him in an especial degree, of contrasting, both in private and in public life, and in poverty equally as in wealth, duty done and duty not done, it made no material addition to his reputation. His public, however, showed no falling-off in its enormous numbers; and what is said in one of his letters, noticeable for this touch of character, illustrates his anxiety to avoid any set-off from the disquiet that critical discourtesies might give. "I was ludicrously foiled here the other night in a resolution I have kept for twenty years not to know of any attack upon myself, by stumbling, before I could pick myself up, on a short extract in the Globe from Blackwood's Magazine, informing me that Little Dorrit is 'Twaddle.' I was sufficiently put out by it to be angry with myself for being such a fool, and then pleased with myself for having so long been constant to a good resolution." There was a scene that made itself part of history not four months after his death, which, if he could have lived to hear of it, might have more than consoled him. It was the meeting of Bismarck and Jules Favre under the walls of Paris. The Prussian was waiting to open fire on the city; the Frenchman was engaged in the arduous task of showing the wisdom of not doing it; and "we learn," say the papers of the day, "that while the two eminent statesmen were trying to find a basis of negotiation, Von Moltke was seated in a corner reading Little Dorrit." Who will doubt that the chapter on HOW NOT TO DO IT was then absorbing the old soldier's attention?

Preparations for the private play had gone on incessantly up to Christmas, and, in turning the school-room into a theatre, sawing and hammering worthy of Babel continued for weeks. The priceless help of Stanfield had again been secured, and I remember finding him one day at Tavistock House in the act of upsetting some elaborate arrangements by Dickens, with a proscenium before him made up of chairs, and the scenery planned out with walking-sticks. But Dickens's art in a matter of this kind was to know how to take advice; and no suggestion came to him that he was not ready to act upon, if it presented the remotest likelihood. In one of his great difficulties of obtaining more space, for audience as well as actors, he was told that Mr. Cooke of Astley's was a man of much resource in that way; and to Mr. Cooke he applied, with the following result. "One of the finest things" (18th of October 1856) "I have

ever seen in my life of that kind was the arrival of my friend Mr. Cooke one morning this week, in an open phaeton drawn by two white ponies with black spots all over them (evidently stencilled), who came in at the gate with a little jolt and a rattle, exactly as they come into the Ring when they draw anything, and went round and round the centre bed of the front court, apparently looking for the clown. A multitude of boys who felt them to be no common ponies rushed up in a breathless state--twined themselves like ivy about the railings--and were only deterred from storming the enclosure by the glare of the Inimitable's eye. Some of these boys had evidently followed from Astley's. I grieve to add that my friend, being taken to the point of difficulty, had no sort of suggestion in him; no gleam of an idea; and might just as well have been the popular minister from the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road. All he could say was--answering me, posed in the garden, precisely as if I were the clown asking him a riddle at night--that two of their stable tents would be home in November, and that they were '20 foot square,' and I was heartily welcome to 'em. Also, he said, 'You might have half a dozen of my trapezes, or my middle-distance-tables, but they're all 6 foot and all too low sir.' Since then, I have arranged to do it in my own way, and with my own carpenter. You will be surprised by the look of the place. It is no more like the school-room than it is like the sign of the Salutation Inn at Ambleside in Westmoreland. The sounds in the house remind me, as to the present time, of Chatham Dockyard--as to a remote epoch, of the building of Noah's ark. Joiners are never out of the house, and the carpenter appears to be unsettled (or settled) for life."

Of course time did not mend matters, and as Christmas approached the house was in a state of siege. "All day long, a labourer heats size over the fire in a great crucible. We eat it, drink it, breathe it, and smell it. Seventy paint-pots (which came in a van) adorn the stage; and thereon may be beheld, Stanny, and three Dansons (from the Surrey Zoological Gardens), all painting at once!! Meanwhile, Telbin, in a secluded bower in Brewer-street, Golden-square, plies his part of the little undertaking." How worthily it turned out in the end, the excellence of the performances and the delight of the audiences, became known to all London; and the pressure for admittance at last took the form of a tragi-comedy, composed of ludicrous makeshifts and gloomy disappointments, with which even Dickens's resources could not deal. "My audience is now 93," he wrote one day in despair, "and at least 10 will neither hear nor see." There was nothing for it but to increase the number of nights; and it was not until the 20th of January he described "the workmen smashing the last atoms of the theatre."

His book was finished soon after at Gadshill Place, to be presently described, which he had purchased the previous year, and taken possession of in February; subscribing himself, in the letter announcing the fact, as "the Kentish Freeholder on his native heath, his name Protection." The new abode occupied him in various ways in the early part of the summer; and Hans Andersen the Dane had just arrived upon a visit to him there, when Douglas Jerrold's unexpected death befell. It was a shock to every one, and an especial grief to Dickens. Jerrold's wit, and the bright shrewd intellect that had so many triumphs, need no celebration from me; but the keenest of satirists was one of the kindliest of men, and Dickens had a fondness for Jerrold as genuine as his admiration for him. "I chance to know a good deal about the poor fellow's illness, for I was with him on the last day he was out. It was ten days ago, when we dined at a dinner given by Russell at Greenwich. He was complaining much when we met, said he had been sick three days, and attributed it to the inhaling of white paint from his study window. I did not think much of it at the moment, as we were very social; but while we walked through Leicester-square he suddenly fell into a white, hot, sick perspiration, and had to lean against the railings. Then, at my urgent request, he was to let me put him in a cab and send him home; but he rallied a little after that, and, on our meeting Russell, determined to come with us. We three went down by steamboat that we might see the great ship, and then got an open fly and rode about Blackheath: poor Jerrold mightily enjoying the air, and constantly saying that it set him up. He was rather quiet at dinner--sat next Delane--but was very

humorous and good, and in spirits, though he took hardly anything. We parted with references to coming down here" (Gadshill) "and I never saw him again. Next morning he was taken very ill when he tried to get up. On the Wednesday and Thursday he was very bad, but rallied on the Friday, and was quite confident of getting well. On the Sunday he was very ill again, and on the Monday forenoon died; 'at peace with all the world' he said, and asking to be remembered to friends. He had become indistinct and insensible, until for but a few minutes at the end. I knew nothing about it, except that he had been ill and was better, until, going up by railway yesterday morning, I heard a man in the carriage, unfolding his newspaper, say to another 'Douglas Jerrold is dead.' I immediately went up there, and then to Whitefriars . . . I propose that there shall be a night at a theatre when the actors (with old Cooke) shall play the Rent Day and Black-ey'd Susan; another night elsewhere, with a lecture from Thackeray; a day reading by me; a night reading by me; a lecture by Russell; and a subscription performance of the Frozen Deep, as at Tavistock House. I don't mean to do it beggingly; but merely to announce the whole series, the day after the funeral, 'In memory of the late Mr. Douglas Jerrold,' or some such phrase. I have got hold of Arthur Smith as the best man of business I know, and go to work with him to-morrow morning--inquiries being made in the meantime as to the likeliest places to be had for these various purposes. My confident hope is that we shall get close upon two thousand pounds."

The friendly enterprise was carried to the close with a vigour, promptitude, and success, that well corresponded with this opening. In addition to the performances named, there were others in the country also organized by Dickens, in which he took active personal part; and the result did not fall short of his expectations. The sum was invested ultimately for our friend's unmarried daughter, who still receives the income from myself, the last surviving trustee.

So passed the greater part of the summer, and when the country performances were over at the end of August I had this intimation. "I have arranged with Collins that he and I will start next Monday on a ten or twelve days' expedition to out-of-the-way places, to do (in inns and coast-corners) a little tour in search of an article and in avoidance of railroads. I must get a good name for it, and I propose it in five articles, one for the beginning of every number in the October part." Next day: "Our decision is for a foray upon the fells of Cumberland; I having discovered in the books some promising moors and bleak places thereabout." Into the lake-country they went accordingly; and The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices, contributed to Household Words, was a narrative of the trip. But his letters had descriptive touches, and some whimsical personal experiences, not in the published account.

Looking over the Beauties of England and Wales before he left London, his ambition was fired by mention of Carrick Fell, "a gloomy old mountain 1500 feet high," which he secretly resolved to go up. "We came straight to it yesterday" (9th of September). "Nobody goes up. Guides have forgotten it. Master of a little inn, excellent north-countryman, volunteered. Went up, in a tremendous rain. C. D. beat Mr. Porter (name of landlord) in half a mile. Mr. P. done up in no time. Three nevertheless went on. Mr. P. again leading; C. D. and C." (Mr. Wilkie Collins) "following. Rain terrific, black mists, darkness of night. Mr. P. agitated. C. D. confident. C. (a long way down in perspective) submissive. All wet through. No poles. Not so much as a walking-stick in the party. Reach the summit, at about one in the day. Dead darkness as of night. Mr. P. (excellent fellow to the last) uneasy. C. D. produces compass from pocket. Mr. P. reassured. Farm-house where dog-cart was left, N.N.W. Mr. P. complimentary. Descent commenced. C. D. with compass triumphant, until compass, with the heat and wet of C. D.'s pocket, breaks. Mr. P. (who never had a compass), inconsolable, confesses he has not been on Carrick Fell for twenty years, and he don't know the way down. Darker and darker. Nobody discernible, two yards off, by the other two. Mr. P. makes suggestions, but no way. It becomes clear to C. D. and to C. that Mr. P. is going round and round the mountain, and never coming down. Mr. P. sits on angular granite, and says he is 'just fairly doon.' C. D. revives Mr. P. with laughter, the only restorative in the company. Mr. P. again

complimentary. Descent tried once more. Mr. P. worse and worse. Council of war. Proposals from C. D. to go 'slap down.' Seconded by C. Mr. P. objects, on account of precipice called The Black Arches, and terror of the country-side. More wandering. Mr. P. terror-stricken, but game. Watercourse, thundering and roaring, reached. C. D. suggests that it must run to the river, and had best be followed, subject to all gymnastic hazards. Mr. P. opposes, but gives in. Watercourse followed accordingly. Leaps, splashes, and tumbles, for two hours. C. lost. C. D. whoops. Cries for assistance from behind. C. D. returns. C. with horribly sprained ankle, lying in rivulet!"

All the danger was over when Dickens sent his description; but great had been the trouble in binding up the sufferer's ankle and getting him painfully on, shoving, shouldering, carrying alternately, till terra firma was reached. "We got down at last in the wildest place, preposterously out of the course; and, propping up C. against stones, sent Mr. P. to the other side of Cumberland for dog-cart, so got back to his inn, and changed. Shoe or stocking on the bad foot, out of the question. Foot tumbled up in a flannel waistcoat. C. D. carrying C. melo-dramatically (Wardour to the life!) everywhere; into and out of carriages; up and down stairs; to bed; every step. And so to Wigton, got doctor, and here we are!! A pretty business, we flatter ourselves!"

Wigton, Dickens described as a place of little houses all in half-mourning, yellow stone or white stone and black, with the wonderful peculiarity that though it had no population, no business, and no streets to speak of, it had five linendrapers within range of their single window, one linendraper's next door, and five more linendrapers round the corner. "I ordered a night light in my bed-room. A queer little old woman brought me one of the common Child's night lights, and, seeming to think that I looked at it with interest, said, 'It's joost a vara keeyourious thing, sir, and joost new coom oop. It'll burn awt hoors a' end, and no goottther, nor no waste, nor ony sike a thing, if you can creedit what I say, seein' the airticle.'" In these primitive quarters there befell a difficulty about letters, which Dickens solved in a fashion especially his own. "The day after Carrick there was a mess about our letters, through our not going to a place called Mayport. So, while the landlord was planning how to get them (they were only twelve miles off), I walked off, to his great astonishment, and brought them over." The night after leaving Wigton they were at the Ship-hotel in Allonby.

Allonby his letters presented as a small untidy outlandish place; rough stone houses in half mourning, a few coarse yellow-stone lodging houses with black roofs (bills in all the windows), five bathing-machines, five girls in straw hats, five men in straw hats (wishing they had not come); very much what Broadstairs would have been if it had been born Irish, and had not inherited a cliff. "But this is a capital little homely inn, looking out upon the sea; with the coast of Scotland, mountainous and romantic, over against the windows; and though I can just stand upright in my bedroom, we are really well lodged. It is a clean nice place in a rough wild country, and we have a very obliging and comfortable landlady." He had found indeed, in the latter, an acquaintance of old date. "The landlady at the little inn at Allonby, lived at Greta-Bridge in Yorkshire when I went down there before Nickleby; and was smuggled into the room to see me, after I was secretly found out. She is an immensely fat woman now. 'But I could tuck my arm round her waist then, Mr. Dickens,' the landlord said when she told me the story as I was going to bed the night before last. 'And can't you do it now?' I said. 'You insensible dog! Look at me! Here's a picture!' Accordingly I got round as much of her as I could; and this gallant action was the most successful I have ever performed, on the whole."

On their way home the friends were at Doncaster, and this was Dickens's first experience of the St. Leger and its saturnalia. His companion had by this time so far recovered as to be able, doubled-up, to walk with a thick stick; in which condition, "being exactly like the gouty admiral in a comedy I have given him that name." The impressions received from the race-week were not favourable. It was noise and

turmoil all day long, and a gathering of vagabonds from all parts of the racing earth. Every bad face that had ever caught wickedness from an innocent horse had its representative in the streets; and as Dickens, like Gulliver looking down upon his fellow-men after coming from the horse-country, looked down into Doncaster High-street from his inn-window, he seemed to see everywhere a then notorious personage who had just poisoned his betting-companion. "Everywhere I see the late Mr. Palmer with his betting-book in his hand. Mr. Palmer sits next me at the theatre; Mr. Palmer goes before me down the street; Mr. Palmer follows me into the chemist's shop where I go to buy rose water after breakfast, and says to the chemist 'Give us soom sal volatile or soom damned thing o' that soort, in wather--my head's bad!' And I look at the back of his bad head repeated in long, long lines on the race course, and in the betting stand and outside the betting rooms in the town, and I vow to God that I can see nothing in it but cruelty, covetousness, calculation, insensibility, and low wickedness."

Even a half-appalling kind of luck was not absent from my friend's experiences at the race course, when, what he called a "wonderful, paralysing, coincidence" befell him. He bought the card; facetiously wrote down three names for the winners of the three chief races (never in his life having heard or thought of any of the horses, except that the winner of the Derby, who proved to be nowhere, had been mentioned to him); "and, if you can believe it without your hair standing on end, those three races were won, one after another, by those three horses!!!" That was the St. Leger-day, of which he also thought it noticeable, that, though the losses were enormous, nobody had won, for there was nothing but grinding of teeth and blaspheming of ill-luck. Nor had matters mended on the Cup-day, after which celebration "a groaning phantom" lay in the doorway of his bed-room and howled all night. The landlord came up in the morning to apologise, "and said it was a gentleman who had lost L1500 or L2000; and he had drunk a deal afterwards; and then they put him to bed, and then he--took the 'orrors, and got up, and yelled till morning." Dickens might well believe, as he declared at the end of his letter, that if a boy with any good in him, but with a dawning propensity to sporting and betting, were but brought to the Doncaster races soon enough, it would cure him.

Volume III, Chapter 7 (1857-1858): What Happened at This Time

What Happened at This Time

AN unsettled feeling greatly in excess of what was usual with Dickens, more or less observable since his first residence at Boulogne, became at this time almost habitual, and the satisfactions which home should have supplied, and which indeed were essential requirements of his nature, he had failed to find in his home. He had not the alternative that under this disappointment some can discover in what is called society. It did not suit him, and he set no store by it. No man was better fitted to adorn any circle he entered, but beyond that of friends and equals he rarely passed. He would take as much pains to keep out of the houses of the great as others take to get into them. Not always wisely, it may be admitted. Mere contempt for toadyism and flunkeyism was not at all times the prevailing motive with him which he supposed it to be. Beneath his horror of those vices of Englishmen in his own rank of life, there was a still stronger resentment at the social inequalities that engender them, of which he was not so conscious and to which he owned less freely. Not the less it served secretly to justify what he might otherwise have had no mind to. To say he was not a gentleman would be as true as to say he was not a writer; but if any one should assert his occasional preference for what was even beneath his level over that which was above it, this would be difficult of disproof. It was among those defects of temperament for which his early trials and his early successes were accountable in perhaps equal measure. He was sensitive in a passionate degree to praise and blame, which yet he made it for the most part a point of pride to assume indifference to; the inequalities of rank which he secretly resented took more galling as well as glaring prominence from the contrast of the necessities he had gone through with the fame that had come to him; and when the forces he most affected to despise assumed the form of barriers he could not easily overleap, he was led to appear frequently intolerant (for he very seldom was really so) in opinions and language. His early sufferings brought with them the healing powers of energy, will, and persistence, and taught him the inexpressible value of a determined resolve to live down difficulties; but the habit, in small as in great things, of renunciation and self-sacrifice, they did not teach; and, by his sudden leap into a world-wide popularity and influence, he became master of everything that might seem to be attainable in life, before he had mastered what a man must undergo to be equal to its hardest trials.

Nothing of all this has yet presented itself to notice, except in occasional forms of restlessness and desire of change of place, which were themselves, when his books were in progress, so incident as well to the active requirements of his fancy as to call, thus far, for no other explanation. Up to the date of the completion of Copperfield he had felt himself to be in possession of an all-sufficient resource. Against whatever might befall he had a set-off in his imaginative creations, a compensation derived from his art that never failed him, because there he was supreme. It was the world he could bend to his will, and make subserve to all his desires. He had otherwise, underneath his exterior of a singular precision, method, and strictly orderly arrangement in all things, and notwithstanding a temperament to which home and home interests were really a necessity, something in common with those eager, impetuous, somewhat overbearing natures, that rush at existence without heeding the cost of it, and are not more ready to accept and make the most of its enjoyments than to be easily and quickly overthrown by its burdens. But the world he had called into being had thus far borne him safely through these perils. He had his own creations always by his side. They were living, speaking companions. With them only he was everywhere thoroughly identified. He laughed and wept with them; was as much elated by their fun as cast down by their grief; and brought to the consideration of them a belief in their reality as well as in

the influences they were meant to exercise, which in every circumstance sustained him.

It was during the composition of Little Dorrit that I think he first felt a certain strain upon his invention which brought with it other misgivings. In a modified form this was present during the latter portions of Bleak House, of which not a few of the defects might be traced to the acting excitements amid which it was written; but the succeeding book made it plainer to him; and it is remarkable that in the interval between them he resorted for the first and only time in his life to a practice, which he abandoned at the close of his next and last story published in the twenty-number form, of putting down written "Memoranda" of suggestions for characters or incidents by way of resource to him in his writing. Never before had his teeming fancy seemed to want such help; the need being less to contribute to its fullness than to check its overflowing; but it is another proof that he had been secretly bringing before himself, at least, the possibility that what had ever been his great support might some day desert him. It was strange that he should have had such doubt, and he would hardly have confessed it openly; but apart from that wonderful world of his books, the range of his thoughts was not always proportioned to the width and largeness of his nature. His ordinary circle of activity, whether in likings or thinkings, was full of such surprising animation, that one was apt to believe it more comprehensive than it really was; and again and again, when a wide horizon might seem to be ahead of him, he would pull up suddenly and stop short, as though nothing lay beyond. For the time, though each had its term and change, he was very much a man of one idea, each having its turn of absolute predominance; and this was one of the secrets of the thoroughness with which everything he took in hand was done. As to the matter of his writings, the actual truth was that his creative genius never really failed him. Not a few of his inventions of character and humour, up to the very close of his life, his Marigolds, Lirripers, Gargerys, Pips, Sapseas and many others, were as fresh and fine as in his greatest day. He had however lost the free and fertile method of the earlier time. He could no longer fill a wide-spread canvas with the same facility and certainty as of old; and he had frequently a quite unfounded apprehension of some possible break-down, of which the end might be at any moment beginning. There came accordingly, from time to time, intervals of unusual impatience and restlessness, strange to me in connection with his home; his old pursuits were too often laid aside for other excitements and occupations; he joined a public political agitation, set on foot by administrative reformers; he got up various quasi-public private theatricals, in which he took the leading place; and though it was but part of his always generous devotion in any friendly duty to organize the series of performances on his friend Jerrold's death, yet the eagerness with which he flung himself into them, so arranging them as to assume an amount of labour in acting and travelling that might have appalled an experienced comedian, and carrying them on week after week unceasingly in London and the provinces, expressed but the craving which still had possession of him to get by some means at some change that should make existence easier. What was highest in his nature had ceased for the time to be highest in his life, and he had put himself at the mercy of lower accidents and conditions. The mere effect of the strolling wandering ways into which this acting led him could not be other than unfavourable. But remonstrance as yet was unavailing.

To one very earnestly made in the early autumn of 1857, in which opportunity was taken to compare his recent rush up Carrick Fell to his rush into other difficulties, here was the reply. "Too late to say, put the curb on, and don't rush at hills--the wrong man to say it to. I have now no relief but in action. I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break, and die, if I spared myself. Much better to die, doing. What I am in that way, nature made me first, and my way of life has of late, alas! confirmed. I must accept the drawback--since it is one--with the powers I have; and I must hold upon the tenure prescribed to me." Something of the same sad feeling, it is right to say, had been expressed from time to time, in connection also with home dissatisfactions and misgivings, through the three years preceding; but I attributed it to other causes, and gave little attention to it. During his absences abroad for

the greater part of 1854, '55, and '56, while the elder of his children were growing out of childhood, and his books were less easy to him than in his earlier manhood, evidences presented themselves in his letters of the old "unhappy loss or want of something" to which he had given a pervading prominence in Copperfield. In the first of those years he made express allusion to the kind of experience which had been one of his descriptions in that favourite book, and, mentioning the drawbacks of his present life, had first identified it with his own: "the so happy and yet so unhappy existence which seeks its realities in unrealities, and finds its dangerous comfort in a perpetual escape from the disappointment of heart around it."

Later in the same year he thus wrote from Boulogne: "I have had dreadful thoughts of getting away somewhere altogether by myself. If I could have managed it, I think possibly I might have gone to the Pyreennees (you know what I mean that word for, so I won't re-write it) for six months! I have put the idea into the perspective of six months, but have not abandoned it. I have visions of living for half a year or so, in all sorts of inaccessible places, and opening a new book therein. A floating idea of going up above the snow-line in Switzerland, and living in some astonishing convent, hovers about me. If Household Words could be got into a good train, in short, I don't know in what strange place, or at what remote elevation above the level of the sea, I might fall to work next. Restlessness, you will say. Whatever it is, it is always driving me, and I cannot help it. I have rested nine or ten weeks, and sometimes feel as if it had been a year--though I had the strangest nervous miseries before I stopped. If I couldn't walk fast and far, I should just explode and perish." Again, four months later he wrote: "You will hear of me in Paris, probably next Sunday, and I may go on to Bordeaux. Have general ideas of emigrating in the summer to the mountain-ground between France and Spain. Am altogether in a dishevelled state of mind--motes of new books in the dirty air, miseries of older growth threatening to close upon me. Why is it, that as with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made?"

Early in 1856 (20th of January) the notion revisited him of writing a book in solitude. "Again I am beset by my former notions of a book whereof the whole story shall be on the top of the Great St. Bernard. As I accept and reject ideas for Little Dorrit, it perpetually comes back to me. Two or three years hence, perhaps you'll find me living with the Monks and the Dogs a whole winter--among the blinding snows that fall about that monastery. I have a serious idea that I shall do it, if I live." He was at this date in Paris; and during the visit to him of Macready in the following April, the self-revelations were resumed. The great actor was then living in retirement at Sherborne, to which he had gone on quitting the stage; and Dickens gave favourable report of his enjoyment of the change to his little holiday at Paris. Then, after recurring to his own old notion of having some slight idea of going to settle in Australia, only he could not do it until he should have finished Little Dorrit, he went on to say that perhaps Macready, if he could get into harness again, would not be the worse for some such troubles as were worrying himself. "It fills me with pity to think of him away in that lonely Sherborne place. I have always felt of myself that I must, please God, die in harness, but I have never felt it more strongly than in looking at, and thinking of, him. However strange it is to be never at rest, and never satisfied, and ever trying after something that is never reached, and to be always laden with plot and plan and care and worry, how clear it is that it must be, and that one is driven by an irresistible might until the journey is worked out! It is much better to go on and fret, than to stop and fret. As to repose--for some men there's no such thing in this life. The foregoing has the appearance of a small sermon; but it is so often in my head in these days that it cannot help coming out. The old days--the old days! Shall I ever, I wonder, get the frame of mind back as it used to be then? Something of it perhaps--but never quite as it used to be. I find that the skeleton in my domestic closet is becoming a pretty big one."

It would be unjust and uncandid not to admit that these and other similar passages in the letters that extended over the years while he lived abroad, had served in some degree as a preparation for what came after his return to England in the following year. It came with a great shock nevertheless; because it told plainly what before had never been avowed, but only hinted at more or less obscurely. The opening reference is to the reply which had been made to a previous expression of his wish for some confidences as in the old time. I give only what is strictly necessary to account for what followed, and even this with deep reluctance. "Your letter of yesterday was so kind and hearty, and sounded so gently the many chords we have touched together, that I cannot leave it unanswered, though I have not much (to any purpose) to say. My reference to 'confidences' was merely to the relief of saying a word of what has long been pent up in my mind. Poor Catherine and I are not made for each other, and there is no help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so too--and much more so. She is exactly what you know, in the way of being amiable and complying; but we are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us. God knows she would have been a thousand times happier if she had married another kind of man, and that her avoidance of this destiny would have been at least equally good for us both. I am often cut to the heart by thinking what a pity it is, for her own sake, that I ever fell in her way; and if I were sick or disabled to-morrow, I know how sorry she would be, and how deeply grieved myself, to think how we had lost each other. But exactly the same incompatibility would arise, the moment I was well again; and nothing on earth could make her understand me, or suit us to each other. Her temperament will not go with mine. It mattered not so much when we had only ourselves to consider, but reasons have been growing since which make it all but hopeless that we should even try to struggle on. What is now befalling me I have seen steadily coming, ever since the days you remember when Mary was born; and I know too well that you cannot, and no one can, help me. Why I have even written I hardly know; but it is a miserable sort of comfort that you should be clearly aware how matters stand. The mere mention of the fact, without any complaint or blame of any sort, is a relief to my present state of spirits--and I can get this only from you, because I can speak of it to no one else." In the same tone was his rejoinder to my reply. "To the most part of what you say--Amen! You are not so tolerant as perhaps you might be of the wayward and unsettled feeling which is part (I suppose) of the tenure on which one holds an imaginative life, and which I have, as you ought to know well, often only kept down by riding over it like a dragoon--but let that go by. I make no maudlin complaint. I agree with you as to the very possible incidents, even not less bearable than mine, that might and must often occur to the married condition when it is entered into very young. I am always deeply sensible of the wonderful exercise I have of life and its highest sensations, and have said to myself for years, and have honestly and truly felt, This is the drawback to such a career, and is not to be complained of. I say it and feel it now as strongly as ever I did; and, as I told you in my last, I do not with that view put all this forward. But the years have not made it easier to bear for either of us; and, for her sake as well as mine, the wish will force itself upon me that something might be done. I know too well it is impossible. There is the fact, and that is all one can say. Nor are you to suppose that I disguise from myself what might be urged on the other side. I claim no immunity from blame. There is plenty of fault on my side, I dare say, in the way of a thousand uncertainties, caprices, and difficulties of disposition; but only one thing will alter all that, and that is, the end which alters everything."

It will not seem to most people that there was anything here which in happier circumstances might not have been susceptible of considerate adjustment; but all the circumstances were unfavourable, and the moderate middle course which the admissions in that letter might wisely have prompted and wholly justified, was unfortunately not taken. Compare what before was said of his temperament, with what is there said by himself of its defects, and the explanation will not be difficult. Every counteracting influence against the one idea which now predominated over him had been so weakened as to be almost

powerless. His elder children were no longer children; his books had lost for the time the importance they formerly had over every other consideration in his life; and he had not in himself the resource that such a man, judging him from the surface, might be expected to have had. Not his genius only, but his whole nature, was too exclusively made up of sympathy for, and with, the real in its most intense form, to be sufficiently provided against failure in the realities around him. There was for him no "city of the mind" against outward ills, for inner consolation and shelter. It was in and from the actual he still stretched forward to find the freedom and satisfactions of an ideal, and by his very attempts to escape the world he was driven back into the thick of it. But what he would have sought there, it supplies to none; and to get the infinite out of anything so finite, has broken many a stout heart.

At the close of that last letter from Gadshill (5th of September) was this question--"What do you think of my paying for this place, by reviving that old idea of some Readings from my books. I am very strongly tempted. Think of it." The reasons against it had great force, and took, in my judgment, greater from the time at which it was again proposed. The old ground of opposition remained. It was a substitution of lower for higher aims; a change to commonplace from more elevated pursuits; and it had so much of the character of a public exhibition for money as to raise, in the question of respect for his calling as a writer, a question also of respect for himself as a gentleman. This opinion, now strongly reiterated, was referred ultimately to two distinguished ladies of his acquaintance, who decided against it. Yet not without such momentary misgiving in the direction of "the stage," as pointed strongly to the danger, which, by those who took the opposite view, was most of all thought incident to the particular time of the proposal. It might be a wild exaggeration to fear that he was in danger of being led to adopt the stage as a calling, but he was certainly about to place himself within reach of not a few of its drawbacks and disadvantages. To the full extent he perhaps did not himself know, how much his eager present wish to become a public reader was but the outcome of the restless domestic discontents of the last four years; and that to indulge it, and the unsettled habits inseparable from it, was to abandon every hope of resettling his disordered home. There is nothing, in its application to so divine a genius as Shakespeare, more affecting than his expressed dislike to a profession, which, in the jealous self-watchfulness of his noble nature, he feared might hurt his mind. The long subsequent line of actors admirable in private as in public life, and all the gentle and generous associations of the histrionic art, have not weakened the testimony of its greatest name against its less favourable influences; against the laxity of habits it may encourage; and its public manners, bred of public means, not always compatible with home felicities and duties. But, freely open as Dickens was to counsel in regard of his books, he was, for reasons formerly stated, less accessible to it on points of personal conduct; and when he had neither self-distrust nor self-denial to hold him back, he would push persistently forward to whatever object he had in view.

An occurrence of the time hastened the decision in this case. An enterprise had been set on foot for establishment of a hospital for sick children; a large old-fashioned mansion in Great Ormond-street, with spacious garden, had been fitted up with more than thirty beds; during the four or five years of its existence, outdoor and indoor relief had been afforded by it to nearly fifty thousand children, of whom thirty thousand were under five years of age; but, want of funds having threatened to arrest the merciful work, it was resolved to try a public dinner by way of charitable appeal, and for president the happy choice was made of one who had enchanted everybody with the joys and sorrows of little children. Dickens threw himself into the service heart and soul. There was a simple pathos in his address from the chair quite startling in its effect at such a meeting; and he probably never moved any audience so much as by the strong personal feeling with which he referred to the sacrifices made for the Hospital by the very poor themselves: from whom a subscription of fifty pounds, contributed in single pennies, had come to the treasurer during almost every year it had been open. The whole speech, indeed, is the best of the kind spoken by him; and two little pictures from it, one of the misery he had witnessed, the other of the

remedy he had found, should not be absent from the picture of his own life.

"Some years ago, being in Scotland, I went with one of the most humane members of the most humane of professions, on a morning tour among some of the worst lodged inhabitants of the old town of Edinburgh. In the closes and wynds of that picturesque place (I am sorry to remind you what fast friends picturesqueness and typhus often are), we saw more poverty and sickness in an hour than many people would believe in, in a life. Our way lay from one to another of the most wretched dwellings, reeking with horrible odours; shut out from the sky and from the air, mere pits and dens. In a room in one of these places, where there was an empty porridge-pot on the cold hearth, a ragged woman and some ragged children crouching on the bare ground near it,--and, I remember as I speak, where the very light, refracted from a high damp-stained wall outside, came in trembling, as if the fever which had shaken everything else had shaken even it,--there lay, in an old egg-box which the mother had begged from a shop, a little, feeble, wan, sick child. With his little wasted face, and his little hot worn hands folded over his breast, and his little bright attentive eyes, I can see him now, as I have seen him for several years, looking steadily at us. There he lay in his small frail box, which was not at all a bad emblem of the small body from which he was slowly parting--there he lay, quite quiet, quite patient, saying never a word. He seldom cried, the mother said; he seldom complained; 'he lay there, seemin' to woonder what it was a' aboot.' God knows, I thought, as I stood looking at him, he had his reasons for wondering. . . . Many a poor child, sick and neglected, I have seen since that time in London; many have I also seen most affectionately tended, in unwholesome houses and hard circumstances where recovery was impossible: but at all such times I have seen my little drooping friend in his egg-box, and he has always addressed his dumb wonder to me what it meant, and why, in the name of a gracious God, such things should be! . . . But, ladies and gentlemen," Dickens added, "such things need NOT be, and will not be, if this company, which is a drop of the life-blood of the great compassionate public heart, will only accept the means of rescue and prevention which it is mine to offer. Within a quarter of a mile of this place where I speak, stands a once courtly old house, where blooming children were born, and grew up to be men and women, and married, and brought their own blooming children back to patter up the old oak staircase which stood but the other day, and to wonder at the old oak carvings on the chimney-pieces. In the airy wards into which the old state drawing-rooms and family bedchambers of that house are now converted, are lodged such small patients that the attendant nurses look like reclaimed giantesses, and the kind medical practitioner like an amiable Christian ogre. Grouped about the little low tables in the centre of the rooms, are such tiny convalescents that they seem to be playing at having been ill. On the doll's beds are such diminutive creatures that each poor sufferer is supplied with its tray of toys: and, looking round, you may see how the little tired flushed cheek has toppled over half the brute creation on its way into the ark; or how one little dimpled arm has mowed down (as I saw myself) the whole tin soldiery of Europe. On the walls of these rooms are graceful, pleasant, bright, childish pictures. At the beds' heads, hang representations of the figure which is the universal embodiment of all mercy and compassion, the figure of Him who was once a child Himself, and a poor one. But alas! reckoning up the number of beds that are there, the visitor to this Child's Hospital will find himself perforce obliged to stop at very little over thirty; and will learn, with sorrow and surprise, that even that small number, so forlornly, so miserably diminutive compared with this vast London, cannot possibly be maintained unless the Hospital be made better known. I limit myself to saying better known, because I will not believe that in a Christian community of fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, it can fail, being better known, to be well and richly-endowed." It was a brave and true prediction. The Child's Hospital has never since known want. That night alone added greatly more than three thousand pounds to its funds, and Dickens put the crown to his good work by reading on its behalf, shortly afterwards, his Christmas Carol; when the sum realized, and the urgent demand that followed for a repetition of the pleasure given by the reading, bore

down farther opposition to the project of his engaging publicly in such readings for himself.

The Child's Hospital night was the 9th of February, its Reading was appointed for the 15th of April, and, nearly a month before, renewed efforts at remonstrance had been made. "Your view of the reading matter," Dickens replied, "I still think is unconsciously taken from your own particular point. You don't seem to me to get out of yourself in considering it. A word more upon it. You are not to think I have made up my mind. If I had, why should I not say so? I find very great difficulty in doing so because of what you urge, because I know the question to be a balance of doubts, and because I most honestly feel in my innermost heart, in this matter (as in all others for years and years), the honour of the calling by which I have always stood most conscientiously. But do you quite consider that the public exhibition of oneself takes place equally, whosoever may get the money? And have you any idea that at this moment--this very time--half the public at least supposes me to be paid? My dear F, out of the twenty or five-and-twenty letters a week that I get about Readings, twenty will ask at what price, or on what terms, it can be done. The only exceptions, in truth, are when the correspondent is a clergyman, or a banker, or the member for the place in question. Why, at this very time half Scotland believes that I am paid for going to Edinburgh!--Here is Greenock writes to me, and asks could it be done for a hundred pounds? There is Aberdeen writes, and states the capacity of its hall, and says, though far less profitable than the very large hall in Edinburgh, is it not enough to come on for? W. answers such letters continually. (--At this place, enter Beale. He called here yesterday morning, and then wrote to ask if I would see him to-day. I replied 'Yes,' so here he came in. With long preface called to know whether it was possible to arrange anything in the way of Readings for this autumn--say, six months. Large capital at command. Could produce partners, in such an enterprise, also with large capital. Represented such. Returns would be enormous. Would I name a sum? a minimum sum that I required to have, in any case? Would I look at it as a Fortune, and in no other point of view? I shook my head, and said, my tongue was tied on the subject for the present; I might be more communicative at another time. Exit Beale in confusion and disappointment.)--You will be happy to hear that at one on Friday, the Lord Provost, Dean of Guild, Magistrates, and Council of the ancient city of Edinburgh will wait (in procession) on their brother freeman, at the Music Hall, to give him hospitable welcome. Their brother freeman has been cursing their stars and his own, ever since the receipt of solemn notification to this effect." But very grateful, when it came, was the enthusiasm of the greeting, and welcome the gift of the silver wassail-bowl which followed the reading of the Carol. "I had no opportunity of asking any one's advice in Edinburgh," he wrote on his return. "The crowd was too enormous, and the excitement in it much too great. But my determination is all but taken. I must do something, or I shall wear my heart away. I can see no better thing to do that is half so hopeful in itself, or half so well suited to my restless state."

What is pointed at in those last words had been taken as a ground of objection, and thus he turned it into an argument the other way. During all these months many sorrowful misunderstandings had continued in his home, and the relief sought from the misery had but the effect of making desperate any hope of a better understanding. "It becomes necessary," he wrote at the end of March, "with a view to the arrangements that would have to be begun next month if I decided on the Readings, to consider and settle the question of the Plunge. Quite dismiss from your mind any reference whatever to present circumstances at home. Nothing can put them right, until we are all dead and buried and risen. It is not, with me, a matter of will, or trial, or sufferance, or good humour, or making the best of it, or making the worst of it, any longer. It is all despairingly over. Have no lingering hope of, or for, me in this association. A dismal failure has to be borne, and there an end. Will you then try to think of this reading project (as I do) apart from all personal likings and dislikings, and solely with a view to its effect on that peculiar relation (personally affectionate, and like no other man's) which subsists between me and the public? I want your most careful consideration. If you would like, when you have gone over it in your mind, to

discuss the matter with me and Arthur Smith (who would manage the whole of the business, which I should never touch); we will make an appointment. But I ought to add that Arthur Smith plainly says, 'Of the immense return in money, I have no doubt. Of the Dash into the new position, however, I am not so good a judge.' I enclose you a rough note of my project, as it stands in my mind."

Mr. Arthur Smith, a man possessed of many qualities that justified the confidence Dickens placed in him, might not have been a good judge of the "Dash" into the new position, but no man knew better every disadvantage incident to it, or was less likely to be disconcerted by any. His exact fitness to manage the scheme successfully, made him an unsafe counsellor respecting it. Within a week from this time the reading for the Charity was to be given. "They have let," Dickens wrote on the 9th of April, "five hundred stalls for the Hospital night; and as people come every day for more, and it is out of the question to make more, they cannot be restrained at St. Martin's Hall from taking down names for other readings." This closed the attempt at further objection. Exactly a fortnight after the reading for the children's hospital, on Thursday the 29th April, came the first public reading for his own benefit; and before the next month was over, this launch into a new life had been followed by a change in his old home. Thenceforward he and his wife lived apart. The eldest son went with his mother, Dickens at once giving effect to her expressed wish in this respect; and the other children remained with himself, their intercourse with Mrs. Dickens being left entirely to themselves. It was thus far an arrangement of a strictly private nature, and no decent person could have had excuse for regarding it in any other light, if public attention had not been unexpectedly invited to it by a printed statement in Household Words. Dickens was stung into this by some miserable gossip at which in ordinary circumstances no man would more determinedly have been silent; but he had now publicly to show himself, at stated times, as a public entertainer, and this, with his name even so aspersed, he found to be impossible. All he would concede to my strenuous resistance against such a publication, was an offer to suppress it, if, upon reference to the opinion of a certain distinguished man (still living), that opinion should prove to be in agreement with mine. Unhappily it fell in with his own, and the publication went on. It was followed by another statement, a letter subscribed with his name, which got into print without his sanction; nothing publicly being known of it (I was not among those who had read it privately) until it appeared in the New York Tribune. It had been addressed and given to Mr. Arthur Smith as an authority for correction of false rumours and scandals, and Mr. Smith had given a copy of it, with like intention, to the Tribune correspondent in London. Its writer referred to it always afterwards as his "violated letter."

The course taken by the author of this book at the time of these occurrences, will not be departed from here. Such illustration of grave defects in Dickens's character as the passage in his life affords, I have not shrunk from placing side by side with such excuses in regard to it as he had unquestionable right to claim should be put forward also. How far what remained of his story took tone or colour from it, and especially from the altered career on which at the same time he entered, will thus be sufficiently explained; and with anything else the public have nothing to do.

Volume III, Chapter 8 (1856-1870): Gadshill Place

Gadshill Place

"I WAS better pleased with Gadshill Place last Saturday," he wrote to me from Paris on the 13th of February 1856, "on going down there, even than I had prepared myself to be. The country, against every disadvantage of season, is beautiful; and the house is so old fashioned, cheerful, and comfortable, that it is really pleasant to look at. The good old Rector now there, has lived in it six and twenty years, so I have not the heart to turn him out. He is to remain till Lady-Day next year, when I shall go in, please God; make my alterations; furnish the house; and keep it for myself that summer." Returning to England through the Kentish country with Mr. Wilkie Collins in July, other advantages occurred to him. "A railroad opened from Rochester to Maidstone, which connects Gadshill at once with the whole sea coast, is certainly an addition to the place, and an enhancement of its value. Bye and bye we shall have the London, Chatham and Dover, too; and that will bring it within an hour of Canterbury and an hour and a half of Dover. I am glad to hear of your having been in the neighbourhood. There is no healthier (marshes avoided), and none in my eyes more beautiful. One of these days I shall show you some places up the Medway with which you will be charmed."

The association with his youthful fancy that first made the place attractive to him has been told; and it was with wonder he had heard one day, from his friend and fellow worker at Household Words, Mr. W. H. Wills, that not only was the house for sale to which he had so often looked wistfully, but that the lady chiefly interested as its owner had been long known and much esteemed by himself. Such curious chances led Dickens to his saying about the smallness of the world; but the close relation often found thus existing between things and persons far apart, suggests not so much the smallness of the world as the possible importance of the least things done in it, and is better explained by the grander teaching of Carlyle, that causes and effects, connecting every man and thing with every other, extend through all space and time.

It was at the close of 1855 the negociation for its purchase began. "They wouldn't," he wrote (25th of November), "take L1700 for the Gadshill property, but 'finally' wanted L1800. I have finally offered L1750. It will require an expenditure of about L300 more before yielding L100 a year." The usual discovery of course awaited him that this first estimate would have to be increased threefold. "The changes absolutely necessary" (9th of February 1856) "will take a thousand pounds; which sum I am always resolving to squeeze out of this, grind out of that, and wring out of the other; this, that, and the other generally all three declining to come up to the scratch for the purpose." "This day," he wrote on the 14th of March, "I have paid the purchase money for Gadshill Place. After drawing the cheque (L1790) I turned round to give it to Wills, and said, 'Now isn't it an extraordinary thing--look at the Day--Friday! I have been nearly drawing it half a dozen times when the lawyers have not been ready, and here it comes round upon a Friday as a matter of course.'" He had no thought at this time of reserving the place wholly for himself, or of making it his own residence except at intervals of summer. He looked upon it as an investment only. "You will hardly know Gadshill again," he wrote in January 1858, "I am improving it so much--yet I have no interest in the place." But continued ownership brought increased liking; he took more and more interest in his own improvements, which were just the kind of occasional occupation and resource his life most wanted in its next seven or eight years; and any farther idea of letting it he soon abandoned altogether. It only once passed out of his possession thus, for four months in 1859; in the following year, on the sale of Tavistock House, he transferred to it his books and pictures and choicer furniture; and thenceforward, varied only by houses taken from time to time for the London season, he made it his permanent family abode. Now and then, even during those years, he would talk of selling it; and on his

last return from America, when he had sent the last of his sons out into the world, he really might have sold it if he could then have found a house in London suitable to him, and such as he could purchase. But in this he failed; secretly to his own satisfaction, as I believe; and thereupon, in that last autumn of his life, he projected and carried out his most costly addition to Gadshill. Already of course more money had been spent upon it than his first intention in buying it would have justified. He had so enlarged the accommodation, improved the grounds and offices, and added to the land, that, taking also into account this final outlay, the reserved price placed upon the whole after his death more than quadrupled what he had given in 1856 for the house, shrubbery, and twenty years' lease of a meadow field. It was then purchased, and is now inhabited, by his eldest son.

Its position has been described, and one of the last-century-histories of Rochester quaintly mentions the principal interest of the locality. "Near the twenty-seventh stone from London is Gadshill, supposed to have been the scene of the robbery mentioned by Shakespeare in his play of Henry IV; there being reason to think also that it was Sir John Falstaff, of truly comic memory, who under the name of Oldcastle inhabited Cooling Castle of which the ruins are in the neighbourhood. A small distance to the left appears on an eminence the Hermitage the seat of the late Sir Francis Head, Bart; and close to the road, on a small ascent, is a neat building lately erected by Mr. Day. In descending Strood-hill is a fine prospect of Strood, Rochester, and Chatham, which three towns form a continued street extending above two miles in length." It had been supposed that "the neat building lately erected by Mr. Day" was that which the great novelist made famous; but Gadshill Place had no existence until eight years after the date of the history. The good rector who so long lived in it told me, in 1859, that it had been built eighty years before by a then well-known character in those parts, one Stevens, father-in-law of Henslow the Cambridge professor of botany. Stevens, who could only with much difficulty manage to write his name, had begun life as ostler at an inn; had become husband to the landlord's widow; then a brewer; and finally, as he subscribed himself on one occasion, "mare" of Rochester. Afterwards the house was inhabited by Mr. Lynn (from some of the members of whose family Dickens made his purchase); and, before the Rev. Mr. Hindle became its tenant, it was inhabited by a Macaroni parson named Townshend, whose horses the Prince Regent bought, throwing into the bargain a box of much desired cigars. Altogether the place had notable associations even apart from those which have connected it with the masterpieces of English humour. "THIS HOUSE, GADSHILL PLACE, stands on the summit of Shakespeare's Gadshill, ever memorable for its association with Sir John Falstaff in his noble fancy. But, my lads, my lads, to-morrow morning, by four o'clock, early at Gadshill! there are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings, and traders riding to London with fat purses: I have vizards for you all; you have horses for yourselves._" Illuminated by Mr. Owen Jones, and placed in a frame on the first-floor landing, these words were the greeting of the new tenant to his visitors. It was his first act of ownership.

All his improvements, it should perhaps be remarked, were not exclusively matters of choice; and to illustrate by his letters what befell at the beginning of his changes, will show what attended them to the close. His earliest difficulty was very grave. There was only one spring of water for gentlefolk and villagers, and from some of the houses or cottages it was two miles away. "We are still" (6th of July) "boring for water here, at the rate of two pounds per day for wages. The men seem to like it very much, and to be perfectly comfortable." Another of his earliest experiences (5th of September) was thus expressed: "Hop-picking is going on, and people sleep in the garden, and breathe in at the keyhole of the house door. I have been amazed, before this year, by the number of miserable lean wretches, hardly able to crawl, who go hop-picking. I find it is a superstition that the dust of the newly picked hop, falling freshly into the throat, is a cure for consumption. So the poor creatures drag themselves along the roads, and sleep under wet hedges, and get cured soon and finally." Towards the close of the same month (24th of September) he wrote: "Here are six men perpetually going up and down the well (I know that

somebody will be killed), in the course of fitting a pump; which is quite a railway terminus--it is so iron, and so big. The process is much more like putting Oxford-street endwise, and laying gas along it, than anything else. By the time it is finished, the cost of this water will be something absolutely frightful. But of course it proportionately increases the value of the property, and that's my only comfort. . . . The horse has gone lame from a sprain, the big dog has run a tenpenny nail into one of his hind feet, the bolts have all flown out of the basket-carriage, and the gardener says all the fruit trees want replacing with new ones." Another note came in three days. "I have discovered that the seven miles between Maidstone and Rochester is one of the most beautiful walks in England. Five men have been looking attentively at the pump for a week, and (I should hope) may begin to fit it in the course of October." . . .

With even such varying fortune he effected other changes. The exterior remained to the last much as it was when he used as a boy to see it first; a plain, old-fashioned, two-story, brick-built country house, with a bell-turret on the roof, and over the front door a quaint neat wooden porch with pillars and seats. But, among his additions and alterations, was a new drawing-room built out from the smaller existing one, both being thrown together ultimately; two good bedrooms built on a third floor at the back; and such rearrangement of the ground floor as, besides its handsome drawing-room, and its dining-room which he hung with pictures, transformed its bedroom into a study which he lined with books and sometimes wrote in, and changed its breakfast-parlour into a retreat fitted up for smokers into which he put a small billiard-table. These several rooms opened from a hall having in it a series of Hogarth prints, until, after the artist's death, Stanfield's noble scenes were placed there, when the Hogarths were moved to his bedroom; and in this hall, during his last absence in America, a parquet floor was laid down. Nor did he omit such changes as might increase the comfort of his servants. He built entirely new offices and stables, and replaced a very old coach-house by a capital servants' hall, transforming the loft above into a commodious school-room or study for his boys. He made at the same time an excellent croquet-ground out of a waste piece of orchard.

Belonging to the house, but unfortunately placed on the other side of the high road, was a shrubbery, well wooded though in desolate condition, in which stood two magnificent cedars; and having obtained, in 1859, the consent of the local authorities for the necessary underground work, Dickens constructed a passage beneath the road from his front lawn; and in the shrubbery thus rendered accessible, and which he then laid out very prettily, he placed afterwards a Swiss chalet presented to him by Mr. Fechter, which arrived from Paris in ninety-four pieces fitting like the joints of a puzzle, but which proved to be somewhat costly in setting on its legs by means of a foundation of brickwork. Once up, however, it was a great resource in the summer months, and much of Dickens's work was done there. "I have put five mirrors in the chalet where I write," he told an American friend, "and they reflect and refract, in all kinds of ways, the leaves that are quivering at the windows, and the great fields of waving corn, and the sail-dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees; and the birds and the butterflies fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious." He used to make great boast, too, not only of his crowds of singing birds all day, but of his nightingales at night.

One or two more extracts from letters having reference to these changes may show something of the interest to him with which Gadshill thus grew under his hands. A sun-dial on his back-lawn had a bit of historic interest about it. "One of the balustrades of the destroyed old Rochester Bridge," he wrote to his daughter in June 1859, "has been (very nicely) presented to me by the contractors for the works, and has been duly stone-masoned and set up on the lawn behind the house. I have ordered a sun-dial for the top of it, and it will be a very good object indeed." "When you come down here next month," he wrote to me, "we have an idea that we shall show you rather a neat house. What terrific adventures have been in

action; how many overladen vans were knocked up at Gravesend, and had to be dragged out of Chalk-turnpike in the dead of the night by the whole equine power of this establishment; shall be revealed at another time." That was in the autumn of 1860, when, on the sale of his London house, its contents were transferred to his country home. "I shall have an alteration or two to show you at Gadshill that greatly improve the little property; and when I get the workmen out this time, I think I'll leave off." October 1861 had now come, when the new bedrooms were built; but in the same month of 1863 he announced his transformation of the old coach-house. "I shall have a small new improvement to show you at Gads, which I think you will accept as the crowning ingenuity of the inimitable." But of course it was not over yet. "My small work and planting," he wrote in the spring of 1866, "really, truly, and positively the last, are nearly at an end in these regions, and the result will await summer inspection." No, nor even yet. He afterwards obtained, by exchange of some land with the trustees of Watts's Charity, the much coveted meadow at the back of the house of which heretofore he had the lease only; and he was then able to plant a number of young limes and chestnuts and other quick-growing trees. He had already planted a row of limes in front. He had no idea, he would say, of planting only for the benefit of posterity, but would put into the ground what he might himself enjoy the sight and shade of. He put them in two or three clumps in the meadow, and in a belt all round.

Still there were "more last words," for the limit was only to be set by his last year of life. On abandoning his notion, after the American Readings, of exchanging Gadshill for London, a new staircase was put up from the hall; a parquet floor laid on the first landing; and a conservatory built, opening into both drawing-room and dining-room, "glass and iron," as he described it, "brilliant but expensive, with foundations as of an ancient Roman work of horrible solidity." This last addition had long been an object of desire with him; though he would hardly even now have given himself the indulgence but for the golden shower from America. He saw it first in a completed state on the Sunday before his death, when his younger daughter was on a visit to him. "Well, Katey," he said to her, "now you see POSITIVELY the last improvement at Gadshill;" and every one laughed at the joke against himself. The success of the new conservatory was unquestionable. It was the remark of all around him that he was certainly, from this last of his improvements, drawing more enjoyment than from any of its predecessors, when the scene for ever closed.

Of the course of his daily life in the country there is not much to be said. Perhaps there was never a man who changed places so much and habits so little. He was always methodical and regular; and passed his life from day to day, divided for the most part between working and walking, the same wherever he was. The only exception was when special or infrequent visitors were with him. When such friends as Longfellow and his daughters, or Charles Eliot Norton and his wife, came, or when Mr. Fields brought his wife and Professor Lowell's daughter, or when he received other Americans to whom he owed special courtesy, he would compress into infinitely few days an enormous amount of sight seeing and country enjoyment, castles, cathedrals, and fortified lines, lunches and picnics among cherry orchards and hop-gardens, excursions to Canterbury or Maidstone and their beautiful neighbourhoods, Druid-stone and Blue Bell Hill. "All the neighbouring country that could be shown in so short a time," he wrote of the Longfellow visit, "they saw. I turned out a couple of postilions in the old red jackets of the old red royal Dover road for our ride, and it was like a holiday ride in England fifty years ago." For Lord Lytton he did the same, for the Emerson Tennents, for Mr. Layard and Mr. Helps, for Lady Molesworth and the Higginses (Jacob Omnium), and such other less frequent visitors.

Excepting on such particular occasions however, and not always even then, his mornings were reserved wholly to himself; and he would generally preface his morning work (such was his love of order in everything around him) by seeing that all was in its place in the several rooms, visiting also the dogs, stables, and kitchen garden, and closing, unless the weather was very bad indeed, with a turn or two

round the meadow before settling to his desk. His dogs were a great enjoyment to him; and, with his high road traversed as frequently as any in England by tramps and wayfarers of a singularly undesirable description, they were also a necessity. There were always two, of the mastiff kind, but latterly the number increased. His own favourite was Turk, a noble animal, full of affection and intelligence, whose death by a railway-accident, shortly after the Staplehurst catastrophe, caused him great grief. Turk's sole companion up to that date was Linda, puppy of a great St. Bernard brought over by Mr. Albert Smith, and grown into a superbly beautiful creature. After Turk there was an interval of an Irish dog, Sultan, given by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald; a cross between a St. Bernard and a bloodhound, built and coloured like a lioness and of splendid proportions, but of such indomitably aggressive propensities, that, after breaking his kennel-chain and nearly devouring a luckless little sister of one of the servants, he had to be killed. Dickens always protested that Sultan was a Fenian, for that no dog, not a secretly sworn member of that body, would ever have made such a point, muzzled as he was, of rushing at and bearing down with fury anything in scarlet with the remotest resemblance to a British uniform. Sultan's successor was Don, presented by Mr. Frederic Lehmann, a grand Newfoundland brought over very young, who with Linda became parent to a couple of Newfoundlands, that were still gambolling about their master, huge, though hardly out of puppydom, when they lost him. He had given to one of them the name of Bumble, from having observed, as he described it, "a peculiarly pompous and overbearing manner he had of appearing to mount guard over the yard when he was an absolute infant." Bumble was often in scrapes. Describing to Mr. Fields a drought in the summer of 1868, when their poor supply of ponds and surface wells had become waterless, he wrote: "I do not let the great dogs swim in the canal, because the people have to drink of it. But when they get into the Medway, it is hard to get them out again. The other day Bumble (the son, Newfoundland dog) got into difficulties among some floating timber, and became frightened. Don (the father) was standing by me, shaking off the wet and looking on carelessly, when all of a sudden he perceived something amiss, and went in with a bound and brought Bumble out by the ear. The scientific way in which he towed him along was charming." The description of his own reception, on his reappearance after America, by Bumble and his brother, by the big and beautiful Linda, and by his daughter Mary's handsome little Pomeranian, may be added from his letters to the same correspondent. "The two Newfoundland dogs coming to meet me, with the usual carriage and the usual driver, and beholding me coming in my usual dress out at the usual door, it struck me that their recollection of my having been absent for any unusual time was at once cancelled. They behaved (they are both young dogs) exactly in their usual manner; coming behind the basket phaeton as we trotted along, and lifting their heads to have their ears pulled, a special attention which they receive from no one else. But when I drove into the stable-yard, Linda (the St. Bernard) was greatly excited; weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great fore-paws. Mary's little dog too, Mrs. Bouncer, barked in the greatest agitation on being called down and asked by Mary, 'Who is this?' and tore round and round me like the dog in the Faust outlines." The father and mother and their two sons, four formidable-looking companions, were with him generally in his later walks.

Round Cobham, skirting the park and village and passing the Leather Bottle famous in the page of Pickwick, was a favourite walk with Dickens. By Rochester and the Medway, to the Chatham Lines, was another. He would turn out of Rochester High-street through The Vines (where some old buildings, from one of which called Restoration-house he took Satis-house for Great Expectations, had a curious attraction for him), would pass round by Fort Pitt, and coming back by Frindsbury would bring himself by some cross fields again into the high road. Or, taking the other side, he would walk through the marshes to Gravesend, return by Chalk church, and stop always to have greeting with a comical old monk who for some incomprehensible reason sits carved in stone, cross-legged with a jovial pot, over the porch of that sacred edifice. To another drearier churchyard, itself forming part of the marshes beyond the Medway,

he often took friends to show them the dozen small tombstones of various sizes adapted to the respective ages of a dozen small children of one family which he made part of his story of Great Expectations, though, with the reserves always necessary in copying nature not to overstep her modesty by copying too closely, he makes the number that appalled little Pip not more than half the reality. About the whole of this Cooling churchyard, indeed, and the neighbouring castle ruins, there was a weird strangeness that made it one of his attractive walks in the late year or winter, when from Higham he could get to it across country over the stubble fields; and, for a shorter summer walk, he was not less fond of going round the village of Shorne, and sitting on a hot afternoon in its pretty shaded churchyard. But on the whole, though Maidstone had also much that attracted him to its neighbourhood, the Cobham neighbourhood was certainly that which he had greatest pleasure in; and he would have taken oftener than he did the walk through Cobham park and woods, which was the last he enjoyed before life suddenly closed upon him, but that here he did not like his dogs to follow.

Don now has his home there with Lord Darnley, and Linda lies under one of the cedars at Gadshill.

Volume III, Chapter 9 (1858-1859): First Paid Readings

First Paid Readings

DICKENS gave his paid public Readings successively, with not long intervals, at four several dates; in 1858-9, in 1861-63, in 1866-67, and in 1868-70; the first series under Mr. Arthur Smith's management, the second under Mr. Headland's, and the third and fourth, in America as well as before and after it, under that of Mr. George Dolby, who, excepting in America, acted for the Messrs. Chappell. The references in the present chapter are to the first series only.

It began with sixteen nights at St. Martin's Hall, the first on the 29th of April, the last on the 22nd of July, 1858; and there was afterwards a provincial tour of 87 readings, beginning at Clifton on the 2nd of August, ending at Brighton on the 13th of November, and taking in Ireland and Scotland as well as the principal English cities: to which were added, in London, three Christmas readings, three in January, with two in the following month; and, in the provinces in the month of October, fourteen, beginning at Ipswich and Norwich, taking in Cambridge and Oxford, and closing with Birmingham and Cheltenham. The series had comprised altogether 125 Readings when it ended on the 27th of October, 1859; and without the touches of character and interest afforded by his letters written while thus employed, the picture of the man would not be complete.

Here was one day's work at the opening which will show something of the fatigue they involved even at their outset. "On Friday we came from Shrewsbury to Chester; saw all right for the evening; and then went to Liverpool. Came back from Liverpool and read at Chester. Left Chester at 11 at night, after the reading, and went to London. Got to Tavistock House at 5 A.M. on Saturday, left it at a quarter past 10 that morning, and came down here" (Gadshill: 15th of August 1858).

The "greatest personal affection and respect" had greeted him everywhere. Nothing could have been "more strongly marked or warmly expressed;" and the readings had "gone" quite wonderfully. What in this respect had most impressed him, at the outset of his adventures, was Exeter. "I think they were the finest audience I ever read to; I don't think I ever read in some respects so well; and I never beheld anything like the personal affection which they poured out upon me at the end. I shall always look back upon it with pleasure." He often lost his voice in these early days, having still to acquire the art of husbanding it; and in the trial to recover it would again waste its power. "I think I sang half the Irish melodies to myself as I walked about, to test it."

An audience of two thousand three hundred people (the largest he had had) greeted him at Liverpool on his way to Dublin, and, besides the tickets sold, more than two hundred pounds in money was taken at the doors. This taxed his business staff a little. "They turned away hundreds, sold all the books, rolled on the ground of my room knee-deep in checks, and made a perfect pantomime of the whole thing." (20th of August.) He had to repeat the reading thrice.

It was the first time he had seen Ireland, and Dublin greatly surprised him by appearing to be so much larger and more populous than he had supposed. He found it to have altogether an unexpectedly thriving look, being pretty nigh as big, he first thought, as Paris; of which some places in it, such as the quays on the river, reminded him. Half the first day he was there, he took to explore it; walking till tired, and then taking a car. "Power, dressed for the character of Teddy the Tiler, drove me: in a suit of patches, and with his hat unbrushed for twenty years. Wonderfully pleasant, light, intelligent, and careless." The number of common people he saw in his drive, "also riding about in cars as hard as they could split," brought to his recollection a more distant scene, and but for the dresses he could have thought himself on the Toledo at Naples.

In respect of the number of his audience, and their reception of him, Dublin was one of his marked successes. He came to have some doubt of their capacity of receiving the pathetic, but of their quickness as to the humorous there could be no question, any more than of their heartiness. He got on wonderfully well with the Dublin people. The Boots at Morrison's expressed the general feeling in a patriotic point of view. "He was waiting for me at the hotel door last night. 'Whaat sart of a hoose sur?' he asked me. 'Capital.' 'The Lard be praised fur the 'onor 'o Dooblin!'" Within the hotel, on getting up next morning, he had a dialogue with a smaller resident, landlord's son he supposed, a little boy of the ripe age of six, which he presented, in his letter to his sister-in-law, as a colloquy between Old England and Young Ireland inadequately reported for want of the "imitation" it required for its full effect. "I am sitting on the sofa, writing, and find him sitting beside me.

"Old England._ Halloa old chap.

"Young Ireland._ Hal--loo!

"Old England (in his delightful way). What a nice old fellow you are. I am very fond of little boys.

"Young Ireland._ Air yes? Ye'r right.

"Old England._ What do you learn, old fellow?

"Young Ireland (very intent on Old England, and always childish except in his brogue). I lairn wureds of three sillibils--and wureds of two sillibils--and wureds of one sillibil.

"Old England (cheerfully). Get out, you humbug! You learn only words of one syllable.

"Young Ireland (laughs heartily). You may say that it is mostly wureds of one sillibil.

"Old England._ Can you write?

"Young Ireland,_ Not yet. Things comes by deegrays.

"Old England._ Can you cipher?

"Young Ireland (very quickly). Whaat's that?

"Old England._ Can you make figures?

"Young Ireland._ I can make a nought, which is not asy, being roond.

"Old England._ I say, old boy! Wasn't it you I saw on Sunday morning in the Hall, in a soldier's cap? You know!--In a soldier's cap?

"Young Ireland (cogitating deeply). Was it a very good cap?

"Old England._ Yes.

"Young Ireland._ Did it fit ankommon?

"Old England._ Yes.

"Young Ireland._ Dat was me!"

The last night in Dublin was an extraordinary scene. "You can hardly imagine it. All the way from the hotel to the Rotunda (a mile), I had to contend against the stream of people who were turned away. When I got there, they had broken the glass in the pay-boxes, and were offering L5 freely for a stall. Half of my platform had to be taken down, and people heaped in among the ruins. You never saw such a scene." But he would not return after his other Irish engagements. "I have positively said No. The work is too hard. It is not like doing it in one easy room, and always the same room. With a different place every night, and a different audience with its own peculiarity every night, it is a tremendous strain. . . . I seem to be always either in a railway carriage or reading, or going to bed; and I get so knocked up whenever I

have a minute to remember it, that then I go to bed as a matter of course."

Belfast he liked quite as much as Dublin in another way. "A fine place with a rough people; everything looking prosperous; the railway ride from Dublin quite amazing in the order, neatness, and cleanness of all you see; every cottage looking as if it had been whitewashed the day before; and many with charming gardens, prettily kept with bright flowers." The success, too, was quite as great. "Enormous audiences. We turn away half the town. I think them a better audience on the whole than Dublin; and the personal affection is something overwhelming. I wish you and the dear girls" (he is writing to his sister-in-law) "could have seen the people look at me in the street; or heard them ask me, as I hurried to the hotel after the reading last night, to 'do me the honor to shake hands Misther Dickens and God bless you sir; not ounly for the light you've been to me this night, but for the light you've been in mee house sir (and God love your face!) this many a year!'" He had never seen men "go in to cry so undisguisedly," as they did at the Belfast Dombey reading; and as to the Boots and Mrs. Gamp "it was just one roar with me and them. For they made me laugh so, that sometimes I could not compose my face to go on." His greatest trial in this way however was a little later at Harrogate--"the queerest place, with the strangest people in it, leading the oddest lives of dancing, newspaper-reading, and tables d'hote"--where he noticed, at the same reading, embodiments respectively of the tears and laughter to which he has moved his fellow creatures so largely. "There was one gentleman at the Little Dombey yesterday morning" (he is still writing to his sister-in-law) "who exhibited--or rather concealed--the profoundest grief. After crying a good deal without hiding it, he covered his face with both his hands, and laid it down on the back of the seat before him, and really shook with emotion. He was not in mourning, but I supposed him to have lost some child in old time. . . . There was a remarkably good fellow too, of thirty or so, who found something so very ludicrous in Toots that he could not compose himself at all, but laughed until he sat wiping his eyes with his handkerchief; and whenever he felt Toots coming again, he began to laugh and wipe his eyes afresh; and when Toots came once more, he gave a kind of cry, as if it were too much for him. It was uncommonly droll, and made me laugh heartily."

At Harrogate he read twice on one day (a Saturday), and had to engage a special engine to take him back that night to York, which, having reached at one o'clock in the morning, he had to leave, because of Sunday restrictions on travel, the same morning at half-past four, to enable him to fulfil a Monday's reading at Scarborough. Such fatigues became matters of course; but their effect, not noted at the time, was grave. "At York I had a most magnificent audience, and might have filled the place for a week. . . . I think the audience possessed of a better knowledge of character than any I have seen. But I recollect Doctor Belcombe to have told me long ago that they first found out Charles Mathews's father, and to the last understood him (he used to say) better than any other people. . . . The let is enormous for next Saturday at Manchester, stalls alone four hundred! I shall soon be able to send you the list of places to the 15th of November, the end. I shall be, O most heartily glad, when that time comes! But I must say that the intelligence and warmth of the audiences are an immense sustainment, and one that always sets me up. Sometimes before I go down to read (especially when it is in the day), I am so oppressed by having to do it that I feel perfectly unequal to the task. But the people lift me out of this directly; and I find that I have quite forgotten everything but them and the book, in a quarter of an hour."

The reception that awaited him at Manchester had very special warmth in it, occasioned by an adverse tone taken in the comment of one of the Manchester daily papers on the letter which by a breach of confidence had been then recently printed. "My violated letter" Dickens always called it. "When I came to Manchester on Saturday I found seven hundred stalls taken! When I went into the room at night 2500 people had paid, and more were being turned away from every door. The welcome they gave me was astounding in its affectionate recognition of the late trouble, and fairly for once unmanned me. I never saw such a sight or heard such a sound. When they had thoroughly done it, they settled down to enjoy

themselves; and certainly did enjoy themselves most heartily to the last minute." Nor, for the rest of his English tour, in any of the towns that remained, had he reason to complain of any want of hearty greeting. At Sheffield great crowds came in excess of the places. At Leeds the hall overflowed in half an hour. At Hull the vast concourse had to be addressed by Mr. Smith on the gallery stairs, and additional Readings had to be given, day and night, "for the people out of town and for the people in town."

The net profit to himself, thus far, had been upwards of three hundred pounds a week; but this was nothing to the success in Scotland, where his profit in a week, with all expenses paid, was five hundred pounds. The pleasure was enhanced, too, by the presence of his two daughters, who had joined him over the Border. At first the look of Edinburgh was not promising. "We began with, for us, a poor room. . . . But the effect of that reading (it was the Chimes) was immense; and on the next night, for Little Dombey, we had a full room. It is our greatest triumph everywhere. Next night (Poor Traveller, Boots, and Gamp) we turned away hundreds upon hundreds of people; and last night, for the Carol, in spite of advertisements in the morning that the tickets were gone, the people had to be got in through such a crowd as rendered it a work of the utmost difficulty to keep an alley into the room. They were seated about me on the platform, put into the doorway of the waiting-room, squeezed into every conceivable place, and a multitude turned away once more. I think I am better pleased with what was done in Edinburgh than with what has been done anywhere, almost. It was so completely taken by storm, and carried in spite of itself. Mary and Katey have been infinitely pleased and interested with Edinburgh. We are just going to sit down to dinner and therefore I cut my missive short. Travelling, dinner, reading, and everything else, come crowding together into this strange life."

Then came Dundee: "An odd place," he wrote, "like Wapping with high rugged hills behind it. We had the strangest journey here--bits of sea, and bits of railroad, alternately; which carried my mind back to travelling in America. The room is an immense new one, belonging to Lord Kinnaird, and Lord Panmure, and some others of that sort. It looks something between the Crystal-palace and Westminster-hall (I can't imagine who wants it in this place), and has never been tried yet for speaking in. Quite disinterestedly of course, I hope it will succeed." The people he thought, in respect of taste and intelligence, below any other of his Scotch audiences; but they woke up surprisingly, and the rest of his Caledonian tour was a succession of triumphs. "At Aberdeen we were crammed to the street, twice in one day. At Perth (where I thought when I arrived, there literally could be nobody to come) the gentlefolk came posting in from thirty miles round, and the whole town came besides, and filled an immense hall. They were as full of perception, fire, and enthusiasm as any people I have seen. At Glasgow, where I read three evenings and one morning, we took the prodigiously large sum of six hundred pounds! And this at the Manchester prices, which are lower than St. Martin's Hall. As to the effect--I wish you could have seen them after Lilian died in the Chimes, or when Scrooge woke in the Carol and talked to the boy outside the window. And at the end of Dombey yesterday afternoon, in the cold light of day, they all got up, after a short pause, gentle and simple, and thundered and waved their hats with such astonishing heartiness and fondness that, for the first time in all my public career, they took me completely off my legs, and I saw the whole eighteen hundred of them reel to one side as if a shock from without had shaken the hall. Notwithstanding which, I must confess to you, I am very anxious to get to the end of my Readings, and to be at home again, and able to sit down and think in my own study. There has been only one thing quite without alloy. The dear girls have enjoyed themselves immensely, and their trip with me has been a great success."

The subjects of his readings during this first circuit were the Carol, the Chimes, the Trial in Pickwick, the chapters containing Paul Dombey, Boots at the Holly Tree Inn, the Poor Traveller (Captain Doubledick), and Mrs. Gamp: to which he continued to restrict himself through the supplementary nights that closed in the autumn of 1859. Of these the most successful in their uniform effect upon his audiences were

undoubtedly the Carol, the Pickwick scene, Mrs. Gamp, and the Dombey--the quickness, variety, and completeness of his assumption of character, having greatest scope in these. Here, I think, more than in the pathos or graver level passages, his strength lay; but this is entitled to no weight other than as an individual opinion, and his audiences gave him many reasons for thinking differently.

The incidents of the period covered by this chapter that had any general interest in them, claim to be mentioned briefly. At the close of 1857 he presided at the fourth anniversary of the Warehousemen and Clerks' Schools, describing and discriminating, with keenest wit and kindliest fun, the sort of schools he liked and he disliked. To the spring and summer of 1858 belongs the first collection of his writings into a succinct library form, each of the larger novels occupying two volumes. In March he paid warm public tribute to Thackeray (who had been induced to take the chair at the General Theatrical Fund) as one for whose genius he entertained the warmest admiration, who did honour to literature, and in whom literature was honoured. In May he presided at the Artists' Benevolent Fund dinner, and made striking appeal for that excellent charity. In July he took earnest part in the opening efforts on behalf of the Royal Dramatic College, which he supplemented later by a speech for the establishment of schools for actors' children; in which he took occasion to declare his belief that there were no institutions in England so socially liberal as its public schools, and that there was nowhere in the country so complete an absence of servility to mere rank, position, or riches. "A boy, there, is always what his abilities or his personal qualities make him. We may differ about the curriculum and other matters, but of the frank, free, manly, independent spirit preserved in our public schools, I apprehend there can be no kind of question." In December he was entertained at a public dinner in Coventry on the occasion of receiving, by way of thanks for help rendered to their Institute, a gold repeater of special construction by the watchmakers of the town; as to which he kept faithfully his pledge to the givers, that it should be thenceforward the inseparable companion of his workings and wanderings, and reckon off the future labours of his days until he should have done with the measurement of time. Within a day from this celebration, he presided at the Institutional Association of Lancashire and Cheshire in Manchester Free Trade Hall; gave prizes to candidates from a hundred and fourteen local mechanics' institutes affiliated to the Association; described in his most attractive language the gallant toiling fellows by whom the prizes had been won; and ended with the monition he never failed to couple with his eulogies of Knowledge, that it should follow the teaching of the Saviour, and not satisfy the understanding merely. "Knowledge has a very limited power when it informs the head only; but when it informs the heart as well, it has a power over life and death, the body and the soul, and dominates the universe."

This too was the year when Mr. Frith completed Dickens's portrait, and it appeared upon the walls of the Academy in the following spring. "I wish," said Edwin Landseer as he stood before it, "he looked less eager and busy, and not so much out of himself, or beyond himself. I should like to catch him asleep and quiet now and then." There is something in the objection, and he also would be envious at times of what he too surely knew could never be his lot. On the other hand who would willingly have lost the fruits of an activity on the whole so healthy and beneficent?

Volume III, Chapter 10 (1859-1861): All the Year Round and the Uncommercial Traveller

All the Year Round and the Uncommercial Traveller

IN the interval before the close of the first circuit of readings, painful personal disputes arising out of the occurrences of the previous year were settled by the discontinuance of Household Words, and the establishment in its place of All the Year Round. The disputes turned upon matters of feeling exclusively, and involved no charge on either side that would render any detailed reference here other than gravely out of place. The question into which the difference ultimately resolved itself was that of the respective rights of the parties as proprietors of Household Words; and this, upon a bill filed in Chancery, was settled by a winding-up order, under which the property was sold. It was bought by Dickens, who, even before the sale, exactly fulfilling a previous announcement of the proposed discontinuance of the existing periodical and establishment of another in its place, precisely similar but under a different title, had started All the Year Round. It was to be regretted perhaps that he should have thought it necessary to move at all, but he moved strictly within his rights.

To the publishers first associated with his great success in literature, Messrs. Chapman and Hall, he now returned for the issue of the remainder of his books; of which he always in future reserved the copyrights, making each the subject of such arrangement as for the time might seem to him desirable. In this he was met by no difficulty; and indeed it will be only proper to add, that, in any points affecting his relations with those concerned in the production of his books, though his resentments were easily and quickly roused, they were never very lasting. The only fair rule therefore was, in a memoir of his life, to confine the mention of such things to what was strictly necessary to explain its narrative. This accordingly has been done; and, in the several disagreements it has been necessary to advert to, I cannot charge myself with having in a single instance overstepped the rule. Objection has been made to my revival of the early differences with Mr. Bentley. But silence respecting them was incompatible with what absolutely required to be said, if the picture of Dickens in his most interesting time, at the outset of his career in letters, was not to be omitted altogether; and, suppressing everything of mere temper that gathered round the dispute, use was made of those letters only containing the young writer's urgent appeal to be absolved, rightly or wrongly, from engagements he had too precipitately entered into. Wrongly, some might say, because the law was undoubtedly on Mr. Bentley's side; but all subsequent reflection has confirmed the view I was led strongly to take at the time, that in the facts there had come to be involved what the law could not afford to overlook, and that the sale of brain-work can never be adjusted by agreement with the same exactness and certainty as that of ordinary goods and chattels. Quitting the subject once for all with this remark, it is not less incumbent on me to say that there was no stage of the dispute in which Mr. Bentley, holding as strongly the other view, might not think it to have sufficient justification; and certainly in later years there was no absence of friendly feeling on the part of Dickens to his old publisher. This already has been mentioned; and on the occasion of Hans Andersen's recent visit to Gadshill, Mr. Bentley was invited to meet the celebrated Dane. Nor should I omit to say, that, in the year to which this narrative has now arrived, his prompt compliance with an intercession made to him for a common friend pleased Dickens greatly.

At the opening of 1859, bent upon such a successor to Household Words as should carry on the associations connected with its name, Dickens was deep in search of a title to give expression to them. "My determination to settle the title arises out of my knowledge that I shall never be able to do anything for the work until it has a fixed name; also out of my observation that the same odd feeling affects

everybody else." He had proposed to himself a title that, as in Household Words, might be capable of illustration by a line from Shakespeare; and alighting upon that wherein poor Henry the Sixth is fain to solace his captivity by the fancy, that, like birds encaged he might soothe himself for loss of liberty "at last by notes of household harmony," he for the time forgot that this might hardly be accepted as a happy comment on the occurrences out of which the supposed necessity had arisen of replacing the old by a new household friend. "Don't you think," he wrote on the 24th of January, "this is a good name and quotation? I have been quite delighted to get hold of it for our title.

"HOUSEHOLD HARMONY.

"'At last by notes of Household Harmony.'--Shakespeare._"

He was at first reluctant even to admit the objection when stated to him. "I am afraid we must not be too particular about the possibility of personal references and applications: otherwise it is manifest that I never can write another book. I could not invent a story of any sort, it is quite plain, incapable of being twisted into some such nonsensical shape. It would be wholly impossible to turn one through half a dozen chapters." Of course he yielded, nevertheless; and much consideration followed over sundry other titles submitted. Reviving none of those formerly rejected, here were a few of these now rejected in their turn. THE HEARTH. THE FORGE. THE CRUCIBLE. THE ANVIL OF THE TIME. CHARLES DICKENS'S OWN. SEASONABLE LEAVES. EVERGREEN LEAVES. HOME. HOME-MUSIC. CHANGE. TIME AND TIDE. TWOPENCE. ENGLISH BELLS. WEEKLY BELLS. THE ROCKET. GOOD HUMOUR. Still the great want was the line adaptable from Shakespeare, which at last exultingly he sent on the 28th of January.

"I am dining early, before reading, and write literally with my mouth full. But I have just hit upon a name that I think really an admirable one--especially with the quotation before it, in the place where our present H. W._ quotation stands.

"'The story of our lives, from year to year.'--Shakespeare._" "ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

"A weekly journal conducted by Charles Dickens."

With the same resolution and energy other things necessary to the adventure were as promptly done. "I have taken the new office," he wrote from Tavistock House on the 21st of February; "have got workmen in; have ordered the paper; settled with the printer; and am getting an immense system of advertising ready. Blow to be struck on the 12th of March. . . . Meantime I cannot please myself with the opening of my story" (the Tale of Two Cities, which All the Year Round was to start with), "and cannot in the least settle at it or take to it. . . . I wish you would come and look at what I flatter myself is a rather ingenious account to which I have turned the Stanfield scenery here." He had placed the Lighthouse scene in a single frame; had divided the scene of the Frozen Deep into two subjects, a British man-of-war and an Arctic sea, which he had also framed; and the school-room that had been the theatre was now hung with sea-pieces by a great painter of the sea. To believe them to have been but the amusement of a few mornings was difficult indeed. Seen from the due distance there was nothing wanting to the most masterly and elaborate art.

The first number of All the Year Round appeared on the 30th of April, and the result of the first quarter's accounts of the sale will tell everything that needs to be said of a success that went on without intermission to the close. "A word before I go back to Gadshill," he wrote from Tavistock House in July, "which I know you will be glad to receive. So well has All the Year Round gone that it was yesterday able to repay me, with five per cent. interest, all the money I advanced for its establishment (paper, print &c. all paid, down to the last number), and yet to leave a good L500 balance at the banker's!" Beside the opening of his Tale of Two Cities its first number had contained another piece of his writing, the "Poor

Man and his Beer;" as to which an interesting note has been sent me. The Rev. T. B. Lawes, of Rothamsted, St. Alban's, had been associated upon a sanitary commission with Mr. Henry Austin, Dickens's brother-in-law and counsellor in regard to all such matters in his own houses, or in the houses of the poor; and this connection led to Dickens's knowledge of a club that Mr. Lawes had established at Rothamsted, which he became eager to recommend as an example to other country neighbourhoods. The club had been set on foot to enable the agricultural labourers of the parish to have their beer and pipes independent of the public-house; and the description of it, says Mr. Lawes, "was the occupation of a drive between this place (Rothamsted) and London, 25 miles, Mr. Dickens refusing the offer of a bed, and saying that he could arrange his ideas on the journey. In the course of our conversation I mentioned that the labourers were very jealous of the small tradesmen, blacksmiths and others, holding allotment-gardens; but that the latter did so indirectly by paying higher rents to the labourers for a share. This circumstance is not forgotten in the verses on the Blacksmith in the same number, composed by Mr. Dickens and repeated to me while he was walking about, and which close the mention of his gains with allusion to

"A share (concealed) in the poor man's field, Which adds to the poor man's store."

The periodical thus established was in all respects, save one, so exactly the counterpart of what it replaced, that a mention of this point of difference is the only description of it called for. Besides his own three-volume stories of The Tale of Two Cities and Great Expectations, Dickens admitted into it other stories of the same length by writers of character and name, of which the authorship was avowed. It published tales of varied merit and success by Mr. Edmund Yates, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, and Mr. Charles Lever. Mr. Wilkie Collins contributed to it his Woman in White, No Name, and Moonstone, the first of which had a pre-eminent success; Mr. Reade his Hard Cash; and Lord Lytton his Strange Story. Conferring about the latter Dickens passed a week at Knebworth, accompanied by his daughter and sister-in-law, in the summer of 1861, as soon as he had closed Great Expectations; and there met Mr. Arthur Helps, with whom and Lord Orford he visited the so-called "Hermit" near Stevenage, whom he described as Mr. Mopes in Tom Tiddler's Ground. With his great brother-artist he thoroughly enjoyed himself, as he invariably did; and reported him as "in better health and spirits than I have seen him in, in all these years,--a little weird occasionally regarding magic and spirits, but always fair and frank under opposition. He was brilliantly talkative, anecdotical, and droll; looked young and well; laughed heartily; and enjoyed with great zest some games we played. In his artist-character and talk, he was full of interest and matter, saying the subtlest and finest things--but that he never fails in. I enjoyed myself immensely, as we all did."

In All the Year Round, as in its predecessor, the tales for Christmas were of course continued, but with a surprisingly increased popularity; and Dickens never had such sale for any of his writings as for his Christmas pieces in the later periodical. It had reached, before he died, to nearly three hundred thousand. The first was called the Haunted House, and had a small mention of a true occurrence in his boyhood which is not included in the bitter record on a former page. "I was taken home, and there was debt at home as well as death, and we had a sale there. My own little bed was so superciliously looked upon by a power unknown to me hazily called The Trade, that a brass coal-scuttle, a roasting jack, and a bird cage were obliged to be put into it to make a lot of it, and then it went for a song. So I heard mentioned, and I wondered what song, and thought what a dismal song it must have been to sing!" The other subjects will have mention in another chapter.

His tales were not his only important work in All the Year Round. The detached papers written by him there had a character and completeness derived from their plan, and from the personal tone, as well as frequent individual confessions, by which their interest is enhanced, and which will always make them

specially attractive. Their title expressed a personal liking. Of all the societies, charitable or self-assisting, which his tact and eloquence in the "chair" so often helped, none had interested him by the character of its service to its members, and the perfection of its management, so much as that of the Commercial Travellers. His, admiration of their schools introduced him to one who then acted as their treasurer, and whom, of all the men he had known, I think he rated highest for the union of business qualities in an incomparable measure to a nature comprehensive enough to deal with masses of men, however differing in creed or opinion, humanely and justly. He never afterwards wanted support for any good work that he did not think first of Mr. George Moore, and appeal was never made to him in vain. "Integrity, enterprise, public spirit, and benevolence," he told the Commercial Travellers on one occasion, "had their synonym in Mr. Moore's name;" and it was another form of the same liking when he took to himself the character and title of a Traveller Uncommercial. "I am both a town traveller and a country traveller, and am always on the road. Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human-interest Brothers, and have rather a large connection in the fancy goods way. Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent-garden, London: now about the city streets; now about the country by-roads: seeing many little things, and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others." In a few words that was the plan and drift of the papers which he began in 1860, and continued to write from time to time until the last autumn of his life.

Many of them, such as "Travelling Abroad," "City Churches," "Dullborough," "Nurses' Stories," and "Birthday Celebrations," have supplied traits, chiefly of his younger days, to portions of this memoir; and parts of his later life receive illustration from others, such as "Tramps," "Night Walks," "Shy Neighbourhoods," "The Italian Prisoner," and "Chatham Dockyard." Indeed hardly any is without its personal interest or illustration. One may learn from them, among other things, what kind of treatment he resorted to for the disorder of sleeplessness from which he had often suffered amid his late anxieties. Experimenting upon it in bed, he found to be too slow and doubtful a process for him; but he very soon defeated his enemy by the brisker treatment, of getting up directly after lying down, going out, and coming home tired at sunrise. "My last special feat was turning out of bed at two, after a hard day pedestrian and otherwise, and walking thirty miles into the country to breakfast." One description he did not give in his paper, but I recollect his saying that he had seldom seen anything so striking as the way in which the wonders of an equinoctial dawn (it was the 15th of October 1857) presented themselves during that walk. He had never before happened to see night so completely at odds with morning, "which was which." Another experience of his night ramblings used to be given in vivid sketches of the restlessness of a great city, and the manner in which it also tumbles and tosses before it can get to sleep. Nor should anyone curious about his habits and ways omit to accompany him with his Tramps into Gadshill lanes; or to follow him into his Shy Neighbourhoods of the Hackney-road, Waterloo-road, Spitalfields, or Bethnal-green. For delightful observation both of country and town, for the wit that finds analogies between remote and familiar things, and for humorous personal sketches and experience, these are perfect of their kind.

"I have my eye upon a piece of Kentish road, bordered on either side by a wood, and having on one hand, between the road-dust and the trees, a skirting patch of grass. Wild flowers grow in abundance on this spot, and it lies high and airy, with a distant river stealing steadily away to the ocean, like a man's life. To gain the mile-stone here, which the moss, primroses, violets, blue-bells, and wild roses, would soon render illegible but for peering travellers pushing them aside with their sticks, you must come up a steep hill, come which way you may. So, all the tramps with carts or caravans--the Gipsy-tramp, the Show-tramp, the Cheap Jack--find it impossible to resist the temptations of the place; and all turn the horse loose when they come to it, and boil the pot. Bless the place, I love the ashes of the vagabond fires that have scorched its grass!" It was there he found Dr. Marigold, and Chops the Dwarf, and the

White-haired Lady with the pink eyes eating meat-pie with the Giant. So, too, in his Shy Neighbourhoods, when he relates his experiences of the bad company that birds are fond of, and of the effect upon domestic fowls of living in low districts, his method of handling the subject has all the charm of a discovery. "That anything born of an egg and invested with wings should have got to the pass that it hops contentedly down a ladder into a cellar, and calls that going home, is a circumstance so amazing as to leave one nothing more in this connexion to wonder at." One of his illustrations is a reduced Bantam family in the Hackney-road deriving their sole enjoyment from crowding together in a pawnbroker's side-entry; but seeming as if only newly come down in the world, and always in a feeble flutter of fear that they may be found out. He contrasts them with others. "I know a low fellow, originally of a good family from Dorking, who takes his whole establishment of wives, in single file, in at the door of the Jug Department of a disorderly tavern near the Haymarket, manoeuvres them among the company's legs, emerges with them at the Bottle Entrance, and so passes his life: seldom, in the season, going to bed before two in the morning. . . . But, the family I am best acquainted with, reside in the densest part of Bethnal-green. Their abstraction from the objects among which they live, or rather their conviction that those objects have all come into existence in express subservience to fowls, has so enchanted me, that I have made them the subject of many journeys at divers hours. After careful observation of the two lords and the ten ladies of whom this family consists, I have come to the conclusion that their opinions are represented by the leading lord and leading lady: the latter, as I judge, an aged personage, afflicted with a paucity of feather and visibility of quill that gives her the appearance of a bundle of office pens. When a railway goods-van that would crush an elephant comes round the corner, tearing over these fowls, they emerge unharmed from under the horses, perfectly satisfied that the whole rush was a passing property in the air, which may have left something to eat behind it. They look upon old shoes, wrecks of kettles and saucepans, and fragments of bonnets, as a kind of meteoric discharge, for fowls to peck at. . . . Gaslight comes quite as natural to them as any other light; and I have more than a suspicion that, in the minds of the two lords, the early public-house at the corner has superseded the sun. They always begin to crow when the public-house shutters begin to be taken down, and they salute the Potboy, the instant he appears to perform that duty, as if he were Phoebes in person." For the truth of the personal adventure in the same essay, which he tells in proof of a propensity to bad company in more refined members of the feathered race, I am myself in a position to vouch. Walking by a dirty court in Spitalfields one day, the quick little busy intelligence of a goldfinch, drawing water for himself in his cage, so attracted him that he bought the bird, which had other accomplishments; but not one of them would the little creature show off in his new abode in Doughty-street, and he drew no water but by stealth or under the cloak of night. "After an interval of futile and at length hopeless expectation, the merchant who had educated him was appealed to. The merchant was a bow-legged character, with a flat and cushiony nose, like the last new strawberry. He wore a fur cap, and shorts, and was of the velveteen race, velveteeny. He sent word that he would 'look round.' He looked round, appeared in the doorway of the room, and slightly cocked up his evil eye at the goldfinch. Instantly a raging thirst beset that bird; and when it was appeased, he still drew several unnecessary buckets of water, leaping about his perch and sharpening his bill with irrepressible satisfaction."

The Uncommercial Traveller papers, his two serial stories, and his Christmas tales, were all the contributions of any importance made by Dickens to All the Year Round; but he reprinted in it, on the completion of his first story, a short tale called "Hunted Down," written for a newspaper in America called the New York Ledger. Its subject had been taken from the life of a notorious criminal already named, and its principal claim to notice was the price paid for it. For a story not longer than half of one of the numbers of Chuzzlewit or Copperfield, he had received a thousand pounds. It was one of the indications of the eager desire which his entry on the career of a public reader had aroused in America to induce him again

to visit that continent; and at the very time he had this magnificent offer from the New York journal, Mr. Fields of Boston, who was then on a visit to Europe, was pressing him so much to go that his resolution was almost shaken. "I am now," he wrote to me from Gadshill on the 9th of July 1859, "getting the Tale of Two Cities into that state that IF I should decide to go to America late in September, I could turn to, at any time, and write on with great vigour. Mr. Fields has been down here for a day, and with the strongest intensity urges that there is no drawback, no commercial excitement or crisis, no political agitation; and that so favourable an opportunity, in all respects, might not occur again for years and years. I should be one of the most unhappy of men if I were to go, and yet I cannot help being much stirred and influenced by the golden prospect held before me."

He yielded nevertheless to other persuasion, and for that time the visit was not to be. In six months more the Civil War began, and America was closed to any such enterprise for nearly five years.

Volume III, Chapter 11 (1861-1863): Second Series of Readings

Second Series of Readings

AT the end of the first year of residence at Gadshill it was the remark of Dickens that nothing had gratified him so much as the confidence with which his poorer neighbours treated him. He had tested generally their worth and good conduct, and they had been encouraged in illness or trouble to resort to him for help. There was pleasant indication of the feeling thus awakened, when, in the summer of 1860, his younger daughter Kate was married to Charles Alston Collins, brother of the novelist, and younger son of the painter and academician, who might have found, if spared to witness that summer-morning scene, subjects not unworthy of his delightful pencil in many a rustic group near Gadshill. All the villagers had turned out in honour of Dickens, and the carriages could hardly get to and from the little church for the succession of triumphal arches they had to pass through. It was quite unexpected by him; and when the feu de joie of the blacksmith in the lane, whose enthusiasm had smuggled a couple of small cannon into his forge, exploded upon him at the return, I doubt if the shyest of men was ever so taken aback at an ovation.

To name the principal persons present that day will indicate the faces that (with addition of Miss Mary Boyle, Miss Marguerite Power, Mr. Fechter, Mr. Charles Kent, Mr. Edmund Yates, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, and members of the family of Mr. Frank Stone, whose sudden death in the preceding year had been a great grief to Dickens) were most familiar at Gadshill in these later years. Mr. Frederic Lehmann was there with his wife, whose sister, Miss Chambers, was one of the bridesmaids; Mr. and Mrs. Wills were there, and Dickens's old fast friend Mr. Thomas Beard; the two nearest country neighbours with whom the family had become very intimate, Mr. Hulkes and Mr. Malleson, with their wives, joined the party; among the others were Henry Chorley, Chauncy Townshend, and Wilkie Collins; and, for friend special to the occasion, the bridegroom had brought his old fellow-student in art, Mr. Holman Hunt. Mr. Charles Collins had himself been bred as a painter, for success in which line he had some rare gifts; but inclination and capacity led him also to literature, and, after much indecision between the two callings, he took finally to letters. His contributions to All the Year Round were among the most charming of its detached papers, and two stories published independently showed strength of wing for higher flights. But his health broke down, and his taste was too fastidious for his failing power. It is possible however that he may live by two small books of description, the New Sentimental Journey and the Cruize on Wheels, which have in them unusual delicacy and refinement of humour; and if those volumes should make any readers in another generation curious about the writer, they will learn, if correct reply is given to their inquiries, that no man disappointed so many reasonable hopes with so little fault or failure of his own, that his difficulty always was to please himself, and that an inferior mind would have been more successful in both the arts he followed. He died in 1873 in his forty-fifth year; and until then it was not known, even by those nearest to him, how great must have been the suffering which he had borne, through many trying years, with uncomplaining patience.

His daughter's marriage was the chief event that had crossed the even tenor of Dickens's life since his first paid readings closed; and it was followed by the sale of Tavistock House, with the resolve to make his future home at Gadshill. In the brief interval (29th of July) he wrote to me of his brother Alfred's death. "I was telegraphed for to Manchester on Friday night. Arrived there at a quarter past ten, but he had been dead three hours, poor fellow! He is to be buried at Highgate on Wednesday. I brought the poor young widow back with me yesterday." All that this death involved, the troubles of his change of home,

and some difficulties in working out his story, gave him more than sufficient occupation till the following spring; and as the time arrived for the new Readings, the change was a not unwelcome one.

The first portion of this second series was planned by Mr. Arthur Smith, but he only superintended the six readings in London which opened it. These were the first at St. James's Hall (St. Martin's Hall having been burnt since the last readings there) and were given in March and April 1861. "We are all well here and flourishing," he wrote to me from Gadshill on the 28th of April. "On the 18th I finished the readings as I purposed. We had between seventy and eighty pounds in the stalls, which, at four shillings apiece, is something quite unprecedented in these times. . . . The result of the six was, that, after paying a large staff of men and all other charges, and Arthur Smith's ten per cent. on the receipts, and replacing everything destroyed in the fire at St. Martin's Hall (including all our tickets, country-baggage, cheque-boxes, books, and a quantity of gas-fittings and what not), I got upwards of L500. A very great result. We certainly might have gone on through the season, but I am heartily glad to be concentrated on my story."

It had been part of his plan that the Provincial Readings should not begin until a certain interval after the close of his story of Great Expectations. They were delayed accordingly until the 28th of October, from which date, when they opened at Norwich, they went on with the Christmas intervals to be presently named to the 30th of January 1862, when they closed at Chester. Kept within England and Scotland, they took in the border town of Berwick, and, besides the Scotch cities, comprised the contrasts and varieties of Norwich and Lancaster, Bury St. Edmunds and Cheltenham, Carlisle and Hastings, Plymouth and Birmingham, Canterbury and Torquay, Preston and Ipswich, Manchester and Brighton, Colchester and Dover, Newcastle and Chester. They were followed by ten readings at the St. James's Hall, between the 13th of March and the 27th of June 1862; and by four at Paris in January 1863, given at the Embassy in aid of the British Charitable Fund. The second series had thus in the number of the readings nearly equalled the first, when it closed at London in June 1863 with thirteen readings in the Hanover Square Rooms; and it is exclusively the subject of such illustrations or references as this chapter will supply.

On Great Expectations closing in June 1861, Bulwer Lytton, at Dickens's earnest wish, took his place in All the Year Round with the "Strange Story;" and he then indulged himself in idleness for a little while. "The subsidence of those distressing pains in my face the moment I had done my work, made me resolve to do nothing in that way for some time if I could help it." But his "doing nothing" was seldom more than a figure of speech, and what it meant in this case was soon told. "Every day for two or three hours, I practise my new readings, and (except in my office work) do nothing else. With great pains I have made a continuous narrative out of Copperfield, that I think will reward the exertion it is likely to cost me. Unless I am much mistaken, it will be very valuable in London. I have also done Nicholas Nickleby at the Yorkshire school, and hope I have got something droll out of Squeers, John Browdie, & Co. Also, the Bastille prisoner from the Tale of Two Cities. Also, the Dwarf from one of our Christmas numbers." Only the first two were added to the list for the present circuit.

It was in the midst of these active preparations that painful news reached him. An illness under which Mr. Arthur Smith had been some time suffering took unexpectedly a dangerous turn, and there came to be but small chance of his recovery. A distressing interview on the 28th of September gave Dickens little hope. "And yet his wakings and wanderings so perpetually turn on his arrangements for the Readings, and he is so desperately unwilling to relinquish the idea of 'going on with the business' to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow, that I had not the heart to press him for the papers. He told me that he believed he had by him '70 or 80 letters unanswered.' You may imagine how anxious it makes me, and at what a deadstop I stand." Another week passed, and with it the time fixed at the places where his work was to have opened; but he could not bring himself to act as if all hope had gone. "With a sick man who

has been so zealous and faithful, I feel bound to be very tender and patient. When I told him the other day about my having engaged Headland--'to do all the personally bustling and fatiguing part of your work,' I said--he nodded his heavy head with great satisfaction, and faintly got out of himself the words, 'Of course I pay him, and not you.'" The poor fellow died in October; and on the day after attending the funeral, Dickens heard of the death of his brother-in-law and friend, Mr. Henry Austin, whose abilities and character he respected as much as he liked the man. He lost much in losing the judicious and safe counsel which had guided him on many public questions in which he took lively interest, and it was with a heavy heart he set out at last upon his second circuit. "With what difficulty I get myself back to the readings after all this loss and trouble, or with what unwillingness I work myself up to the mark of looking them in the face, I can hardly say. As for poor Arthur Smith at this time, it is as if my right arm were gone. It is only just now that I am able to open one of the books, and screw the text out of myself in a flat dull way. Enclosed is the list of what I have to do. You will see that I have left ten days in November for the Christmas number, and also a good Christmas margin for our meeting at Gadshill. I shall be very glad to have the money that I expect to get; but it will be earned." That November interval was also the date of the marriage of his eldest son to the daughter of Mr. Evans, so long, in connection with Mr. Bradbury, his publisher and printer.

The start of the readings at Norwich was not good, so many changes of vexation having been incident to the opening announcements as to leave some doubt of their fulfilment. But the second night, when trial was made of the Nickleby scenes, "we had a splendid hall, and I think Nickleby will top all the readings. Somehow it seems to have got in it, by accident, exactly the qualities best suited to the purpose; and it went last night, not only with roars, but with a general hilarity and pleasure that I have never seen surpassed." From this night onward, the success was uninterrupted, and here was his report to me from Brighton on the 8th of November. "We turned away half Dover and half Hastings and half Colchester; and, if you can believe such a thing, I may tell you that in round numbers we find 1000 stalls already taken here in Brighton! I left Colchester in a heavy snow-storm. To-day it is so warm here that I can hardly bear the fire, and am writing with the window open down to the ground. Last night I had a most charming audience for Copperfield, with a delicacy of perception that really made the work delightful. It is very pretty to see the girls and women generally, in the matter of Dora; and everywhere I have found that peculiar personal relation between my audience and myself on which I counted most when I entered on this enterprise. Nickleby continues to go in the wildest manner."

A storm was at this time sweeping round the coast, and while at Dover he had written of it to his sister-in-law (7th of November): "The bad weather has not in the least touched us, and the storm was most magnificent at Dover. All the great side of the Lord Warden next the sea had to be emptied, the break of the waves was so prodigious, and the noise so utterly confounding. The sea came in like a great sky of immense clouds, for ever breaking suddenly into furious rain; all kinds of wreck were washed in; among other things, a very pretty brass-bound chest being thrown about like a feather. . . . The unhappy Ostend packet, unable to get in or go back, beat about the Channel all Tuesday night, and until noon yesterday; when I saw her come in, with five men at the wheel, a picture of misery inconceivable. . . . The effect of the readings at Hastings and Dover really seems to have outdone the best usual impression; and at Dover they wouldn't go, but sat applauding like mad. The most delicate audience I have seen in any provincial place, is Canterbury" ("an intelligent and delightful response in them," he wrote to his daughter, "like the touch of a beautiful instrument"); "but the audience with the greatest sense of humour certainly is Dover. The people in the stalls set the example of laughing, in the most curiously unreserved way; and they laughed with such really cordial enjoyment, when Squeers read the boys' letters, that the contagion extended to me. For, one couldn't hear them without laughing too. . . . So, I am thankful to say, all goes well, and the recompense for the trouble is in every way Great."

From the opposite quarter of Berwick-on-Tweed he wrote again in the midst of storm. But first his mention of Newcastle, which he had also taken on his way to Edinburgh, reading two nights there, should be given. "At Newcastle, against the very heavy expenses, I made more than a hundred guineas profit. A finer audience there is not in England, and I suppose them to be a specially earnest people; for, while they can laugh till they shake the roof, they have a very unusual sympathy with what is pathetic or passionate. An extraordinary thing occurred on the second night. The room was tremendously crowded and my gas-apparatus fell down. There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew that the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her, laughing, and half-asked and half-ordered her to sit down again; and, in a moment, it was all over. But the men in attendance had such a fearful sense of what might have happened (besides the real danger of Fire) that they positively shook the boards I stood on, with their trembling, when they came up to put things right. I am proud to record that the gas-man's sentiment, as delivered afterwards, was, 'The more you want of the master, the more you'll find in him.' With which complimentary homage, and with the wind blowing so that I can hardly hear myself write, I conclude."

It was still blowing, in shape of a gale from the sea, when, an hour before the reading, he wrote from the King's Arms at Berwick-on-Tweed. "As odd and out of the way a place to be at, it appears to me, as ever was seen! And such a ridiculous room designed for me to read in! An immense Corn Exchange, made of glass and iron, round, dome-topp'd, lofty, utterly absurd for any such purpose, and full of thundering echoes; with a little lofty crow's nest of a stone gallery, breast high, deep in the wall, into which it was designed to put----me! I instantly struck, of course; and said I would either read in a room attached to this house (a very snug one, capable of holding 500 people), or not at all. Terrified local agents glowered, but fell prostrate, and my men took the primitive accommodation in hand. Ever since, I am alarmed to add, the people (who besought the honour of the visit) have been coming in numbers quite irreconcileable with the appearance of the place, and what is to be the end I do not know. It was poor Arthur Smith's principle that a town on the way paid the expenses of a long through-journey, and therefore I came." The Reading paid more than those expenses.

Enthusiastic greeting awaited him in Edinburgh. "We had in the hall exactly double what we had on the first night last time. The success of Copperfield was perfectly unexampled. Four great rounds of applause with a burst of cheering at the end, and every point taken in the finest manner." But this was nothing to what befell on the second night, when, by some mistake of the local agents, the tickets issued were out of proportion to the space available. Writing from Glasgow next day (3rd of December) he described the scene. "Such a pouring of hundreds into a place already full to the throat, such indescribable confusion, such a rending and tearing of dresses, and yet such a scene of good humour on the whole, I never saw the faintest approach to. While I addressed the crowd in the room, G addressed the crowd in the street. Fifty frantic men got up in all parts of the hall and addressed me all at once. Other frantic men made speeches to the walls. The whole B family were borne in on the top of a wave, and landed with their faces against the front of the platform. I read with the platform crammed with people. I got them to lie down upon it, and it was like some impossible tableau or gigantic pic-nic--one pretty girl in full dress, lying on her side all night, holding on to one of the legs of my table! It was the most extraordinary sight. And yet, from the moment I began to the moment of my leaving off, they never missed a point, and they ended with a burst of cheers. . . . The expenditure of lungs and spirits was (as you may suppose) rather great; and to sleep well was out of the question. I am therefore rather fagged to-day; and as the hall in which I read to-night is a large one, I must make my letter a short one. . . . My people were torn to ribbons last night. They have not a hat among them--and scarcely a coat." He came home for his Christmas rest by way of Manchester, and thus spoke of the reading there on the 14th of

December. "Copperfield in the Free Trade Hall last Saturday was really a grand scene."

He was in southern latitudes after Christmas, and on the 8th of January wrote from Torquay: "We are now in the region of small rooms, and therefore this trip will not be as profitable as the long one. I imagine the room here to be very small. Exeter I know, and that is small too. I am very much used up on the whole, for I cannot bear this moist warm climate. It would kill me very soon. And I have now got to the point of taking so much out of myself with Copperfield that I might as well do Richard Wardour. . . . This is a very pretty place--a compound of Hastings, Tunbridge Wells, and little bits of the hills about Naples; but I met four respirators as I came up from the station, and three pale curates without them who seemed in a bad way." They had been not bad omens, however. The success was good, at both Torquay and Exeter; and he closed the month, and this series of the country readings, at the great towns of Liverpool and Chester. "The beautiful St. George's Hall crowded to excess last night" (28th of January 1862) "and numbers turned away. Brilliant to see when lighted up, and for a reading simply perfect. You remember that a Liverpool audience is usually dull; but they put me on my mettle last night, for I never saw such an audience--no, not even in Edinburgh! The agents (alone, and of course without any reference to ready money at the doors) had taken for the two readings two hundred pounds." But as the end approached the fatigues had told severely on him. He described himself sleeping horribly, and with head dazed and worn by gas and heat. Rest, before he could resume at the St. James's Hall in March, was become an absolute necessity.

Two brief extracts from letters of the dates respectively of the 8th of April and the 28th of June will sufficiently describe the London readings. "The money returns have been quite astounding. Think of L190 a night! The effect of Copperfield exceeds all the expectations which its success in the country led me to form. It seems to take people entirely by surprise. If this is not new to you, I have not a word of news. The rain that raineth every day seems to have washed news away or got it under water." That was in April. In June he wrote: "I finished my readings on Friday night to an enormous hall--nearly L200. The success has been throughout complete. It seems almost suicidal to leave off with the town so full, but I don't like to depart from my public pledge. A man from Australia is in London ready to pay L10,000 for eight months there. If----" It was an If that troubled him for some time, and led to agitating discussion. The civil war having closed America, an increase made upon the just-named offer tempted him to Australia. He tried to familiarize himself with the fancy that he should thus also get new material for observation, and he went so far as to plan an Uncommercial Traveller Upside Down. It is however very doubtful if such a scheme would have been entertained for a moment, but for the unwonted difficulties of invention that were now found to beset a twenty-number story. Such a story had lately been in his mind, and he had just chosen the title for it (Our Mutual Friend); but still he halted and hesitated sorely. "If it was not," (he wrote on the 5th of October 1862) "for the hope of a gain that would make me more independent of the worst, I could not look the travel and absence and exertion in the face. I know perfectly well beforehand how unspeakably wretched I should be. But these renewed and larger offers tempt me. I can force myself to go aboard a ship, and I can force myself to do at that reading-desk what I have done a hundred times; but whether, with all this unsettled fluctuating distress in my mind, I could force an original book out of it, is another question." On the 22nd, still striving hard to find reasons to cope with the all but irresistible arguments against any such adventure, which indeed, with everything that then surrounded him, would have been little short of madness, he thus stated his experience of his two circuits of public reading. "Remember that at home here the thing has never missed fire, but invariably does more the second time than it did the first; and also that I have got so used to it, and have worked so hard at it, as to get out of it more than I ever thought was in it for that purpose. I think all the probabilities for such a country as Australia are immense." The terrible difficulty was that the home argument struck both ways. "If I were to go it would be a penance and a misery, and I dread the thought

more than I can possibly express. The domestic life of the Readings is all but intolerable to me when I am away for a few weeks at a time merely, and what would it be----." On the other hand it was also a thought of home, far beyond the mere personal loss or gain of it, that made him willing still to risk even so much misery and penance; and he had a fancy that it might be possible to take his eldest daughter with him. "It is useless and needless for me to say what the conflict in my own mind is. How painfully unwilling I am to go, and yet how painfully sensible that perhaps I ought to go--with all the hands upon my skirts that I cannot fail to feel and see there, whenever I look round. It is a struggle of no common sort, as you will suppose, you who know the circumstances of the struggler." It closed at once when he clearly saw that to take any of his family with him, and make satisfactory arrangement for the rest during such an absence, would be impossible. By this time also he began to find his way to the new story, and better hopes and spirits had returned.

In January 1863 he had taken his daughter and his sister-in-law to Paris, and he read twice at the Embassy in behalf of the British Charitable Fund, the success being such that he consented to read twice again. He passed his birthday of that year (the 7th of the following month) at Arras. "You will remember me to-day, I know. Thanks for it. An odd birthday, but I am as little out of heart as you would have me be--floored now and then, but coming up again at the call of Time. I wanted to see this town, birthplace of our amiable Sea Green" (Robespierre); "and I find a Grande Place so very remarkable and picturesque that it is astonishing how people miss it. Here too I found, in a bye-country place just near, a Fair going on, with a Religious Richardson's in it--THEATRE RELIGIEUX--'donnant six fois par jour, l'histoire de la Croix en tableaux vivants, depuis la naissance de notre Seigneur jusqu'a son sepulture. Aussi l'immolation d'Isaac, par son pere Abraham.' It was just before nightfall when I came upon it; and one of the three wise men was up to his eyes in lamp oil, hanging the moderators. A woman in blue and fleshings (whether an angel or Joseph's wife I don't know) was addressing the crowd through an enormous speaking-trumpet; and a very small boy with a property lamb (I leave you to judge who he was) was standing on his head on a barrel-organ." Returning to England by Boulogne in the same year, as he stepped into the Folkestone boat he encountered a friend, Mr. Charles Manby (for, in recording a trait of character so pleasing and honourable, it is not necessary that I should suppress the name), also passing over to England. "Taking leave of Manby was a shabby man of whom I had some remembrance, but whom I could not get into his place in my mind. Noticing when we stood out of the harbour that he was on the brink of the pier, waving his hat in a desolate manner, I said to Manby, 'Surely I know that man.'--'I should think you did,' said he: 'Hudson!' He is living--just living--at Paris, and Manby had brought him on. He said to Manby at parting, 'I shall not have a good dinner again, till you come back.' I asked Manby why he stuck to him? He said, Because he (Hudson) had so many people in his power, and had held his peace; and because he (Manby) saw so many Notabilities grand with him now, who were always grovelling for 'shares' in the days of his grandeur."

Upon Dickens's arrival in London the second series of his readings was brought to a close; and opportunity may be taken, before describing the third, to speak of the manuscript volume found among his papers, containing Memoranda for use in his writings.

Volume III, Chapter 12 (1855-1865): Hints for Books Written and Unwritten

Hints for Books Written and Unwritten

DICKENS began the Book of Memoranda for possible use in his work, to which occasional reference has been made, in January 1855, six months before the first page of Little Dorrit was written; and I find no allusion leading me to suppose, except in one very doubtful instance, that he had made addition to its entries, or been in the habit of resorting to them, after the date of Our Mutual Friend. It seems to comprise that interval of ten years in his life.

In it were put down any hints or suggestions that occurred to him. A mere piece of imagery or fancy, it might be at one time; at another the outline of a subject or a character; then a bit of description or dialogue; no order or sequence being observed in any. Titles for stories were set down too, and groups of names for the actors in them; not the least curious of the memoranda belonging to this class. More rarely, entry is made of some oddity of speech; and he has thus preserved in it, verbatim et literatim, what he declared to have been as startling a message as he ever received. A confidential servant at Tavistock House, having conferred on some proposed changes in his bed-room with the party that was to do the work, delivered this ultimatum to her master. "The gas-fitter says, sir, that he can't alter the fitting of your gas in your bed-room without taking up almost the ole of your bed-room floor, and pulling your room to pieces. He says, of course you can have it done if you wish, and he'll do it for you and make a good job of it, but he would have to destroy your room first, and go entirely under the jistes."

It is very interesting in this book, last legacy as it is of the literary remains of such a writer, to compare the way in which fancies were worked out with their beginnings entered in its pages. Those therefore will first be taken that in some form or other appeared afterwards in his writings, with such reference to the latter as may enable the reader to make comparison for himself.

"Our House. Whatever it is, it is in a first-rate situation, and a fashionable neighbourhood. (Auctioneer called it 'a gentlemanly residence.') A series of little closets squeezed up into the corner of a dark street--but a Duke's Mansion round the corner. The whole house just large enough to hold a vile smell. The air breathed in it, at the best of times, a kind of Distillation of Mews." He made it the home of the Barnacles in Little Dorrit.

What originally he meant to express by Mrs. Clennam in the same story has narrower limits, and a character less repellent, in the Memoranda than it assumed in the book. "Bed-ridden (or room-ridden) twenty--five-and-twenty--years; any length of time. As to most things, kept at a standstill all the while. Thinking of altered streets as the old streets--changed things as the unchanged things--the youth or girl I quarrelled with all those years ago, as the same youth or girl now. Brought out of doors by an unexpected exercise of my latent strength of character, and then how strange!"

One of the people of the same story who becomes a prominent actor in it, Henry Gowan, a creation on which he prided himself as forcible and new, seems to have risen to his mind in this way. "I affect to believe that I would do anything myself for a ten-pound note, and that anybody else would. I affect to be always book-keeping in every man's case, and posting up a little account of good and evil with every one. Thus the greatest rascal becomes 'the dearest old fellow,' and there is much less difference than you would be inclined to suppose between an honest man and a scoundrel. While I affect to be finding good in most men, I am in reality decrying it where it really is, and setting it up where it is not. Might not a presentation of this far from uncommon class of character, if I could put it strongly enough, be likely to

lead some men to reflect, and change a little? I think it has never been done."

In Little Dorrit also will be found a picture which seems to live with a more touching effect in his first pleasing fancy of it. "The ferryman on a peaceful river, who has been there from youth, who lives, who grows old, who does well, who does ill, who changes, who dies--the river runs six hours up and six hours down, the current sets off that point, the same allowance must be made for the drifting of the boat, the same tune is always played by the rippling water against the prow."

Here was an entry made when the thought occurred to him of the close of old Dorrit's life. "First sign of the father failing and breaking down. Cancels long interval. Begins to talk about the turnkey who first called him the Father of the Marshalsea--as if he were still living. 'Tell Bob I want to speak to him. See if he is on the Lock, my dear.'" And here was the first notion of Clennam's reverse of fortune. "His falling into difficulty, and himself imprisoned in the Marshalsea. Then she, out of all her wealth and changed station, comes back in her old dress, and devotes herself in the old way."

He seems to have designed, for the sketches of society in the same tale, a "Full-length portrait of his lordship, surrounded by worshippers;" of which, beside that brief memorandum, only his first draft of the general outline was worked at. "Sensible men enough, agreeable men enough, independent men enough in a certain way;--but the moment they begin to circle round my lord, and to shine with a borrowed light from his lordship, heaven and earth how mean and subservient! What a competition and outbidding of each other in servility."

The last of the Memoranda hints which were used in the story whose difficulties at its opening seem first to have suggested them, ran thus: "The unwieldy ship taken in tow by the snorting little steam tug"--by which was prefigured the patriarch Casby and his agent Panks.

In a few lines are the germ of the tale called Hunted Down: "Devoted to the Destruction of a man. Revenge built up on love. The secretary in the Wainewright case, who had fallen in love (or supposed he had) with the murdered girl."--The hint on which he worked in his description of the villain of that story, is also in the Memoranda. "The man with his hair parted straight up the front of his head, like an aggravating gravel-walk. Always presenting it to you. 'Up here, if you please. Neither to the right nor left. Take me exactly in this direction. Straight up here. Come off the grass--'"

His first intention as to the Tale of Two Cities was to write it upon a plan proposed in this manuscript book. "How as to a story in two periods--with a lapse of time between, like a French Drama? Titles for such a notion. TIME! THE LEAVES OF THE FOREST. SCATTERED LEAVES. THE GREAT WHEEL. ROUND AND ROUND. OLD LEAVES. LONG AGO. FAR APART. FALLEN LEAVES. FIVE AND TWENTY YEARS. YEARS AND YEARS. ROLLING YEARS. DAY AFTER DAY. FELLED TREES. MEMORY CARTON. ROLLING STONES. TWO GENERATIONS." That special title of Memory Carton shows that what led to the greatest success of the book as written was always in his mind; and another of the memoranda is this rough hint of the character itself. "The drunken?--dissipated?--What?--LION--and his JACKALL and Primer, stealing down to him at unwonted hours."

The studies of Silas Wegg and his patron as they exist in Our Mutual Friend, are hardly such good comedy as in the form which the first notion of them seems to have intended. "Gibbon's Decline and Fall. The two characters. One reporting to the other as he reads. Both getting confused as to whether it is not all going on now." In the same story may be traced, more or less clearly, other fancies which had found their first expression in the Memoranda. A touch for Bella Wilfer is here. "Buying poor shabby--FATHER?--a new hat. So incongruous that it makes him like African King Boy, or King George; who is usually full dressed when he has nothing upon him but a cocked hat or a waistcoat." Here

undoubtedly is the voice of Podsnap. "I stand by my friends and acquaintances;--not for their sakes, but because they are my friends and acquaintances. I know them, I have licensed them, they have taken out my certificate. Ergo, I champion them as myself." To the same redoubtable person another trait clearly belongs. "And by denying a thing, supposes that he altogether puts it out of existence." A third very perfectly expresses the boy, ready for mischief, who does all the work there is to be done in Eugene Wrayburn's place of business. "The office boy for ever looking out of window, who never has anything to do."

The poor wayward purposeless good-hearted master of the boy, Eugene himself, is as evidently in this: "If they were great things, I, the untrustworthy man in little things, would do them earnestly--But O No, I wouldn't!" What follows has a more direct reference; being indeed almost literally copied in the story. "As to the question whether I, Eugene, lying ill and sick even unto death, may be consoled by the representation that coming through this illness, I shall begin a new life, and have energy and purpose and all I have yet wanted: 'I hope I should, but I know I shouldn't. Let me die, my dear.'"

In connection with the same book, the last in that form which he lived to complete, another fancy may be copied from which, though not otherwise worked out in the tale, the relation of Lizzie Hexam to her brother was taken. "A man, and his wife--or daughter--or niece. The man, a reprobate and ruffian; the woman (or girl) with good in her, and with compunctions. He believes nothing, and defies everything; yet has suspicions always, that she is 'praying against' his evil schemes, and making them go wrong. He is very much opposed to this, and is always angrily harping on it. 'If she must pray, why can't she pray in their favour, instead of going against 'em? She's always ruining me--she always is--and calls that, Duty! There's a religious person! Calls it Duty to fly in my face! Calls it Duty to go sneaking against me!'"

Other fancies preserved in his Memoranda were left wholly unemployed, receiving from him no more permanent form of any kind than that which they have in this touching record; and what most people would probably think the most attractive and original of all the thoughts he had thus set down for future use, are those that were never used.

Here were his first rough notes for the opening of a story. "Beginning with the breaking up of a large party of guests at a country house: house left lonely with the shrunken family in it: guests spoken of, and introduced to the reader that way.--OR, beginning with a house abandoned by a family fallen into reduced circumstances. Their old furniture there, and numberless tokens of their old comforts. Inscriptions under the bells downstairs--'Mr. John's Room,' 'Miss Caroline's Room.' Great gardens trimly kept to attract a tenant: but no one in them. A landscape without figures. Billiard room: table covered up, like a body. Great stables without horses, and great coach-houses without carriages. Grass growing in the chinks of the stone-paving, this bright cold winter day. Downhills._" Another opening had also suggested itself to him. "Open a story by bringing two strongly contrasted places and strongly contrasted sets of people, into the connexion necessary for the story, by means of an electric message. Describe the message--be the message--flashing along through space, over the earth, and under the sea." Connected with which in some way would seem to be this other notion, following it in the Memoranda. "Representing London--or Paris, or any other great place--in the new light of being actually unknown to all the people in the story, and only taking the colour of their fears and fancies and opinions. So getting a new aspect, and being unlike itself. An odd unlikeness of itself."

The subjects for stories are various, and some are striking. There was one he clung to much, and thought of frequently as in a special degree available for a series of papers in his periodical; but when he came to close quarters with it the difficulties were found to be too great. "English landscape. The beautiful prospect, trim fields, clipped hedges, everything so neat and orderly--gardens, houses, roads. Where are the people who do all this? There must be a great many of them, to do it. Where are they all?

And are they, too, so well kept and so fair to see? Suppose the foregoing to be wrought out by an Englishman: say, from China: who knows nothing about his native country." To which may be added a fancy that savours of the same mood of discontent, political and social. "How do I know that I, a man, am to learn from insects--unless it is to learn how little my littlenesses are? All that botheration in the hive about the queen bee, may be, in little, me and the court circular."

A domestic story he had met with in the State Trials struck him greatly by its capabilities, and I may preface it by mentioning another subject, not entered in the Memoranda, which for a long time impressed him as capable of attractive treatment. It was after reading one of the witch-trials that this occurred to him; and the heroine was to be a girl who for a special purpose had taken a witch's disguise, and whose trick was not discovered until she was actually at the stake. Here is the State Trials story as told by Dickens. "There is a case in the State Trials, where a certain officer made love to a (supposed) miser's daughter, and ultimately induced her to give her father slow poison, while nursing him in sickness. Her father discovered it, told her so, forgave her, and said 'Be patient my dear--I shall not live long, even if I recover: and then you shall have all my wealth.' Though penitent then, she afterwards poisoned him again (under the same influence), and successfully. Whereupon it appeared that the old man had no money at all, and had lived on a small annuity which died with him, though always feigning to be rich. He had loved this daughter with great affection."

A theme touching closely on ground that some might think dangerous, is sketched in the following fancy. "The father (married young) who, in perfect innocence, venerates his son's young wife, as the realization of his ideal of woman. (He not happy in his own choice.) The son slights her, and knows nothing of her worth. The father watches her, protects her, labours for her, endures for her,--is for ever divided between his strong natural affection for his son as his son, and his resentment against him as this young creature's husband." Here is another, less dangerous, which he took from an actual occurrence made known to him when he was at Bonchurch. "The idea of my being brought up by my mother (me the narrator), my father being dead; and growing up in this belief until I find that my father is the gentleman I have sometimes seen, and oftener heard of, who has the handsome young wife, and the dog I once took notice of when I was a little child, and who lives in the great house and drives about."

Very admirable is this. "The girl separating herself from the lover who has shewn himself unworthy--loving him still--living single for his sake--but never more renewing their old relations. Coming to him when they are both grown old, and nursing him in his last illness." Nor is the following less so. "Two girls mis-marrying two men. The man who has evil in him, dragging the superior woman down. The man who has good in him, raising the inferior woman up." Dickens would have been at his best in working out both fancies.

In some of the most amusing of his sketches of character, women also take the lead. "The lady un peu passee, who is determined to be interesting. No matter how much I love that person--nay, the more so for that very reason--I MUST flatter, and bother, and be weak and apprehensive and nervous, and what not. If I were well and strong, agreeable and self-denying, my friend might forget me." Another not remotely belonging to the same family is as neatly hit off. "The sentimental woman feels that the comic, undesigning, unconscious man, is 'Her Fate.'--I her fate? God bless my soul, it puts me into a cold perspiration to think of it. I her fate? How can I be her fate? I don't mean to be. I don't want to have anything to do with her--Sentimental woman perceives nevertheless that Destiny must be accomplished."

Other portions of a female group are as humorously sketched and hardly less entertaining. "The enthusiastically complimentary person, who forgets you in her own flowery prosiness: as--'I have no need to say to a person of your genius and feeling, and wide range of experience'--and then, being shortsighted, puts up her glass to remember who you are."--"Two sisters" (these were real people known

to him). "One going in for being generally beloved (which she is not by any means); and the other for being generally hated (which she needn't be)."--"The bequeathed maid-servant, or friend. Left as a legacy. And a devil of a legacy too."--"The woman who is never on any account to hear of anything shocking. For whom the world is to be of barley-sugar."--"The lady who lives on her enthusiasm; and hasn't a jot."--"Bright-eyed creature selling jewels. The stones and the eyes." Much significance is in the last few words. One may see to what uses Dickens would have turned them.

A more troubled note is sounded in another of these female characters. "I am a common woman--fallen. Is it devilry in me--is it a wicked comfort--what is it--that induces me to be always tempting other women down, while I hate myself!" This next, with as much truth in it, goes deeper than the last. "The prostitute who will not let one certain youth approach her. 'O let there be some one in the world, who having an inclination towards me has not gratified it, and has not known me in my degradation!' She almost loving him.--Suppose, too, this touch in her could not be believed in by his mother or mistress: by some handsome and proudly virtuous woman, always revolting from her." A more agreeable sketch than either follows, though it would not please M. Taine so well. "The little baby-like married woman--so strange in her new dignity, and talking with tears in her eyes, of her sisters 'and all of them' at home. Never from home before, and never going back again." Another from the same manuscript volume not less attractive, which was sketched in his own home, I gave upon a former page.

The female character in its relations with the opposite sex has lively illustration in the Memoranda. "The man who is governed by his wife, and is heartily despised in consequence by all other wives; who still want to govern their husbands, notwithstanding." An alarming family pair follows that. "The playful--and scratching--family. Father and daughter." And here is another. "The agreeable (and wicked) young-mature man, and his devoted sister." What next was set down he had himself partly seen; and, by enquiry at the hospital named, had ascertained the truth of the rest. "The two people in the Incurable Hospital.--The poor incurable girl lying on a water-bed, and the incurable man who has a strange flirtation with her; comes and makes confidences to her; snips and arranges her plants; and rehearses to her the comic songs(!) by writing which he materially helps out his living."

Two lighter figures are very pleasantly touched. "Set of circumstances which suddenly bring an easy, airy fellow into near relations with people he knows nothing about, and has never even seen. This, through his being thrown in the way of the innocent young personage of the story. 'Then there is Uncle Sam to be considered,' says she. 'Aye to be sure,' says he, 'so there is! By Jupiter, I forgot Uncle Sam. He's a rock ahead, is Uncle Sam. He must be considered, of course; he must be smoothed down; he must be cleared out of the way. To be sure. I never thought of Uncle Sam.--By the bye, who is Uncle Sam?'"

There are several such sketches as that, to set against the groups of women; and some have Dickens's favourite vein of satire in them. "The man whose vista is always stopped up by the image of Himself. Looks down a long walk, and can't see round himself, or over himself, or beyond himself. Is always blocking up his own way. Would be such a good thing for him, if he could knock himself down." Another picture of selfishness is touched with greater delicacy. "'Too good' to be grateful to, or dutiful to, or anything else that ought to be. 'I won't thank you: you are too good.'--'Don't ask me to marry you: you are too good.'--In short, I don't particularly mind ill-using you, and being selfish with you: for you are so good. Virtue its own reward!" A third, which seems to reverse the dial, is but another face of it: frankly avowing faults, which are virtues. "In effect--I admit I am generous, amiable, gentle, magnanimous. Reproach me--I deserve it--I know my faults--I have striven in vain to get the better of them." Dickens would have made much, too, of the working out of the next. "The knowing man in distress, who borrows a round sum of a generous friend. Comes, in depression and tears, dines, gets the money, and gradually cheers up over his wine, as he obviously entertains himself with the reflection that his friend is an egregious fool to

have lent it to him, and that he would have known better." And so of this other. "The man who invariably says apposite things (in the way of reproof or sarcasm) THAT HE DON'T MEAN. Astonished when they are explained to him."

Here is a fancy that I remember him to have been more than once bent upon making use of: but the opportunity never came. "The two men to be guarded against, as to their revenge. One, whom I openly hold in some serious animosity, whom I am at the pains to wound and defy, and whom I estimate as worth wounding and defying;--the other, whom I treat as a sort of insect, and contemptuously and pleasantly flick aside with my glove. But, it turns out to be the latter who is the really dangerous man; and, when I expect the blow from the other, it comes from him."

We have the master hand in the following bit of dialogue, which takes wider application than that for which it appears to have been intended.

"'There is some virtue in him too.'

"'Virtue! Yes. So there is in any grain of seed in a seedsman's shop--but you must put it in the ground, before you can get any good out of it.'

"'Do you mean that he must be put in the ground before any good comes of him?'

"'Indeed I do. You may call it burying him, or you may call it sowing him, as you like. You must set him in the earth, before you get any good of him.'"

One of the entries is a list of persons and places meant to have been made subjects for special description, and it will awaken regret that only as to one of them (the Mugby Refreshments) his intention was fulfilled. "A Vestryman. A Briber. A Station Waiting-Room. Refreshments at Mugby. A Physician's Waiting-Room. The Royal Academy. An Antiquary's house. A Sale Room. A Picture Gallery (for sale). A Waste-paper Shop. A Post-Office. A Theatre."

All will have been given that have particular interest or value, from this remarkable volume, when the thoughts and fancies I proceed to transcribe have been put before the reader.

"The man who is incapable of his own happiness. Or who is always in pursuit of happiness. Result, Where is happiness to be found then? Surely not Everywhere? Can that be so, after all? Is this my experience?"

"The people who persist in defining and analysing their (and everybody else's) moral qualities, motives and what not, at once in the narrowest spirit and the most lumbering manner;--as if one should put up an enormous scaffolding for the building of a pigstye."

"The house-full of Toadies and Humbugs. They all know and despise one another; but--partly to keep their hands in, and partly to make out their own individual cases--pretend not to detect one another."

"People realising immense sums of money, imaginatively--speculatively--counting their chickens before hatched. Inflaming each other's imaginations about great gains of money, and entering into a sort of intangible, impossible, competition as to who is the richer."

"The advertising sage, philosopher, and friend: who educates 'for the bar, the pulpit, or the stage.'"

"The character of the real refugee--not the conventional; the real."

"The mysterious character, or characters, interchanging confidences. 'Necessary to be very careful in that direction.'--'In what direction?'--'B'--'You don't say so. What, do you mean that C----?'--'Is aware of D. Exactly.'"

"The father and boy, as I dramatically see them. Opening with the wild dance I have in my mind."

"The old child. That is to say, born of parents advanced in life, and observing the parents of other

children to be young. Taking an old tone accordingly."

"A thoroughly sulky character--perverting everything. Making the good, bad--and the bad, good."

"The people who lay all their sins negligences and ignorances, on Providence."

"The man who marries his cook at last, after being so desperately knowing about the sex."

"The swell establishment, frightfully mean and miserable in all but the 'reception rooms.' Those very showy."

"B. tells M. what my opinion is of his work, &c. Quoting the man you have once spoken to as if he had talked a life's talk in two minutes."

"A misplaced and mis-married man; always, as it were, playing hide and seek with the world; and never finding what Fortune seems to have hidden when he was born."

"Certain women in Africa who have lost children, carry little wooden images of children on their heads, and always put their food to the lips of those images, before tasting it themselves. This is in a part of Africa where the mortality among children (judging from the number of these little memorials) is very great."

Two more entries are the last which he made. "AVAILABLE NAMES" introduces a wonderful list in the exact following classes and order; as to which the reader may be left to his own memory for selection of such as found their way into the several stories from Little Dorrit to the end. The rest, not lifted into that higher notice by such favour of their creator, must remain like any other undistinguished crowd. But among them may perhaps be detected, by those who have special insight for the physiognomy of a name, some few with so great promise in them of fun and character as will make the "mute inglorious" fate which has befallen them a subject for special regret; and much ingenious speculation will probably wait upon all. Dickens has generally been thought, by the curious, to display not a few of his most characteristic traits in this particular field of invention.

First there are titles for books; and from the list subjoined were taken two for Christmas numbers and two for stories, though Nobody's Fault had ultimately to give way to Little Dorrit.

"THE LUMBER ROOM. SOMEBODY'S LUGGAGE. TO BE LEFT TILL CALLED FOR. SOMETHING WANTED. EXTREMES MEET. NOBODY'S FAULT. THE GRINDSTONE. ROKESMITH'S FORGE. OUR MUTUAL FRIEND. THE CINDER HEAP. TWO GENERATIONS. BROKEN CROCKERY. DUST. THE HOME DEPARTMENT. THE YOUNG PERSON. NOW OR NEVER. MY NEIGHBOURS. THE CHILDREN OF THE FATHERS. NO THOROUGHFARE."

Then comes a batch of "Christian names": Girls and Boys: which stand thus, with mention of the source from which he obtained them. These therefore can hardly be called pure invention. Some would have been reckoned too extravagant for anything but reality.

"Girls from Privy Council Education lists._

"LELIA. MENELLA. RUBINA. IRIS. REBECCA. ETTY. REBINAH. SEBA. PERSIA. ARAMANDA. DORIS. BALZINA. PLEASANT. GENTILLA.

"Boys from Privy Council Education lists._

"DOCTOR. HOMER. ODEN. BRADLEY. ZERUBBABEL. MAXIMILIAN. URBIN. SAMILIAS. PICKLES. ORANGE. FEATHER.

"Girls and Boys from Ditto._

"AMANDA, ETHLYNIDA; BOETIUS, BOLTIUS."

To which he adds supplementary lists that appear to be his own.

"More Boys._

"ROBERT LADLE. JOLY STICK. BILL MARIGOLD. STEPHEN MARQUICK. JONATHAN KNOTWELL. PHILIP BROWNDRESS. HENRY GHOST. GEORGE MUZZLE. WALTER ASHES. ZEPHANIAH FERRY (or FURY). WILLIAM WHY. ROBERT GOSPEL. THOMAS FATHERLY. ROBIN SCUBBAM.

"More Girls._

"SARAH GOLDSACKS. ROSETTA DUST. SUSAN GOLDRING. CATHERINE TWO. MATILDA RAINBIRD. MIRIAM DENIAL. SOPHIA DOOMSDAY. ALICE THORNEYWORK. SALLY GIMBLET. VERITY HAWKYARD. BIRDIE NASH. AMBROSINA EVENTS. APAULINA VERNON. NELTIE ASHFORD."

And then come the mass of his "available names," which stand thus, without other introduction or comment:

"TOWNDLING. MOOD. GUFF. TREBLE. CHILBY. SPESSIFER. WODDER. WHELPFORD. FENNERCK. GANNERSON. CHINKERBLE. BINTREY. FLEDSON. HIRLL. BRAYLE. MULLENDER. TRESLINGHAM. BRANKLE. SITTERN. DOSTONE. CAY-LON. SLYANT. QUEEDY. BESSELTHUR. MUSTY. GROUT. TERTIUS JOBBER. AMON HEADSTON. STRAYSHOTT. HIGDEN. MORFIT. GOLDSTRAW. BARREL. INGE. JUMP. JIGGINS. BONES. COY. DAWN. TATKIN. DROWVEY. PUDSEY. PEDSEY. DUNCALF. TRICKLEBANK. SAPSEA. READYHUFF. DUFTY. FOGGY. TWINN. BROWNSWORD. PEARTREE. SUDDS. SILVERMAN. KIMBER. LAUGHLEY. LESSOCK. TIPPINS. MINNITT. RADLOWE. PRATCHET. MAWDETT. WOZENHAM. SNOWELL. LOTTRUM. LAMMLE. FROSER. HOLBLACK. MULLEY. REDWORTH. REDFOOT. TARBOX (B). TINKLING. DUDDLE. JEBUS. POWDERHILL. GRIMMER. SKUSE. TITCOOMBE. CRABBLE. SWANNOCK. TUZZEN. TWEMLOW. SQUAB. JACKMAN. SUGG. BREMMIDGE. SILAS BLODGET. MELVIN BEAL. BUTTRICK. EDSON. SANLORN. LIGHTWORD. TITBULL. BANGHAM. KYLE--NYLE. PEMBLE. MAXEY. ROKESMITH. CHIVERY. WABBLER. PEEX--SPEEX. GANNAWAY. MRS. FLINKS. FLINX. JEE. HARDEN. MERDLE. MURDEN. TOPWASH. PORDAGE. DORRET--DORRIT. CARTON. MINIFIE. SLINGO. JOAD. KINCH. MAG. CHELLYSON. BLENNAM--CL. BARDOCK. SNIGSWORTH. SWENTON. CASBY--PEACH. LOWLEIGH--LOWELY. PIGRIN. YERBURY. PLORNISH. MAROON. BANDY-NANDY. STONEBURY. MAGWITCH. MEAGLES. PANCKS. HAGGAGE. PROVIS. STILTINGTON. STILTWALK. STILTINGSTALK. STILTSTALKING. RAVENDER. PODSNAP. CLARRIKER. COMPERY. STRIVER-STRYVER. PUMBLECHOOK. WANGLER. BOFFIN. BANTINCK. DIBTON. WILFER. GLIBBERY. MULVEY. HORLICK. DOOLGE. GANNERY. GARGERY. WILLSHARD. RIDERHOOD. PRATTERSTONE. CHINKIBLE. WOPSELL. WOPSLE. WHELPINGTON. WHELPFORD. GAYVERY. WEGG. HUBBLE. URRY. KIBBLE. SKIFFINS. WODDER. ETSER. AKERSHEM."

The last of the Memoranda, and the last words written by Dickens in the blank paper book containing them, are these. "'Then I'll give up snuff.' Brobity.--An alarming sacrifice. Mr. Brobity's snuff-box. The Pawnbroker's account of it?" What was proposed by this must be left to conjecture; but "Brobity" is the name of one of the people in his unfinished story, and the suggestion may have been meant for some incident in it. If so, it is the only passage in the volume which can be in any way connected with the piece of writing on which he was last engaged. Some names were taken for it from the lists, but there is otherwise nothing to recall Edwin Drood.

Volume III, Chapter 13 (1864-1867): Third Series of Readings

Third Series of Readings

THE sudden death of Thackeray on the Christmas eve of 1863 was a painful shock to Dickens. It would not become me to speak, when he has himself spoken, of his relations with so great a writer and so old a friend.

"I saw him first, nearly twenty-eight years ago, when he proposed to become the illustrator of my earliest book. I saw him last, shortly before Christmas, at the Athenaeum Club, when he told me that he had been in bed three days . . . and that he had it in his mind to try a new remedy which he laughingly described. He was cheerful, and looked very bright. In the night of that day week, he died. The long interval between these two periods is marked in my remembrance of him by many occasions when he was extremely humorous, when he was irresistibly extravagant, when he was softened and serious, when he was charming with children. . . . No one can be surer than I, of the greatness and goodness of his heart. . . . In no place should I take it upon myself at this time to discourse of his books, of his refined knowledge of character, of his subtle acquaintance with the weaknesses of human nature, of his delightful playfulness as an essayist, of his quaint and touching ballads, of his mastery over the English language. . . . But before me lies all that he had written of his latest story . . . and the pain I have felt in perusing it has not been deeper than the conviction that he was in the healthiest vigour of his powers when he worked on this last labour. . . . The last words he corrected in print were 'And my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss.' God grant that on that Christmas Eve when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he had been wont to do when very weary, some consciousness of duty done, and of Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart so to throb, when he passed away to his Redeemer's rest. He was found peacefully lying as above described, composed, undisturbed, and to all appearance asleep."

Other griefs were with Dickens at this time, and close upon them came the too certain evidence that his own health was yielding to the overstrain which had been placed upon it by the occurrences and anxieties of the few preceding years. His mother, whose infirm health had been tending for more than two years to the close, died in September 1863; and on his own birthday in the following February he had tidings of the death of his second son Walter, on the last day of the old year in the officers' hospital at Calcutta; to which he had been sent up invalided from his station, on his way home. He was a lieutenant in the 26th Native Infantry regiment, and had been doing duty with the 42nd Highlanders. In 1853 his father had thus written to the youth's godfather, Walter Savage Landor: "Walter is a very good boy, and comes home from school with honorable commendation and a prize into the bargain. He never gets into trouble, for he is a great favourite with the whole house and one of the most amiable boys in the boy-world. He comes out on birthdays in a blaze of shirt pin." The pin was a present from Landor; to whom three years later, when the boy had obtained his cadetship through the kindness of Miss Coutts, Dickens wrote again. "Walter has done extremely well at school; has brought home a prize in triumph; and will be eligible to 'go up' for his India examination soon after next Easter. Having a direct appointment he will probably be sent out soon after he has passed, and so will fall into that strange life 'up the country' before he well knows he is alive, or what life is--which indeed seems to be rather an advanced state of knowledge." If he had lived another month he would have reached his twenty-third year, and perhaps not then the advanced state of knowledge his father speaks of. But, never forfeiting his claim to those kindly paternal words, he had the goodness and simplicity of boyhood to the last.

Dickens had at this time begun his last story in twenty numbers, and my next chapter will show through what unwonted troubles, in this and the following year, he had to fight his way. What otherwise during its

progress chiefly interested him, was the enterprise of Mr. Fechter at the Lyceum, of which he had become the lessee; and Dickens was moved to this quite as much by generous sympathy with the difficulties of such a position to an artist who was not an Englishman, as by genuine admiration of Mr. Fechter's acting. He became his helper in disputes, adviser on literary points, referee in matters of management; and for some years no face was more familiar than the French comedian's at Gadshill or in the office of his journal. But theatres and their affairs are things of a season, and even Dickens's whim and humour will not revive for us any interest in these. No bad example, however, of the difficulties in which a French actor may find himself with English playwrights, will appear in a few amusing words from one of his letters about a piece played at the Princess's before the Lyceum management was taken in hand.

"I have been cautioning Fechter about the play whereof he gave the plot and scenes to B; and out of which I have struck some enormities, my account of which will (I think) amuse you. It has one of the best first acts I ever saw; but if he can do much with the last two, not to say three, there are resources in his art that I know nothing about. When I went over the play this day week, he was at least 20 minutes, in a boat, in the last scene, discussing with another gentleman (also in the boat) whether he should kill him or not; after which the gentleman dived overboard and swam for it. Also, in the most important and dangerous parts of the play, there was a young person of the name of Pickles who was constantly being mentioned by name, in conjunction with the powers of light or darkness; as, 'Great Heaven! Pickles?'--'By Hell, 'tis Pickles!'--'Pickles? a thousand Devils!'--'Distraction! Pickles?'"

The old year ended and the new one opened sadly enough. The death of Leech in November affected Dickens very much, and a severe attack of illness in February put a broad mark between his past life and what remained to him of the future. The lameness now began in his left foot which never afterwards wholly left him, which was attended by great suffering, and which baffled experienced physicians. He had persisted in his ordinary exercise during heavy snow-storms, and to the last he had the fancy that his illness was merely local. But that this was an error is now certain; and it is more than probable that if the nervous danger and disturbance it implied had been correctly appreciated at the time, its warning might have been of priceless value to Dickens. Unhappily he never thought of husbanding his strength except for the purpose of making fresh demands upon it, and it was for this he took a brief holiday in France during the summer. "Before I went away," he wrote to his daughter, "I had certainly worked myself into a damaged state. But the moment I got away, I began, thank God, to get well. I hope to profit by this experience, and to make future dashes from my desk before I want them." At his return he was in the terrible railway accident at Staplehurst, on a day which proved afterwards more fatal to him; and it was with shaken nerves but unsubdued energy he resumed the labour to be presently described. His foot troubled him more or less throughout the autumn; he was beset by nervous apprehensions which the accident had caused to himself, not lessened by his generous anxiety to assuage the severer sufferings inflicted by it on others; and that he should nevertheless have determined, on the close of his book, to undertake a series of readings involving greater strain and fatigue than any hitherto, was a startling circumstance. He had perhaps become conscious, without owning it even to himself, that for exertion of this kind the time left him was short; but, whatever pressed him on, his task of the next three years, self-imposed, was to make the most money in the shortest time without any regard to the physical labour to be undergone. The very letter announcing his new engagement shows how entirely unfit he was to enter upon it.

"For some time," he wrote at the end of February 1866, "I have been very unwell. F. B. wrote me word that with such a pulse as I described, an examination of the heart was absolutely necessary. 'Want of muscular power in the heart,' B said. 'Only remarkable irritability of the heart,' said Doctor Brinton of Brook-street, who had been called in to consultation. I was not disconcerted; for I knew well beforehand

that the effect could not possibly be without the one cause at the bottom of it, of some degeneration of some function of the heart. Of course I am not so foolish as to suppose that all my work can have been achieved without some penalty, and I have noticed for some time a decided change in my buoyancy and hopefulness--in other words, in my usual 'tone.' But tonics have already brought me round. So I have accepted an offer, from Chappells of Bond-street, of L50 a night for thirty nights to read 'in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Paris;' they undertaking all the business, paying all personal expenses, travelling and otherwise, of myself, John" (his office servant), "and my gasman; and making what they can of it. I begin, I believe, in Liverpool on the Thursday in Easter week, and then come to London. I am going to read at Cheltenham (on my own account) on the 23rd and 24th of this month, staying with Macready of course."

The arrangement of this series of Readings differed from those of its predecessors in relieving Dickens from every anxiety except of the reading itself; but, by such rapid and repeated change of nights at distant places as kept him almost wholly in a railway carriage when not at the reading-desk or in bed, it added enormously to the physical fatigue. He would read at St. James's Hall in London one night, and at Bradford the next. He would read in Edinburgh, go on to Glasgow and to Aberdeen, then come back to Glasgow, read again in Edinburgh, strike off to Manchester, come back to St. James's Hall once more, and begin the same round again. It was labour that must in time have broken down the strongest man, and what Dickens was when he assumed it we have seen.

He did not himself admit a shadow of misgiving. "As to the readings" (11th of March), "all I have to do is, to take in my book and read, at the appointed place and hour, and come out again. All the business of every kind, is done by Chappells. They take John and my other man, merely for my convenience. I have no more to do with any detail whatever, than you have. They transact all the business at their own cost, and on their own responsibility. I think they are disposed to do it in a very good spirit, because, whereas the original proposition was for thirty readings 'in England, Ireland, Scotland, or Paris,' they wrote out their agreement 'in London, the Provinces, or elsewhere, as you and we may agree.' For this they pay L1500 in three sums; L500 on beginning, L500 on the fifteenth Reading, L500 at the close. Every charge of every kind, they pay besides. I rely for mere curiosity on Doctor Marigold (I am going to begin with him in Liverpool, and at St. James's Hall). I have got him up with immense pains, and should like to give you a notion what I am going to do with him."

The success everywhere went far beyond even the former successes. A single night at Manchester, when eight hundred stalls were let, two thousand five hundred and sixty-five people admitted, and the receipts amounted to more than three hundred pounds, was followed in nearly the same proportion by all the greater towns; and on the 20th of April the outlay for the entire venture was paid, leaving all that remained, to the middle of the month of June, sheer profit. "I came back last Sunday," he wrote on the 30th of May, "with my last country piece of work for this time done. Everywhere the success has been the same. St. James's Hall last night was quite a splendid spectacle. Two more Tuesdays there, and I shall retire into private life. I have only been able to get to Gadshill once since I left it, and that was the day before yesterday."

One memorable evening he had passed at my house in the interval, when he saw Mrs. Carlyle for the last time. Her sudden death followed shortly after, and near the close of April he had thus written to me from Liverpool. "It was a terrible shock to me, and poor dear Carlyle has been in my mind ever since. How often I have thought of the unfinished novel. No one now to finish it. None of the writing women come near her at all." This was an allusion to what had passed at their meeting. It was on the second of April, the day when Mr. Carlyle had delivered his inaugural address as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, and a couple of ardent words from Professor Tyndall had told her of the triumph just before

dinner. She came to us flourishing the telegram in her hand, and the radiance of her enjoyment of it was upon her all the night. Among other things she gave Dickens the subject for a novel, from what she had herself observed at the outside of a house in her street; of which the various incidents were drawn from the condition of its blinds and curtains, the costumes visible at its windows, the cabs at its door, its visitors admitted or rejected, its articles of furniture delivered or carried away; and the subtle serious humour of it all, the truth in trifling bits of character, and the gradual progress into a half-romantic interest, had enchanted the skilled novelist. She was well into the second volume of her small romance before she left, being as far as her observation then had taken her; but in a few days exciting incidents were expected, the denouement could not be far off, and Dickens was to have it when they met again. Yet it was to something far other than this amusing little fancy his thoughts had carried him, when he wrote of no one being capable to finish what she might have begun. In greater things this was still more true. No one could doubt it who had come within the fascinating influence of that sweet and noble nature. With some of the highest gifts of intellect, and the charm of a most varied knowledge of books and things, there was something "beyond, beyond." No one who knew Mrs. Carlyle could replace her loss when she had passed away.

The same letter which told of his uninterrupted success to the last, told me also that he had a heavy cold upon him and was "very tired and depressed." Some weeks before the first batch of readings closed, Messrs. Chappell had already tempted him with an offer for fifty more nights to begin at Christmas, for which he meant, as he then said, to ask them seventy pounds a night. "It would be unreasonable to ask anything now on the ground of the extent of the late success, but I am bound to look to myself for the future. The Chappells are speculators, though of the worthiest and most honourable kind. They make some bad speculations, and have made a very good one in this case, and will set this against those. I told them when we agreed: 'I offer these thirty Readings to you at fifty pounds a night, because I know perfectly well beforehand that no one in your business has the least idea of their real worth, and I wish to prove it.' The sum taken is L4720." The result of the fresh negotiation, though not completed until the beginning of August, may be at once described. "Chappell instantly accepts my proposal of forty nights at sixty pounds a night, and every conceivable and inconceivable expense paid. To make an even sum, I have made it forty-two nights for L2500. So I shall now try to discover a Christmas number" (he means the subject for one), "and shall, please Heaven, be quit of the whole series of readings so as to get to work on a new story for the new series of All the Year Round early in the spring. The readings begin probably with the New Year." These were fair designs, but the fairest are the sport of circumstance, and though the subject for Christmas was found, the new series of All the Year Round never had a new story from its founder. With whatever consequence to himself, the strong tide of the Readings was to sweep on to its full. The American war had ceased, and the first renewed offers from the States had been made and rejected. Hovering over all, too, were other sterner dispositions. "I think," he wrote in September, "there is some strange influence in the atmosphere. Twice last week I was seized in a most distressing manner--apparently in the heart; but, I am persuaded, only in the nervous system."

In the midst of his ovations such checks had not been wanting. "The police reported officially," he wrote to his daughter from Liverpool on the 14th of April, "that three thousand people were turned away from the hall last night. . . . Except that I can not sleep, I really think myself in very much better training than I had anticipated. A dozen oysters and a little champagne between the parts every night, seem to constitute the best restorative I have ever yet tried." "Such a prodigious demonstration last night at Manchester," he wrote to the same correspondent twelve days later, "that I was obliged (contrary to my principle in such cases) to go back. I am very tired to-day; for it would be of itself very hard work in that immense place, if there were not to be added eighty miles of railway and late hours to boot." "It has been very heavy work," he wrote to his sister-in-law on the 11th of May from Clifton, "getting up at 6.30 each

morning after a heavy night, and I am not at all well to-day. We had a tremendous hall at Birmingham last night, L230 odd, 2100 people; and I made a most ridiculous mistake. Had Nickleby on my list to finish with, instead of Trial. Read Nickleby with great go, and the people remained. Went back again at 10 o'clock, and explained the accident: but said if they liked I would give them the Trial. They did like;--and I had another half hour of it, in that enormous place. . . . I have so severe a pain in the ball of my left eye that it makes it hard for me to do anything after 100 miles shaking since breakfast. My cold is no better, nor my hand either." It was his left eye, it will be noted, as it was his left foot and hand; the irritability or faintness of heart was also of course on the left side; and it was on the same left side he felt most of the effect of the railway accident.

Everything was done to make easier the labour of travel, but nothing could materially abate either the absolute physical exhaustion, or the nervous strain. "We arrived here," he wrote from Aberdeen (16th of May), "safe and sound between 3 and 4 this morning. There was a compartment for the men, and a charming room for ourselves furnished with sofas and easy chairs. We had also a pantry and washing-stand. This carriage is to go about with us." Two days later he wrote from Glasgow: "We halted at Perth yesterday, and got a lovely walk there. Until then I had been in a condition the reverse of flourishing; half strangled with my cold, and dyspeptically gloomy and dull; but, as I feel much more like myself this morning, we are going to get some fresh air aboard a steamer on the Clyde." The last letter during his country travel was from Portsmouth on the 24th of May, and contained these words: "You need have no fear about America." The readings closed in June.

The readings of the new year began with even increased enthusiasm, but not otherwise with happier omen. Here was his first outline of plan: "I start on Wednesday afternoon (the 15th of January) for Liverpool, and then go on to Chester, Derby, Leicester, and Wolverhampton. On Tuesday the 29th I read in London again, and in February I read at Manchester and then go on into Scotland." From Liverpool he wrote on the 21st: "The enthusiasm has been unbounded. On Friday night I quite astonished myself; but I was taken so faint afterwards that they laid me on a sofa, at the hall for half an hour. I attribute it to my distressing inability to sleep at night, and to nothing worse. Everything is made as easy to me as it possibly can be. Dolby would do anything to lighten the work, and does everything." The weather was sorely against him. "At Chester," he wrote on the 24th from Birmingham, "we read in a snow-storm and a fall of ice. I think it was the worst weather I ever saw. . . . At Wolverhampton last night the thaw had thoroughly set in, and it rained furiously, and I was again heavily beaten. We came on here after the reading (it is only a ride of forty miles), and it was as much as I could do to hold out the journey. But I was not faint, as at Liverpool. I was only exhausted." Five days later he had returned for his Reading in London, and thus replied to a summons to dine with Macready at my house: "I am very tired; cannot sleep; have been severely shaken on an atrocious railway; read to-night, and have to read at Leeds on Thursday. But I have settled with Dolby to put off our going to Leeds on Wednesday, in the hope of coming to dine with you, and seeing our dear old friend. I say 'in the hope,' because if I should be a little more used-up to-morrow than I am to-day, I should be constrained, in spite of myself, to take to the sofa and stick there."

On the 15th of February he wrote to his sister-in-law from Liverpool that they had had "an enormous turnaway" the previous night. "The day has been very fine, and I have turned it to the wholesomest account by walking on the sands at New Brighton all the morning. I am not quite right within, but believe it to be an effect of the railway shaking. There is no doubt of the fact that, after the Staplehurst experience, it tells more and more (railway shaking, that is) instead of, as one might have expected, less and less." The last remark is a strange one, from a man of his sagacity; but it was part of the too-willing self-deception which he practised, to justify him in his professed belief that these continued excesses of labour and excitement were really doing him no harm. The day after that last letter he pushed on to

Scotland, and on the 17th wrote to his daughter from Glasgow. The closing night at Manchester had been enormous. "They cheered to that extent after it was over that I was obliged to huddle on my clothes (for I was undressing to prepare for the journey) and go back again. After so heavy a week, it was rather stiff to start on this long journey at a quarter to two in the morning; but I got more sleep than I ever got in a railway-carriage before. . . . I have, as I had in the last series of readings, a curious feeling of soreness all round the body--which I suppose to arise from the great exertion of voice . . ." Two days later he wrote to his sister-in-law from the Bridge of Allan, which he had reached from Glasgow that morning. "Yesterday I was so unwell with an internal malady that occasionally at long intervals troubles me a little, and it was attended with the sudden loss of so much blood, that I wrote to F. B. from whom I shall doubtless hear to-morrow. . . . I felt it a little more exertion to read, afterwards, and I passed a sleepless night after that again; but otherwise I am in good force and spirits to-day: I may say, in the best force. . . . The quiet of this little place is sure to do me good." He rallied again from this attack, and, though he still complained of sleeplessness, wrote cheerfully from Glasgow on the 21st, describing himself indeed as confined to his room, but only because "in close hiding from a local poet who has christened his infant son in my name, and consequently haunts the building." On getting back to Edinburgh he wrote to me, with intimation that many troubles had beset him; but that the pleasure of his audiences, and the providence and forethought of Messrs. Chappell, had borne him through. "Everything is done for me with the utmost liberality and consideration. Every want I can have on these journeys is anticipated, and not the faintest spark of the tradesman spirit ever peeps out. I have three men in constant attendance on me; besides Dolby, who is an agreeable companion, an excellent manager, and a good fellow."

On the 4th of March he wrote from Newcastle: "The readings have made an immense effect in this place, and it is remarkable that although the people are individually rough, collectively they are an unusually tender and sympathetic audience; while their comic perception is quite up to the high London standard. The atmosphere is so very heavy that yesterday we escaped to Tynemouth for a two hours' sea walk. There was a high north wind blowing, and a magnificent sea running. Large vessels were being towed in and out over the stormy bar, with prodigious waves breaking on it; and, spanning the restless uproar of the waters, was a quiet rainbow of transcendent beauty. The scene was quite wonderful. We were in the full enjoyment of it when a heavy sea caught us, knocked us over, and in a moment drenched us and filled even our pockets. We had nothing for it but to shake ourselves together (like Dr. Marigold), and dry ourselves as well as we could by hard walking in the wind and sunshine. But we were wet through for all that, when we came back here to dinner after half-an-hour's railway drive. I am wonderfully well, and quite fresh and strong." Three days later he was at Leeds; from which he was to work himself round through the most important neighbouring places to another reading in London, before again visiting Ireland.

This was the time of the Fenian excitements; it was with great reluctance he consented to go; and he told us all at his first arrival that he should have a complete breakdown. More than 300 stalls were gone at Belfast two days before the reading, but on the afternoon of the reading in Dublin not 50 were taken. Strange to say however a great crowd pressed in at night, he had a tumultuous greeting, and on the 22nd of March I had this announcement from him: "You will be surprised to be told that we have done WONDERS! Enthusiastic crowds have filled the halls to the roof each night, and hundreds have been turned away. At Belfast the night before last we had L246 5s._ In Dublin to-night everything is sold out, and people are besieging Dolby to put chairs anywhere, in doorways, on my platform, in any sort of hole or corner. In short the Readings are a perfect rage at a time when everything else is beaten down." He took the Eastern Counties at his return, and this brought the series to a close. "The reception at Cambridge was something to be proud of in such a place. The colleges mustered in full force, from the biggest guns to the smallest; and went beyond even Manchester in the roars of welcome and rounds of

cheers. The place was crammed, and all through the reading everything was taken with the utmost heartiness of enjoyment." The temptation of offers from America had meanwhile again been presented to him so strongly, and in such unlucky connection with immediate family claims threatening excess of expenditure even beyond the income he was making, that he was fain to write to his sister-in-law: "I begin to feel myself drawn towards America as Darnay in the Tale of Two Cities was attracted to Paris. It is my Loadstone Rock." Too surely it was to be so; and Dickens was not to be saved from the consequence of yielding to the temptation, by any such sacrifice as had rescued Darnay.

The letter which told me of the close of his English readings had in it no word of the farther enterprise, yet it seemed to be in some sort a preparation for it. "Last Monday evening" (14th May) "I finished the 50 Readings with great success. You have no idea how I have worked at them. Feeling it necessary, as their reputation widened, that they should be better than at first, I have learnt them all, so as to have no mechanical drawback in looking after the words. I have tested all the serious passion in them by everything I know; made the humorous points much more humorous; corrected my utterance of certain words; cultivated a self-possession not to be disturbed; and made myself master of the situation. Finishing with Dombey (which I had not read for a long time) I learnt that, like the rest; and did it to myself, often twice a day, with exactly the same pains as at night, over and over and over again." . . . Six days later brought his reply to a remark that no degree of excellence to which he might have brought his readings could reconcile me to what there was little doubt would soon be pressed upon him. "It is curious" (20th May) "that you should touch the American subject, because I must confess that my mind is in a most disturbed state about it. That the people there have set themselves on having the readings, there is no question. Every mail brings me proposals, and the number of Americans at St. James's Hall has been surprising. A certain Mr. Grau, who took Ristori out, and is highly responsible, wrote to me by the last mail (for the second time) saying that if I would give him a word of encouragement he would come over immediately and arrange on the boldest terms for any number I chose, and would deposit a large sum of money at Coutts's. Mr. Fields writes to me on behalf of a committee of private gentlemen at Boston who wished for the credit of getting me out, who desired to hear the readings and did not want profit, and would put down as a guarantee L10,000--also to be banked here. Every American speculator who comes to London repairs straight to Dolby, with similar proposals. And, thus excited, Chappells, the moment this last series was over, proposed to treat for America!" Upon the mere question of these various offers he had little difficulty in making up his mind. If he went at all, he would go on his own account, making no compact with any one. Whether he should go at all, was what he had to determine.

One thing with his usual sagacity he saw clearly enough. He must make up his mind quickly. "The Presidential election would be in the autumn of next year. They are a people whom a fancy does not hold long. They are bent upon my reading there, and they believe (on no foundation whatever) that I am going to read there. If I ever go, the time would be when the Christmas number goes to press. Early in this next November." Every sort of enquiry he accordingly set on foot; and so far came to the immediate decision, that, if the answers left him no room to doubt that a certain sum might be realized, he would go. "Have no fear that anything will induce me to make the experiment, if I do not see the most forcible reasons for believing that what I could get by it, added to what I have got, would leave me with a sufficient fortune. I should be wretched beyond expression there. My small powers of description cannot describe the state of mind in which I should drag on from day to day." At the end of May he wrote: "Poor dear Stanfield!" (our excellent friend had passed away the week before). "I cannot think even of him, and of our great loss, for this spectre of doubt and indecision that sits at the board with me and stands at the bedside. I am in a tempest-tossed condition, and can hardly believe that I stand at bay at last on the American question. The difficulty of determining amid the variety of statements made to me is enormous, and you have no idea how heavily the anxiety of it sits upon my soul. But the prize looks so large!" One way at

last seemed to open by which it was possible to get at some settled opinion. "Dolby sails for America" (2nd of July) "on Saturday the 3rd of August. It is impossible to come to any reasonable conclusion, without sending eyes and ears on the actual ground. He will take out my MS. for the Children's Magazine. I hope it is droll, and very child-like; though the joke is a grown-up one besides. You must try to like the pirate story, for I am very fond of it." The allusion is to his pleasant Holiday Romance which he had written for Mr. Fields.

Hardly had Mr. Dolby gone when there came that which should have availed to dissuade, far more than any of the arguments which continued to express my objection to the enterprise. "I am laid up," he wrote on the 6th of August, "with another attack in my foot, and was on the sofa all last night in tortures. I cannot bear to have the fomentations taken off for a moment. I was so ill with it on Sunday, and it looked so fierce, that I came up to Henry Thompson. He has gone into the case heartily, and says that there is no doubt the complaint originates in the action of the shoe, in walking, on an enlargement in the nature of a bunion. Erysipelas has supervened upon the injury; and the object is to avoid a gathering, and to stay the erysipelas where it is. Meantime I am on my back, and chafing. . . . I didn't improve my foot by going down to Liverpool to see Dolby off, but I have little doubt of its yielding to treatment, and repose." A few days later he was chafing still; the accomplished physician he consulted having dropped other hints that somewhat troubled him. "I could not walk a quarter of a mile to-night for L500. I make out so many reasons against supposing it to be gouty that I really do not think it is."

So momentous in my judgment were the consequences of the American journey to him that it seemed right to preface thus much of the inducements and temptations that led to it. My own part in the discussion was that of steady dissuasion throughout: though this might perhaps have been less persistent if I could have reconciled myself to the belief, which I never at any time did, that Public Readings were a worthy employment for a man of his genius. But it had by this time become clear to me that nothing could stay the enterprise. The result of Mr. Dolby's visit to America--drawn up by Dickens himself in a paper possessing still the interest of having given to the Readings when he crossed the Atlantic much of the form they then assumed--reached me when I was staying at Ross; and upon it was founded my last argument against the scheme. This he received in London on the 28th of September, on which day he thus wrote to his eldest daughter: "As I telegraphed after I saw you, I am off to Ross to consult with Mr. Forster and Dolby together. You shall hear, either on Monday, or by Monday's post from London, how I decide finally." The result he wrote to her three days later: "You will have had my telegram that I go to America. After a long discussion with Forster, and consideration of what is to be said on both sides, I have decided to go through with it. We have telegraphed 'Yes' to Boston." Seven days later he wrote to me: "The Scotia being full, I do not sail until lord mayor's day; for which glorious anniversary I have engaged an officer's cabin on deck in the Cuba. I am not in very brilliant spirits at the prospect before me, and am deeply sensible of your motive and reasons for the line you have taken; but I am not in the least shaken in the conviction that I could never quite have given up the idea."

The remaining time was given to preparations; on the 2nd of November there was a Farewell Banquet in the Freemasons' Hall over which Lord Lytton presided; and on the 9th Dickens sailed for Boston. Before he left he had contributed his part to the last of his Christmas Numbers; all the writings he lived to complete were done; and the interval of his voyage may be occupied by a general review of the literary labour of his life.

Volume III, Chapter 14 (1836-1870): Dickens as a Novelist (Part 1)

Dickens as a Novelist

M. Taine's Criticism--What M. Taine overlooks--Anticipatory Reply to M. Taine--Paper by Mr. Lewes--Plea for Objectors to Dickens--Dickens a "Seer of Visions"--Criticised and Critic--An Opinion on Mr. and Mrs. Micawber--Dickens in a Fit of Hallucination--Dickens's Leading Quality--Dickens's Earlier Books--Mastery of Dialogue--Realities of Fiction--Fielding and Dickens--Universality of Micawber Experiences--Dickens's Enjoyment of his Own Humour--Origin of Tale of Two Cities--Title-hunting--Success--Method different from his Other Books--Reply to an Objection--Care with which Dickens worked--Tale of Two Cities characterized--Opinion of an American Critic--Great Expectations--Another Boy-child for Hero--Groundwork of the Story--Masterly Drawing of Character--Christmas Sketches--Our Mutual Friend--Germ of Characters for it--Writing Numbers in Advance--Death of Leech--Holiday in France--In the Staplehurst Accident--On a Tale by Edmund About--Doctor Marigold--Minor Stories--Edwin Drood--Purity of Dickens's Writings--True Province of Humour--Dickens's Death--Effect of the News in America--A Far-Western Admirer of Dickens.

WHAT I have to say generally of Dickens's genius as a writer may be made part of the notice, which still remains to be given, of his writings from The Tale of Two Cities to the time at which we have arrived, leaving Edwin Drood for mention in its place; and this will be accompanied, as in former notices of individual stories, by illustrations drawn from his letters and life. His literary work was so intensely one with his nature that he is not separable from it, and the man and the method throw a singular light on each other. But some allusion to what has been said of these books, by writers assuming to speak with authority, will properly precede what has to be offered by me; and I shall preface this part of my task with the hint of Carlyle, that in looking at a man out of the common it is good for common men to make sure that they "see" before they attempt to "oversee" him.

Of the French writer, M. Henri Taine, it has before been remarked that his inability to appreciate humour is fatal to his pretensions as a critic of the English novel. But there is much that is noteworthy in his criticism notwithstanding, as well as remarkable in his knowledge of our language; his position entitles him to be heard without a suspicion of partizanship or intentional unfairness; whatever the value of his opinion, the elaboration of its form and expression is itself no common tribute; and what is said in it of Dickens's handling in regard to style and character, embodies temperately objections which have since been taken by some English critics without his impartiality and with less than his ability. As to style M. Taine does not find that the natural or simple prevails sufficiently. The tone is too passionate. The imaginative or poetic side of allusion is so uniformly dwelt on, that the descriptions cease to be subsidiary, and the minute details of pain or pleasure wrought out by them become active agencies in the tale. So vivid and eager is the display of fancy that everything is borne along with it; imaginary objects take the precision of real ones; living thoughts are controlled by inanimate things; the chimes console the poor old ticket-porter; the cricket steadies the rough carrier's doubts; the sea waves soothe the dying boy; clouds, flowers, leaves, play their several parts; hardly a form of matter without a living quality; no silent thing without its voice. Fondling and exaggerating thus what is occasional in the subject of his criticism, into what he has evidently at last persuaded himself is a fixed and universal practice with Dickens, M. Taine proceeds to explain the exuberance by comparing such imagination in its vividness to that of a monomaniac. He fails altogether to apprehend that property in Humour which involves the feeling of subtlest and most affecting analogies, and from which is drawn the rare insight into sympathies

between the nature of things and their attributes or opposites, in which Dickens's fancy revelled with such delight. Taking the famous lines which express the lunatic, the lover, and the poet as "of Imagination all compact," in a sense that would have startled not a little the great poet who wrote them, M. Taine places on the same level of creative fancy the phantoms of the lunatic and the personages of the artist. He exhibits Dickens as from time to time, in the several stages of his successive works of fiction, given up to one idea, possessed by it, seeing nothing else, treating it in a hundred forms, exaggerating it, and so dazzling and overpowering his readers with it that escape is impossible. This he maintains to be equally the effect as Mr. Mell the usher plays the flute, as Tom Pinch enjoys or exposes his Pecksniff, as the guard blows his bugle while Tom rides to London, as Ruth Pinch crosses Fountain Court or makes the beefsteak pudding, as Jonas Chuzzlewit commits and returns from the murder, and as the storm which is Steerforth's death-knell beats on the Yarmouth shore. To the same kind of power he attributes the extraordinary clearness with which the commonest objects in all his books, the most ordinary interiors, any old house, a parlour, a boat, a school, fifty things that in the ordinary tale-teller would pass unmarked, are made vividly present and indelible; are brought out with a strength of relief, precision, and force, unapproached in any other writer of prose fiction; with everything minute yet nothing cold, "with all the passion and the patience of the painters of his country." And while excitement in the reader is thus maintained to an extent incompatible with a natural style or simple narrative, M. Taine yet thinks he has discovered, in this very power of awakening a feverish sensibility and moving laughter or tears at the commonest things, the source of Dickens's astonishing popularity. Ordinary people, he says, are so tired of what is always around them, and take in so little of the detail that makes up their lives, that when, all of a sudden, there comes a man to make these things interesting, and turn them into objects of admiration, tenderness, or terror, the effect is enchantment. Without leaving their arm-chairs or their firesides, they find themselves trembling with emotion, their eyes are filled with tears, their cheeks are broad with laughter, and, in the discovery they have thus made that they too can suffer, love, and feel, their very existence seems doubled to them. It had not occurred to M. Taine that to effect so much might seem to leave little not achieved.

So far from it, the critic had satisfied himself that such a power of style must be adverse to a just delineation of character. Dickens is not calm enough, he says, to penetrate to the bottom of what he is dealing with. He takes sides with it as friend or enemy, laughs or cries over it, makes it odious or touching, repulsive or attractive, and is too vehement and not enough inquisitive to paint a likeness. His imagination is at once too vivid and not sufficiently large. Its tenacious quality, and the force and concentration with which his thoughts penetrate into the details he desires to apprehend, form limits to his knowledge, confine him to single traits, and prevent his sounding all the depths of a soul. He seizes on one attitude, trick, expression, or grimace; sees nothing else; and keeps it always unchanged. Mercy Pecksniff laughs at every word, Mark Tapley is nothing but jolly, Mrs. Gamp talks incessantly of Mrs. Harris, Mr. Chillip is invariably timid, and Mr. Micawber is never tired of emphasizing his phrases or passing with ludicrous brusqueness from joy to grief. Each is the incarnation of some one vice, virtue, or absurdity; whereof the display is frequent, invariable, and exclusive. The language I am using condenses with strict accuracy what is said by M. Taine, and has been repeated ad nauseam by others, professing admirers as well as open detractors. Mrs. Gamp and Mr. Micawber, who belong to the first rank of humorous creation, are thus without another word dismissed by the French critic; and he shows no consciousness whatever in doing it, of that very fault in himself for which Dickens is condemned, of mistaking lively observation for real insight.

He has, however much concession in reserve, being satisfied, by his observation of England, that it is to the people for whom Dickens wrote his deficiencies in art are mainly due. The taste of his nation had prohibited him from representing character in a grand style. The English require too much morality and

religion for genuine art. They made him treat love, not as holy and sublime in itself, but as subordinate to marriage; forced him to uphold society and the laws, against nature and enthusiasm; and compelled him to display, in painting such a seduction as in Copperfield, not the progress, ardour, and intoxication of passion, but only the misery, remorse, and despair. The result of such surface religion and morality, combined with the trading spirit, M. Taine continues, leads to so many national forms of hypocrisy, and of greed as well as worship for money, as to justify this great writer of the nation in his frequent choice of those vices for illustration in his tales. But his defect of method again comes into play. He does not deal with vices in the manner of a physiologist, feeling a sort of love for them, and delighting in their finer traits as if they were virtues. He gets angry over them. (I do not interrupt M. Taine, but surely, to take one instance illustrative of many, Dickens's enjoyment in dealing with Pecksniff is as manifest as that he never ceases all the time to make him very hateful.) He cannot, like Balzac, leave morality out of account, and treat a passion, however loathsome, as that great tale-teller did, from the only safe ground of belief, that it is a force, and that force of whatever kind is good. It is essential to an artist of that superior grade, M. Taine holds, no matter how vile his subject, to show its education and temptations, the form of brain or habits of mind that have reinforced the natural tendency, to deduce it from its cause, to place its circumstances around it, and to develop its effects to their extremes. In handling such and such a capital miser, hypocrite, debauchee, or what not, he should never trouble himself about the evil consequences of the vices. He should be too much of a philosopher and artist to remember that he is a respectable citizen. But this is what Dickens never forgets, and he renounces all beauties requiring so corrupt a soil. M. Taine's conclusion upon the whole nevertheless is, that though those triumphs of art which become the property of all the earth have not been his, much has yet been achieved by him. Out of his unequalled observation, his satire, and his sensibility, has proceeded a series of original characters existing nowhere but in England, which will exhibit to future generations not the record of his own genius only, but that of his country and his times.

Between the judgment thus passed by the distinguished French lecturer, and the later comment to be now given from an English critic, certainly not in arrest of that judgment, may fitly come a passage from one of Dickens's letters saying something of the limitations placed upon the artist in England. It may read like a quasi-confession of one of M. Taine's charges, though it was not written with reference to his own but to one of Scott's later novels. "Similarly" (15th of August 1856) "I have always a fine feeling of the honest state into which we have got, when some smooth gentleman says to me or to some one else when I am by, how odd it is that the hero of an English book is always uninteresting--too good--not natural, &c. I am continually hearing this of Scott from English people here, who pass their lives with Balzac and Sand. But O my smooth friend, what a shining impostor you must think yourself and what an ass you must think me, when you suppose that by putting a brazen face upon it you can blot out of my knowledge the fact that this same unnatural young gentleman (if to be decent is to be necessarily unnatural), whom you meet in those other books and in mine, must be presented to you in that unnatural aspect by reason of your morality, and is not to have, I will not say any of the indecencies you like, but not even any of the experiences, trials, perplexities, and confusions inseparable from the making or unmaking of all men!"

M. Taine's criticism was written three or four years before Dickens's death, and to the same date belong some notices in England which adopted more or less the tone of depreciation; conceding the great effects achieved by the writer, but disputing the quality and value of his art. For it is incident to all such criticism of Dickens to be of necessity accompanied by the admission, that no writer has so completely impressed himself on the time in which he lived, that he has made his characters a part of literature, and that his readers are the world.

But, a little more than a year after his death, a paper was published of which the object was to reconcile

such seeming inconsistency, to expound the inner meanings of "Dickens in relation to Criticism," and to show that, though he had a splendid genius and a wonderful imagination, yet the objectors were to be excused who called him only a stagy sentimentalist and a clever caricaturist. This critical essay appeared in the Fortnightly Review for February 1872, with the signature of Mr. George Henry Lewes; and the pretentious airs of the performance, with its prodigious professions of candour, force upon me the painful task of stating what it really is. During Dickens's life, especially when any fresh novelist could be found available for strained comparison with him, there were plenty of attempts to write him down: but the trick of studied depreciation was never carried so far or made so odious as in this case, by intolerable assumptions of an indulgent superiority; and to repel it in such a form once for all is due to Dickens's memory.

The paper begins by the usual concessions--that he was a writer of vast popularity, that he delighted no end of people, that his admirers were in all classes and all countries, that he stirred the sympathy of masses not easily reached through literature and always to healthy emotion, that he impressed a new direction on popular writing, and modified the literature of his age in its spirit no less than its form. The very splendour of these successes, on the other hand, so deepened the shadow of his failures, that to many there was nothing but darkness. Was it unnatural? Could greatness be properly ascribed, by the fastidious, to a writer whose defects were so glaring, exaggerated, untrue, fantastic, and melodramatic? Might they not fairly insist on such defects as outweighing all positive qualities, and speak of him with condescending patronage or sneering irritation? Why, very often such men, though their talk would be seasoned with quotations from, and allusions to, his writings, and though they would lay aside their most favourite books to bury themselves in his new "number," had been observed by this critic to be as niggardly in their praise of him as they were lavish in their scorn. He actually heard "a very distinguished man," on one occasion, express measureless contempt for Dickens, and a few minutes afterwards admit that Dickens had "entered into his life." And so the critic betook himself to the task of reconciling this immense popularity and this critical contempt, which he does after the following manner.

He says that Dickens was so great in "fun" (humour he does not concede to him anywhere) that Fielding and Smollett are small in comparison, but that this would only have been a passing amusement for the world if he had not been "gifted with an imagination of marvellous vividness, and an emotional sympathetic nature capable of furnishing that imagination with elements of universal power." To people who think that words should carry some meaning it might seem, that, if only a man could be "gifted" with all this, nothing more need be said. With marvellous imagination, and a nature to endow it with elements of universal power, what secrets of creative art could possibly be closed to him? But this is reckoning without your philosophical critic. The vividness of Dickens's imagination M. Taine found to be simply monomaniacal, and his follower finds it to be merely hallucinative. Not the less he heaps upon it epithet after epithet. He talks of its irradiating splendour; calls it glorious as well as imperial and marvellous; and, to make us quite sure he is not with these fine phrases puffing-off an inferior article, he interposes that such imagination is "common to all great writers." Luckily for great writers in general, however, their creations are of the old, immortal, commonplace sort; whereas Dickens in his creative processes, according to this philosophy of criticism, is tied up hard and fast within hallucinative limits.

"He was," we are told, "a seer of visions." Amid silence and darkness, we are assured, he heard voices and saw objects; of which the revived impressions to him had the vividness of sensations, and the images his mind created in explanation of them had the coercive force of realities; so that what he brought into existence in this way, no matter how fantastic and unreal, was (whatever this may mean) universally intelligible. "His types established themselves in the public mind like personal experiences. Their falsity was unnoticed in the blaze of their illumination. Every humbug seemed a Pecksniff, every jovial improvident a Micawber, every stinted serving-wench a Marchioness." The critic, indeed, saw

through it all, but he gave his warnings in vain. "In vain critical reflection showed these figures to be merely masks; not characters, but personified characteristics; caricatures and distortions of human nature. The vividness of their presentation triumphed over reflection; their creator managed to communicate to the public his own unhesitating belief." What, however, is the public? Mr Lewes goes on to relate. "Give a child a wooden horse, with hair for mane and tail, and wafer-spots for colouring, he will never be disturbed by the fact that this horse does not move its legs but runs on wheels; and this wooden horse, which he can handle and draw, is believed in more than a pictured horse by a Wouvermanns or an Ansdell(!!) It may be said of Dickens's human figures that they too are wooden, and run on wheels; but these are details which scarcely disturb the belief of admirers. Just as the wooden horse is brought within the range of the child's emotions, and dramatizing tendencies, when he can handle and draw it, so Dickens's figures are brought within the range of the reader's interests, and receive from these interests a sudden illumination, when they are the puppets of a drama every incident of which appeals to the sympathies."

Risum teneatis?_ But the smile is grim that rises to the face of one to whom the relations of the writer and his critic, while both writer and critic lived, are known; and who sees the drift of now scattering such rubbish as this over an established fame. As it fares with the imagination that is imperial, so with the drama every incident of which appeals to the sympathies. The one being explained by hallucination, and the other by the wooden horse, plenty of fine words are to spare by which contempt may receive the show of candour. When the characters in a play are puppets, and the audiences of the theatre fools or children, no wise man forfeits his wisdom by proceeding to admit that the successful playwright, "with a fine felicity of instinct," seized upon situations, for his wooden figures, having "irresistible hold over the domestic affections;" that, through his puppets, he spoke "in the mother-tongue of the heart;" that, with his spotted horses and so forth, he "painted the life he knew and everyone knew;" that he painted, of course, nothing ideal or heroic, and that the world of thought and passion lay beyond his horizon; but that, with his artificial performers and his feeble-witted audiences, "all the resources of the bourgeois epic were in his grasp; the joys and pains of childhood, the petty tyrannies of ignoble natures, the genial pleasantries of happy natures, the life of the poor, the struggles of the street and back parlour, the insolence of office, the sharp social contrasts, east wind and Christmas jollity, hunger, misery, and hot punch"--"so that even critical spectators who complained that these broadly painted pictures were artistic daubs could not wholly resist their effective suggestiveness." Since Trinculo and Caliban were under one cloak, there has surely been no such delicate monster with two voices. "His forward voice, now, is to speak well of his friend; his backward voice is to utter foul speeches and to detract." One other of the foul speeches I may not overlook, since it contains what is alleged to be a personal revelation of Dickens made to the critic himself.

"When one thinks of Micawber always presenting himself in the same situation, moved with the same springs and uttering the same sounds, always confident of something turning up, always crushed and rebounding, always making punch--and his wife always declaring she will never part from him, always referring to his talents and her family--when one thinks of the 'catchwords' personified as characters, one is reminded of the frogs whose brains have been taken out for physiological purposes, and whose actions henceforth want the distinctive peculiarity of organic action, that of fluctuating spontaneity." Such was that sheer inability of Dickens, indeed, to comprehend this complexity of the organism, that it quite accounted, in the view of this philosopher, for all his unnaturalness, for the whole of his fantastic people, and for the strained dialogues of which his books are made up, painfully resembling in their incongruity "the absurd and eager expositions which insane patients pour into the listener's ear when detailing their wrongs, or their schemes. Dickens once declared to me," Mr. Lewes continues, "that every word said by his characters was distinctly heard by him; I was at first not a little puzzled to account for the fact that he

could hear language so utterly unlike the language of real feeling, and not be aware of its preposterousness; but the surprise vanished when I thought of the phenomena of hallucination." Wonderful sagacity! to unravel easily such a bewildering "puzzle"! And so to the close. Between the uncultivated whom Dickens moved, and the cultivated he failed to move; between the power that so worked in delft as to stir the universal heart, and the commonness that could not meddle with porcelain or aspire to any noble clay; the pitiful see-saw is continued up to the final sentence, where, in the impartial critic's eagerness to discredit even the value of the emotion awakened in such men as Jeffrey by such creations as Little Nell, he reverses all he has been saying about the cultivated and uncultivated, and presents to us a cultivated philosopher, in his ignorance of the stage, applauding an actor whom every uncultivated playgoing apprentice despises as stagey. But the bold stroke just exhibited, of bringing forward Dickens himself in the actual crisis of one of his fits of hallucination, requires an additional word.

To establish the hallucinative theory, he is said on one occasion to have declared to the critic that every word uttered by his characters was distinctly heard by him before it was written down. Such an averment, not credible for a moment as thus made, indeed simply untrue to the extent described, may yet be accepted in the limited and quite different sense which a passage in one of Dickens's letters gives to it. All writers of genius to whom their art has become as a second nature, will be found capable of doing upon occasion what the vulgar may think to be "hallucination," but hallucination will never account for. After Scott began the Bride of Lammermoor he had one of his terrible seizures of cramp, yet during his torment he dictated that fine novel; and when he rose from his bed, and the published book was placed in his hands, "he did not," James Ballantyne explicitly assured Lockhart, "recollect one single incident, character, or conversation it contained." When Dickens was under the greatest trial of his life, and illness and sorrow were contending for the mastery over him, he thus wrote to me. "Of my distress I will say no more than that it has borne a terrible, frightful, horrible proportion to the quickness of the gifts you remind me of. But may I not be forgiven for thinking it a wonderful testimony to my being made for my art, that when, in the midst of this trouble and pain, I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to be interested, and I don't invent it--really do not--but see it, and write it down. . . . It is only when it all fades away and is gone, that I begin to suspect that its momentary relief has cost me something."

Whatever view may be taken of the man who wrote those words, he had the claim to be judged by reference to the highest models in the art which he studied. In the literature of his time, from 1836 to 1870, he held the most conspicuous place, and his claim to the most popular one in the literature of fiction was by common consent admitted. He obtained this rank by the sheer force of his genius, unhelped in any way, and he held it without dispute. As he began he closed. After he had written for only four months, and after he had written incessantly for four and thirty years, he was of all living writers the most widely read. It is of course quite possible that such popularity might imply rather littleness in his contemporaries than greatness in him: but his books are the test to judge by. Each thus far, as it appeared, has had notice in these pages for its illustration of his life, or of his method of work, or of the variety and versatility in the manifestations of his power. But his latest books remain still for notice, and will properly suggest what is farther to be said of his general place in literature.

His leading quality was Humour. It has no mention in either of the criticisms cited, but it was his highest faculty; and it accounts for his magnificent successes, as well as for his not infrequent failures, in characteristic delineation. He was conscious of this himself. Five years before he died, a great and generous brother artist, Lord Lytton, amid much ungrudging praise of a work he was then publishing, asked him to consider, as to one part of it, if the modesties of art were not a little overpassed. "I cannot tell you," he replied, "how highly I prize your letter, or with what pride and pleasure it inspires me. Nor do

I for a moment question its criticism (if objection so generous and easy may be called by that hard name) otherwise than on this ground--that I work slowly and with great care, and never give way to my invention recklessly, but constantly restrain it; and that I think it is my infirmity to fancy or perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally. Also, I have such an inexpressible enjoyment of what I see in a droll light, that I dare say I pet it as if it were a spoilt child. This is all I have to offer in arrest of judgment." To perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally, is one of those exquisite properties of humour by which are discovered the affinities between the high and the low, the attractive and the repulsive, the rarest things and things of every day, which bring us all upon the level of a common humanity. It is this which gives humour an immortal touch that does not belong of necessity to pictures, even the most exquisite, of mere character or manners; the property which in its highest aspects Carlyle so subtly described as a sort of inverse sublimity, exalting into our affections what is below us as the other draws down into our affections what is above us. But it has a danger which Dickens also hints at, and into which he often fell. All humour has in it, is indeed identical with, what ordinary people are apt to call exaggeration; but there is an excess beyond the allowable even here, and to "pet" or magnify out of proper bounds its sense of what is droll, is to put the merely grotesque in its place. What might have been overlooked in a writer with no uncommon powers of invention, was thrown into overpowering prominence by Dickens's wealth of fancy; and a splendid excess of his genius came to be objected to as its integral and essential quality.

It cannot be said to have had any place in his earlier books. His powers were not at their highest and the humour was less fine and subtle, but there was no such objection to be taken. No misgiving interrupted the enjoyment of the wonderful freshness of animal spirits in Pickwick; but beneath its fun, laughter, and light-heartedness were indications of power of the first rank in the delineation of character. Some caricature was in the plan; but as the circle of people widened beyond the cockney club, and the delightful oddity of Mr. Pickwick took more of an independent existence, a different method revealed itself, nothing appeared beyond the exaggerations permissible to humorous comedy, and the art was seen which can combine traits vividly true to particular men or women with propensities common to all mankind. This has its highest expression in Fielding: but even the first of Dickens's books showed the same kind of mastery; and, by the side of its life-like middle-class people universally familiar, there was one figure before seen by none but at once knowable by all, delightful for the surprise it gave by its singularity and the pleasure it gave by its truth; and, though short of the highest in this form of art, taking rank with the class in which live everlastingly the dozen unique inventions that have immortalized the English novel. The groups in Oliver Twist, Fagin and his pupils, Sikes and Nancy, Mr. Bumble and his parish-boy, belong to the same period; when Dickens also began those pathetic delineations that opened to the neglected, the poor, and the fallen, a world of compassion and tenderness. Yet I think it was not until the third book, Nickleby, that he began to have his place as a writer conceded to him; and that he ceased to be regarded as a mere phenomenon or marvel of fortune, who had achieved success by any other means than that of deserving it, and who challenged no criticism better worth the name than such as he has received from the Fortnightly reviewer. It is to be added to what before was said of Nickleby, that it established beyond dispute his mastery of dialogue, or that power of making characters real existences, not by describing them but by letting them describe themselves, which belongs only to story-tellers of the first rank. Dickens never excelled the easy handling of the subordinate groups in this novel, and he never repeated its mistakes in the direction of aristocratic or merely polite and dissipated life. It displayed more than before of his humour on the tragic side; and, in close connection with its affecting scenes of starved and deserted childhood, were placed those contrasts of miser and spendthrift, of greed and generosity, of hypocrisy and simple-heartedness, which he handled in later books with greater power and fullness, but of which the first formal expression was here. It was his first

general picture, so to speak, of the character and manners of his time, which it was the design more or less of all his books to exhibit; and it suffers by comparison with his later productions, because the humour is not to the same degree enriched by imagination; but it is free from the not infrequent excess into which that supreme gift also tempted its possessor. None of the tales is more attractive throughout, and on the whole it was a step in advance even of the stride previously taken. Nor was the gain lost in the succeeding story of the Old Curiosity Shop. The humorous traits of Mrs. Nickleby could hardly be surpassed: but, in Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, there was a subtlety and lightness of touch that led to finer issues; and around Little Nell and her fortunes, surpassingly touching and beautiful, let criticism object what it will, were gathered some small characters that had a deeper intention and more imaginative insight, than anything yet done. Strokes of this kind were also observable in the hunted life of the murderer in Barnaby Rudge; and his next book, Chuzzlewit, was, as it still remains, one of his greatest achievements. Even so brief a retrospect of the six opening years of Dickens's literary labour will help to a clearer judgment of the work of the twenty-eight more years that remained to him.

To the special observations already made on the series of stories which followed the return from America, Chuzzlewit, Dombey, Copperfield, and Bleak House, in which attention has been directed to the higher purpose and more imaginative treatment that distinguished them, a general remark is to be added. Though the range of character they traverse is not wide, it is surrounded by a fertility of invention and illustration without example in any previous novelist; and it is represented in these books, so to speak, by a number and variety of existences sufficiently real to have taken places as among the actual people of the world. Could half as many known and universally recognisable men and women be selected out of one story, by any other prose writer of the first rank, as at once rise to the mind from one of the masterpieces of Dickens? So difficult of dispute is this, that as much perhaps will be admitted; but then it will be added, if the reply is by a critic of the school burlesqued by Mr. Lewes, that after all they are not individual or special men and women so much as general impersonations of men and women, abstract types made up of telling catchwords or surface traits, though with such accumulation upon them of a wonderful wealth of humorous illustration, itself filled with minute and accurate knowledge of life, that the real nakedness of the land of character is hidden. Well, what can be rejoined to this, but that the poverty or richness of any territory worth survey will for the most part lie in the kind of observation brought to it. There was no finer observer than Johnson of the manners of his time, and he protested of their greatest delineator that he knew only the shell of life. Another of his remarks, after a fashion followed by the criticizers of Dickens, places Fielding below one of his famous contemporaries; but who will not now be eager to reverse such a comparison, as that Fielding tells you correctly enough what o'clock it is by looking at the face of the dial, but that Richardson shows you how the watch is made? There never was a subtler or a more sagacious observer than Fielding, or who better deserved what is generously said of him by Smollett, that he painted the characters and ridiculed the follies of life with equal strength, humour, and propriety. But might it not be said of him, as of Dickens, that his range of character was limited; and that his method of proceeding from a central idea in all his leading people, exposed him equally to the charge of now and then putting human nature itself in place of the individual who should only be a small section of it? This is in fact but another shape of what I have expressed on a former page, that what a character, drawn by a master, will roughly present upon its surface, is frequently such as also to satisfy its more subtle requirements; and that when only the salient points or sharper prominences are thus displayed, the great novelist is using his undoubted privilege of showing the large degree to which human intercourse is carried on, not by men's habits or ways at their commonest, but by the touching of their extremes. A definition of Fielding's genius has been made with some accuracy in the saying, that he shows common propensities in connection with the identical unvarnished adjuncts which are peculiar to the individual, nor could a more exquisite felicity of handling

than this be any man's aim or desire; but it would be just as easy, by employment of the critical rules applied to Dickens, to transform it into matter of censure. Partridge, Adams, Trulliber, Squire Western, and the rest, present themselves often enough under the same aspects, and use with sufficient uniformity the same catchwords, to be brought within the charge of mannerism; and though M. Taine cannot fairly say of Fielding as of Dickens, that he suffers from too much morality, he brings against him precisely the charge so strongly put against the later novelist of "looking upon the passions not as simple forces but as objects of approbation or blame." We must keep in mind all this to understand the worth of the starved fancy, that can find in such a delineation as that of Micawber only the man described by Mr. Lewes as always in the same situation, moved with the same springs and uttering the same sounds, always confident of something turning up, always crushed and rebounding, always making punch, and his wife always declaring she will never part from him. It is not thus that such creations are to be viewed; but by the light which enables us to see why the country squires, village schoolmasters, and hedge parsons of Fielding became immortal. The later ones will live, as the earlier do, by the subtle quality of genius that makes their doings and sayings part of those general incentives which pervade mankind. Who has not had occasion, however priding himself on his unlikeness to Micawber, to think of Micawber as he reviewed his own experiences? Who has not himself waited, like Micawber, for something to turn up? Who has not at times discovered, in one or other acquaintance or friend, some one or other of that cluster of sagacious hints and fragments of human life and conduct which the kindly fancy of Dickens embodied in this delightful form? If the irrepressible New Zealander ever comes over to achieve his long promised sketch of St. Paul's, who can doubt that it will be no other than our undying Micawber, who had taken to colonisation the last time we saw him, and who will thus again have turned up? There are not many conditions of life or society to which his and his wife's experiences are not applicable; and when, the year after the immortal couple made their first appearance on earth, Protection was in one of its then frequent difficulties, declaring it could not live without something widely different from existing circumstances shortly turning up, and imploring its friends to throw down the gauntlet and boldly challenge society to turn up a majority and rescue it from its embarrassments, a distinguished wit seized upon the likeness to Micawber, showed how closely it was borne out by the jollity and gin-punch of the banquets at which the bewailings were heard, and asked whether Dickens had stolen from the farmer's friends or the farmer's friends had stolen from Dickens. "Corn, said Mr. Micawber, may be gentlemanly, but it is not remunerative. . . . I ask myself this question: if corn is not to be relied on, what is? We must live. . . ." Loud as the general laughter was, I think the laughter of Dickens himself was loudest, at this discovery of so exact and unexpected a likeness.

A readiness in all forms thus to enjoy his own pleasantry was indeed always observable (it is common to great humourists, nor would it be easier to carry it farther than Sterne did), and his own confession on the point may receive additional illustration before proceeding to the later books. He accounted by it, as we have seen, for occasional even grotesque extravagances. In another of his letters there is this passage: "I can report that I have finished the job I set myself, and that it has in it something--to me at all events--so extraordinarily droll, that though I have been reading it some hundred times in the course of the working, I have never been able to look at it with the least composure, but have always roared in the most unblushing manner. I leave you to find out what it was." It was the encounter of the major and the tax-collector in the second Mrs. Lirriper. Writing previously of the papers in Household Words called The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices, after saying that he and Mr. Wilkie Collins had written together a story in the second part, "in which I think you would find it very difficult to say where I leave off and he comes in," he had said of the preceding descriptions: "Some of my own tickle me very much; but that may be in great part because I know the originals, and delight in their fantastic fidelity." "I have been at work with such a will" he writes later of a piece of humour for the holidays, "that I have done the opening

and conclusion of the Christmas number. They are done in the character of a waiter, and I think are exceedingly droll. The thread on which the stories are to hang, is spun by this waiter, and is, purposely, very slight; but has, I fancy, a ridiculously comical and unexpected end. The waiter's account of himself includes (I hope) everything you know about waiters, presented humorously." In this last we have a hint of the "fantastic fidelity" with which, when a fancy "tickled" him, he would bring out what Corporal Nym calls the humour of it under so astonishing a variety of conceivable and inconceivable aspects of subtle exaggeration, that nothing was left to the subject but that special individual illustration of it. In this, however, humour was not his servant but his master; because it reproduced too readily, and carried too far, the grotesque imaginings to which great humourists are prone; which lie indeed deep in their nature; and from which they derive their genial sympathy with eccentric characters that enables them to find motives for what to other men is hopelessly obscure, to exalt into types of humanity what the world turns impatiently aside at, and to enshrine in a form for eternal homage and love such whimsical absurdity as Captain Toby Shandy's. But Dickens was too conscious of these excesses from time to time, not zealously to endeavour to keep the leading characters in his more important stories under some strictness of discipline. To confine exaggeration within legitimate limits was an art he laboriously studied; and, in whatever proportions of failure or success, during the vicissitudes of both that attended his later years, he continued to endeavour to practise it. In regard to mere description, it is true, he let himself loose more frequently, and would sometimes defend it even on the ground of art; nor would it be fair to omit his reply, on one occasion, to some such remonstrance as M. Taine has embodied in his adverse criticism, against the too great imaginative wealth thrown by him into mere narrative. "It does not seem to me to be enough to say of any description that it is the exact truth. The exact truth must be there; but the merit or art in the narrator, is the manner of stating the truth. As to which thing in literature, it always seems to me that there is a world to be done. And in these times, when the tendency is to be frightfully literal and catalogue-like--to make the thing, in short, a sort of sum in reduction that any miserable creature can do in that way--I have an idea (really founded on the love of what I profess), that the very holding of popular literature through a kind of popular dark age, may depend on such fanciful treatment."

THE TALE OF TWO CITIES.

Dickens's next story to Little Dorrit was the Tale of Two Cities, of which the first notion occurred to him while acting with his friends and his children in the summer of 1857 in Mr. Wilkie Collins's drama of The Frozen Deep. But it was only a vague fancy, and the sadness and trouble of the winter of that year were not favourable to it. Towards the close (27th) of January 1858, talking of improvements at Gadshill in which he took little interest, it was again in his thoughts. "Growing inclinations of a fitful and undefined sort are upon me sometimes to fall to work on a new book. Then I think I had better not worry my worried mind yet awhile. Then I think it would be of no use if I did, for I couldn't settle to one occupation.--And that's all!" "If I can discipline my thoughts," he wrote three days later, "into the channel of a story, I have made up my mind to get to work on one: always supposing that I find myself, on the trial, able to do well. Nothing whatever will do me the least 'good' in the way of shaking the one strong possession of change impending over us that every day makes stronger; but if I could work on with some approach to steadiness, through the summer, the anxious toil of a new book would have its neck well broken before beginning to publish, next October or November. Sometimes, I think I may continue to work; sometimes, I think not. What do you say to the title, ONE OF THESE DAYS?" That title held its ground very briefly. "What do you think," he wrote after six weeks, "of this name for my story--BURIED ALIVE? Does it seem too grim? Or, THE THREAD OF GOLD? Or, THE DOCTOR OF BEAUVAIS?" But not until twelve months later did he fairly buckle himself to the task he had contemplated so long. All the Year Round had taken the place of Household Words in the interval; and the tale was then started to give strength to the new weekly periodical for whose pages it was designed.

"This is merely to certify," he wrote on the 11th of March 1859, "that I have got exactly the name for the story that is wanted; exactly what will fit the opening to a T. A TALE OF TWO CITIES. Also, that I have struck out a rather original and bold idea. That is, at the end of each month to publish the monthly part in the green cover, with the two illustrations, at the old shilling. This will give All the Year Round always the interest and precedence of a fresh weekly portion during the month; and will give me my old standing with my old public, and the advantage (very necessary in this story) of having numbers of people who read it in no portions smaller than a monthly part. . . . My American ambassador pays a thousand pounds for the first year, for the privilege of republishing in America one day after we publish here. Not bad?" . . . He had to struggle at the opening through a sharp attack of illness, and on the 9th of July progress was thus reported. "I have been getting on in health very slowly and through irksome botheration enough. But I think I am round the corner. This cause--and the heat--has tended to my doing no more than hold my ground, my old month's advance, with the Tale of Two Cities. The small portions thereof, drive me frantic; but I think the tale must have taken a strong hold. The run upon our monthly parts is surprising, and last month we sold 35,000 back numbers. A note I have had from Carlyle about it has given me especial pleasure." A letter of the following month expresses the intention he had when he began the story, and in what respect it differs as to method from all his other books. Sending in proof four numbers ahead of the current publication, he adds: "I hope you will like them. Nothing but the interest of the subject, and the pleasure of striving with the difficulty of the form of treatment,--nothing in the way of mere money, I mean,--could else repay the time and trouble of the incessant condensation. But I set myself the little task of making a picturesque story, rising in every chapter, with characters true to nature, but whom the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue. I mean in other words, that I fancied a story of incident might be written (in place of the odious stuff that is written under that pretence), pounding the characters in its own mortar, and beating their interest out of them. If you could have read the story all at once, I hope you wouldn't have stopped halfway." Another of his letters supplies the last illustration I need to give of the design and meanings in regard to this tale expressed by himself. It was a reply to some objections of which the principal were, a doubt if the feudal cruelties came sufficiently within the date of the action to justify his use of them, and some question as to the manner of disposing of the chief revolutionary agent in the plot. "I had of course full knowledge of the formal surrender of the feudal privileges, but these had been bitterly felt quite as near to the time of the Revolution as the Doctor's narrative, which you will remember dates long before the Terror. With the slang of the new philosophy on the one side, it was surely not unreasonable or unallowable, on the other, to suppose a nobleman wedded to the old cruel ideas, and representing the time going out as his nephew represents the time coming in. If there be anything certain on earth, I take it that the condition of the French peasant generally at that day was intolerable. No later enquiries or provings by figures will hold water against the tremendous testimony of men living at the time. There is a curious book printed at Amsterdam, written to make out no case whatever, and tiresome enough in its literal dictionary-like minuteness; scattered up and down the pages of which is full authority for my marquis. This is Mercier's Tableau de Paris. Rousseau is the authority for the peasant's shutting up his house when he had a bit of meat. The tax-tables are the authority for the wretched creature's impoverishment. . . . I am not clear, and I never have been clear, respecting the canon of fiction which forbids the interposition of accident in such a case as Madame Defarge's death. Where the accident is inseparable from the passion and action of the character; where it is strictly consistent with the entire design, and arises out of some culminating proceeding on the part of the individual which the whole story has led up to; it seems to me to become, as it were, an act of divine justice. And when I use Miss Pross (though this is quite another question) to bring about such a catastrophe, I have the positive intention of making that half-comic intervention a part of the desperate woman's failure; and of opposing that mean death, instead of a desperate one in the

streets which she wouldn't have minded, to the dignity of Carton's. Wrong or right, this was all design, and seemed to me to be in the fitness of things."

Volume III, Chapter 14 (1836-1870): Dickens as a Novelist (Part 2)

These are interesting intimations of the care with which Dickens worked; and there is no instance in his novels, excepting this, of a deliberate and planned departure from the method of treatment which had been pre-eminently the source of his popularity as a novelist. To rely less upon character than upon incident, and to resolve that his actors should be expressed by the story more than they should express themselves by dialogue, was for him a hazardous, and can hardly be called an entirely successful, experiment. With singular dramatic vivacity, much constructive art, and with descriptive passages of a high order everywhere (the dawn of the terrible outbreak in the journey of the marquis from Paris to his country seat, and the London crowd at the funeral of the spy, may be instanced for their power), there was probably never a book by a great humourist, and an artist so prolific in the conception of character, with so little humour and so few rememberable figures. Its merits lie elsewhere. Though there are excellent traits and touches all through the revolutionary scenes, the only full-length that stands out prominently is the picture of the wasted life saved at last by heroic sacrifice. Dickens speaks of his design to make impressive the dignity of Carton's death, and in this he succeeded perhaps even beyond his expectation. Carton suffers himself to be mistaken for another, and gives his life that the girl he loves may be happy with that other; the secret being known only to a poor little girl in the tumbril that takes them to the scaffold, who at the moment has discovered it, and whom it strengthens also to die. The incident is beautifully told; and it is at least only fair to set against verdicts not very favourable as to this effort of his invention, what was said of the particular character and scene, and of the book generally, by an American critic whose literary studies had most familiarized him with the rarest forms of imaginative writing. "Its pourtrayal of the noble-natured castaway makes it almost a peerless book in modern literature, and gives it a place among the highest examples of literary art. . . . The conception of this character shows in its author an ideal of magnanimity and of charity unsurpassed. There is not a grander, lovelier figure than the self-wrecked, self-devoted Sydney Carton, in literature or history; and the story itself is so noble in its spirit, so grand and graphic in its style, and filled with a pathos so profound and simple, that it deserves and will surely take a place among the great serious works of imagination." I should myself prefer to say that its distinctive merit is less in any of its conceptions of character, even Carton's, than as a specimen of Dickens's power in imaginative story-telling. There is no piece of fiction known to me, in which the domestic life of a few simple private people is in such a manner knitted and interwoven with the outbreak of a terrible public event, that the one seems but part of the other. When made conscious of the first sultry drops of a thunderstorm that fall upon a little group sitting in an obscure English lodging, we are witness to the actual beginning of a tempest which is preparing to sweep away everything in France. And, to the end, the book in this respect is really remarkable.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

The Tale of Two Cities was published in 1859; the series of papers collected as the Uncommercial Traveller were occupying Dickens in 1860; and it was while engaged in these, and throwing off in the course of them capital "samples" of fun and enjoyment, he thus replied to a suggestion that he should let himself loose upon some single humorous conception, in the vein of his youthful achievements in that way. "For a little piece I have been writing--or am writing; for I hope to finish it to-day--such a very fine, new, and grotesque idea has opened upon me, that I begin to doubt whether I had not better cancel the little paper, and reserve the notion for a new book. You shall judge as soon as I get it printed. But it so opens out before me that I can see the whole of a serial revolving on it, in a most singular and comic manner." This was the germ of Pip and Magwitch, which at first he intended to make the groundwork of a

tale in the old twenty-number form, but for reasons perhaps fortunate brought afterwards within the limits of a less elaborate novel. "Last week," he wrote on the 4th of October 1860, "I got to work on the new story. I had previously very carefully considered the state and prospects of All the Year Round, and, the more I considered them, the less hope I saw of being able to get back, now, to the profit of a separate publication in the old 20 numbers." (A tale, which at the time was appearing in his serial, had disappointed expectation.) "However I worked on, knowing that what I was doing would run into another groove; and I called a council of war at the office on Tuesday. It was perfectly clear that the one thing to be done was, for me to strike in. I have therefore decided to begin the story as of the length of the Tale of Two Cities on the first of December--begin publishing, that is. I must make the most I can out of the book. You shall have the first two or three weekly parts to-morrow. The name is GREAT EXPECTATIONS. I think a good name?" Two days later he wrote: "The sacrifice of Great Expectations is really and truly made for myself. The property of All the Year Round is far too valuable, in every way, to be much endangered. Our fall is not large, but we have a considerable advance in hand of the story we are now publishing, and there is no vitality in it, and no chance whatever of stopping the fall; which on the contrary would be certain to increase. Now, if I went into a twenty-number serial, I should cut off my power of doing anything serial here for two good years--and that would be a most perilous thing. On the other hand, by dashing in now, I come in when most wanted; and if Reade and Wilkie follow me, our course will be shaped out handsomely and hopefully for between two and three years. A thousand pounds are to be paid for early proofs of the story to America." A few more days brought the first instalment of the tale, and explanatory mention of it. "The book will be written in the first person throughout, and during these first three weekly numbers you will find the hero to be a boy-child, like David. Then he will be an apprentice. You will not have to complain of the want of humour as in the Tale of Two Cities. I have made the opening, I hope, in its general effect exceedingly droll. I have put a child and a good-natured foolish man, in relations that seem to me very funny. Of course I have got in the pivot on which the story will turn too--and which indeed, as you remember, was the grotesque tragi-comic conception that first encouraged me. To be quite sure I had fallen into no unconscious repetitions, I read David Copperfield again the other day, and was affected by it to a degree you would hardly believe."

It may be doubted if Dickens could better have established his right to the front rank among novelists claimed for him, than by the ease and mastery with which, in these two books of Copperfield and Great Expectations, he kept perfectly distinct the two stories of a boy's childhood, both told in the form of autobiography. A subtle penetration into character marks the unlikeness in the likeness; there is enough at once of resemblance and of difference in the position and surroundings of each to account for the divergences of character that arise; both children are good-hearted, and both have the advantage of association with models of tender simplicity and oddity, perfect in their truth and quite distinct from each other; but a sudden tumble into distress steadies Peggotty's little friend, and as unexpected a stroke of good fortune turns the head of the small protege of Joe Gargery. What a deal of spoiling nevertheless, a nature that is really good at the bottom of it will stand without permanent damage, is nicely shown in Pip; and the way he reconciles his determination to act very shabbily to his early friends, with a conceited notion that he is setting them a moral example, is part of the shading of a character drawn with extraordinary skill. His greatest trial comes out of his good luck; and the foundations of both are laid at the opening of the tale, in a churchyard down by the Thames, as it winds past desolate marshes twenty miles to the sea, of which a masterly picture in half a dozen lines will give only average example of the descriptive writing that is everywhere one of the charms of the book. It is strange, as I transcribe the words, with what wonderful vividness they bring back the very spot on which we stood when he said he meant to make it the scene of the opening of his story--Cooling Castle ruins and the desolate Church,

lying out among the marshes seven miles from Gadshill! "My first most vivid and broad impression . . . on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening . . . was . . . that this bleak place, overgrown with nettles, was the churchyard, and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond, was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing, was the sea. . . . On the edge of the river . . . only two black things in all the prospect seemed to be standing upright . . . one, the beacon by which the sailors steered, like an unhooped cask upon a pole, an ugly thing when you were near it; the other, a gibbet with some chains hanging to it which had once held a pirate." Here Magwitch, an escaped convict from Chatham, terrifies the child Pip into stealing for him food and a file; and though recaptured and transported, he carries with him to Australia such a grateful heart for the small creature's service, that on making a fortune there he resolves to make his little friend a gentleman. This requires circumspection; and is so done, through the Old-Bailey attorney who has defended Magwitch at his trial (a character of surprising novelty and truth), that Pip imagines his present gifts and "great expectations" to have come from the supposed rich lady of the story (whose eccentricities are the unattractive part of it, and have yet a weird character that somehow fits in with the kind of wrong she has suffered). When therefore the closing scenes bring back Magwitch himself, who risks his life to gratify his longing to see the gentleman he has made, it is an unspeakable horror to the youth to discover his benefactor in the convicted felon. If any one doubts Dickens's power of so drawing a character as to get to the heart of it, seeing beyond surface peculiarities into the moving springs of the human being himself, let him narrowly examine those scenes. There is not a grain of substitution of mere sentiment, or circumstance, for the inner and absolute reality of the position in which these two creatures find themselves. Pip's loathing of what had built up his fortune, and his horror of the uncouth architect, are apparent in even his most generous efforts to protect him from exposure and sentence. Magwitch's convict habits strangely blend themselves with his wild pride in, and love for, the youth whom his money has turned into a gentleman. He has a craving for his good opinion; dreads to offend him by his "heavy grubbing," or by the oaths he lets fall now and then; and pathetically hopes his Pip, his dear boy, won't think him "low": but, upon a chum of Pip's appearing unexpectedly while they are together, he pulls out a jack-knife by way of hint he can defend himself, and produces afterwards a greasy little clasped black Testament on which the startled new-comer, being found to have no hostile intention, is sworn to secrecy. At the opening of the story there had been an exciting scene of the wretched man's chase and recapture among the marshes, and this has its parallel at the close in his chase and recapture on the river while poor Pip is helping to get him off. To make himself sure of the actual course of a boat in such circumstances, and what possible incidents the adventure might have, Dickens hired a steamer for the day from Blackwall to Southend. Eight or nine friends and three or four members of his family were on board, and he seemed to have no care, the whole of that summer day (22nd of May 1861), except to enjoy their enjoyment and entertain them with his own in shape of a thousand whims and fancies; but his sleepless observation was at work all the time, and nothing had escaped his keen vision on either side of the river. The fifteenth chapter of the third volume is a masterpiece.

The characters generally afford the same evidence as those two that Dickens's humour, not less than his creative power, was at its best in this book. The Old-Bailey attorney Jaggers, and his clerk Wemmick (both excellent, and the last one of the oddities that live in everybody's liking for the goodheartedness of its humorous surprises), are as good as his earliest efforts in that line; the Pumblechooks and Wopsles are perfect as bits of Nickleby fresh from the mint; and the scene in which Pip, and Pip's chum Herbert, make up their accounts and schedule their debts and obligations, is original and delightful as Micawber himself. It is the art of living upon nothing and making the best of it, in the most pleasing form. Herbert's intentions to trade east and west, and get himself into business transactions of a magnificent extent and

variety, are as perfectly warranted to us, in his way of putting them, by merely "being in a counting-house and looking about you," as Pip's means of paying his debts are lightened and made easy by his method of simply adding them up with a margin. "The time comes," says Herbert, "when you see your opening. And you go in, and you swoop upon it, and you make your capital, and then there you are! When you have once made your capital you have nothing to do but employ it." In like manner Pip tells us "Suppose your debts to be one hundred and sixty four pounds four and two-pence, I would say, leave a margin and put them down at two hundred; or suppose them to be four times as much, leave a margin and put them down at seven hundred." He is sufficiently candid to add, that, while he has the highest opinion of the wisdom and prudence of the margin, its dangers are that in the sense of freedom and solvency it imparts there is a tendency to run into new debt. But the satire that thus enforces the old warning against living upon vague hopes, and paying ancient debts by contracting new ones, never presented itself in more amusing or kindly shape. A word should be added of the father of the girl that Herbert marries, Bill Barley, ex-ship's purser, a gouty, bed-ridden, drunken old rascal, who lies on his back in an upper floor on Mill Pond Bank by Chinks's Basin, where he keeps, weighs, and serves out the family stores or provisions, according to old professional practice, with one eye at a telescope which is fitted on his bed for the convenience of sweeping the river. This is one of those sketches, slight in itself but made rich with a wealth of comic observation, in which Dickens's humour took especial delight; and to all this part of the story, there is a quaint riverside flavour that gives it amusing reality and relish.

Sending the chapters that contain it, which open the third division of the tale, he wrote thus: "It is a pity that the third portion cannot be read all at once, because its purpose would be much more apparent; and the pity is the greater, because the general turn and tone of the working out and winding up, will be away from all such things as they conventionally go. But what must be, must be. As to the planning out from week to week, nobody can imagine what the difficulty is, without trying. But, as in all such cases, when it is overcome the pleasure is proportionate. Two months more will see me through it, I trust. All the iron is in the fire, and I have 'only' to beat it out." One other letter throws light upon an objection taken not unfairly to the too great speed with which the heroine, after being married, reclaimed, and widowed, is in a page or two again made love to, and remarried by the hero. This summary proceeding was not originally intended. But, over and above its popular acceptance, the book had interested some whose opinions Dickens specially valued (Carlyle among them, I remember); and upon Bulwer Lytton objecting to a close that should leave Pip a solitary man, Dickens substituted what now stands. "You will be surprised" he wrote "to hear that I have changed the end of Great Expectations from and after Pip's return to Joe's, and finding his little likeness there. Bulwer, who has been, as I think you know, extraordinarily taken by the book, so strongly urged it upon me, after reading the proofs, and supported his view with such good reasons, that I resolved to make the change. You shall have it when you come back to town. I have put in as pretty a little piece of writing as I could, and I have no doubt the story will be more acceptable through the alteration." This turned out to be the case; but the first ending nevertheless seems to be more consistent with the drift, as well as natural working out, of the tale, and for this reason it is preserved in a note.

CHRISTMAS SKETCHES.

Between that fine novel, which was issued in three volumes in the autumn of 1861, and the completion of his next serial story, were interposed three sketches in his happiest vein at which everyone laughed and cried in the Christmas times of 1862, '3, and '4. Of the waiter in Somebody's Luggage Dickens has himself spoken; and if any theme is well treated, when, from the point of view taken, nothing more is left to say about it, that bit of fun is perfect. Call it exaggeration, grotesqueness, or by what hard name you will, laughter will always intercept any graver criticism. Writing from Paris of what he was himself responsible for in the articles left by Somebody with his wonderful Waiter, he said that in one of them he

had made the story a camera obscura of certain French places and styles of people; having founded it on something he had noticed in a French soldier. This was the tale of Little Bebelle, which had a small French corporal for its hero, and became highly popular. But the triumph of the Christmas achievements in these days was Mrs. Lirriper. She took her place at once among people known to everybody; and all the world talked of Major Jemmy Jackman, and his friend the poor elderly lodging-house keeper of the Strand, with her miserable cares and rivalries and worries, as if they had both been as long in London and as well known as Norfolk-street itself. A dozen volumes could not have told more than those dozen pages did. The Legacy followed the Lodgings in 1864, and there was no falling off in the fun and laughter.

OUR MUTUAL FRIEND.

The publication of Our Mutual Friend, in the form of the earliest stories, extended from May 1864 to November 1865. Four years earlier he had chosen this title as a good one, and he held to it through much objection. Between that time and his actual commencement there is mention, in his letters, of the three leading notions on which he founded the story. In his water-side wanderings during his last book, the many handbills he saw posted up, with dreary description of persons drowned in the river, suggested the 'long shore men and their ghastly calling whom he sketched in Hexam and Riderhood, "I think," he had written, "a man, young and perhaps eccentric, feigning to be dead, and being dead to all intents and purposes external to himself, and for years retaining the singular view of life and character so imparted, would be a good leading incident for a story;" and this he partly did in Rokesmith. For other actors in the tale, he had thought of "a poor impostor of a man marrying a woman for her money; she marrying him for his money; after marriage both finding out their mistake, and entering into a league and covenant against folks in general:" with whom he had proposed to connect some Perfectly New people. "Everything new about them. If they presented a father and mother, it seemed as if THEY must be bran new, like the furniture and the carriages--shining with varnish, and just home from the manufacturers." These groups took shape in the Lammles and the Veneerings. "I must use somehow," is the remark of another letter, "the uneducated father in fustian and the educated boy in spectacles whom Leech and I saw at Chatham;" of which a hint is in Charley Hexam and his father. The benevolent old Jew whom he makes the unconscious agent of a rascal, was meant to wipe out a reproach against his Jew in Oliver Twist as bringing dislike upon the religion of the race he belonged to.

Having got his title in '61 it was his hope to have begun in '62. "Alas!" he wrote in the April of that year, "I have hit upon nothing for a story. Again and again I have tried. But this odious little house" (he had at this time for a few weeks exchanged Gadshill for a friend's house near Kensington) "seems to have stifled and darkened my invention." It was not until the autumn of the following year he saw his way to a beginning. "The Christmas number has come round again" (30th of August 1863)--"it seems only yesterday that I did the last--but I am full of notions besides for the new twenty numbers. When I can clear the Christmas stone out of the road, I think I can dash into it on the grander journey." He persevered through much difficulty; which he described six weeks later, with characteristic glance at his own ways when writing, in a letter from the office of his journal. "I came here last night, to evade my usual day in the week--in fact to shirk it--and get back to Gad's for five or six consecutive days. My reason is, that I am exceedingly anxious to begin my book. I am bent upon getting to work at it. I want to prepare it for the spring; but I am determined not to begin to publish with less than five numbers done. I see my opening perfectly, with the one main line on which the story is to turn; and if I don't strike while the iron (meaning myself) is hot, I shall drift off again, and have to go through all this uneasiness once more."

He had written, after four months, very nearly three numbers, when upon a necessary rearrangement of

his chapters he had to hit upon a new subject for one of them. "While I was considering" (25th of February) "what it should be, Marcus, who has done an excellent cover, came to tell me of an extraordinary trade he had found out, through one of his painting requirements. I immediately went with him to Saint Giles's to look at the place, and found--what you will see." It was the establishment of Mr. Venus, preserver of animals and birds, and articulator of human bones; and it took the place of the last chapter of No. 2, which was then transferred to the end of No. 3. But a start with three full numbers done, though more than enough to satisfy the hardest self-conditions formerly, did not satisfy him now. With his previous thought given to the story, with his Memoranda to help him, with the people he had in hand to work it with, and ready as he still was to turn his untiring observation to instant use on its behalf, he now moved, with the old large canvas before him, somewhat slowly and painfully. "If I were to lose" (29th of March) "a page of the five numbers I have proposed to myself to be ready by the publication day, I should feel that I had fallen short. I have grown hard to satisfy, and write very slowly. And I have so much--not fiction--that will be thought of, when I don't want to think of it, that I am forced to take more care than I once took."

The first number was launched at last, on the first of May; and after two days he wrote: "Nothing can be better than Our Friend, now in his thirtieth thousand, and orders flowing in fast." But between the first and second number there was a drop of five thousand, strange to say, for the larger number was again reached, and much exceeded, before the book closed. "This leaves me" (10th of June) "going round and round like a carrier-pigeon before swooping on number seven." Thus far he had held his ground; but illness came, with some other anxieties, and on the 29th of July he wrote sadly enough. "Although I have not been wanting in industry, I have been wanting in invention, and have fallen back with the book. Looming large before me is the Christmas work, and I can hardly hope to do it without losing a number of Our Friend. I have very nearly lost one already, and two would take one half of my whole advance. This week I have been very unwell; am still out of sorts; and, as I know from two days' slow experience, have a very mountain to climb before I shall see the open country of my work." The three following months brought hardly more favourable report. "I have not done my number. This death of poor Leech (I suppose) has put me out woefully. Yesterday and the day before I could do nothing; seemed for the time to have quite lost the power; and am only by slow degrees getting back into the track to-day." He rallied after this, and satisfied himself for a while; but in February 1865 that formidable illness in his foot broke out which, at certain times for the rest of his life, deprived him more or less of his inestimable solace of bodily exercise. In April and May he suffered severely; and after trying the sea went abroad for more complete change. "Work and worry, without exercise, would soon make an end of me. If I were not going away now, I should break down. No one knows as I know to-day how near to it I have been."

That was the day of his leaving for France, and the day of his return brought these few hurried words. "Saturday, tenth of June, 1865. I was in the terrific Staplehurst accident yesterday, and worked for hours among the dying and dead. I was in the carriage that did not go over, but went off the line, and hung over the bridge in an inexplicable manner. No words can describe the scene. I am away to Gads." Though with characteristic energy he resisted the effects upon himself of that terrible ninth of June, they were for some time evident; and, up to the day of his death on its fatal fifth anniversary, were perhaps never wholly absent. But very few complaints fell from him. "I am curiously weak--weak as if I were recovering from a long illness." "I begin to feel it more in my head. I sleep well and eat well; but I write half a dozen notes, and turn faint and sick." "I am getting right, though still low in pulse and very nervous. Driving into Rochester yesterday I felt more shaken than I have since the accident." "I cannot bear railway travelling yet. A perfect conviction, against the senses, that the carriage is down on one side (and generally that is the left, and not the side on which the carriage in the accident really went over), comes upon me with anything like speed, and is inexpressibly distressing." These are passages from his letters up to the

close of June. Upon his book the immediate result was that another lost number was added to the losses of the preceding months, and "alas!" he wrote at the opening of July, "for the two numbers you write of! There is only one in existence. I have but just begun the other." "Fancy!" he added next day, "fancy my having under-written number sixteen by two and a half pages--a thing I have not done since Pickwick!" He did it once with Dombey, and was to do it yet again.

The book thus begun and continued under adverse influences, though with fancy in it, descriptive power, and characters well designed, will never rank with his higher efforts. It has some pictures of a rare veracity of soul amid the lowest forms of social degradation, placed beside others of sheer falsehood and pretence amid unimpeachable social correctness, which lifted the writer to his old place; but the judgment of it on the whole must be, that it wants freshness and natural development. This indeed will be most freely admitted by those who feel most strongly that all the old cunning of the master hand is yet in the wayward loving Bella Wilfer, in the vulgar canting Podsnap, and in the dolls' dressmaker Jenny Wren, whose keen little quaint weird ways, and precocious wit sharpened by trouble, are fitted into a character as original and delightfully conceived as it is vividly carried through to the last. A dull coarse web her small life seems made of; but even from its taskwork, which is undertaken for childhood itself, there are glittering threads cast across its woof and warp of care. The unconscious philosophy of her tricks and manners has in it more of the subtler vein of the satire aimed at in the book, than even the voices of society which the tale begins and ends with. In her very kindliness there is the touch of malice that shows a childish playfulness familiar with unnatural privations; this gives a depth as well as tenderness to her humours which entitles them to rank with the writer's happiest things; and though the odd little creature's talk is incessant when she is on the scene, it has the individuality that so seldom tires. It is veritably her own small "trick" and "manner," and is never mistakeable for any one else's. "I have been reading," Dickens wrote to me from France while he was writing the book, "a capital little story by Edmond About--The Notary's Nose. I have been trying other books; but so infernally conversational, that I forget who the people are before they have done talking, and don't in the least remember what they talked about before when they begin talking again!" The extreme contrast to his own art could not be defined more exactly; and other examples from this tale will be found in the differing members of the Wilfer family, in the riverside people at the Fellowship Porters, in such marvellous serio-comic scenes as that of Rogue Riderhood's restoration from drowning, and in those short and simple annals of Betty Higden's life and death which might have given saving virtue to a book more likely than this to perish prematurely. It has not the creative power which crowded his earlier page, and transformed into popular realities the shadows of his fancy; but the observation and humour he excelled in are not wanting to it, nor had there been, in his first completed work, more eloquent or generous pleading for the poor and neglected, than this last completed work contains. Betty Higden finishes what Oliver Twist began.

DR. MARIGOLD AND TALES FOR AMERICA.

He had scarcely closed that book in September, wearied somewhat with a labour of invention which had not been so free or self-sustaining as in the old facile and fertile days, when his customary contribution to Christmas became due from him; and his fancy, let loose in a narrower field, resumed its old luxury of enjoyment. Here are notices of it from his letters. "If people at large understand a Cheap Jack, my part of the Christmas number will do well. It is wonderfully like the real thing, of course a little refined and humoured." "I do hope that in the beginning and end of this Christmas number you will find something that will strike you as being fresh, forcible, and full of spirits." He described its mode of composition afterwards. "Tired with Our Mutual, I sat down to cast about for an idea, with a depressing notion that I was, for the moment, overworked. Suddenly, the little character that you will see, and all belonging to it, came flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and I had only to look on and leisurely describe it." This was Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions, one of the most popular of all the pieces selected for his readings, and

a splendid example of his humour, pathos, and character. There were three more Christmas pieces before he made his last visit to America: Barbox Brothers, The Boy at Mugby Station, and No Thoroughfare: the last a joint piece of work with Mr. Wilkie Collins, who during Dickens's absence in the States transformed it into a play for Mr. Fechter, with a view to which it had been planned originally. There were also two papers written for first publication in America, George Silverman's Explanation, and Holiday Romance, containing about the quantity of half a shilling number of his ordinary serials, and paid for at a rate unexampled in literature. They occupied him not many days in the writing, and he received a thousand pounds for them.

The year after his return, as the reader knows, saw the commencement of the work which death interrupted. The fragment will hereafter be described; and here meanwhile may close my criticism--itself a fragment left for worthier completion by a stronger hand than mine.

But at least I may hope that the ground has been cleared by it from those distinctions and comparisons never safely to be applied to an original writer, and which always more or less intercept his fair appreciation. It was long the fashion to set up wide divergences between novels of incident and manners, and novels of character; the narrower range being left to Fielding and Smollett, and the larger to Richardson; yet there are not many now who will accept such classification. Nor is there more truth in other like distinctions alleged between novelists who are assumed to be real, or ideal, in their methods of treatment. To any original novelist of the higher grade there is no meaning in these contrasted phrases. Neither mode can exist at all perfectly without the other. No matter how sensitive the mind to external impressions, or how keen the observation to whatever can be seen, without the rarer seeing of imagination nothing will be arrived at that is real in any genuine artist-sense. Reverse the proposition, and the result is expressed in an excellent remark of Lord Lytton's, that the happiest effort of imagination, however lofty it may be, is that which enables it to be cheerfully at home with the real. I have said that Dickens felt criticism, of whatever kind, with too sharp a relish for the indifference he assumed to it; but the secret was that he believed himself to be entitled to higher tribute than he was always in the habit of receiving. It was the feeling which suggested a memorable saying of Wordsworth. "I am not at all desirous that any one should write a critique on my poems. If they be from above, they will do their own work in course of time; if not, they will perish as they ought."

The something "from above" never seems to be absent from Dickens, even at his worst. When the strain upon his invention became apparent, and he could only work freely in a more confined space than of old, it was still able to assert itself triumphantly; and his influence over his readers was continued by it to the last day of his life. Looking back over the series of his writings, the first reflection that rises to the mind of any thoughtful person, is one of thankfulness that the most popular of writers, who had carried into the lowest scenes and conditions an amount of observation, fun, and humour not approached by any of his contemporaries, should never have sullied that world-wide influence by a hint of impurity or a possibility of harm. Nor is there anything more surprising than the freshness and variety of character which those writings include, within the range of the not numerous types of character that were the limit of their author's genius. For, this also appears, upon any review of them collectively, that the teeming life which is in them is that of the time in which his own life was passed; and that with the purpose of showing vividly its form and pressure, was joined the hope and design to leave it better than he found it. It has been objected that humanity receives from him no addition to its best types; that the burlesque humourist is always stronger in him than the reflective moralist; that the light thrown by his genius into out of the way corners of life never steadily shines in its higher beaten ways; and that beside his pictures of what man is or does, there is no attempt to show, by delineation of an exalted purpose or a great career, what man is able to be or to do. In the charge abstractedly there is truth; but the fair remark upon it is that whatever can be regarded as essential in the want implied by it will be found in other forms in his

writings, that the perfect innocence of their laughter and tears has been itself a prodigious blessing, and that it is otherwise incident to so great a humourist to work after the fashion most natural to the genius of humour. What kind of work it has been in his case, the attempt is made in preceding pages to show; and on the whole it can be said with some certainty that the best ideals in this sense are obtained, not by presenting with added comeliness or grace the figures which life is ever eager to present as of its best, but by connecting the singularities and eccentricities, which ordinary life is apt to reject or overlook, with the appreciation that is deepest and the laws of insight that are most universal. It is thus that all things human are happily brought within human sympathy. It was at the heart of everything Dickens wrote. It was the secret of the hope he had that his books might help to make people better; and it so guarded them from evil, that there is scarcely a page of the thousands he has written which might not be put into the hands of a little child. It made him the intimate of every English household, and a familiar friend wherever the language is spoken whose stores of harmless pleasure he has so largely increased.

"The loss of no single man during the present generation, if we except Abraham Lincoln alone," said Mr. Horace Greeley, describing the profound and universal grief of America at his death, "has carried mourning into so many families, and been so unaffectedly lamented through all the ranks of society." "The terrible news from England," wrote Longfellow to me (Cambridge, Mass. 12th of June 1870), "fills us all with inexpressible sadness. Dickens was so full of life that it did not seem possible he could die, and yet he has gone before us, and we are sorrowing for him. . . . I never knew an author's death cause such general mourning. It is no exaggeration to say that this whole country is stricken with grief . . ." Nor was evidence then wanting, that far beyond the limits of society on that vast continent the English writer's influence had penetrated. Of this, very touching illustration was given in my first volume; and proof even more striking has since been afforded to me, that not merely in wild or rude communities, but in life the most savage and solitary, his genius had helped to while time away.

"Like all Americans who read," writes an American gentleman, "and that takes in nearly all our people, I am an admirer and student of Dickens. . . . Its perusal" (that of my second volume) "has recalled an incident which may interest you. Twelve or thirteen years ago I crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains as a Government surveyor under a famous frontiersman and civil engineer--Colonel Lander. We were too early by a month, and became snow-bound just on the very summit. Under these circumstances it was necessary to abandon the wagons for a time, and drive the stock (mules) down the mountains to the valleys where there was pasturage and running water. This was a long and difficult task, occupying several days. On the second day, in a spot where we expected to find nothing more human than a grizzly bear or an elk, we found a little hut, built of pine boughs and a few rough boards clumsily hewn out of small trees with an axe. The hut was covered with snow many feet deep, excepting only the hole in the roof which served for a chimney, and a small pit-like place in front to permit egress. The occupant came forth to hail us and solicit whisky and tobacco. He was dressed in a suit made entirely of flour-sacks, and was curiously labelled on various parts of his person Best Family Flour. Extra._ His head was covered by a wolf's skin drawn from the brute's head--with the ears standing erect in a fierce alert manner. He was a most extraordinary object, and told us he had not seen a human being in four months. He lived on bear and elk meat and flour laid in during his short summer. Emigrants in the season paid him a kind of ferry-toll. I asked him how he passed his time, and he went to a barrel and produced Nicholas Nickleby and Pickwick. I found he knew them almost by heart. He did not know, or seem to care, about the author; but he gloried in Sam Weller, despised Squeers, and would probably have taken the latter's scalp with great skill and cheerfulness. For Mr. Winkle he had no feeling but contempt, and in fact regarded a fowling-piece as only a toy for a squaw. He had no Bible; and perhaps if he practised in his rude savage way all Dickens taught, he might less have felt the want even of that companion."

Volume III, Chapter 15 (1867): America Revisited: November and December 1867

America Revisited: November and December 1867

IT is the intention of this and the following chapter to narrate the incidents of the visit to America in Dickens's own language, and in that only. They will consist almost exclusively of extracts from his letters written home, to members of his family and to myself.

On the night of Tuesday the 19th of November he arrived at Boston, where he took up his residence at the Parker House hotel; and his first letter (21st) stated that the tickets for the first four Readings, all to that time issued, had been sold immediately on their becoming saleable. "An immense train of people waited in the freezing street for twelve hours, and passed into the office in their turns, as at a French theatre. The receipts already taken for these nights exceed our calculation by more than L250." Up to the last moment, he had not been able to clear off wholly a shade of misgiving that some of the old grudges might make themselves felt; but from the instant of his setting foot in Boston not a vestige of such fear remained. The greeting was to the full as extraordinary as that of twenty-five years before, and was given now, as then, to the man who had made himself the most popular writer in the country. His novels and tales were crowding the shelves of all the dealers in books in all the cities of the Union. In every house, in every car, on every steamboat, in every theatre of America, the characters, the fancies, the phraseology of Dickens were become familiar beyond those of any other writer of books. "Even in England," said one of the New York journals, "Dickens is less known than here; and of the millions here who treasure every word he has written, there are tens of thousands who would make a large sacrifice to see and hear the man who has made happy so many hours. Whatever sensitiveness there once was to adverse or sneering criticism, the lapse of a quarter of a century, and the profound significance of a great war, have modified or removed." The point was more pithily, and as truly, put by Mr. Horace Greeley in the Tribune. "The fame as a novelist which Mr. Dickens had already created in America, and which, at the best, has never yielded him anything particularly munificent or substantial, is become his capital stock in the present enterprise."

The first Reading was appointed for the second of December, and in the interval he saw some old friends and made some new ones. Boston he was fond of comparing to Edinburgh as Edinburgh was in the days when several dear friends of his own still lived there. Twenty-five years had changed much in the American city; some genial faces were gone, and on ground which he had left a swamp he found now the most princely streets; but there was no abatement of the old warmth of kindness, and, with every attention and consideration shown to him, there was no intrusion. He was not at first completely conscious of the change in this respect, or of the prodigious increase in the size of Boston. But the latter grew upon him from day to day, and then there was impressed along with it a contrast to which it was difficult to reconcile himself. Nothing enchanted him so much as what he again saw of the delightful domestic life of Cambridge, simple, self-respectful, cordial, and affectionate; and it seemed impossible to believe that within half an hour's distance of it should be found what might at any time be witnessed in such hotels as that which he was staying at: crowds of swaggerers, loafers, bar-loungers, and dram-drinkers, that seemed to be making up, from day to day, not the least important-part of the human life of the city. But no great mercantile resort in the States, such as Boston had now become, could be without that drawback; and fortunate should we account any place to be, though even so plague-afflicted, that has yet so near it the healthier influence of the other life which our older world has wellnigh lost altogether.

"The city has increased prodigiously in twenty-five years," he wrote to his daughter Mary. "It has grown more mercantile. It is like Leeds mixed with Preston, and flavoured with New Brighton. Only, instead of smoke and fog, there is an exquisitely bright light air." "Cambridge is exactly as I left it," he wrote to me. "Boston more mercantile, and much larger. The hotel I formerly stayed at, and thought a very big one, is now regarded as a very small affair. I do not yet notice--but a day, you know, is not a long time for observation!--any marked change in character or habits. In this immense hotel I live very high up, and have a hot and cold bath in my bed room, with other comforts not in existence in my former day. The cost of living is enormous." "Two of the staff are at New York," he wrote to his sister-in-law on the 25th of November, "where we are at our wits' end how to keep tickets out of the hands of speculators. We have communications from all parts of the country, but we take no offer whatever. The young under-graduates of Cambridge have made a representation to Longfellow that they are 500 strong and cannot get one ticket. I don't know what is to be done, but I suppose I must read there, somehow. We are all in the clouds until I shall have broken ground in New York." The sale of tickets, there, had begun two days before the first reading in Boston. "At the New York barriers," he wrote to his daughter on the first of December, "where the tickets were on sale and the people ranged as at the Paris theatres, speculators went up and down offering twenty dollars for any body's place. The money was in no case accepted. But one man sold two tickets for the second, third, and fourth nights; his payment in exchange being one ticket for the first night, fifty dollars (about L7 10s._), and a 'brandy-cocktail.'"

On Monday the second of December he read for the first time in Boston, his subjects being the Carol and the Trial from Pickwick; and his reception, from an audience than which perhaps none more remarkable could have been brought together, went beyond all expectations formed. "It is really impossible," he wrote to me next morning, "to exaggerate the magnificence of the reception or the effect of the reading. The whole city will talk of nothing else and hear of nothing else to-day. Every ticket for those announced here, and in New York, is sold. All are sold at the highest price, for which in our calculation we made no allowance; and it is impossible to keep out speculators who immediately sell at a premium. At the decreased rate of money even, we had above L450 English in the house last night; and the New York hall holds 500 people more. Everything looks brilliant beyond the most sanguine hopes, and I was quite as cool last night as though I were reading at Chatham." The next night he read again; and also on Thursday and Friday; on Wednesday he had rested; and on Saturday he travelled to New York.

He had written, the day before he left, that he was making a clear profit of thirteen hundred pounds English a week, even allowing seven dollars to the pound; but words were added having no good omen in them, that the weather was taking a turn of even unusual severity, and that he found the climate, in the suddenness of its changes, "and the wide leaps they take," excessively trying. "The work is of course rather trying too; but the sound position that everything must be subservient to it enables me to keep aloof from invitations. To-morrow," ran the close of the letter, "we move to New York. We cannot beat the speculators in our tickets. We sell no more than six to any one person for the course of four readings; but these speculators, who sell at greatly increased prices and make large profits, will employ any number of men to buy. One of the chief of them--now living in this house, in order that he may move as we move!--can put on 50 people in any place we go to; and thus he gets 300 tickets into his own hands." Almost while Dickens was writing these words an eye-witness was describing to a Philadelphia paper the sale of the New York tickets. The pay-place was to open at nine on a Wednesday morning, and at midnight of Tuesday a long line of speculators were assembled in queue; at two in the morning a few honest buyers had begun to arrive; at five there were, of all classes, two lines of not less than 800 each; at eight there were at least 5000 persons in the two lines; at nine each line was more than three-quarters of a mile in length, and neither became sensibly shorter during the whole morning. "The tickets for the course were all sold before noon. Members of families relieved each other in the queues; waiters flew

across the streets and squares from the neighbouring restaurant, to serve parties who were taking their breakfast in the open December air; while excited men offered five and ten dollars for the mere permission to exchange places with other persons standing nearer the head of the line!"

The effect of the reading in New York corresponded with this marvellous preparation, and Dickens characterised his audience as an unexpected support to him; in its appreciation quick and unfailing, and highly demonstrative in its satisfactions. On the 11th of December he wrote to his daughter: "Amazing success. A very fine audience, far better than at Boston. Carol and Trial on first night, great: still greater, Copperfield and Bob Sawyer on second. For the tickets of the four readings of next week there were, at nine o'clock this morning, 3000 people in waiting, and they had begun to assemble in the bitter cold as early as two o'clock in the morning." To myself he wrote on the 15th, adding touches to the curious picture. "Dolby has got into trouble about the manner of issuing the tickets for next week's series. He cannot get four thousand people into a room holding only two thousand, he cannot induce people to pay at the ordinary price for themselves instead of giving thrice as much to speculators, and he is attacked in all directions . . . I don't much like my hall, for it has two large balconies far removed from the platform; but no one ever waylays me as I go into it or come out of it, and it is kept as rigidly quiet as the Francais at a rehearsal. We have not yet had in it less than L430 per night, allowing for the depreciated currency! I send L3000 to England by this packet. From all parts of the States, applications and offers continually come in. We go to Boston next Saturday for two more readings, and come back here on Christmas Day for four more. I am not yet bound to go elsewhere, except three times (each time for two nights) to Philadelphia; thinking it wisest to keep free for the largest places. I have had an action brought against me by a man who considered himself injured (and really may have been) in the matter of his tickets. Personal service being necessary, I was politely waited on by a marshal for that purpose; whom I received with the greatest courtesy, apparently very much to his amazement. The action was handsomely withdrawn next day, and the plaintiff paid his own costs. . . . Dolby hopes you are satisfied with the figures so far; the profit each night exceeding the estimated profit by L130 odd. He is anxious I should also tell you that he is the most unpopular and best-abused man in America." Next day a letter to his sister-in-law related an incident too common in American cities to disconcert any but strangers. He had lodged himself, I should have said, at the Westminster Hotel in Irving Place. "Last night I was getting into bed just at 12 o'clock, when Dolby came to my door to inform me that the house was on fire. I got Scott up directly; told him first to pack the books and clothes for the Readings; dressed, and pocketed my jewels and papers; while the manager stuffed himself out with money. Meanwhile the police and firemen were in the house tracing the mischief to its source in a certain fire-grate. By this time the hose was laid all through from a great tank on the roof, and everybody turned out to help. It was the oddest sight, and people had put the strangest things on! After chopping and cutting with axes through stairs, and much handing about of water, the fire was confined to a dining-room in which it had originated; and then everybody talked to everybody else, the ladies being particularly loquacious and cheerful. I may remark that the second landlord (from both, but especially the first, I have had untiring attention) no sooner saw me on this agitating occasion, than, with his property blazing, he insisted on taking me down into a room full of hot smoke, to drink brandy and water with him! And so we got to bed again about 2."

Dickens had been a week in New York before he was able to identify the great city which a lapse of twenty-five years had so prodigiously increased. "The only portion that has even now come back to me," he wrote, "is the part of Broadway in which the Carlton Hotel (long since destroyed) used to stand. There is a very fine new park in the outskirts, and the number of grand houses and splendid equipages is quite surprising. There are hotels close here with 500 bedrooms and I don't know how many boarders; but this hotel is quite as quiet as, and not much larger than, Mivart's in Brook Street. My rooms are all en suite, and I come and go by a private door and private staircase communicating with my bed-room. The

waiters are French, and one might be living in Paris. One of the two proprietors is also proprietor of Niblo's Theatre, and the greatest care is taken of me. Niblo's great attraction, the Black Crook, has now been played every night for 16 months(!), and is the most preposterous peg to hang ballets on that was ever seen. The people who act in it have not the slightest idea of what it is about, and never had; but, after taxing my intellectual powers to the utmost, I fancy that I have discovered Black Crook to be a malignant hunchback leagued with the Powers of Darkness to separate two lovers; and that the Powers of Lightness coming (in no skirts whatever) to the rescue, he is defeated. I am quite serious in saying that I do not suppose there are two pages of All the Year Round in the whole piece (which acts all night); the whole of the rest of it being ballets of all sorts, perfectly unaccountable processions, and the Donkey out of last year's Covent Garden pantomime! At the other theatres, comic operas, melodramas, and domestic dramas prevail all over the city, and my stories play no inconsiderable part in them. I go nowhere, having laid down the rule that to combine visiting with my work would be absolutely impossible. . . . The Fenian explosion at Clerkenwell was telegraphed here in a few hours. I do not think there is any sympathy whatever with the Fenians on the part of the American people, though political adventurers may make capital out of a show of it. But no doubt large sections of the Irish population of this State are themselves Fenian; and the local politics of the place are in a most depraved condition, if half of what is said to me be true. I prefer not to talk of these things, but at odd intervals I look round for myself. Great social improvements in respect of manners and forbearance have come to pass since I was here before, but in public life I see as yet but little change."

He had got through half of his first New York readings when a winter storm came on, and from this time until very near his return the severity of the weather was exceptional even for America. When the first snow fell, the railways were closed for some days; and he described New York crowded with sleighs, and the snow piled up in enormous walls the whole length of the streets. "I turned out in a rather gorgeous sleigh yesterday with any quantity of buffalo robes, and made an imposing appearance." "If you were to behold me driving out," he wrote to his daughter, "furred up to the moustache, with an immense white red-and-yellow-striped rug for a covering, you would suppose me to be of Hungarian or Polish nationality." These protections nevertheless availed him little; and when the time came for getting back to Boston, he found himself at the close of his journey with a cold and cough that never again left him until he had quitted the country, and of which the effects became more and more disastrous. For the present there was little allusion to this, his belief at the first being strong that he should overmaster it; but it soon forced itself into all his letters.

His railway journey otherwise had not been agreeable. "The railways are truly alarming. Much worse (because more worn I suppose) than when I was here before. We were beaten about yesterday, as if we had been aboard the Cuba. Two rivers have to be crossed, and each time the whole train is banged aboard a big steamer. The steamer rises and falls with the river, which the railroad don't do; and the train is either banged up hill or banged down hill. In coming off the steamer at one of these crossings yesterday, we were banged up such a height that the rope broke, and one carriage rushed back with a run down-hill into the boat again. I whisked out in a moment, and two or three others after me; but nobody else seemed to care about it. The treatment of the luggage is perfectly outrageous. Nearly every case I have is already broken. When we started from Boston yesterday, I beheld, to my unspeakable amazement, Scott, my dresser, leaning a flushed countenance against the wall of the car, and weeping bitterly. It was over my smashed writing-desk. Yet the arrangements for luggage are excellent, if the porters would not be beyond description reckless." The same excellence of provision, and flinging away of its advantages, are observed in connection with another subject in the same letter. "The halls are excellent. Imagine one holding two thousand people, seated with exact equality for every one of them, and every one seated separately. I have nowhere, at home or abroad, seen so fine a police as the police

of New York; and their bearing in the streets is above all praise. On the other hand, the laws for regulation of public vehicles, clearing of streets, and removal of obstructions, are wildly outraged by the people for whose benefit they are intended. Yet there is undoubtedly improvement in every direction, and I am taking time to make up my mind on things in general. Let me add that I have been tempted out at three in the morning to visit one of the large police station-houses, and was so fascinated by the study of a horrible photograph-book of thieves' portraits that I couldn't shut it up."

A letter of the same date (22nd) to his sister-in-law told of personal attentions awaiting him on his return to Boston by which he was greatly touched. He found his rooms garnished with flowers and holly, with real red berries, and with festoons of moss; and the homely Christmas look of the place quite affected him. "There is a certain Captain Dolliver belonging to the Boston custom-house, who came off in the little steamer that brought me ashore from the Cuba; and he took it into his head that he would have a piece of English mistletoe brought out in this week's Cunard, which should be laid upon my breakfast-table. And there it was this morning. In such affectionate touches as this, these New England people are especially amiable. . . . As a general rule you may lay it down that whatever you see about me in the papers is not true; but you may generally lend a more believing ear to the Philadelphia correspondent of the Times, a well-informed gentleman. Our hotel in New York was on fire again the other night. But fires in this country are quite matters of course. There was a large one in Boston at four this morning; and I don't think a single night has passed, since I have been under the protection of the Eagle, that I have not heard the Fire Bells dolefully clanging all over both cities." The violent abuse of his manager by portions of the press is the subject of the rest of the letter, and receives farther illustration in one of the same date to me. "A good specimen of the sort of newspaper you and I know something of, came out in Boston here this morning. The editor had applied for our advertisements, saying that 'it was at Mr. D's disposal for paragraphs.' The advertisements were not sent; Dolby did not enrich its columns paragraphically; and among its news to-day is the item that 'this chap calling himself Dolby got drunk down town last night, and was taken to the police station for fighting an Irishman!' I am sorry to say that I don't find anybody to be much shocked by this liveliness." It is right to add what was said to me a few days later. "The Tribune is an excellent paper. Horace Greeley is editor in chief, and a considerable shareholder too. All the people connected with it whom I have seen are of the best class. It is also, a very fine property--but here the New York Herald beats it hollow, hollow, hollow! Another able and well edited paper is the New York Times. A most respectable journal too is Bryant's Evening Post, excellently written. There is generally a much more responsible and respectable tone than prevailed formerly, however small may be the literary merit, among papers pointed out to me as of large circulation. In much of the writing there is certainly improvement, but it might be more widely spread."

The time had now come when the course his Readings were to take independently of the two leading cities must be settled, and the general tour made out. His agent's original plan was that they should be in New York every week. "But I say No. By the 10th of January I shall have read to 35,000 people in that city alone. Put the readings out of the reach of all the people behind them, for the time. It is that one of the popular peculiarities which I most particularly notice, that they must not have a thing too easily. Nothing in the country lasts long; and a thing is prized the more, the less easy it is made. Reflecting therefore that I shall want to close, in April, with farewell readings here and in New York, I am convinced that the crush and pressure upon these necessary to their adequate success is only to be got by absence; and that the best thing I can do is not to give either city as much reading as it wants now, but to be independent of both while both are most enthusiastic. I have therefore resolved presently to announce in New York so many readings (I mean a certain number) as the last that can be given there, before I travel to promised places; and that we select the best places, with the largest halls, on our list. This will include, East here--the two or three best New England towns; South--Baltimore and

Washington; West--Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and St. Louis; and towards Niagara--Cleveland and Buffalo. Philadelphia we are already pledged to, for six nights; and the scheme will pretty easily bring us here again twice before the farewells. I feel convinced that this is the sound policy." (It was afterwards a little modified, as will be seen, by public occurrences and his own condition of health; the West, as well as a promise to Canada, having to be abandoned; but otherwise it was carried out.) "I read here to-morrow and Tuesday; all tickets being sold to the end of the series, even for subjects not announced. I have not read a single time at a lower clear profit per night (all deductions made) than L315. But rely upon it I shall take great care not to read oftener than four times a week--after this next week, when I stand committed to five. The inevitable tendency of the staff, when these great houses excite them, is, in the words of an old friend of ours, to 'hurge the hartist hon;' and a night or two ago I had to cut away five readings from their list."

An incident at Boston should have mention before he resumes his readings in New York. In the interval since he was first in America, the Harvard professor of chemistry, Dr. Webster, whom he had at that visit met among the honoured men who held chairs in their Cambridge University, had been hanged for the murder, committed in his laboratory in the college, of a friend who had lent him money, portions of whose body lay concealed under the lid of the lecture-room table where the murderer continued to meet his students. "Being in Cambridge," Dickens wrote to Lord Lytton, "I thought I would go over the Medical School, and see the exact localities where Professor Webster did that amazing murder, and worked so hard to rid himself of the body of the murdered man. (I find there is of course no rational doubt that the Professor was always a secretly cruel man.) They were horribly grim, private, cold, and quiet; the identical furnace smelling fearfully (some anatomical broth in it I suppose) as if the body were still there; jars of pieces of sour mortality standing about, like the forty robbers in Ali Baba after being scalded to death; and bodies near us ready to be carried in to next morning's lecture. At the house where I afterwards dined I heard an amazing and fearful story; told by one who had been at a dinner-party of ten or a dozen, at Webster's, less than a year before the murder. They began rather uncomfortably, in consequence of one of the guests (the victim of an instinctive antipathy) starting up with the sweat pouring down his face, and crying out, 'O Heaven! There's a cat somewhere in the room!' The cat was found and ejected, but they didn't get on very well. Left with their wine, they were getting on a little better; when Webster suddenly told the servants to turn the gas off and bring in that bowl of burning minerals which he had prepared, in order that the company might see how ghastly they looked by its weird light. All this was done, and every man was looking, horror-stricken, at his neighbour; when Webster was seen bending over the bowl with a rope round his neck, holding up the end of the rope, with his head on one side and his tongue lolled out, to represent a hanged man!"

Dickens read at Boston on the 23rd and the 24th of December, and on Christmas day travelled back to New York where he was to read on the 26th. The last words written before he left were of illness. "The low action of the heart, or whatever it is, has inconvenienced me greatly this last week. On Monday night, after the reading, I was laid upon a bed, in a very faint and shady state; and on the Tuesday I did not get up till the afternoon." But what in reality was less grave took outwardly the form of a greater distress; and the effects of the cold which had struck him in travelling to Boston, as yet not known to his English friends, appear most to have alarmed those about him. I depart from my rule in this narrative, otherwise strictly observed, in singling out one of those friends for mention by name: but a business connection with the Readings, as well as untiring offices of personal kindness and sympathy, threw Mr. Fields into closer relations with Dickens from arrival to departure, than any other person had; and his description of the condition of health in which Dickens now quitted Boston and went through the rest of the labour he had undertaken, will be a sad though fit prelude to what the following chapter has to tell. "He went from Boston to New York carrying with him a severe catarrh contracted in our climate. He was quite ill from

the effects of the disease; but he fought courageously against them. . . . His spirit was wonderful, and, although he lost all appetite and could partake of very little food, he was always cheerful and ready for his work when the evening came round. A dinner was tendered to him by some of his literary friends in Boston; but he was so ill the day before that the banquet had to be given up. The strain upon his strength and nerves was very great during all the months he remained, and only a man of iron will could have accomplished what he did. He was accustomed to talk and write a good deal about eating and drinking, but I have rarely seen a man eat and drink less. He liked to dilate in imagination over the brewing of a bowl of punch, but when the punch was ready he drank less of it than any one who might be present. It was the sentiment of the thing and not the thing itself that engaged his attention. I scarcely saw him eat a hearty meal during his whole stay. Both at Parker's hotel in Boston, and at the Westminster in New York, everything was arranged by the proprietors for his comfort, and tempting dishes to pique his invalid appetite were sent up at different hours of the day; but the influenza had seized him with masterful power, and held the strong man down till he left the country."

When he arrived in New York on the evening of Christmas Day he found a letter from his daughter. Answering her next day he told her: "I wanted it much, for I had a frightful cold (English colds are nothing to those of this country) and was very miserable. . . . It is a bad country to be unwell and travelling in. You are one of, say, a hundred people in a heated car with a great stove in it, all the little windows being closed; and the bumping and banging about are indescribable, the atmosphere detestable, the ordinary motion all but intolerable." The following day this addition was made to the letter. "I managed to read last night, but it was as much as I could do. To-day I am so very unwell that I have sent for a doctor. He has just been, and is in doubt whether I shall not have to stop reading for a while."

His stronger will prevailed, and he went on without stopping. On the last day of the year he announced to us that though he had been very low he was getting right again; that in a couple of days he should have accomplished a fourth of the entire Readings; and that the first month of the new year would see him through Philadelphia and Baltimore, as well as through two more nights in Boston. He also prepared his English friends for the startling intelligence they might shortly expect, of four readings coming off in a church, before an audience of two thousand people accommodated in pews, and with himself emerging from a vestry.

Volume III, Chapter 16 (1868): America Revisited: January to April 1868 (Part 1)

America Revisited: January to April 1868

THE Reading on the third of January closed a fourth of the entire series, and on that day Dickens wrote of the trouble brought on them by the "speculators," which to some extent had affected unfavourably the three previous nights in New York. When adventurers buy up the best places, the public resent it by refusing the worst; to prevent it by first helping themselves, being the last thing they ever think of doing. "We try to withhold the best seats from the speculators, but the unaccountable thing is that the great mass of the public buy of them (prefer it), and the rest of the public are injured if we have not got those very seats to sell them. We have now a travelling staff of six men, in spite of which Dolby, who is leaving me to-day to sell tickets in Philadelphia to-morrow morning, will no doubt get into a tempest of difficulties. Of course also, in such a matter, as many obstacles as possible are thrown in an Englishman's way; and he may himself be a little injudicious into the bargain. Last night, for instance, he met one of the 'ushers' (who show people to their seats) coming in with one of our men. It is against orders that any one employed in front should go out during the reading, and he took this man to task in the British manner. Instantly, the free and independent usher put on his hat and walked off. Seeing which, all the other free and independent ushers (some 20 in number) put on their hats and walked off; leaving us absolutely devoid and destitute of a staff for to-night. One has since been improvised: but it was a small matter to raise a stir and ill-will about, especially as one of our men was equally in fault; and really there is little to be done at night. American people are so accustomed to take care of themselves, that one of these immense audiences will fall into their places with an ease amazing to a frequenter of St. James's Hall; and the certainty with which they are all in, before I go on, is a very acceptable mark of respect. Our great labour is outside; and we have been obliged to bring our staff up to six, besides a boy or two, by employment of a regular additional clerk, a Bostonian. The speculators buying the front-seats (we have found instances of this being done by merchants in good position), the public won't have the back seats; return their tickets; write and print volumes on the subject; and deter others from coming. You are not to suppose that this prevails to any great extent, as our lowest house here has been L300; but it does hit us. There is no doubt about it. Fortunately I saw the danger when the trouble began, and changed the list at the right time. . . . You may get an idea of the staff's work, by what is in hand now. They are preparing, numbering, and stamping, 6000 tickets for Philadelphia, and 8000 tickets for Brooklyn. The moment those are done, another 8000 tickets will be wanted for Baltimore, and probably another 6000 for Washington; and all this in addition to the correspondence, advertisements, accounts, travelling, and the nightly business of the Readings four times a week. . . . I cannot get rid of this intolerable cold! My landlord invented for me a drink of brandy, rum, and snow, called it a 'Rocky Mountain Sneezer,' and said it was to put down all less effectual sneezing; but it has not yet had the effect. Did I tell you that the favourite drink before you get up is an Eye-Opener? There has been another fall of snow, succeeded by a heavy thaw."

The day after (the 4th) he went back to Boston, and next day wrote to me: "I am to read here on Monday and Tuesday, return to New York on Wednesday, and finish there (except the farewells in April) on Thursday and Friday. The New York reading of Doctor Marigold made really a tremendous hit. The people doubted at first, having evidently not the least idea what could be done with it, and broke out at last into a perfect chorus of delight. At the end they made a great shout, and gave a rush towards the platform as if they were going to carry me off. It puts a strong additional arrow into my quiver. Another

extraordinary success has been Nickleby and Boots at the Holly Tree (appreciated here in Boston, by the bye, even more than Copperfield); and think of our last New York night bringing L500 English into the house, after making more than the necessary deduction for the present price of gold! The manager is always going about with an immense bundle that looks like a sofa-cushion, but is in reality paper-money, and it had risen to the proportions of a sofa on the morning he left for Philadelphia. Well, the work is hard, the climate is hard, the life is hard: but so far the gain is enormous. My cold steadily refuses to stir an inch. It distresses me greatly at times, though it is always good enough to leave me for the needful two hours. I have tried allopathy, homoeopathy, cold things, warm things, sweet things, bitter things, stimulants, narcotics, all with the same result. Nothing will touch it."

In the same letter, light was thrown on the ecclesiastical mystery. "At Brooklyn I am going to read in Mr. Ward Beecher's chapel: the only building there available for the purpose. You must understand that Brooklyn is a kind of sleeping-place for New York, and is supposed to be a great place in the money way. We let the seats pew by pew! the pulpit is taken down for my screen and gas! and I appear out of the vestry in canonical form! These ecclesiastical entertainments come off on the evenings of the 16th, 17th, 20th, and 21st, of the present month." His first letter after returning to New York (9th of January) made additions to the Brooklyn picture. "Each evening an enormous ferry-boat will convey me and my state-carriage (not to mention half a dozen wagons and any number of people and a few score of horses) across the river to Brooklyn, and will bring me back again. The sale of tickets there was an amazing scene. The noble army of speculators are now furnished (this is literally true, and I am quite serious) each man with a straw mattress, a little bag of bread and meat, two blankets, and a bottle of whiskey. With this outfit, they lie down in line on the pavement the whole of the night before the tickets are sold: generally taking up their position at about 10. It being severely cold at Brooklyn, they made an immense bonfire in the street--a narrow street of wooden houses--which the police turned out to extinguish. A general fight then took place; from which the people farthest off in the line rushed bleeding when they saw any chance of ousting others nearer the door, put their mattresses in the spots so gained, and held on by the iron rails. At 8 in the morning Dolby appeared with the tickets in a portmanteau. He was immediately saluted with a roar of Halloa! Dolby! So Charley has let you have the carriage, has he, Dolby? How is he, Dolby? Don't drop the tickets, Dolby! Look alive, Dolby! &c. &c. &c. in the midst of which he proceeded to business, and concluded (as usual) by giving universal dissatisfaction. He is now going off upon a little journey to look over the ground and cut back again. This little journey (to Chicago) is twelve hundred miles on end, by railway, besides the back again!" It might tax the Englishman, but was nothing to the native American. It was part of his New York landlord's ordinary life in a week, Dickens told me, to go to Chicago and look at his theatre there on a Monday; to pelt back to Boston and look at his theatre there on a Thursday; and to come rushing to New York on a Friday, to apostrophize his enormous ballet.

Three days later, still at New York, he wrote to his sister-in-law. "I am off to Philadelphia this evening for the first of three visits of two nights each, tickets for all being sold. My cold steadily refuses to leave me, but otherwise I am as well as I can hope to be under this heavy work. My New York readings are over (except the farewell nights), and I look forward to the relief of being out of my hardest hall. On Friday I was again dead beat at the end, and was once more laid upon a sofa. But the faintness went off after a little while. We have now cold bright frosty weather, without snow; the best weather for me." Next day from Philadelphia he wrote to his daughter that he was lodged in The Continental, one of the most immense of American hotels, but that he found himself just as quiet as elsewhere. "Everything is very good, my waiter is German, and the greater part of the servants seem to be coloured people. The town is very clean, and the day as blue and bright as a fine Italian day. But it freezes very very hard, and my cold is not improved; for the cars were so intolerably hot that I was often obliged to stand upon the brake

outside, and then the frosty air bit me indeed. I find it necessary (so oppressed am I with this American catarrh as they call it) to dine at three o'clock instead of four, that I may have more time to get voice; so that the days are cut short and letter-writing not easy."

He nevertheless found time in this city to write to me (14th of January) the most interesting mention he had yet made of such opinions as he had been able to form during his present visit, apart from the pursuit that absorbed him. Of such of those opinions as were given on a former page, it is only necessary to repeat that while the tone of party politics still impressed him unfavourably, he had thus far seen everywhere great changes for the better socially. I will add other points from the same letter. That he was unfortunate in his time of visiting New York, as far as its politics were concerned, what has since happened conclusively shows. "The Irish element is acquiring such enormous influence in New York city, that when I think of it, and see the large Roman Catholic cathedral rising there, it seems unfair to stigmatise as 'American' other monstrous things that one also sees. But the general corruption in respect of the local funds appears to be stupendous, and there is an alarming thing as to some of the courts of law which I am afraid is native-born. A case came under my notice the other day in which it was perfectly plain, from what was said to me by a person interested in resisting an injunction, that his first proceeding had been to 'look up the Judge.'" Of such occasional provincial oddity, harmless in itself but strange in large cities, as he noticed in the sort of half disappointment at the small fuss made by himself about the Readings, and in the newspaper references to "Mr. Dickens's extraordinary composure" on the platform, he gives an illustration. "Last night here in Philadelphia (my first night), a very impressible and responsive audience were so astounded by my simply walking in and opening my book that I wondered what was the matter. They evidently thought that there ought to have been a flourish, and Dolby sent in to prepare for me. With them it is the simplicity of the operation that raises wonder. With the newspapers 'Mr. Dickens's extraordinary composure' is not reasoned out as being necessary to the art of the thing, but is sensitively watched with a lurking doubt whether it may not imply disparagement of the audience. Both these things strike me as drolly expressive.". . .

His testimony as to improved social habits and ways was expressed very decidedly. "I think it reasonable to expect that as I go westward, I shall find the old manners going on before me, and may tread upon their skirts mayhap. But so far, I have had no more intrusion or boredom than I have when I lead the same life in England. I write this in an immense hotel, but I am as much at peace in my own rooms, and am left as wholly undisturbed, as if I were at the Station Hotel in York. I have now read in New York city to 40,000 people, and am quite as well known in the streets there as I am in London. People will turn back, turn again and face me, and have a look at me, or will say to one another 'Look here! Dickens coming!' But no one ever stops me or addresses me. Sitting reading in the carriage outside the New York post-office while one of the staff was stamping the letters inside, I became conscious that a few people who had been looking at the turn-out had discovered me within. On my peeping out good-humouredly, one of them (I should say a merchant's book-keeper) stepped up to the door, took off his hat, and said in a frank way: 'Mr. Dickens, I should very much like to have the honour of shaking hands with you'--and, that done, presented two others. Nothing could be more quiet or less intrusive. In the railway cars, if I see anybody who clearly wants to speak to me, I usually anticipate the wish by speaking myself. If I am standing on the brake outside (to avoid the intolerable stove), people getting down will say with a smile: 'As I am taking my departure, Mr. Dickens, and can't trouble you for more than a moment, I should like to take you by the hand sir.' And so we shake hands and go our ways. . . . Of course many of my impressions come through the readings. Thus I find the people lighter and more humorous than formerly; and there must be a great deal of innocent imagination among every class, or they never could pet with such extraordinary pleasure as they do, the Boots' story of the elopement of the two little children. They seem to see the children; and the women set up a shrill undercurrent of half-pity and half-pleasure that is

quite affecting. To-night's reading is my 26th; but as all the Philadelphia tickets for four more are sold, as well as four at Brooklyn, you must assume that I am at--say--my 35th reading. I have remitted to Coutts's in English gold L10,000 odd; and I roughly calculate that on this number Dolby will have another thousand pounds profit to pay me. These figures are of course between ourselves, at present; but are they not magnificent? The expenses, always recollect, are enormous. On the other hand we never have occasion to print a bill of any sort (bill-printing and posting are great charges at home); and have just now sold off L90 worth of bill-paper, provided beforehand, as a wholly useless incumbrance."

Then came, as ever, the constant shadow that still attended him, the slave in the chariot of his triumph. "The work is very severe. There is now no chance of my being rid of this American catarrh until I embark for England. It is very distressing. It likewise happens, not seldom, that I am so dead beat when I come off that they lay me down on a sofa after I have been washed and dressed, and I lie there, extremely faint, for a quarter of an hour. In that time I rally and come right." One week later from New York, where he had become due on the 16th for the first of his four Brooklyn readings, he wrote to his sister-in-law. "My cold sticks to me, and I can scarcely exaggerate what I undergo from sleeplessness. I rarely take any breakfast but an egg and a cup of tea--not even toast or bread and butter. My small dinner at 3, and a little quail or some such light thing when I come home at night, is my daily fare; and at the hall I have established the custom of taking an egg beaten up in sherry before going in, and another between the parts, which I think pulls me up. . . . It is snowing hard now, and I begin to move to-morrow. There is so much floating ice in the river, that we are obliged to have a pretty wide margin of time for getting over the ferry to read." The last of the readings over the ferry was on the day when this letter was written. "I finished at my church to-night. It is Mrs. Stowe's brother's, and a most wonderful place to speak in. We had it enormously full last night (Marigold and Trial), but it scarcely required an effort. Mr. Ward Beecher being present in his pew, I sent to invite him to come round before he left. I found him to be an unostentatious, evidently able, straightforward, and agreeable man; extremely well-informed, and with a good knowledge of art."

Baltimore and Washington were the cities in which he was now, on quitting New York, to read for the first time; and as to the latter some doubts arose. The exceptional course had been taken in regard to it, of selecting a hall with space for not more than 700 and charging everybody five dollars; to which Dickens, at first greatly opposed, had yielded upon use of the argument, "you have more people at New York, thanks to the speculators, paying more than five dollars every night." But now other suggestions came. "Horace Greeley dined with me last Saturday," he wrote on the 20th, "and didn't like my going to Washington, now full of the greatest rowdies and worst kind of people in the States. Last night at eleven came B. expressing like doubts; and though they may be absurd I thought them worth attention, B. coming so close on Greeley." Mr. Dolby was in consequence sent express to Washington with power to withdraw or go on, as enquiry on the spot might dictate; and Dickens took the additional resolve so far to modify the last arrangements of his tour as to avoid the distances of Chicago, St. Louis, and Cincinnati, to content himself with smaller places and profits, and thereby to get home nearly a month earlier. He was at Philadelphia on the 23rd of January, when he announced this intention. "The worst of it is, that everybody one advises with has a monomania respecting Chicago. 'Good heavens sir,' the great Philadelphia authority said to me this morning, 'if you don't read in Chicago the people will go into fits!' Well, I answered, I would rather they went into fits than I did. But he didn't seem to see it at all."

From Baltimore he wrote to his sister-in-law on the 29th, in the hour's interval he had to spare before going back to Philadelphia. "It has been snowing hard for four and twenty hours--though this place is as far south as Valentia in Spain; and my manager, being on his way to New York, has a good chance of being snowed up somewhere. This is one of the places where Butler carried it with a high hand during the war, and where the ladies used to spit when they passed a Northern soldier. They are very

handsome women, with an Eastern touch in them, and dress brilliantly. I have rarely seen so many fine faces in an audience. They are a bright responsive people likewise, and very pleasant to read to. My hall is a charming little opera house built by a society of Germans; quite a delightful place for the purpose. I stand on the stage, with the drop curtain down, and my screen before it. The whole scene is very pretty and complete, and the audience have a 'ring' in them that sounds deeper than the ear. I go from here to Philadelphia, to read to-morrow night and Friday; come through here again on Saturday on my way back to Washington; come back here on Saturday week for two finishing nights; then go to Philadelphia for two farewells--and so turn my back on the southern part of the country. Our new plan will give 82 readings in all." (The real number was 76, six having been dropped on subsequent political excitements.) "Of course I afterwards discovered that we had finally settled the list on a Friday. I shall be halfway through it at Washington; of course on a Friday also, and my birthday." To myself he wrote on the following day from Philadelphia, beginning with a thank Heaven that he had struck off Canada and the West, for he found the wear and tear "enormous." "Dolby decided that the croakers were wrong about Washington, and went on; the rather as his raised prices, which he put finally at three dollars each, gave satisfaction. Fields is so confident about Boston, that my remaining list includes, in all, 14 more readings there. I don't know how many more we might not have had here (where I have had attentions otherwise that have been very grateful to me), if we had chosen. Tickets are now being resold at ten dollars each. At Baltimore I had a charming little theatre, and a very apprehensive impulsive audience. It is remarkable to see how the Ghost of Slavery haunts the town; and how the shambling, untidy, evasive, and postponing Irrepressible proceeds about his free work, going round and round it, instead of at it. The melancholy absurdity of giving these people votes, at any rate at present, would glare at one out of every roll of their eyes, chuckle in their mouths, and bump in their heads, if one did not see (as one cannot help seeing in the country) that their enfranchisement is a mere party trick to get votes. Being at the Penitentiary the other day (this, while we mention votes), and looking over the books, I noticed that almost every man had been 'pardoned' a day or two before his time was up. Why? Because, if he had served his time out, he would have been ipso facto disfranchised. So, this form of pardon is gone through to save his vote; and as every officer of the prison holds his place only in right of his party, of course his hopeful clients vote for the party that has let them out! When I read in Mr. Beecher's church at Brooklyn, we found the trustees had suppressed the fact that a certain upper gallery holding 150 was 'the Coloured Gallery,' On the first night not a soul could be induced to enter it; and it was not until it became known next day that I was certainly not going to read there more than four times, that we managed to fill it. One night at New York, on our second or third row, there were two well-dressed women with a tinge of colour--I should say, not even quadroons. But the holder of one ticket who found his seat to be next them, demanded of Dolby 'what he meant by fixing him next to those two Gord darmed cusses of niggers?' and insisted on being supplied with another good place. Dolby firmly replied that he was perfectly certain Mr. Dickens would not recognize such an objection on any account, but he could have his money back, if he chose. Which, after some squabbling, he had. In a comic scene in the New York Circus one night, when I was looking on, four white people sat down upon a form in a barber's shop to be shaved. A coloured man came as the fifth customer, and the four immediately ran away. This was much laughed at and applauded. In the Baltimore Penitentiary, the white prisoners dine on one side of the room, the coloured prisoners on the other; and no one has the slightest idea of mixing them. But it is indubitably the fact that exhalations not the most agreeable arise from a number of coloured people got together, and I was obliged to beat a quick retreat from their dormitory. I strongly believe that they will die out of this country fast. It seems, looking at them, so manifestly absurd to suppose it possible that they can ever hold their own against a restless, shifty, striving, stronger race."

On the fourth of February he wrote from Washington. "You may like to have a line to let you know that it

is all right here, and that the croakers were simply ridiculous. I began last night. A charming audience, no dissatisfaction whatever at the raised prices, nothing missed or lost, cheers at the end of the Carol, and rounds upon rounds of applause all through. All the foremost men and their families had taken tickets for the series of four. A small place to read in. L300 in it." It will be no violation of the rule of avoiding private detail if the very interesting close of this letter is given. Its anecdote of President Lincoln was repeatedly told by Dickens after his return, and I am under no necessity to withhold from it the authority of Mr. Sumner's name. "I am going to-morrow to see the President, who has sent to me twice. I dined with Charles Sumner last Sunday, against my rule; and as I had stipulated for no party, Mr. Secretary Stanton was the only other guest, besides his own secretary. Stanton is a man with a very remarkable memory, and extraordinarily familiar with my books. . . . He and Sumner having been the first two public men at the dying President's bedside, and having remained with him until he breathed his last, we fell into a very interesting conversation after dinner, when, each of them giving his own narrative separately, the usual discrepancies about details of time were observable. Then Mr. Stanton told me a curious little story which will form the remainder of this short letter.

"On the afternoon of the day on which the President was shot, there was a cabinet council at which he presided. Mr. Stanton, being at the time commander-in-chief of the Northern troops that were concentrated about here, arrived rather late. Indeed they were waiting for him, and on his entering the room, the President broke off in something he was saying, and remarked: 'Let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton then noticed, with great surprise, that the President sat with an air of dignity in his chair instead of lolling about it in the most ungainly attitudes, as his invariable custom was; and that instead of telling irrelevant or questionable stories, he was grave and calm, and quite a different man. Mr. Stanton, on leaving the council with the Attorney-General, said to him, 'That is the most satisfactory cabinet meeting I have attended for many a long day! What an extraordinary change in Mr. Lincoln!' The Attorney-General replied, 'We all saw it, before you came in. While we were waiting for you, he said, with his chin down on his breast, "Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon."' To which the Attorney-General had observed, 'Something good, sir, I hope?' when the President answered very gravely: 'I don't know; I don't know. But it will happen, and shortly too!' As they were all impressed by his manner, the Attorney-General took him up again: 'Have you received any information, sir, not yet disclosed to us?' 'No,' answered the President: 'but I have had a dream. And I have now had the same dream three times. Once, on the night preceding the Battle of Bull Run. Once, on the night preceding' such another (naming a battle also not favourable to the North). His chin sank on his breast again, and he sat reflecting. 'Might one ask the nature of this dream, sir?' said the Attorney-General. 'Well,' replied the President, without lifting his head or changing his attitude, 'I am on a great broad rolling river--and I am in a boat--and I drift--and I drift!--But this is not business--' suddenly raising his face and looking round the table as Mr. Stanton entered, 'let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton and the Attorney-General said, as they walked on together, it would be curious to notice whether anything ensued on this; and they agreed to notice. He was shot that night."

On his birthday, the seventh of February, Dickens had his interview with President Andrew Johnson. "This scrambling scribblement is resumed this morning, because I have just seen the President: who had sent to me very courteously asking me to make my own appointment. He is a man with a remarkable face, indicating courage, watchfulness, and certainly strength of purpose. It is a face of the Webster type, but without the 'bounce' of Webster's face. I would have picked him out anywhere as a character of mark. Figure, rather stoutish for an American; a trifle under the middle size; hands clasped in front of him; manner, suppressed, guarded, anxious. Each of us looked at the other very hard. . . . It was in his own cabinet that I saw him. As I came away, Thornton drove up in a sleigh--turned out for a state occasion--to deliver his credentials. There was to be a cabinet council at 12. The room was very like a London club's

ante-drawing room. On the walls, two engravings only: one, of his own portrait; one, of Lincoln's. . . . In the outer room was sitting a certain sunburnt General Blair, with many evidences of the war upon him. He got up to shake hands with me, and then I found that he had been out on the Prairie with me five-and-twenty years ago. . . . The papers having referred to my birthday's falling to-day, my room is filled with most exquisite flowers. They came pouring in from all sorts of people at breakfast time. The audiences here are really very fine. So ready to laugh or cry, and doing both so freely, that you would suppose them to be Manchester shillings rather than Washington half-sovereigns. Alas! alas! my cold worse than ever." So he had written too at the opening of his letter.

The first reading had been four days earlier, and was described to his daughter in a letter on the 4th, with a comical incident that occurred in the course of it. "The gas was very defective indeed last night, and I began with a small speech to the effect that I must trust to the brightness of their faces for the illumination of mine. This was taken greatly. In the Carol a most ridiculous incident occurred. All of a sudden, I saw a dog leap out from among the seats in the centre aisle, and look very intently at me. The general attention being fixed on me, I don't think anybody saw this dog; but I felt so sure of his turning up again and barking, that I kept my eye wandering about in search of him. He was a very comic dog, and it was well for me that I was reading a comic part of the book. But when he bounced out into the centre aisle again, in an entirely new place, and (still looking intently at me) tried the effect of a bark upon my proceedings, I was seized with such a paroxysm of laughter that it communicated itself to the audience, and we roared at one another, loud and long." Three days later the sequel came, in a letter to his sister-in-law. "I mentioned the dog on the first night here? Next night, I thought I heard (in Copperfield) a suddenly-suppressed bark. It happened in this wise:--One of our people, standing just within the door, felt his leg touched, and looking down beheld the dog, staring intently at me, and evidently just about to bark. In a transport of presence of mind and fury, he instantly caught him up in both hands, and threw him over his own head, out into the entry, where the check-takers received him like a game at ball. Last night he came again, with another dog; but our people were so sharply on the look-out for him that he didn't get in. He had evidently promised to pass the other dog, free."

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What is expressed in these letters, of a still active, hopeful, enjoying, energetic spirit, able to assert itself against illness of the body and in some sort to overmaster it, was also so strongly impressed upon those who were with him, that, seeing his sufferings as they did, they yet found it difficult to understand the extent of them. The sadness thus ever underlying his triumph makes it all very tragical. "That afternoon of my birthday," he wrote from Baltimore on the 11th, "my catarrh was in such a state that Charles Sumner, coming in at five o'clock, and finding me covered with mustard poultice, and apparently voiceless, turned to Dolby and said: 'Surely, Mr. Dolby, it is impossible that he can read to-night!' Says Dolby: 'Sir, I have told Mr. Dickens so, four times to-day, and I have been very anxious. But you have no idea how he will change, when he gets to the little table.' After five minutes of the little table I was not (for the time) even hoarse. The frequent experience of this return of force when it is wanted, saves me a vast amount of anxiety; but I am not at times without the nervous dread that I may some day sink altogether." To the same effect in another letter he adds: "Dolby and Osgood" (the latter represented the publishing firm of Mr. Fields and was one of the travelling staff), "who do the most ridiculous things to keep me in spirits (I am often very heavy, and rarely sleep much), are determined to have a walking match at Boston on the last day of February to celebrate the arrival of the day when I can say 'next month!' for home." The match ended in the Englishman's defeat; which Dickens doubly commemorated, by a narrative of the American victory in sporting-newspaper style, and by a dinner in Boston to a party of dear friends there.

After Baltimore he was reading again at Philadelphia, from which he wrote to his sister-in-law on the 13th as to a characteristic trait observed in both places. "Nothing will induce the people to believe in the farewells. At Baltimore on Tuesday night (a very brilliant night indeed), they asked as they came out: 'When will Mr. Dickens read here again?' 'Never.' 'Nonsense! Not come back, after such houses as these? Come. Say when he'll read again.' Just the same here. We could as soon persuade them that I am the President, as that to-morrow night I am going to read here for the last time. . . . There is a child in this house--a little girl--to whom I presented a black doll when I was here last; and as I have just seen her eye at the keyhole since I began writing this, I think she and the doll must be outside still. 'When you sent it up to me by the coloured boy,' she said after receiving it (coloured boy is the term for black waiter), 'I gave such a cream that Ma come running in and creamed too, 'cos she fort I'd hurt myself. But I creamed a cream of joy.' She had a friend to play with her that day, and brought the friend with her--to my infinite confusion. A friend all stockings and much too tall, who sat on the sofa very far back with her stockings sticking stiffly out in front of her, and glared at me, and never spake a word. Dolby found us confronted in a sort of fascination, like serpent and bird."

On the 15th he was again at New York, in the thick of more troubles with the speculators. They involved even charges of fraud in ticket-sales at Newhaven and Providence; indignation meetings having been held by the Mayors, and unavailing attempts made by his manager to turn the wrath aside. "I expect him back here presently half bereft of his senses, and I should be wholly bereft of mine if the situation were not comical as well as disagreeable. We can sell at our own box-office to any extent; but we cannot buy back of the speculators, because we have informed the public that all the tickets are gone; and even if we made the sacrifice of buying at their price and selling at ours, we should be accused of treating with them and of making money by it." It ended in Providence by his going himself to the town and making a speech; and in Newhaven it ended by his sending back the money taken, with intimation that he would not read until there had been a new distribution of the tickets approved by all the town. Fresh disturbance broke out upon this; but he stuck to his determination to delay the reading until the heats had cooled

down, and what should have been given in the middle of February he did not give until the close of March.

The Readings he had promised at the smaller outlying places by the Canadian frontier and Niagara district, including Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, were appointed for that same March month which was to be the interval between the close of the ordinary readings and the farewells in the two leading cities. All that had been promised in New York were closed when he returned to Boston on the 23rd of February, ready for the increase he had promised there; but the check of a sudden political excitement came. It was the month when the vote was taken for impeachment of President Johnson. "It is well" (25th of February) "that the money has flowed in hitherto so fast, for I have a misgiving that the great excitement about the President's impeachment will damage our receipts. . . . The vote was taken at 5 last night. At 7 the three large theatres here, all in a rush of good business, were stricken with paralysis. At 8 our long line of outsiders waiting for unoccupied places, was nowhere. To-day you hear all the people in the streets talking of only one thing. I shall suppress my next week's promised readings (by good fortune, not yet announced), and watch the course of events. Nothing in this country, as I before said, lasts long; and I think it likely that the public may be heartily tired of the President's name by the 9th of March, when I read at a considerable distance from here. So behold me with a whole week's holiday in view!" Two days later he wrote pleasantly to his sister-in-law of his audiences. "They have come to regard the Readings and the Reader as their peculiar property; and you would be both amused and pleased if you could see the curious way in which they show this increased interest in both. Whenever they laugh or cry, they have taken to applauding as well; and the result is very inspiriting. I shall remain here until Saturday the 7th; but after to-morrow night shall not read here until the 1st of April, when I begin my farewells--six in number." On the 28th he wrote: "To-morrow fortnight we purpose being at the Falls of Niagara, and then we shall come back and really begin to wind up. I have got to know the Carol so well that I can't remember it, and occasionally go dodging about in the wildest manner, to pick up lost pieces. They took it so tremendously last night that I was stopped every five minutes. One poor young girl in mourning burst into a passion of grief about Tiny Tim, and was taken out. We had a fine house, and, in the interval while I was out, they covered the little table with flowers. The cough has taken a fresh start as if it were a novelty, and is even worse than ever to-day. There is a lull in the excitement about the President: but the articles of impeachment are to be produced this afternoon, and then it may set in again. Osgood came into camp last night from selling in remote places, and reports that at Rochester and Buffalo (both places near the frontier), tickets were bought by Canada people, who had struggled across the frozen river and clambered over all sorts of obstructions to get them. Some of those distant halls turn out to be smaller than represented; but I have no doubt--to use an American expression--that we shall 'get along.' The second half of the receipts cannot reasonably be expected to come up to the first; political circumstances, and all other surroundings, considered."

His old ill luck in travel pursued him. On the day his letter was written a snow-storm began, with a heavy gale of wind; and "after all the hard weather gone through," he wrote on the 2nd of March, "this is the worst day we have seen. It is telegraphed that the storm prevails over an immense extent of country, and is just the same at Chicago as here. I hope it may prove a wind up. We are getting sick of the very sound of sleigh-bells even." The roads were so bad and the trains so much out of time, that he had to start a day earlier; and on the 6th of March his tour north-west began, with the gale still blowing and the snow falling heavily. On the 13th he wrote to me from Buffalo.

"We go to the Falls of Niagara to-morrow for our own pleasure; and I take all the men, as a treat. We found Rochester last Tuesday in a very curious state. Perhaps you know that the Great Falls of the Genessee River (really very fine, even so near Niagara) are at that place. In the height of a sudden thaw, an immense bank of ice above the rapids refused to yield; so that the town was threatened (for the

second time in four years) with submersion. Boats were ready in the streets, all the people were up all night, and none but the children slept. In the dead of the night a thundering noise was heard, the ice gave way, the swollen river came raging and roaring down the Falls, and the town was safe. Very picturesque! but 'not very good for business,' as the manager says. Especially as the hall stands in the centre of danger, and had ten feet of water in it on the last occasion of flood. But I think we had above L200 English. On the previous night at Syracuse--a most out of the way and unintelligible-looking place, with apparently no people in it--we had L375 odd. Here, we had last night, and shall have to-night, whatever we can cram into the hall.

"This Buffalo has become a large and important town, with numbers of German and Irish in it. But it is very curious to notice, as we touch the frontier, that the American female beauty dies out; and a woman's face clumsily compounded of German, Irish, Western America, and Canadian, not yet fused together, and not yet moulded, obtains instead. Our show of Beauty at night is, generally, remarkable; but we had not a dozen pretty women in the whole throng last night, and the faces were all blunt. I have just been walking about, and observing the same thing in the streets. . . . The winter has been so severe, that the hotel on the English side at Niagara (which has the best view of the Falls, and is for that reason very preferable) is not yet open. So we go, perforce, to the American: which telegraphs back to our telegram: 'all Mr. Dickens's requirements perfectly understood.' I have not yet been in more than two very bad inns. I have been in some, where a good deal of what is popularly called 'slopping round' has prevailed; but have been able to get on very well. 'Slopping round,' so used, means untidyness and disorder. It is a comically expressive phrase, and has many meanings. Fields was asking the price of a quarter-cask of sherry the other day. 'Wa'al Mussr Fields,' the merchant replies, 'that varies according to quality, as is but nay'tral. If yer wa'ant a sherry just to slop round with it, I can fix you some at a very low figger.'"

His letter was resumed at Rochester on the 18th. "After two most brilliant days at the Falls of Niagara, we got back here last night. To-morrow morning we turn out at 6 for a long railway journey back to Albany. But it is nearly all 'back' now, thank God! I don't know how long, though, before turning, we might have gone on at Buffalo. . . . We went everywhere at the Falls, and saw them in every aspect. There is a suspension bridge across, now, some two miles or more from the Horse Shoe; and another, half a mile nearer, is to be opened in July. They are very fine but very ticklish, hanging aloft there, in the continual vibration of the thundering water: nor is one greatly reassured by the printed notice that troops must not cross them at step, that bands of music must not play in crossing, and the like. I shall never forget the last aspect in which we saw Niagara yesterday. We had been everywhere, when I thought of struggling (in an open carriage) up some very difficult ground for a good distance, and getting where we could stand above the river, and see it, as it rushes forward to its tremendous leap, coming for miles and miles. All away to the horizon on our right was a wonderful confusion of bright green and white water. As we stood watching it with our faces to the top of the Falls, our backs were towards the sun. The majestic valley below the Falls, so seen through the vast cloud of spray, was made of rainbow. The high banks, the riven rocks, the forests, the bridge, the buildings, the air, the sky, were all made of rainbow. Nothing in Turner's finest water-colour drawings, done in his greatest day, is so ethereal, so imaginative, so gorgeous in colour, as what I then beheld. I seemed to be lifted from the earth and to be looking into Heaven. What I once said to you, as I witnessed the scene five and twenty years ago, all came back at this most affecting and sublime sight. The 'muddy vesture of our clay' falls from us as we look. . . . I chartered a separate carriage for our men, so that they might see all in their own way, and at their own time.

"There is a great deal of water out between Rochester and New York, and travelling is very uncertain, as I fear we may find to-morrow. There is again some little alarm here on account of the river rising too fast. But our to-night's house is far ahead of the first. Most charming halls in these places; excellent for sight

and sound. Almost invariably built as theatres, with stage, scenery, and good dressing-rooms. Audience seated to perfection (every seat always separate), excellent doorways and passages, and brilliant light. My screen and gas are set up in front of the drop-curtain, and the most delicate touches will tell anywhere. No creature but my own men ever near me."

His anticipation of the uncertainty that might beset his travel back had dismal fulfilment. It is described in a letter written on the 21st from Springfield to his valued friend, Mr. Frederic Ouvry, having much interest of its own, and making lively addition to the picture which these chapters give. The unflagging spirit that bears up under all disadvantages is again marvellously shown. "You can hardly imagine what my life is with its present conditions--how hard the work is, and how little time I seem to have at my disposal. It is necessary to the daily recovery of my voice that I should dine at 3 when not travelling; I begin to prepare for the evening at 6; and I get back to my hotel, pretty well knocked up, at half-past 10. Add to all this, perpetual railway travelling in one of the severest winters ever known; and you will descry a reason or two for my being an indifferent correspondent. Last Sunday evening I left the Falls of Niagara for this and two intervening places. As there was a great thaw, and the melted snow was swelling all the rivers, the whole country for three hundred miles was flooded. On the Tuesday afternoon (I had read on the Monday) the train gave in, as under circumstances utterly hopeless, and stopped at a place called Utica; the greater part of which was under water, while the high and dry part could produce nothing particular to eat. Here, some of the wretched passengers passed the night in the train, while others stormed the hotel. I was fortunate enough to get a bed-room, and garnished it with an enormous jug of gin-punch; over which I and the manager played a double-dummy rubber. At six in the morning we were knocked up: 'to come aboard and try it.' At half-past six we were knocked up again with the tidings 'that it was of no use coming aboard or trying it.' At eight all the bells in the town were set agoing, to summon us to 'come aboard' instantly. And so we started, through the water, at four or five miles an hour; seeing nothing but drowned farms, barns adrift like Noah's arks, deserted villages, broken bridges, and all manner of ruin. I was to read at Albany that night, and all the tickets were sold. A very active superintendent of works assured me that if I could be 'got along' he was the man to get me along: and that if I couldn't be got along, I might conclude that it couldn't possibly be fixed. He then turned on a hundred men in seven-league boots, who went ahead of the train, each armed with a long pole and pushing the blocks of ice away. Following this cavalcade, we got to land at last, and arrived in time for me to read the Carol and Trial triumphantly. My people (I had five of the staff with me) turned to at their work with a will, and did a day's labour in a couple of hours. If we had not come in as we did, I should have lost L350, and Albany would have gone distracted. You may conceive what the flood was, when I hint at the two most notable incidents of our journey:--1, We took the passengers out of two trains, who had been in the water, immovable all night and all the previous day. 2, We released a large quantity of sheep and cattle from trucks that had been in the water I don't know how long, but so long that the creatures in them had begun to eat each other, and presented a most horrible spectacle."

Beside Springfield, he had engagements at Portland, New Bedford, and other places in Massachusetts, before the Boston farewells began; and there wanted but two days to bring him to that time, when he thus described to his daughter the labour which was to occupy them. His letter was from Portland on the 29th of March, and it will be observed that he no longer compromises or glozes over what he was and had been suffering. During his terrible travel to Albany his cough had somewhat spared him, but the old illness had broken out in his foot; and, though he persisted in ascribing it to the former supposed origin ("having been lately again wet, from walking in melted snow, which I suppose to be the occasion of its swelling in the old way"), it troubled him sorely, extended now at intervals to the right foot also, and lamed him for all the time he remained in the States. "I should have written to you by the last mail, but I really was too unwell to do it. The writing day was last Friday, when I ought to have left Boston for New

Bedford (55 miles) before eleven in the morning. But I was so exhausted that I could not be got up, and had to take my chance of an evening train's producing me in time to read--which it just did. With the return of snow, nine days ago, my cough became as bad as ever. I have coughed every morning from two or three till five or six, and have been absolutely sleepless. I have had no appetite besides, and no taste. Last night here, I took some laudanum; and it is the only thing that has done me good, though it made me sick this morning. But the life, in this climate, is so very hard! When I did manage to get to New Bedford, I read with my utmost force and vigour. Next morning, well or ill, I must turn out at seven, to get back to Boston on my way here. I dined at Boston at three, and at five had to come on here (a hundred and thirty miles or so) for to-morrow night: there being no Sunday train. To-morrow night I read here in a very large place; and Tuesday morning at six I must again start, to get back to Boston once more. But after to-morrow night I have only the farewells, thank God! Even as it is, however, I have had to write to Dolby (who is in New York) to see my doctor there, and ask him to send me some composing medicine that I can take at night, inasmuch as without sleep I cannot get through. However sympathetic and devoted the people are about one, they CAN NOT be got to comprehend, seeing me able to do the two hours when the time comes round, that it may also involve much misery." To myself on the 30th he wrote from the same place, making like confession. No comment could deepen the sadness of the story of suffering, revealed in his own simple language. "I write in a town three parts of which were burnt down in a tremendous fire three years ago. The people lived in tents while their city was rebuilding. The charred trunks of the trees with which the streets of the old city were planted, yet stand here and there in the new thoroughfares like black spectres. The rebuilding is still in progress everywhere. Yet such is the astonishing energy of the people that the large hall in which I am to read to-night (its predecessor was burnt) would compare very favourably with the Free Trade Hall at Manchester! . . . I am nearly used up. Climate, distance, catarrh, travelling, and hard work, have begun (I may say so, now they are nearly all over) to tell heavily upon me. Sleeplessness besets me; and if I had engaged to go on into May, I think I must have broken down. It was well that I cut off the Far West and Canada when I did. There would else have been a sad complication. It is impossible to make the people about one understand, however zealous and devoted (it is impossible even to make Dolby understand until the pinch comes), that the power of coming up to the mark every night, with spirits and spirit, may coexist with the nearest approach to sinking under it. When I got back to Boston on Thursday, after a very hard three weeks, I saw that Fields was very grave about my going on to New Bedford (55 miles) next day, and then coming on here (180 miles) next day. But the stress is over, and so I can afford to look back upon it, and think about it, and write about it." On the 31st he closed his letter at Boston, and he was at home when I heard of him again. "The latest intelligence, my dear old fellow, is, that I have arrived here safely, and that I am certainly better. I consider my work virtually over, now. My impression is, that the political crisis will damage the farewells by about one half. I cannot yet speak by the card; but my predictions here, as to our proceedings, have thus far been invariably right. We took last night at Portland, L360 English; where a costly Italian troupe, using the same hall to-night, had not booked L14! It is the same all over the country, and the worst is not seen yet. Everything is becoming absorbed in the Presidential impeachment, helped by the next Presidential election. Connecticut is particularly excited. The night after I read at Hartford this last week, there were two political meetings in the town; meetings of two parties; and the hotel was full of speakers coming in from outlying places. So at Newhaven: the moment I had finished, carpenters came in to prepare for next night's politics. So at Buffalo. So everywhere very soon."

In the same tone he wrote his last letter to his sister-in-law from Boston. "My notion of the farewells is pretty certain now to turn out right. We had L300 English here last night. To-day is a Fast Day, and to-night we shall probably take much less. Then it is likely that we shall pull up again, and strike a good reasonable average; but it is not at all probable that we shall do anything enormous. Every pulpit in

Massachusetts will resound with violent politics to-day and to-night." That was on the second of April, and a postscript was added. "Friday afternoon the 3rd. Catarrh worse than ever! and we don't know (at four o'clock) whether I can read to-night or must stop. Otherwise, all well."

Dickens's last letter from America was written to his daughter Mary from Boston on the 9th of April, the day before his sixth and last farewell night. "I not only read last Friday when I was doubtful of being able to do so, but read as I never did before, and astonished the audience quite as much as myself. You never saw or heard such a scene of excitement. Longfellow and all the Cambridge men have urged me to give in. I have been very near doing so, but feel stronger to-day. I cannot tell whether the catarrh may have done me any lasting injury in the lungs or other breathing organs, until I shall have rested and got home. I hope and believe not. Consider the weather! There have been two snow storms since I wrote last, and to-day the town is blotted out in a ceaseless whirl of snow and wind. Dolby is as tender as a woman, and as watchful as a doctor. He never leaves me during the reading, now, but sits at the side of the platform, and keeps his eye upon me all the time. Ditto George the gasman, steadiest and most reliable man I ever employed. I have Dombey to do to-night, and must go through it carefully; so here ends my report. The personal affection of the people in this place is charming to the last. Did I tell you that the New York Press are going to give me a public dinner on Saturday the 18th?"

In New York, where there were five farewell nights, three thousand two hundred and ninety-eight dollars were the receipts of the last, on the 20th of April; those of the last at Boston, on the 8th, having been three thousand four hundred and fifty-six dollars. But on earlier nights in the same cities respectively, these sums also had been reached; and indeed, making allowance for an exceptional night here and there, the receipts varied so wonderfully little, that a mention of the highest average returns from other places will give no exaggerated impression of the ordinary receipts throughout. Excluding fractions of dollars, the lowest were New Bedford ($1640), Rochester ($1906), Springfield ($1970), and Providence ($2140). Albany and Worcester averaged something less than $2400; while Hartford, Buffalo, Baltimore, Syracuse, Newhaven, and Portland rose to $2600. Washington's last night was $2610, no night there having less than $2500. Philadelphia exceeded Washington by $300, and Brooklyn went ahead of Philadelphia by $200. The amount taken at the four Brooklyn readings was 11,128 dollars.

The New York public dinner was given at Delmonico's, the hosts were more than two hundred, and the chair was taken by Mr. Horace Greeley. Dickens attended with great difficulty, and spoke in pain. But he used the occasion to bear his testimony to the changes of twenty-five years; the rise of vast new cities; growth in the graces and amenities of life; much improvement in the press, essential to every other advance; and changes in himself leading to opinions more deliberately formed. He promised his kindly entertainers that no copy of his Notes, or his Chuzzlewit, should in future be issued by him without accompanying mention of the changes to which he had referred that night; of the politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, and consideration in all ways for which he had to thank them; and of his gratitude for the respect shown, during all his visit, to the privacy enforced upon him by the nature of his work and the condition of his health.

He had to leave the room before the proceedings were over. On the following Monday he read to his last American audience, telling them at the close that he hoped often to recall them, equally by his winter fire and in the green summer weather, and never as a mere public audience but as a host of personal friends. He sailed two days later in the "Russia," and reached England in the first week of May 1868.

Volume III, Chapter 17 (1868-1870): Last Readings

Last Readings

FAVOURABLE weather helped him pleasantly home. He had profited greatly by the sea voyage, perhaps greatly more by its repose; and on the 25th of May he described himself to his Boston friends as brown beyond belief, and causing the greatest disappointment in all quarters by looking so well. "My doctor was quite broken down in spirits on seeing me for the first time last Saturday. Good Lord! seven years younger!_ said the doctor, recoiling." That he gave all the credit to "those fine days at sea," and none to the rest from such labours as he had passed through, the close of the letter too sadly showed. "We are already settling--think of this!--the details of my farewell course of readings."

Even on his way out to America that enterprise was in hand. From Halifax he had written to me. "I told the Chappells that when I got back to England, I would have a series of farewell readings in town and country; and then read No More. They at once offer in writing to pay all expenses whatever, to pay the ten per cent. for management, and to pay me, for a series of 75, six thousand pounds." The terms were raised and settled before the first Boston readings closed. The number was to be a hundred; and the payment, over and above expenses and per centage, eight thousand pounds. Such a temptation undoubtedly was great; and though it was a fatal mistake which Dickens committed in yielding to it, it was not an ignoble one. He did it under no excitement from the American gains, of which he knew nothing when he pledged himself to the enterprise. No man could care essentially less for mere money than he did. But the necessary provision for many sons was a constant anxiety; he was proud of what the Readings had done to abridge this care; and the very strain of them under which it seems certain that his health had first given way, and which he always steadily refused to connect especially with them, had also broken the old confidence of being at all times available for his higher pursuit. What affected his health only he would not regard as part of the question either way. That was to be borne as the lot more or less of all men; and the more thorough he could make his feeling of independence, and of ability to rest, by what was now in hand, the better his final chances of a perfect recovery would be. That was the spirit in which he entered on this last engagement. It was an opportunity offered for making a particular work really complete before he should abandon it for ever. Something of it will not be indiscernible even in the summary of his past acquisitions, which with a pardonable exultation he now sent me.

"We had great difficulty in getting our American accounts squared to the point of ascertaining what Dolby's commission amounted to in English money. After all, we were obliged to call in the aid of a money-changer, to determine what he should pay as his share of the average loss of conversion into gold. With this deduction made, I think his commission (I have not the figures at hand) was L2,888; Ticknor and Fields had a commission of L1,000, besides 5 per cent. on all Boston receipts. The expenses in America to the day of our sailing were 38,948 dollars;--roughly 39,000 dollars, or L13,000. The preliminary expenses were L614. The average price of gold was nearly 40 per cent., and yet my profit was within a hundred or so of L20,000. Supposing me to have got through the present engagement in good health, I shall have made by the Readings, in two years, L33,000: that is to say, L13,000 received from the Chappells, and L20,000 from America. What I had made by them before, I could only ascertain by a long examination of Coutts's books. I should say, certainly not less than L10,000: for I remember that I made half that money in the first town and country campaign with poor Arthur Smith. These figures are of course between ourselves; but don't you think them rather remarkable? The Chappell bargain began with L50 a night and everything paid; then became L60; and now rises to L80."

The last readings were appointed to begin with October; and at the request of an old friend, Chauncy Hare Townshend, who died during his absence in the States, he had accepted the trust, which occupied

him some part of the summer, of examining and selecting for publication a bequest of some papers on matters of religious belief, which were issued in a small volume the following year. There came also in June a visit from Longfellow and his daughters, with later summer visits from the Eliot Nortons; and at the arrival of friends whom he loved and honoured as he did these, from the great country to which he owed so much, infinite were the rejoicings of Gadshill. Nothing could quench his old spirit in this way. But in the intervals of my official work I saw him frequently that summer, and never without the impression that America had told heavily upon him. There was manifest abatement of his natural force, the elasticity of bearing was impaired, and the wonderful brightness of eye was dimmed at times. One day, too, as he walked from his office with Miss Hogarth to dine at our house, he could read only the halves of the letters over the shop doors that were on his right as he looked. He attributed it to medicine. It was an additional unfavourable symptom that his right foot had become affected as well as the left, though not to anything like the same extent, during the journey from the Canada frontier to Boston. But all this disappeared, upon any special cause for exertion; and he was never unprepared to lavish freely for others the reserved strength that should have been kept for himself. This indeed was the great danger, for it dulled the apprehension of us all to the fact that absolute and pressing danger did positively exist.

He had scarcely begun these last readings than he was beset by a misgiving, that, for a success large enough to repay Messrs. Chappell's liberality, the enterprise would require a new excitement to carry him over the old ground; and it was while engaged in Manchester and Liverpool at the outset of October that this announcement came. "I have made a short reading of the murder in Oliver Twist. I cannot make up my mind, however, whether to do it or not. I have no doubt that I could perfectly petrify an audience by carrying out the notion I have of the way of rendering it. But whether the impression would not be so horrible as to keep them away another time, is what I cannot satisfy myself upon. What do you think? It is in three short parts: 1, Where Fagin sets Noah Claypole on to watch Nancy. 2, The scene on London Bridge. 3, Where Fagin rouses Claypole from his sleep, to tell his perverted story to Sikes. And the Murder, and the Murderer's sense of being haunted. I have adapted and cut about the text with great care, and it is very powerful. I have to-day referred the book and the question to the Chappells as so largely interested." I had a strong dislike to this proposal, less perhaps on the ground which ought to have been taken of the physical exertion it would involve, than because such a subject seemed to be altogether out of the province of reading; and it was resolved, that, before doing it, trial should be made to a limited private audience in St. James's Hall. The note announcing this, from Liverpool on the 25th of October, is for other reasons worth printing. "I give you earliest notice that the Chappells suggest to me the 18th of November" (the 14th was chosen) "for trial of the Oliver Twist murder, when everything in use for the previous day's reading can be made available. I hope this may suit you? We have been doing well here; and how it was arranged, nobody knows, but we had L410 at St. James's Hall last Tuesday, having advanced from our previous L360. The expenses are such, however, on the princely scale of the Chappells, that we never begin at a smaller, often at a larger, cost than L180. . . . I have not been well, and have been heavily tired. However, I have little to complain of--nothing, nothing; though, like Mariana, I am aweary. But think of this. If all go well, and (like Mr. Dennis) I 'work off' this series triumphantly, I shall have made of these readings L28,000 in a year and a half." This did not better reconcile me to what had been too clearly forced upon him by the supposed necessity of some new excitement to ensure a triumphant result; and even the private rehearsal only led to a painful correspondence between us, of which a few words are all that need now be preserved. "We might have agreed," he wrote, "to differ about it very well, because we only wanted to find out the truth if we could, and because it was quite understood that I wanted to leave behind me the recollection of something very passionate and dramatic, done with simple means, if the art would justify the theme." Apart from mere personal considerations, the whole question lay in these last words. It was impossible for me to admit that the effect to be produced

was legitimate, or such as it was desirable to associate with the recollection of his readings.

Mention should not be omitted of two sorrows which affected him at this time. At the close of the month before the readings began his youngest son went forth from home to join an elder brother in Australia. "These partings are hard hard things" (26th of September), "but they are the lot of us all, and might have to be done without means or influence, and then would be far harder. God bless him!" Hardly a month later, the last of his surviving brothers, Frederick, the next to himself, died at Darlington. "He had been tended" (24th of October) "with the greatest care and affection by some local friends. It was a wasted life, but God forbid that one should be hard upon it, or upon anything in this world that is not deliberately and coldly wrong."

Before October closed the renewal of his labour had begun to tell upon him. He wrote to his sister-in-law on the 29th of sickness and sleepless nights, and of its having become necessary, when he had to read, that he should lie on the sofa all day. After arrival at Edinburgh in December he had been making a calculation that the railway travelling over such a distance involved something more than thirty thousand shocks to the nerves; but he went on to Christmas, alternating these far-off places with nights regularly intervening in London, without much more complaint than of an inability to sleep. Trade reverses at Glasgow had checked the success there, but Edinburgh made compensation. "The affectionate regard of the people exceeds all bounds and is shown in every way. The audiences do everything but embrace me, and take as much pains with the readings as I do. . . . The keeper of the Edinburgh hall, a fine old soldier, presented me on Friday night with the most superb red camellia for my button-hole that ever was seen. Nobody can imagine how he came by it, as the florists had had a considerable demand for that colour, from ladies in the stalls, and could get no such thing."

The second portion of the enterprise opened with the New Year, and the Sikes and Nancy scenes, everywhere his prominent subject, exacted the most terrible physical exertion from him. In January he was at Clifton, where he had given, he told his sister-in-law, "by far the best Murder yet done;" while at the same date he wrote to his daughter: "At Clifton on Monday night we had a contagion of fainting; and yet the place was not hot. I should think we had from a dozen to twenty ladies taken out stiff and rigid, at various times! It became quite ridiculous." He was afterwards at Cheltenham. "Macready is of opinion that the Murder is two Macbeths. He declares that he heard every word of the reading, but I doubt it. Alas! he is sadly infirm." On the 27th he wrote to his daughter from Torquay that the place into which they had put him to read, and where a pantomime had been played the night before, was something between a Methodist chapel, a theatre, a circus, a riding-school, and a cow-house. That day he wrote to me from Bath: "Landor's ghost goes along the silent streets here before me. . . . The place looks to me like a cemetery which the Dead have succeeded in rising and taking. Having built streets, of their old gravestones, they wander about scantly trying to 'look alive.' A dead failure."

In the second week of February he was in London, under engagement to return to Scotland (which he had just left) after the usual weekly reading at St. James's Hall, when there was a sudden interruption. "My foot has turned lame again!" was his announcement to me on the 15th, followed next day by this letter. "Henry Thompson will not let me read to-night, and will not let me go to Scotland to-morrow. Tremendous house here, and also in Edinburgh. Here is the certificate he drew up for himself and Beard to sign. 'We the undersigned hereby certify that Mr. C. D. is suffering from inflammation of the foot (caused by over-exertion), and that we have forbidden his appearance on the platform this evening, as he must keep his room for a day or two.' I have sent up to the Great Western Hotel for apartments, and, if I can get them, shall move there this evening. Heaven knows what engagements this may involve in April! It throws us all back, and will cost me some five hundred pounds."

A few days' rest again brought so much relief, that, against the urgent entreaties of members of his

family as well as other friends, he was in the railway carriage bound for Edinburgh on the morning of the 20th of February, accompanied by Mr. Chappell himself. "I came down lazily on a sofa," he wrote to me from Edinburgh next day, "hardly changing my position the whole way. The railway authorities had done all sorts of things, and I was more comfortable than on the sofa at the hotel. The foot gave me no uneasiness, and has been quiet and steady all night." He was nevertheless under the necessity, two days later, of consulting Mr. Syme; and he told his daughter that this great authority had warned him against over-fatigue in the readings, and given him some slight remedies, but otherwise reported him in "joost pairfactly splendid condition." With care he thought the pain might be got rid of. "'Wa'at mad' Thompson think it was goot?' he said often, and seemed to take that opinion extremely ill." Again before leaving Scotland he saw Mr. Syme, and wrote to me on the second of March of the indignation with which he again treated the gout diagnosis, declaring the disorder to be an affection of the delicate nerves and muscles originating in cold. "I told him that it had shewn itself in America in the other foot as well. 'Noo I'll joost swear,' said he, 'that ayond the fatigue o' the readings ye'd been tramping i' th' snaw, within twa or three days.' I certainly had. 'Wa'al,' said he triumphantly, 'and hoo did it first begin? I' th' snaw. Goot! Bah!--Thompson knew no other name for it, and just ca'd it Goot--Boh!' For which he took two guineas." Yet the famous pupil, Sir Henry Thompson, went certainly nearer the mark than the distinguished master, Mr. Syme, in giving to it a more than local character.

The whole of that March month he went on with the scenes from Oliver Twist. "The foot goes famously," he wrote to his daughter. "I feel the fatigue in it (four Murders in one week) but not overmuch. It merely aches at night; and so does the other, sympathetically I suppose." At Hull on the 8th he heard of the death of the old and dear friend, Emerson Tennent, to whom he had inscribed his last book; and on the morning of the 12th I met him at the funeral. He had read the Oliver Twist scenes the night before at York; had just been able to get to the express train, after shortening the pauses in the reading, by a violent rush when it was over; and had travelled through the night. He appeared to, me "dazed" and worn. No man could well look more so than he did, that sorrowful morning.

The end was near. A public dinner, which will have mention on a later page, had been given him in Liverpool on the 10th of April, with Lord Dufferin in the chair, and a reading was due from him in Preston on the 22nd of that month. But on Sunday the 18th we had ill report of him from Chester, and on the 21st he wrote from Blackpool to his sister-in-law. "I have come to this Sea-Beach Hotel (charming) for a day's rest. I am much better than I was on Sunday; but shall want careful looking to, to get through the readings. My weakness and deadness are all on the left side; and if I don't look at anything I try to touch with my left hand, I don't know where it is. I am in (secret) consultation with Frank Beard, who says that I have given him indisputable evidences of overwork which he could wish to treat immediately; and so I have telegraphed for him. I have had a delicious walk by the sea to-day, and I sleep soundly, and have picked up amazingly in appetite. My foot is greatly better too, and I wear my own boot." Next day was appointed for the reading at Preston; and from that place he wrote to me, while waiting the arrival of Mr. Beard. "Don't say anything about it, but the tremendously severe nature of this work is a little shaking me. At Chester last Sunday I found myself extremely giddy, and extremely uncertain of my sense of touch, both in the left leg and the left hand and arms. I had been taking some slight medicine of Beard's; and immediately wrote to him describing exactly what I felt, and asking him whether those feelings could be referable to the medicine? He promptly replied: 'There can be no mistaking them from your exact account. The medicine cannot possibly have caused them. I recognise indisputable symptoms of overwork, and I wish to take you in hand without any loss of time.' They have greatly modified since, but he is coming down here this afternoon. To-morrow night at Warrington I shall have but 25 more nights to work through. If he can coach me up for them, I do not doubt that I shall get all right again--as I did when I became free in America. The foot has given me very little trouble. Yet it is remarkable that it is the left

foot too; and that I told Henry Thompson (before I saw his old master Syme) that I had an inward conviction that whatever it was, it was not gout. I also told Beard, a year after the Staplehurst accident, that I was certain that my heart had been fluttered, and wanted a little helping. This the stethoscope confirmed; and considering the immense exertion I am undergoing, and the constant jarring of express trains, the case seems to me quite intelligible. Don't say anything in the Gad's direction about my being a little out of sorts. I have broached the matter of course; but very lightly. Indeed there is no reason for broaching it otherwise."

Even to the close of that letter he had buoyed himself up with the hope that he might yet be "coached" and that the readings need not be discontinued. But Mr. Beard stopped them at once, and brought his patient to London. On Friday morning the 23rd, the same envelope brought me a note from himself to say that he was well enough, but tired; in perfectly good spirits, not at all uneasy, and writing this himself that I should have it under his own hand; with a note from his eldest son to say that his father appeared to him to be very ill, and that a consultation had been appointed with Sir Thomas Watson. The statement of that distinguished physician, sent to myself in June 1872, completes for the present the sorrowful narrative.

"It was, I think, on the 23rd of April 1869 that I was asked to see Charles Dickens, in consultation with Mr. Carr Beard. After I got home I jotted down, from their joint account, what follows.

"After unusual irritability, C. D. found himself, last Saturday or Sunday, giddy, with a tendency to go backwards, and to turn round. Afterwards, desiring to put something on a small table, he pushed it and the table forwards, undesignedly. He had some odd feeling of insecurity about his left leg, as if there was something unnatural about his heel; but he could lift, and he did not drag, his leg. Also he spoke of some strangeness of his left hand and arm; missed the spot on which he wished to lay that hand, unless he carefully looked at it; felt an unreadiness to lift his hands towards his head, especially his left hand--when, for instance, he was brushing his hair.

"He had written thus to Mr. Carr Beard.

"'Is it possible that anything in my medicine can have made me extremely giddy, extremely uncertain of my footing, especially on the left side, and extremely indisposed to raise my hands to my head. These symptoms made me very uncomfortable on Saturday (qy. Sunday?) night, and all yesterday, &c.'

"The state thus described showed plainly that C. D. had been on the brink of an attack of paralysis of his left side, and possibly of apoplexy. It was, no doubt, the result of extreme hurry, overwork, and excitement, incidental to his Readings.

"On hearing from him Mr. Carr Beard had gone at once to Preston, or Blackburn (I am not sure which), had forbidden his reading that same evening, and had brought him to London.

"When I saw him he appeared to be well. His mind was unclouded, his pulse quiet. His heart was beating with some slight excess of the natural impulse. He told me he had of late sometimes, but rarely, lost or misused a word; that he forgot names, and numbers, but had always done that; and he promised implicit obedience to our injunctions.

"We gave him the following certificate.

"'The undersigned certify that Mr. Charles Dickens has been seriously unwell, through great exhaustion and fatigue of body and mind consequent upon his public Readings and long and frequent railway journeys. In our judgment Mr. Dickens will not be able with safety to himself to resume his Readings for several months to come.

"'THOS. WATSON, M.D. "'F. CARR BEARD.'

"However, after some weeks, he expressed a wish for my sanction to his endeavours to redeem, in a careful and moderate way, some of the reading engagements to which he had been pledged before those threatenings of brain-mischief in the North of England.

"As he had continued uniformly to seem and to feel perfectly well, I did not think myself warranted to refuse that sanction: and in writing to enforce great caution in the trials, I expressed some apprehension that he might fancy we had been too peremptory in our injunctions of mental and bodily repose in April; and I quoted the following remark, which occurs somewhere in one of Captain Cook's Voyages. 'Preventive measures are always invidious, for when most successful, the necessity for them is the least apparent.'

"I mention this to explain the letter which I send herewith, and which I must beg you to return to me, as a precious remembrance of the writer with whom I had long enjoyed very friendly and much valued relations.

"I scarcely need say that if what I have now written can, in any way, be of use to you, it is entirely at your service and disposal--nor need I say with how much interest I have read the first volume of your late friend's Life. I cannot help regretting that a great pressure of professional work at the time, prevented my making a fuller record of a case so interesting."

The twelve readings to which Sir Thomas Watson consented, with the condition that railway travel was not to accompany them, were farther to be delayed until the opening months of 1870. They were an offering from Dickens by way of small compensation to Messrs. Chappell for the breakdown of the enterprise on which they had staked so much. But here practically he finished his career as a public reader, and what remains will come with the end of what is yet to be told. One effort only intervened, by which he hoped to get happily back to his old pursuits; but to this, as to that which preceded it, sterner Fate said also No, and his Last Book, like his Last Readings, prematurely closed.

Volume III, Chapter 18 (1869-1870): Last Book

Last Book

THE last book undertaken by Dickens was to be published, in illustrated monthly numbers, of the old form, but to close with the twelfth. It closed, unfinished, with the sixth number, which was itself underwritten by two pages.

His first fancy for the tale was expressed in a letter in the middle of July. "What should you think of the idea of a story beginning in this way?--Two people, boy and girl, or very young, going apart from one another, pledged to be married after many years--at the end of the book. The interest to arise out of the tracing of their separate ways, and the impossibility of telling what will be done with that impending fate." This was laid aside; but it left a marked trace on the story as afterwards designed, in the position of Edwin Drood and his betrothed.

I first heard of the later design in a letter dated "Friday the 6th of August 1869," in which after speaking, with the usual unstinted praise he bestowed always on what moved him in others, of a little tale he had received for his journal, he spoke of the change that had occurred to him for the new tale by himself. "I laid aside the fancy I told you of, and have a very curious and new idea for my new story. Not a communicable idea (or the interest of the book would be gone), but a very strong one, though difficult to work." The story, I learnt immediately afterward, was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted. The last chapters were to be written in the condemned cell, to which his wickedness, all elaborately elicited from him as if told of another, had brought him. Discovery by the murderer of the utter needlessness of the murder for its object, was to follow hard upon commission of the deed; but all discovery of the murderer was to be baffled till towards the close, when, by means of a gold ring which had resisted the corrosive effects of the lime into which he had thrown the body, not only the person murdered was to be identified but the locality of the crime and the man who committed it. So much was told to me before any of the book was written; and it will be recollected that the ring, taken by Drood to be given to his betrothed only if their engagement went on, was brought away with him from their last interview. Rosa was to marry Tartar, and Crisparkle the sister of Landless, who was himself, I think, to have perished in assisting Tartar finally to unmask and seize the murderer.

Nothing had been written, however, of the main parts of the design excepting what is found in the published numbers; there was no hint or preparation for the sequel in any notes of chapters in advance; and there remained not even what he had himself so sadly written of the book by Thackeray also interrupted by death. The evidence of matured designs never to be accomplished, intentions planned never to be executed, roads of thought marked out never to be traversed, goals shining in the distance never to be reached, was wanting here. It was all a blank. Enough had been completed nevertheless to give promise of a much greater book than its immediate predecessor. "I hope his book is finished," wrote Longfellow when the news of his death was flashed to America. "It is certainly one of his most beautiful works, if not the most beautiful of all. It would be too sad to think the pen had fallen from his hand, and left it incomplete." Some of its characters were touched with subtlety, and in its descriptions his imaginative power was at its best. Not a line was wanting to the reality, in the most minute local detail, of places the most widely contrasted; and we saw with equal vividness the lazy cathedral town and the lurid opium-eater's den. Something like the old lightness and buoyancy of animal spirits gave a new freshness to the humour; the scenes of the child-heroine and her luckless betrothed had both novelty and nicety of character in them; and Mr. Grewgious in chambers with his clerk and the two waiters, the conceited fool

Sapsea, and the blustering philanthropist Honeythunder, were first-rate comedy. Miss Twinkleton was of the family of Miss La Creevy; and the lodging-house keeper, Miss Billickin, though she gave Miss Twinkleton but a sorry account of her blood, had that of Mrs. Todgers in her veins. "I was put in life to a very genteel boarding-school, the mistress being no less a lady than yourself, of about your own age, or it may be, some years younger, and a poorness of blood flowed from the table which has run through my life." Was ever anything better said of a school-fare of starved gentility?

The last page of Edwin Drood was written in the Chalet in the afternoon of his last day of consciousness; and I have thought there might be some interest in a facsimile of the greater part of this final page of manuscript that ever came from his hand, at which he had worked unusually late in order to finish the chapter. It has very much the character, in its excessive care of correction and interlineation, of all his later manuscripts; and in order that comparison may be made with his earlier and easier method, I place beside it a portion of a page of the original of Oliver Twist. His greater pains and elaboration of writing, it may be mentioned, become first very obvious in the later parts of Martin Chuzzlewit; but not the least remarkable feature in all his manuscripts, is the accuracy with which the portions of each representing the several numbers are exactly adjusted to the space the printer had to fill. Whether without erasure or so interlined as to be illegible, nothing is wanting, and there is nothing in excess. So assured was the habit, that he has himself remarked upon an instance the other way, in Our Mutual Friend, as not having happened to him for thirty years. But Edwin Drood more startlingly showed him how unsettled the habit he most prized had become, in the clashing of old and new pursuits. "When I had written" (22nd of December 1869) "and, as I thought, disposed of the first two Numbers of my story, Clowes informed me to my horror that they were, together, twelve printed pages too short!!! Consequently I had to transpose a chapter from number two to number one, and remodel number two altogether! This was the more unlucky, that it came upon me at the time when I was obliged to leave the book, in order to get up the Readings" (the additional twelve for which Sir Thomas Watson's consent had been obtained), "quite gone out of my mind since I left them off. However, I turned to it and got it done, and both numbers are now in type. Charles Collins has designed an excellent cover." It was his wish that his son-in-law should have illustrated the story; but, this not being practicable, upon an opinion expressed by Mr. Millais which the result thoroughly justified, choice was made of Mr. S. L. Fildes.

This reference to the last effort of Dickens's genius had been written as it thus stands, when a discovery of some interest was made by the writer. Within the leaves of one of Dickens's other manuscripts were found some detached slips of his writing, on paper only half the size of that used for the tale, so cramped, interlined, and blotted as to be nearly illegible, which on close inspection proved to be a scene in which Sapsea the auctioneer is introduced as the principal figure, among a group of characters new to the story. The explanation of it perhaps is, that, having become a little nervous about the course of the tale, from a fear that he might have plunged too soon into the incidents leading on to the catastrophe, such as the Datchery assumption in the fifth number (a misgiving he had certainly expressed to his sister-in-law), it had occurred to him to open some fresh veins of character incidental to the interest, though not directly part of it, and so to handle them in connection with Sapsea as a little to suspend the final development even while assisting to strengthen it. Before beginning any number of a serial he used, as we have seen in former instances, to plan briefly what he intended to put into it chapter by chapter; and his first number-plan of Drood had the following: "Mr. Sapsea. Old Tory jackass. Connect Jasper with him. (He will want a solemn donkey by and by):" which was effected by bringing together both Durdles and Jasper, for connection with Sapsea, in the matter of the epitaph for Mrs. Sapsea's tomb. The scene now discovered might in this view have been designed to strengthen and carry forward that element in the tale; and otherwise it very sufficiently expresses itself. It would supply an answer, if such were needed, to those who have asserted that the hopeless decadence of Dickens as a writer had set in

before his death. Among the lines last written by him, these are the very last we can ever hope to receive; and they seem to me a delightful specimen of the power possessed by him in his prime, and the rarest which any novelist can have, of revealing a character by a touch. Here are a couple of people, Kimber and Peartree, not known to us before, whom we read off thoroughly in a dozen words; and as to Sapsea himself, auctioneer and mayor of Cloisterham, we are face to face with what before we only dimly realised, and we see the solemn jackass, in his business pulpit, playing off the airs of Mr. Dean in his Cathedral pulpit, with Cloisterham laughing at the impostor.

"HOW MR. SAPSEA CEASED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE EIGHT CLUB.

"TOLD BY HIMSELF.

"Wishing to take the air, I proceeded by a circuitous route to the Club, it being our weekly night of meeting. I found that we mustered our full strength. We were enrolled under the denomination of the Eight Club. We were eight in number; we met at eight o'clock during eight months of the year; we played eight games of four-handed cribbage, at eightpence the game; our frugal supper was composed of eight rolls, eight mutton chops, eight pork sausages, eight baked potatoes, eight marrow-bones, with eight toasts, and eight bottles of ale. There may, or may not, be a certain harmony of colour in the ruling idea of this (to adopt a phrase of our lively neighbours) reunion. It was a little idea of mine.

"A somewhat popular member of the Eight Club, was a member by the name of Kimber. By profession, a dancing-master. A commonplace, hopeful sort of man, wholly destitute of dignity or knowledge of the world.

"As I entered the Club-room, Kimber was making the remark: 'And he still half-believes him to be very high in the Church.'

"In the act of hanging up my hat on the eighth peg by the door, I caught Kimber's visual ray. He lowered it, and passed a remark on the next change of the moon. I did not take particular notice of this at the moment, because the world was often pleased to be a little shy of ecclesiastical topics in my presence. For I felt that I was picked out (though perhaps only through a coincidence) to a certain extent to represent what I call our glorious constitution in Church and State. The phrase may be objected to by captious minds; but I own to it as mine. I threw it off in argument some little time back. I said: 'OUR GLORIOUS CONSTITUTION in CHURCH and STATE.'

"Another member of the Eight Club was Peartree; also member of the Royal College of Surgeons. Mr. Peartree is not accountable to me for his opinions, and I say no more of them here than that he attends the poor gratis whenever they want him, and is not the parish doctor. Mr. Peartree may justify it to the grasp of his mind thus to do his republican utmost to bring an appointed officer into contempt. Suffice it that Mr. Peartree can never justify it to the grasp of mine.

"Between Peartree and Kimber there was a sickly sort of feeble-minded alliance. It came under my particular notice when I sold off Kimber by auction. (Goods taken in execution). He was a widower in a white under-waistcoat, and slight shoes with bows, and had two daughters not ill-looking. Indeed the reverse. Both daughters taught dancing in scholastic establishments for Young Ladies--had done so at Mrs. Sapsea's; nay, Twinkleton's--and both, in giving lessons, presented the unwomanly spectacle of having little fiddles tucked under their chins. In spite of which, the younger one might, if I am correctly informed--I will raise the veil so far as to say I KNOW she might--have soared for life from this degrading taint, but for having the class of mind allotted to what I call the common herd, and being so incredibly devoid of veneration as to become painfully ludicrous.

"When I sold off Kimber without reserve, Peartree (as poor as he can hold together) had several prime household lots knocked down to him. I am not to be blinded; and of course it was as plain to me what he

was going to do with them, as it was that he was a brown hulking sort of revolutionary subject who had been in India with the soldiers, and ought (for the sake of society) to have his neck broke. I saw the lots shortly afterwards in Kimber's lodgings--through the window--and I easily made out that there had been a sneaking pretence of lending them till better times. A man with a smaller knowledge of the world than myself might have been led to suspect that Kimber had held back money from his creditors, and fraudulently bought the goods. But, besides that I knew for certain he had no money, I knew that this would involve a species of forethought not to be made compatible with the frivolity of a caperer, inoculating other people with capering, for his bread.

"As it was the first time I had seen either of those two since the sale, I kept myself in what I call Abeyance. When selling him up, I had delivered a few remarks--shall I say a little homely?--concerning Kimber, which the world did regard as more than usually worth notice. I had come up into my pulpit;, it was said, uncommonly like--and a murmur of recognition had repeated his (I will not name whose) title, before I spoke. I had then gone on to say that all present would find, in the first page of the catalogue that was lying before them, in the last paragraph before the first lot, the following words: 'Sold in pursuance of a writ of execution issued by a creditor.' I had then proceeded to remind my friends, that however frivolous, not to say contemptible, the business by which a man got his goods together, still his goods were as dear to him, and as cheap to society (if sold without reserve), as though his pursuits had been of a character that would bear serious contemplation. I had then divided my text (if I may be allowed so to call it) into three heads: firstly, Sold; secondly, In pursuance of a writ of execution; thirdly, Issued by a creditor; with a few moral reflections on each, and winding up with, 'Now to the first lot' in a manner that was complimented when I afterwards mingled with my hearers.

"So, not being certain on what terms I and Kimber stood, I was grave, I was chilling. Kimber, however, moving to me, I moved to Kimber. (I was the creditor who had issued the writ. Not that it matters.)

"'I was alluding, Mr. Sapsea,' said Kimber, 'to a stranger who entered into conversation with me in the street as I came to the Club. He had been speaking to you just before, it seemed, by the churchyard; and though you had told him who you were, I could hardly persuade him that you were not high in the Church.'

"'Idiot!' said Peartree.

"'Ass!' said Kimber.

"'Idiot and Ass!" said the other five members.

"'Idiot and Ass, gentlemen,' I remonstrated, looking around me, 'are strong expressions to apply to a young man of good appearance and address.' My generosity was roused; I own it.

"'You'll admit that he must be a Fool,' said Peartree.

"'You can't deny that he must be a Blockhead, said Kimber.

"Their tone of disgust amounted to being offensive. Why should the young man be so calumniated? What had he done? He had only made an innocent and natural mistake. I controlled my generous indignation, and said so.

"'Natural?' repeated Kimber; 'He's a Natural!'

"The remaining six members of the Eight Club laughed unanimously. It stung me. It was a scornful laugh. My anger was roused in behalf of an absent, friendless stranger. I rose (for I had been sitting down).

"'Gentlemen,' I said with dignity, 'I will not remain one of this Club allowing opprobrium to be cast on an unoffending person in his absence. I will not so violate what I call the sacred rites of hospitality. Gentlemen, until you know how to behave yourselves better, I leave you. Gentlemen, until then I

withdraw, from this place of meeting, whatever personal qualifications I may have brought into it. Gentlemen, until then you cease to be the Eight Club, and must make the best you can of becoming the Seven.'

"I put on my hat and retired. As I went down stairs I distinctly heard them give a suppressed cheer. Such is the power of demeanour and knowledge of mankind. I had forced it out of them.

"II.

"Whom should I meet in the street, within a few yards of the door of the inn where the Club was held, but the self-same young man whose cause I had felt it my duty so warmly--and I will add so disinterestedly--to take up.

"Is it Mr. Sapsea,' he said doubtfully, 'or is it----'

"'It is Mr. Sapsea,' I replied.

"'Pardon me, Mr. Sapsea; you appear warm, sir,'

"'I have been warm,' I said, 'and on your account.' Having stated the circumstances at some length (my generosity almost overpowered him), I asked him his name.

"'Mr. Sapsea,' he answered, looking down, 'your penetration is so acute, your glance into the souls of your fellow men is so penetrating, that if I was hardy enough to deny that my name is Poker, what would it avail me?'

"I don't know that I had quite exactly made out to a fraction that his name was Poker, but I daresay I had been pretty near doing it.

"'Well, well,' said I, trying to put him at his ease by nodding my head in a soothing way. 'Your name is Poker, and there is no harm in being named Poker.'

"'Oh Mr. Sapsea!' cried the young man, in a very well-behaved manner. 'Bless you for those words!' He then, as if ashamed of having given way to his feelings, looked down again.

"'Come, Poker,' said I, 'let me hear more about you. Tell me. Where are you going to, Poker? and where do you come from?'

"'Ah Mr. Sapsea!' exclaimed the young man. 'Disguise from you is impossible. You know already that I come from somewhere, and am going somewhere else. If I was to deny it, what would it avail me?'

"'Then don't deny it,' was my remark.

"'Or,' pursued Poker, in a kind of despondent rapture, 'or if I was to deny that I came to this town to see and hear you sir, what would it avail me? Or if I was to deny----'"

The fragment ends there, and the hand that could alone have completed it is at rest for ever.

Some personal characteristics remain for illustration before the end is briefly told.

Volume III, Chapter 19 (1836-1870): Personal Characteristics (Part 1)

Personal Characteristics

OBJECTION has been taken to this biography as likely to disappoint its readers in not making them "talk to Dickens as Boswell makes them talk to Johnson." But where will the blame lie if a man takes up Pickwick and is disappointed to find that he is not reading Rasselas? A book must be judged for what it aims to be, and not for what it cannot by possibility be. I suppose so remarkable an author as Dickens hardly ever lived who carried so little of authorship into ordinary social intercourse. Potent as the sway of his writings was over him, it expressed itself in other ways. Traces or triumphs of literary labour, displays of conversational or other personal predominance, were no part of the influence he exerted over friends. To them he was only the pleasantest of companions, with whom they forgot that he had ever written anything, and felt only the charm which a nature of such capacity for supreme enjoyment causes every one around it to enjoy. His talk was unaffected and natural, never bookish in the smallest degree. He was quite up to the average of well read men, but as there was no ostentation of it in his writing, so neither was there in his conversation. This was so attractive because so keenly observant, and lighted up with so many touches of humorous fancy; but, with every possible thing to give relish to it, there were not many things to bring away.

Of course a book must stand or fall by its contents. Macaulay said very truly that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them. I offer no complaint of any remark made upon these volumes, but there have been some misapprehensions. Though Dickens bore outwardly so little of the impress of his writings, they formed the whole of that inner life which essentially constituted the man; and as in this respect he was actually, I have thought that his biography should endeavour to present him. The story of his books, therefore, at all stages of their progress, and of the hopes or designs connected with them, was my first care. With that view, and to give also to the memoir what was attainable of the value of autobiography, letters to myself, such as were never addressed to any other of his correspondents, and covering all the important incidents in the life to be retraced, were used with few exceptions exclusively; and though the exceptions are much more numerous in the present volume, this general plan has guided me to the end. Such were my limits indeed, that half even of those letters had to be put aside; and to have added all such others as were open to me would have doubled the size of my book, not contributed to it a new fact of life or character, and altered materially its design. It would have been so much lively illustration added to the subject, but out of place here. The purpose here was to make Dickens the sole central figure in the scenes revived, narrator as well as principal actor; and only by the means employed could consistency or unity be given to the self-revelation, and the picture made definite and clear. It is the peculiarity of few men to be to their most intimate friend neither more nor less than they are to themselves, but this was true of Dickens; and what kind or quality of nature such intercourse expressed in him, of what strength, tenderness, and delicacy susceptible, of what steady level warmth, of what daily unresting activity of intellect, of what unbroken continuity of kindly impulse through the change and vicissitude of three-and-thirty years, the letters to myself given in these volumes could alone express. Gathered from various and differing sources, their interest could not have been as the interest of these; in which everything comprised in the successive stages of a most attractive career is written with unexampled candour and truthfulness, and set forth in definite pictures of what he saw and stood in the midst of, unblurred by vagueness or reserve. Of the charge of obtruding myself to which their publication has exposed me, I can only say that I studied

nothing so hard as to suppress my own personality, and have to regret my ill success where I supposed I had even too perfectly succeeded. But we have all of us frequent occasion to say, parodying Mrs. Peachem's remark, that we are bitter bad judges of ourselves.

The other properties of these letters are quite subordinate to this main fact that the man who wrote them is thus perfectly seen in them. But they do not lessen the estimate of his genius. Admiration rises higher at the writer's mental forces, who, putting so much of himself into his work for the public, had still so much overflowing for such private intercourse. The sunny health of nature in them is manifest; its largeness, spontaneity, and manliness; but they have also that which highest intellects appreciate best. "I have read them," Lord Russell wrote to me, "with delight and pain. His heart, his imagination, his qualities of painting what is noble, and finding diamonds hidden far away, are greater here than even his works convey to me. How I lament he was not spared to us longer. I shall have a fresh grief when he dies in your volumes." Shallower people are more apt to find other things. If the bonhommie of a man's genius is obvious to all the world, there are plenty of knowing ones ready to take the shine out of the genius, to discover that after all it is not so wonderful, that what is grave in it wants depth, and the humour has something mechanical. But it will be difficult even for these to look over letters so marvellous in the art of reproducing to the sight what has once been seen, so natural and unstudied in their wit and fun, and with such a constant well-spring of sprightly runnings of speech in them, point of epigram, ingenuity of quaint expression, absolute freedom from every touch of affectation, and to believe that the source of this man's humour, or of whatever gave wealth to his genius, was other than habitual, unbounded, and resistless.

There is another consideration of some importance. Sterne did not more incessantly fall back from his works upon himself than Dickens did, and undoubtedly one of the impressions left by the letters is that of the intensity and tenacity with which he recognized, realized, contemplated, cultivated, and thoroughly enjoyed, his own individuality in even its most trivial manifestations. But if any one is led to ascribe this to self-esteem, to a narrow exclusiveness, or to any other invidious form of egotism, let him correct the impression by observing how Dickens bore himself amid the universal blazing-up of America, at the beginning and at the end of his career. Of his hearty, undisguised, and unmistakeable enjoyment of his astonishing and indeed quite bewildering popularity, there can be as little doubt as that there is not a particle of vanity in it, any more than of false modesty or grimace. While realizing fully the fact of it, and the worth of the fact, there is not in his whole being a fibre that answers falsely to the charmer's voice. Few men in the world, one fancies, could have gone through such grand displays of fireworks, not merely with so marvellous an absence of what the French call pose, but unsoiled by the smoke of a cracker. No man's strong individuality was ever so free from conceit.

Other personal incidents and habits, and especially some matters of opinion of grave importance, will help to make his character better known. Much questioning followed a brief former reference to his religious belief, but, inconsistent or illogical as the conduct described may be, there is nothing to correct or to modify in my statement of it; and, to what otherwise appeared to be in doubt, explicit answer will be afforded by a letter, written upon the youngest of his children leaving home in September 1868 to join his brother in Australia, than which none worthier appears in his story. "I write this note to-day because your going away is much upon my mind, and because I want you to have a few parting words from me, to think of now and then at quiet times. I need not tell you that I love you dearly, and am very, very sorry in my heart to part with you. But this life is half made up of partings, and these pains must be borne. It is my comfort and my sincere conviction that you are going to try the life for which you are best fitted. I think its freedom and wildness more suited to you than any experiment in a study or office would have been; and without that training, you could have followed no other suitable occupation. What you have always wanted until now, has been a set, steady, constant purpose. I therefore exhort you to persevere in a

thorough determination to do whatever you have to do, as well as you can do it. I was not so old as you are now, when I first had to win my food, and to do it out of this determination; and I have never slackened in it since. Never take a mean advantage of any one in any transaction, and never be hard upon people who are in your power. Try to do to others as you would have them do to you, and do not be discouraged if they fail sometimes. It is much better for you that they should fail in obeying the greatest rule laid down by Our Saviour than that you should. I put a New Testament among your books for the very same reasons, and with the very same hopes, that made me write an easy account of it for you, when you were a little child. Because it is the best book that ever was, or will be, known in the world; and because it teaches you the best lessons by which any human creature, who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty, can possibly be guided. As your brothers have gone away, one by one, I have written to each such words as I am now writing to you, and have entreated them all to guide themselves by this Book, putting aside the interpretations and inventions of Man. You will remember that you have never at home been harassed about religious observances, or mere formalities. I have always been anxious not to weary my children with such things, before they are old enough to form opinions respecting them. You will therefore understand the better that I now most solemnly impress upon you the truth and beauty of the Christian Religion, as it came from Christ Himself, and the impossibility of your going far wrong if you humbly but heartily respect it. Only one thing more on this head. The more we are in earnest as to feeling it, the less we are disposed to hold forth about it. Never abandon the wholesome practice of saying your own private prayers, night and morning. I have never abandoned it myself, and I know the comfort of it. I hope you will always be able to say in after life, that you had a kind father. You cannot show your affection for him so well, or make him so happy, as by doing your duty." They who most intimately knew Dickens will know best that every word there is written from his heart, and is radiant with the truth of his nature.

To the same effect, in the leading matter, he expressed himself twelve years before, and again the day before his death; replying in both cases to correspondents who had addressed him as a public writer. A clergyman, the Rev. R. H. Davies, had been struck by the hymn in the Christmas tale of the Wreck of the Golden Mary (Household Words, 1856). "I beg to thank you" Dickens answered (Christmas Eve, 1856) "for your very acceptable letter--not the less gratifying to me because I am myself the writer you refer to. . . . There cannot be many men, I believe, who have a more humble veneration for the New Testament, or a more profound conviction of its all-sufficiency, than I have. If I am ever (as you tell me I am) mistaken on this subject, it is because I discountenance all obtrusive professions of and tradings in religion, as one of the main causes why real Christianity has been retarded in this world; and because my observation of life induces me to hold in unspeakable dread and horror, those unseemly squabbles about the letter which drive the spirit out of hundreds of thousands." In precisely similar tone, to a reader of Edwin Drood (Mr. J. M. Makeham), who had pointed out to him that his employment as a figure of speech of a line from Holy Writ in his tenth chapter might be subject to misconstruction, he wrote from Gadshill on Wednesday the eighth of June, 1870. "It would be quite inconceivable to me, but for your letter, that any reasonable reader could possibly attach a scriptural reference to that passage. . . . I am truly shocked to find that any reader can make the mistake. I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour; because I feel it; and because I re-wrote that history for my children--every one of whom knew it, from having it repeated to them, long before they could read, and almost as soon as they could speak. But I have never made proclamation of this from the house tops."

A dislike of all display was rooted in him; and his objection to posthumous honours, illustrated by the instructions in his will, was very strikingly expressed two years before his death, when Mr. Thomas Fairbairn asked his help to a proposed recognition of Rajah Brooke's services by a memorial in Westminster Abbey. "I am very strongly impelled" (24th of June 1868) "to comply with any request of

yours. But these posthumous honours of committee, subscriptions, and Westminster Abbey are so profoundly unsatisfactory in my eyes that--plainly--I would rather have nothing to do with them in any case. My daughter and her aunt unite with me in kindest regards to Mrs. Fairbairn, and I hope you will believe in the possession of mine until I am quietly buried without any memorial but such as I have set up in my lifetime." Asked a year later (August 1869) to say something on the inauguration of Leigh Hunt's bust at his grave in Kensal-green, he told the committee that he had a very strong objection to speech-making beside graves. "I do not expect or wish my feelings in this wise to guide other men; still, it is so serious with me, and the idea of ever being the subject of such a ceremony myself is so repugnant to my soul, that I must decline to officiate."

His aversion to every form of what is called patronage of literature was part of the same feeling. A few months earlier a Manchester gentleman wrote for his support to such a scheme. "I beg to be excused," was his reply, "from complying with the request you do me the honour to prefer, simply because I hold the opinion that there is a great deal too much patronage in England. The better the design, the less (as I think) should it seek such adventitious aid, and the more composedly should it rest on its own merits." This was the belief Southey held; it extended to the support by way of patronage given by such societies as the Literary Fund, which Southey also strongly resisted; and it survived the failure of the Guild whereby it was hoped to establish a system of self-help, under which men engaged in literary pursuits might be as proud to receive as to give. Though there was no project of his life into which he flung himself with greater eagerness than the Guild, it was not taken up by the class it was meant to benefit, and every renewed exertion more largely added to the failure. There is no room in these pages for the story, which will add its chapter some day to the vanity of human wishes; but a passage from a letter to Bulwer Lytton at its outset will be some measure of the height from which the writer fell, when all hope for what he had so set his heart upon ceased. "I do devoutly believe that this plan, carried by the support which I trust will be given to it, will change the status of the literary man in England, and make a revolution in his position which no government, no power on earth but his own, could ever effect. I have implicit confidence in the scheme--so splendidly begun--if we carry it out with a stedfast energy. I have a strong conviction that we hold in our hands the peace and honour of men of letters for centuries to come, and that you are destined to be their best and most enduring benefactor. . . . Oh what a procession of new years may walk out of all this for the class we belong to, after we are dust."

These views about patronage did not make him more indulgent to the clamour with which it is so often invoked for the ridiculously small. "You read that life of Clare?" he wrote (15th of August 1865). "Did you ever see such preposterous exaggeration of small claims? And isn't it expressive, the perpetual prating of him in the book as the Poet? So another Incompetent used to write to the Literary Fund when I was on the committee: 'This leaves the Poet at his divine mission in a corner of the single room. The Poet's father is wiping his spectacles. The Poet's mother is weaving'--Yah!'" He was equally intolerant of every magnificent proposal that should render the literary man independent of the bookseller, and he sharply criticized even a compromise to replace the half-profits system by one of royalties on copies sold. "What does it come to?" he remarked of an ably-written pamphlet in which this was urged (10th of November 1866): "what is the worth of the remedy after all? You and I know very well that in nine cases out of ten the author is at a disadvantage with the publisher because the publisher has capital and the author has not. We know perfectly well that in nine cases out of ten money is advanced by the publisher before the book is producible--often, long before. No young or unsuccessful author (unless he were an amateur and an independent gentleman) would make a bargain for having that royalty, to-morrow, if he could have a certain sum of money, or an advance of money. The author who could command that bargain, could command it to-morrow, or command anything else. For the less fortunate or the less able, I make bold to say--with some knowledge of the subject, as a writer who made a publisher's fortune long before he

began to share in the real profits of his books--that if the publishers met next week, and resolved henceforth to make this royalty bargain and no other, it would be an enormous hardship and misfortune because the authors could not live while they wrote. The pamphlet seems to me just another example of the old philosophical chess-playing, with human beings for pieces. 'Don't want money.' 'Be careful to be born with means, and have a banker's account.' 'Your publisher will settle with you, at such and such long periods according to the custom of his trade, and you will settle with your butcher and baker weekly, in the meantime, by drawing cheques as I do.' 'You must be sure not to want money, and then I have worked it out for you splendidly.'"

Less has been said in this work than might perhaps have been wished, of the way in which his editorship of Household Words and All the Year Round was discharged. It was distinguished above all by liberality; and a scrupulous consideration and delicacy, evinced by him to all his contributors, was part of the esteem in which he held literature itself. It was said in a newspaper after his death, evidently by one of his contributors, that he always brought the best out of a man by encouragement and appreciation; that he liked his writers to feel unfettered; and that his last reply to a proposition for a series of articles had been: "Whatever you see your way to, I will see mine to, and we know and understand each other well enough to make the best of these conditions." Yet the strong feeling of personal responsibility was always present in his conduct of both journals; and varied as the contents of a number might be, and widely apart the writers, a certain individuality of his own was never absent. He took immense pains (as indeed was his habit about everything) with numbers in which he had written nothing; would often accept a paper from a young or unhandy contributor, because of some single notion in it which he thought it worth rewriting for; and in this way, or by helping generally to give strength and attractiveness to the work of others, he grudged no trouble. "I have had a story" he wrote (22nd of June 1856) "to hack and hew into some form for Household Words this morning, which has taken me four hours of close attention. And I am perfectly addled by its horrible want of continuity after all, and the dreadful spectacle I have made of the proofs--which look like an inky fishing-net." A few lines from another letter will show the difficulties in which he was often involved by the plan he adopted for Christmas numbers, of putting within a framework by himself a number of stories by separate writers to whom the leading notion had before been severally sent. "As yet" (25th of November 1859), "not a story has come to me in the least belonging to the idea (the simplest in the world; which I myself described in writing, in the most elaborate manner); and everyone of them turns, by a strange fatality, on a criminal trial!" It had all to be set right by him, and editorship on such terms was not a sinecure.

It had its pleasures as well as pains, however, and the greatest was when he fancied he could descry unusual merit in any writer. A letter will give one instance for illustration of many; the lady to whom it was addressed, admired under her assumed name of Holme Lee, having placed it at my disposal. (Folkestone: 14th of August 1855.) "I read your tale with the strongest emotion, and with a very exalted admiration of the great power displayed in it. Both in severity and tenderness I thought it masterly. It moved me more than I can express to you. I wrote to Mr. Wills that it had completely unsettled me for the day, and that by whomsoever it was written, I felt the highest respect for the mind that had produced it. It so happened that I had been for some days at work upon a character externally like the Aunt. And it was very strange to me indeed to observe how the two people seemed to be near to one another at first, and then turned off on their own ways so wide asunder. I told Mr. Wills that I was not sure whether I could have prevailed upon myself to present to a large audience the terrible consideration of hereditary madness, when it was reasonably probable that there must be many--or some--among them whom it would awfully, because personally, address. But I was not obliged to ask myself the question, inasmuch as the length of the story rendered it unavailable for Household Words. I speak of its length in reference to that publication only; relatively to what is told in it, I would not spare a page of your manuscript.

Experience shows me that a story in four portions is best suited to the peculiar requirements of such a journal, and I assure you it will be an uncommon satisfaction to me if this correspondence should lead to your enrolment among its contributors. But my strong and sincere conviction of the vigour and pathos of this beautiful tale, is quite apart from, and not to be influenced by, any ulterior results. You had no existence to me when I read it. The actions and sufferings of the characters affected me by their own force and truth, and left a profound impression on me." The experience there mentioned did not prevent him from admitting into his later periodical, All the Year Round, longer serial stories published with the names of known writers; and to his own interference with these he properly placed limits. "When one of my literary brothers does me the honour to undertake such a task, I hold that he executes it on his own personal responsibility, and for the sustainment of his own reputation; and I do not consider myself at liberty to exercise that control over his text which I claim as to other contributions." Nor had he any greater pleasure, even in these cases, than to help younger novelists to popularity. "You asked me about new writers last night. If you will read Kissing the Rod, a book I have read to-day, you will not find it hard to take an interest in the author of such a book." That was Mr. Edmund Yates, in whose literary successes he took the greatest interest himself, and with whom he continued to the last an intimate personal intercourse which had dated from kindness shown at a very trying time. "I think" he wrote of another of his contributors, Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, for whom he had also much personal liking, and of whose powers he thought highly, "you will find Fatal Zero a very curious bit of mental development, deepening as the story goes on into a picture not more startling than true." My mention of these pleasures of editorship shall close with what I think to him was the greatest. He gave to the world, while yet the name of the writer was unknown to him, the pure and pathetic verse of Adelaide Procter. "In the spring of the year 1853 I observed a short poem among the proffered contributions, very different, as I thought, from the shoal of verses perpetually setting through the office of such a periodical." The contributions had been large and frequent under an assumed name, when at Christmas 1854 he discovered that Miss Mary Berwick was the daughter of his old and dear friend Barry Cornwall.

But periodical writing is not without its drawbacks, and its effect on Dickens, who engaged in it largely from time to time, was observable in the increased impatience of allusion to national institutions and conventional distinctions to be found in his later books. Party divisions he cared for less and less as life moved on; but the decisive, peremptory, dogmatic style, into which a habit of rapid remark on topics of the day will betray the most candid and considerate commentator, displayed its influence, perhaps not always consciously to himself, in the underlying tone of bitterness that runs through the books which followed Copperfield. The resentment against remediable wrongs is as praiseworthy in them as in the earlier tales; but the exposure of Chancery abuses, administrative incompetence, politico-economic shortcomings, and social flunkeyism, in Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Hard Times, and Our Mutual Friend, would not have been made less odious by the cheerier tone that had struck with much sharper effect at prison abuses, parish wrongs, Yorkshire schools, and hypocritical humbug, in Pickwick, Oliver Twist, Nickleby, and Chuzzlewit. It will be remembered of him always that he desired to set right what was wrong, that he held no abuse to be unimprovable, that he left none of the evils named exactly as he found them, and that to influences drawn from his writings were due not a few of the salutary changes which marked the age in which he lived; but anger does not improve satire, and it gave latterly, from the causes named, too aggressive a form to what, after all, was but a very wholesome hatred of the cant that everything English is perfect, and that to call a thing unEnglish is to doom it to abhorred extinction.

"I have got an idea for occasional papers in Household Words called the Member for Nowhere. They will contain an account of his views, votes, and speeches; and I think of starting with his speeches on the Sunday question. He is a member of the Government of course. The moment they found such a member in the House, they felt that he must be dragged (by force, if necessary) into the Cabinet." "I give it up

reluctantly," he wrote afterwards, "and with it my hope to have made every man in England feel something of the contempt for the House of Commons that I have. We shall never begin to do anything until the sentiment is universal." That was in August 1854; and the break-down in the Crimea that winter much embittered his radicalism. "I am hourly strengthened in my old belief," he wrote (3rd of February 1855) "that our political aristocracy and our tuft-hunting are the death of England. In all this business I don't see a gleam of hope. As to the popular spirit, it has come to be so entirely separated from the Parliament and Government, and so perfectly apathetic about them both, that I seriously think it a most portentous sign." A couple of months later: "I have rather a bright idea, I think, for Household Words this morning: a fine little bit of satire: an account of an Arabic MS. lately discovered very like the Arabian Nights--called the Thousand and One Humbugs. With new versions of the best known stories." This also had to be given up, and is only mentioned as another illustration of his political discontents and of their connection with his journal-work. The influences from his early life which unconsciously strengthened them in certain social directions has been hinted at, and of his absolute sincerity in the matter there can be no doubt. The mistakes of Dickens were never such as to cast a shade on his integrity. What he said with too much bitterness, in his heart he believed; and had, alas! too much ground for believing. "A country," he wrote (27th of April 1855) "which is discovered to be in this tremendous condition as to its war affairs; with an enormous black cloud of poverty in every town which is spreading and deepening every hour, and not one man in two thousand knowing anything about, or even believing in, its existence; with a non-working aristocracy, and a silent parliament, and everybody for himself and nobody for the rest; this is the prospect, and I think it a very deplorable one." Admirably did he say, of a notorious enquiry at that time: "O what a fine aspect of political economy it is, that the noble professors of the science on the adulteration committee should have tried to make Adulteration a question of Supply and Demand! We shall never get to the Millennium, sir, by the rounds of that ladder; and I, for one, won't hold by the skirts of that Great Mogul of impostors, Master M'Culloch!" Again he wrote (30th of September 1855): "I really am serious in thinking--and I have given as painful consideration to the subject as a man with children to live and suffer after him can honestly give to it--that representative government is become altogether a failure with us, that the English gentilities and subserviences render the people unfit for it, and that the whole thing has broken down since that great seventeenth-century time, and has no hope in it."

With the good sense that still overruled all his farthest extremes of opinion he yet never thought of parliament for himself. He could not mend matters, and for him it would have been a false position. The people of the town of Reading and others applied to him during the first half of his life, and in the last half some of the Metropolitan constituencies. To one of the latter a reply is before me in which he says: "I declare that as to all matters on the face of this teeming earth, it appears to me that the House of Commons and Parliament altogether is become just the dreariest failure and nuisance that ever bothered this much-bothered world." To a private enquiry of apparently about the same date he replied: "I have thoroughly satisfied myself, having often had occasion to consider the question, that I can be far more usefully and independently employed in my chosen sphere of action than I could hope to be in the House of Commons; and I believe that no consideration would induce me to become a member of that extraordinary assembly." Finally, upon a reported discussion in Finsbury whether or not he should be invited to sit for that borough, he promptly wrote (November 1861): "It may save some trouble if you will kindly confirm a sensible gentleman who doubted at that meeting whether I was quite the man for Finsbury. I am not at all the sort of man; for I believe nothing would induce me to offer myself as a parliamentary representative of that place, or of any other under the sun." The only direct attempt to join a political agitation was his speech at Drury-lane for administrative reform, and he never repeated it. But every movement for practical social reforms, to obtain more efficient sanitary legislation, to get the best

compulsory education practicable for the poor, and to better the condition of labouring people, he assisted earnestly to his last hour; and the readiness with which he took the chair at meetings having such objects in view, the help he gave to important societies working in beneficent ways for themselves or the community, and the power and attractiveness of his oratory, made him one of the forces of the time. His speeches derived singular charm from the buoyancy of his perfect self-possession, and to this he added the advantages of a person and manner which had become as familiar and as popular as his books. The most miscellaneous assemblages listened to him as to a personal friend.

Two incidents at the close of his life will show what upon these matters his latest opinions were. At the great Liverpool dinner after his country readings in 1869, over which Lord Dufferin eloquently presided, he replied to a remonstrance from Lord Houghton against his objection to entering public life, that when he took literature for his profession he intended it to be his sole profession; that at that time it did not appear to him to be so well understood in England, as in some other countries, that literature was a dignified profession by which any man might stand or fall; and he resolved that in his person at least it should stand "by itself, of itself, and for itself;" a bargain which "no consideration on earth would now induce him to break." Here however he probably failed to see the entire meaning of Lord Houghton's regret, which would seem to have been meant to say, in more polite form, that to have taken some part in public affairs might have shown him the difficulty in a free state of providing remedies very swiftly for evils of long growth. A half reproach from the same quarter for alleged unkindly sentiments to the House of Lords, he repelled with vehement warmth; insisting on his great regard for individual members, and declaring that there was no man in England he respected more in his public capacity, loved more in his private capacity, or from whom he had received more remarkable proofs of his honour and love of literature, than Lord Russell. In Birmingham shortly after, discoursing on education to the members of the Midland Institute, he told them they should value self-improvement not because it led to fortune but because it was good and right in itself; counselled them in regard to it that Genius was not worth half so much as Attention, or the art of taking an immense deal of pains, which he declared to be, in every study and pursuit, the one sole, safe, certain, remunerative quality; and summed up briefly his political belief.--"My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the People governed is, on the whole, illimitable." This he afterwards (January 1870) explained to mean that he had very little confidence in the people who govern us ("with a small p"), and very great confidence in the People whom they govern ("with a large P"). "My confession being shortly and elliptically stated, was, with no evil intention I am absolutely sure, in some quarters inversely explained." He added that his political opinions had already been not obscurely stated in an "idle book or two"; and he reminded his hearers that he was the inventor "of a certain fiction called the Circumlocution Office, said to be very extravagant, but which I do see rather frequently quoted as if there were grains of truth at the bottom of it." It may nevertheless be suspected, with some confidence, that the construction of his real meaning was not far wrong which assumed it as the condition precedent to his illimitable faith, that the people, even with the big P, should be "governed." It was his constant complaint that, being much in want of government, they had only sham governors; and he had returned from his second American visit, as he came back from his first, indisposed to believe that the political problem had been solved in the land of the free. From the pages of his last book, the bitterness of allusion so frequent in the books just named was absent altogether; and his old unaltered wish to better what was bad in English institutions, carried with it no desire to replace them by new ones.

In a memoir published shortly after his death there appeared this statement. "For many years past Her Majesty the Queen has taken the liveliest interest in Mr. Dickens's literary labours, and has frequently expressed a desire for an interview with him. . . . This interview took place on the 9th of April, when he received her commands to attend her at Buckingham Palace, and was introduced by his friend Mr. Arthur

Helps, the clerk of the Privy Council. . . . Since our author's decease the journal with which he was formerly connected has said: 'The Queen was ready to confer any distinction which Mr. Dickens's known views and tastes would permit him to accept, and after more than one title of honour had been declined, Her Majesty desired that he would, at least, accept a place in her Privy Council.'" As nothing is too absurd for belief, it will not be superfluous to say that Dickens knew of no such desire on her Majesty's part; and though all the probabilities are on the side of his unwillingness to accept any title or place of honour, certainly none was offered to him.

Volume III, Chapter 19 (1836-1870): Personal Characteristics (Part 2)

It had been hoped to obtain her Majesty's name for the Jerrold performances in 1857, but, being a public effort in behalf of an individual, assent would have involved "either perpetual compliance or the giving of perpetual offence." Her Majesty however then sent, through Colonel Phipps, a request to Dickens that he would select a room in the palace, do what he would with it, and let her see the play there. "I said to Col. Phipps thereupon" (21st of June 1857) "that the idea was not quite new to me; that I did not feel easy as to the social position of my daughters, &c. at a Court under those circumstances; and that I would beg her Majesty to excuse me, if any other way of her seeing the play could be devised. To this Phipps said he had not thought of the objection, but had not the slightest doubt I was right. I then proposed that the Queen should come to the Gallery of Illustration a week before the subscription night, and should have the room entirely at her own disposal, and should invite her own company. This, with the good sense that seems to accompany her good nature on all occasions, she resolved within a few hours to do." The effect of the performance was a great gratification. "My gracious sovereign" (5th of July 1857) "was so pleased that she sent round begging me to go and see her and accept her thanks. I replied that I was in my Farce dress, and must beg to be excused. Whereupon she sent again, saying that the dress 'could not be so ridiculous as that,' and repeating the request. I sent my duty in reply, but again hoped her Majesty would have the kindness to excuse my presenting myself in a costume and appearance that were not my own. I was mighty glad to think, when I woke this morning, that I had carried the point."

The opportunity of presenting himself in his own costume did not arrive till the year of his death, another effort meanwhile made having proved also unsuccessful. "I was put into a state of much perplexity on Sunday" (30th of March 1858). "I don't know who had spoken to my informant, but it seems that the Queen is bent upon hearing the Carol read, and has expressed her desire to bring it about without offence; hesitating about the manner of it, in consequence of my having begged to be excused from going to her when she sent for me after the Frozen Deep. I parried the thing as well as I could; but being asked to be prepared with a considerate and obliging answer, as it was known the request would be preferred, I said, 'Well! I supposed Col. Phipps would speak to me about it, and if it were he who did so, I should assure him of my desire to meet any wish of her Majesty's, and should express my hope that she would indulge me by making one of some audience or other--for I thought an audience necessary to the effect.' Thus it stands: but it bothers me." The difficulty was not surmounted, but her Majesty's continued interest in the Carol was shown by her purchase of a copy of it with Dickens's autograph at Thackeray's sale; and at last there came, in the year of his death, the interview with the author whose popularity dated from her accession, whose books had entertained larger numbers of her subjects than those of any other contemporary writer, and whose genius will be counted among the glories of her reign. Accident led to it. Dickens had brought with him from America some large and striking photographs of the Battle Fields of the Civil War, which the Queen, having heard of them through Mr. Helps, expressed a wish to look at. Dickens sent them at once; and went afterwards to Buckingham Palace with Mr. Helps, at her Majesty's request, that she might see and thank him in person.

It was in the middle of March, not April. "Come now sir, this is an interesting matter, do favour us with it," was the cry of Johnson's friends after his conversation with George the Third; and again and again the story was told to listeners ready to make marvels of its commonplaces. But the romance even of the eighteenth century in such a matter is clean gone out of the nineteenth. Suffice it that the Queen's kindness left a strong impression on Dickens. Upon her Majesty's regret not to have heard his Readings, Dickens intimated that they were become now a thing of the past, while he acknowledged gratefully her

Majesty's compliment in regard to them. She spoke to him of the impression made upon her by his acting in the Frozen Deep; and on his stating, in reply to her enquiry, that the little play had not been very successful on the public stage, said this did not surprise her, since it no longer had the advantage of his performance in it. Then arose a mention of some alleged discourtesy shown to Prince Arthur in New York, and he begged her Majesty not to confound the true Americans of that city with the Fenian portion of its Irish population; on which she made the quiet comment that she was convinced the people about the Prince had made too much of the affair. He related to her the story of President Lincoln's dream on the night before his murder. She asked him to give her his writings, and could she have them that afternoon? but he begged to be allowed to send a bound copy. Her Majesty then took from a table her own book upon the Highlands, with an autograph inscription "to Charles Dickens"; and, saying that "the humblest" of writers would be ashamed to offer it to "one of the greatest" but that Mr. Helps, being asked to give it, had remarked that it would be valued most from herself, closed the interview by placing it in his hands. "Sir," said Johnson, "they may say what they like of the young King, but Louis the Fourteenth could not have shown a more refined courtliness"; and Dickens was not disposed to say less of the young King's granddaughter. That the grateful impression sufficed to carry him into new ways, I had immediate proof, coupled with intimation of the still surviving strength of old memories. "As my sovereign desires" (26th of March 1870) "that I should attend the next levee, don't faint with amazement if you see my name in that unwonted connexion. I have scrupulously kept myself free for the second of April, in case you should be accessible." The name appeared at the levee accordingly, his daughter was at the drawing-room that followed, and Lady Houghton writes to me "I never saw Mr. Dickens more agreeable than at a dinner at our house about a fortnight before his death, when he met the King of the Belgians and the Prince of Wales at the special desire of the latter." Up to nearly the hour of dinner, it was doubtful if he could go. He was suffering from the distress in his foot; and on arrival at the house, being unable to ascend the stairs, had to be assisted at once into the dining-room.

The friend who had accompanied Dickens to Buckingham Palace, writing of him after his death, briefly but with admirable knowledge and taste, said that he ardently desired, and confidently looked forward to, a time when there would be a more intimate union than exists at present between the different classes in the state, a union that should embrace alike the highest and the lowest. This perhaps expresses, as well as a few words could, what certainly was always at his heart; and he might have come to think it, when his life was closing, more possible of realisation some day than he ever thought it before. The hope of it was on his friend Talfourd's lips when he died, and his own most jarring opinions might at last have joined in the effort to bring about such reconcilement. More on this head it needs not to say. Whatever may be the objection to special views held by him, he would, wanting even the most objectionable, have been less himself. It was by something of the despot seldom separable from genius, joined to a truthfulness of nature belonging to the highest characters, that men themselves of a rare faculty were attracted to find in Dickens what Sir Arthur Helps has described, "a man to confide in, and look up to as a leader, in the midst of any great peril."

Mr. Layard also held that opinion of him. He was at Gadshill during the Christmas before Dickens went for the last time to America, and witnessed one of those scenes, not infrequent there, in which the master of the house was pre-eminently at home. They took generally the form of cricket matches; but this was, to use the phrase of his friend Bobadil, more popular and diffused; and of course he rose with the occasion. "The more you want of the master, the more you'll find in him," said the gasman employed about his readings. "Foot-races for the villagers," he wrote on Christmas Day, "come off in my field to-morrow. We have been all hard at work all day, building a course, making countless flags, and I don't know what else. Layard is chief commissioner of the domestic police. The country police predict an immense crowd." There were between two and three thousand people; and somehow, by a magical kind

of influence, said Layard, Dickens seemed to have bound every creature present, upon what honour the creature had, to keep order. What was the special means used, or the art employed, it might have been difficult to say; but that was the result. Writing on New Year's Day, Dickens himself described it to me. "We had made a very pretty course, and taken great pains. Encouraged by the cricket matches experience, I allowed the landlord of the Falstaff to have a drinking-booth on the ground. Not to seem to dictate or distrust, I gave all the prizes (about ten pounds in the aggregate) in money. The great mass of the crowd were labouring men of all kinds, soldiers, sailors, and navvies. They did not, between half-past ten, when we began, and sunset, displace a rope or a stake; and they left every barrier and flag as neat as they found it. There was not a dispute, and there was no drunkenness whatever. I made them a little speech from the lawn, at the end of the games, saying that please God we would do it again next year. They cheered most lustily and dispersed. The road between this and Chatham was like a Fair all day; and surely it is a fine thing to get such perfect behaviour out of a reckless seaport town. Among other oddities we had a Hurdle Race for Strangers. One man (he came in second) ran 120 yards and leaped over ten hurdles, in twenty seconds, with a pipe in his mouth, and smoking it all the time. 'If it hadn't been for your pipe,' I said to him at the winning-post, 'you would have been first.' 'I beg your pardon, sir,' he answered, 'but if it hadn't been for my pipe, I should have been nowhere.'" The close of the letter had this rather memorable announcement. "The sale of the Christmas number was, yesterday evening, 255,380." Would it be absurd to say that there is something in such a vast popularity in itself electrical, and, though founded on books, felt where books never reach?

It is also very noticeable that what would have constituted the strength of Dickens if he had entered public life, the attractive as well as the commanding side of his nature, was that which kept him most within the circle of home pursuits and enjoyments. This "better part" of him had now long survived that sorrowful period of 1857-8, when, for reasons which I have not thought myself free to suppress, a vaguely disturbed feeling for the time took possession of him, and occurrences led to his adoption of other pursuits than those to which till then he had given himself exclusively. It was a sad interval in his life; but, though changes incident to the new occupation then taken up remained, and with them many adverse influences which brought his life prematurely to a close, it was, with any reference to that feeling, an interval only; and the dominant impression of the later years, as of the earlier, takes the marvellously domestic home-loving shape in which also the strength of his genius is found. It will not do to draw round any part of such a man too hard a line, and the writer must not be charged with inconsistency who says that Dickens's childish sufferings, and the sense they burnt into him of the misery of loneliness and a craving for joys of home, though they led to what was weakest in him, led also to what was greatest. It was his defect as well as his merit in maturer life not to be able to live alone. When the fancies of his novels were upon him and he was under their restless influence, though he often talked of shutting himself up in out of the way solitary places, he never went anywhere unaccompanied by members of his family. His habits of daily life he carried with him wherever he went. In Albaro and Genoa, at Lausanne and Geneva, in Paris and Boulogne, his ways were as entirely those of home as in London and Broadstairs. If it is the property of a domestic nature to be personally interested in every detail, the smallest as the greatest, of the four walls within which one lives, then no man had it so essentially as Dickens. No man was so inclined naturally to derive his happiness from home concerns. Even the kind of interest in a house which is commonly confined to women, he was full of. Not to speak of changes of importance, there was not an additional hook put up wherever he inhabited, without his knowledge, or otherwise than as part of some small ingenuity of his own. Nothing was too minute for his personal superintendence. Whatever might be in hand, theatricals for the little children, entertainments for those of larger growth, cricket matches, dinners, field sports, from the first new year's eve dance in Doughty Street to the last musical party in Hyde Park Place, he was the centre and soul of it. He did not

care to take measure of its greater or less importance. It was enough that a thing was to do, to be worth his while to do it as if there was nothing else to be done in the world. The cry of Laud and Wentworth was his, alike in small and great things; and to no man was more applicable the German "Echt," which expresses reality as well as thoroughness. The usual result followed, in all his homes, of an absolute reliance on him for everything. Under every difficulty, and in every emergency, his was the encouraging influence, the bright and ready help. In illness, whether of the children or any of the servants, he was better than a doctor. He was so full of resource, for which every one eagerly turned to him, that his mere presence in the sick-room was a healing influence, as if nothing could fail if he were only there. So that at last, when, all through the awful night which preceded his departure, he lay senseless in the room where he had fallen, the stricken and bewildered ones who tended him found it impossible to believe that what they saw before them alone was left, or to shut out wholly the strange wild hope that he might again be suddenly among them like himself, and revive what they could not connect, even then, with death's despairing helplessness.

It was not a feeling confined to the relatives whom he had thus taught to have such exclusive dependence on him. Among the consolations addressed to those mourners came words from one whom in life he had most honoured, and who also found it difficult to connect him with death, or to think that he should never see that blithe face anymore. "It is almost thirty years," Mr. Carlyle wrote, "since my acquaintance with him began; and on my side, I may say, every new meeting ripened it into more and more clear discernment of his rare and great worth as a brother man: a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just and loving man: till at length he had grown to such a recognition with me as I have rarely had for any man of my time. This I can tell you three, for it is true and will be welcome to you: to others less concerned I had as soon not speak on such a subject." "I am profoundly sorry, for you," Mr. Carlyle at the same time wrote to me; "and indeed for myself and for us all. It is an event world-wide; a unique of talents suddenly extinct; and has 'eclipsed,' we too may say, 'the harmless gaiety of nations.' No death since 1866 has fallen on me with such a stroke. No literary man's hitherto ever did. The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens,--every inch of him an Honest Man."

Of his ordinary habits of activity I have spoken, and they were doubtless carried too far. In youth it was all well, but he did not make allowance for years. This has had abundant illustration, but will admit of a few words more. To all men who do much, rule and order are essential; method in everything was Dickens's peculiarity; and between breakfast and luncheon, with rare exceptions, was his time of work. But his daily walks were less of rule than of enjoyment and necessity. In the midst of his writing they were indispensable, and especially, as it has often been shown, at night. Mr. Sala is an authority on London streets, and, in the eloquent and generous tribute he was among the first to offer to his memory, has described himself encountering Dickens in the oddest places and most inclement weather, in Ratcliffe-highway, on Haverstock-hill, on Camberwell-green, in Gray's-inn-lane, in the Wandsworth-road, at Hammersmith Broadway, in Norton Folgate, and at Kensal New Town. "A hansom whirled you by the Bell and Horns at Brompton, and there he was striding, as with seven-league boots, seemingly in the direction of North-end, Fulham. The Metropolitan Railway sent you forth at Lisson-grove, and you met him plodding speedily towards the Yorkshire Stingo. He was to be met rapidly skirting the grim brick wall of the prison in Coldbath-fields, or trudging along the Seven Sisters-road at Holloway, or bearing, under a steady press of sail, underneath Highgate Archway, or pursuing the even tenor of his way up the Vauxhall-bridge-road." But he was equally at home in the intricate byways of narrow streets and in the lengthy thoroughfares. Wherever there was "matter to be heard and learned," in back streets behind Holborn, in Borough courts and passages, in city wharfs or alleys, about the poorer lodging-houses, in prisons, workhouses, ragged-schools, police-courts, rag-shops, chandlers' shops, and all sorts of

markets for the poor, he carried his keen observation and untiring study. "I was among the Italian Boys from 12 to 2 this morning," says one of his letters. "I am going out to-night in their boat with the Thames Police," says another. It was the same when he was in Italy or Switzerland, as we have seen; and when, in later life, he was in French provincial places. "I walk miles away into the country, and you can scarcely imagine by what deserted ramparts and silent little cathedral closes, or how I pass over rusty drawbridges and stagnant ditches out of and into the decaying town." For several consecutive years I accompanied him every Christmas Eve to see the marketings for Christmas down the road from Aldgate to Bow; and he had a surprising fondness for wandering about in poor neighbourhoods on Christmas-day, past the areas of shabby genteel houses in Somers or Kentish Towns, and watching the dinners preparing or coming in. But the temptations of his country life led him on to excesses in walking. "Coming in just now," he wrote in his third year at Gadshill, "after twelve miles in the rain, I was so wet that I have had to change and get my feet into warm water before I could do anything." Again, two years later: "A south-easter blowing, enough to cut one's throat. I am keeping the house for my cold, as I did yesterday. But the remedy is so new to me, that I doubt if it does me half the good of a dozen miles in the snow. So, if this mode of treatment fails to-day, I shall try that to-morrow." He tried it perhaps too often. In the winter of 1865 he first had the attack in his left foot which materially disabled his walking-power for the rest of his life. He supposed its cause to be overwalking in the snow, and that this had aggravated the suffering is very likely; but, read by the light of what followed, it may now be presumed to have had more serious origin. It recurred at intervals, before America, without any such provocation; in America it came back, not when he had most been walking in the snow, but when nervous exhaustion was at its worst with him; after America, it became prominent on the eve of the occurrence at Preston which first revealed the progress that disease had been making in the vessels of the brain; and in the last year of his life, as will immediately be seen, it was a constant trouble and most intense suffering, extending then gravely to his left hand also, which had before been only slightly affected.

It was from a letter of the 21st of February 1865 I first learnt that he was suffering tortures from a "frost-bitten" foot, and ten days later brought more detailed account. "I got frost-bitten by walking continually in the snow, and getting wet in the feet daily. My boots hardened and softened, hardened and softened, my left foot swelled, and I still forced the boot on; sat in it to write, half the day; walked in it through the snow, the other half; forced the boot on again next morning; sat and walked again; and being accustomed to all sorts of changes in my feet, took no heed. At length, going out as usual, I fell lame on the walk, and had to limp home dead lame, through the snow, for the last three miles--to the remarkable terror, by-the-bye, of the two big dogs." The dogs were Turk and Linda. Boisterous companions as they always were, the sudden change in him brought them to a stand-still; and for the rest of the journey they crept by the side of their master as slowly as he did, never turning from him. He was greatly moved by the circumstance, and often referred to it. Turk's look upward to his face was one of sympathy as well as fear, he said; but Linda was wholly struck down.

The saying in his letter to his youngest son that he was to do to others what he would that they should do to him, without being discouraged if they did not do it; and his saying to the Birmingham people that they were to attend to self-improvement not because it led to fortune, but because it was right; express a principle that at all times guided himself. Capable of strong attachments, he was not what is called an effusive man; but he had no half-heartedness in any of his likings. The one thing entirely hateful to him, was indifference. "I give my heart to very few people; but I would sooner love the most implacable man in the world than a careless one, who, if my place were empty to-morrow, would rub on and never miss me." There was nothing he more repeatedly told his children than that they were not to let indifference in others appear to justify it in themselves. "All kind things," he wrote, "must be done on their own account,

and for their own sake, and without the least reference to any gratitude." Again he laid it down, while he was making some exertion for the sake of a dead friend that did not seem likely to win proper appreciation from those it was to serve. "As to gratitude from the family--as I have often remarked to you, one does a generous thing because it is right and pleasant, and not for any response it is to awaken in others." The rule in another form frequently appears in his letters; and it was enforced in many ways upon all who were dear to him. It is worth while to add his comment on a regret of a member of his family at an act of self-devotion supposed to have been thrown away: "Nothing of what is nobly done can ever be lost." It is also to be noted as in the same spirit, that it was not the loud but the silent heroisms he most admired. Of Sir John Richardson, one of the few who have lived in our days entitled to the name of a hero, he wrote from Paris in 1856. "Lady Franklin sent me the whole of that Richardson memoir; and I think Richardson's manly friendship, and love of Franklin, one of the noblest things I ever knew in my life. It makes one's heart beat high, with a sort of sacred joy." (It is the feeling as strongly awakened by the earlier exploits of the same gallant man to be found at the end of Franklin's first voyage, and never to be read without the most exalted emotion.) It was for something higher than mere literature he valued the most original writer and powerful teacher of the age. "I would go at all times farther to see Carlyle than any man alive."

Of his attractive points in society and conversation I have particularized little, because in truth they were himself. Such as they were, they were never absent from him. His acute sense of enjoyment gave such relish to his social qualities that probably no man, not a great wit or a professed talker, ever left, in leaving any social gathering, a blank so impossible to fill up. In quick and varied sympathy, in ready adaptation to every whim or humour, in help to any mirth or game, he stood for a dozen men. If one may say such a thing, he seemed to be always the more himself for being somebody else, for continually putting off his personality. His versatility made him unique. What he said once of his own love of acting, applied to him equally when at his happiest among friends he loved; sketching a character, telling a story, acting a charade, taking part in a game; turning into comedy an incident of the day, describing the last good or bad thing he had seen, reproducing in quaint, tragical, or humorous form and figure, some part of the passionate life with which all his being overflowed. "Assumption has charms for me so delightful--I hardly know for how many wild reasons--that I feel a loss of Oh I can't say what exquisite foolery, when I lose a chance of being some one not in the remotest degree like myself." How it was, that, from one of such boundless resource in contributing to the pleasure of his friends, there was yet, as I have said, so comparatively little to bring away, may be thus explained. But it has been also seen that no one at times said better things, and to happy examples formerly given I will add one or two of a kind he more rarely indulged. "He is below par on the Exchange," a friend remarked of a notorious puffing actor; "he doesn't stand well at Lloyds." "Yet no one stands so well with the under-writers," said Dickens; a pun that Swift would have envied. "I call him an Incubus!" said a non-literary friend, at a loss to express the boredom inflicted on him by a popular author. "Pen-and-ink-ubus, you mean," interposed Dickens. So, when Stanfield said of his mid-shipman son, then absent on his first cruise, "the boy has got his sea-legs on by this time!" "I don't know," remarked Dickens, "about his getting his sea-legs on; but if I may judge from his writing, he certainly has not got his A B C legs on."

Other agreeable pleasantries might be largely cited from his letters. "An old priest" (he wrote from France in 1862), "the express image of Frederic Lemaitre got up for the part, and very cross with the toothache, told me in a railway carriage the other day, that we had no antiquities in heretical England. 'None at all?' I said. 'You have some ships however.' 'Yes; a few.' 'Are they strong?' 'Well,' said I, 'your trade is spiritual, my father: ask the ghost of Nelson.' A French captain who was in the carriage, was immensely delighted with this small joke. I met him at Calais yesterday going somewhere with a detachment; and he said--Pardon! But he had been so limited as to suppose an Englishman incapable of that bonhommie!" In

humouring a joke he was excellent, both in letters and talk; and for this kind of enjoyment his least important little notes are often worth preserving. Take one small instance. So freely had he admired a tale told by his friend and solicitor Mr. Frederic Ouvry, that he had to reply to a humorous proposal for publication of it, in his own manner, in his own periodical. "Your modesty is equal to your merit. . . . I think your way of describing that rustic courtship in middle life, quite matchless. . . . A cheque for L1000 is lying with the publisher. We would willingly make it more, but that we find our law charges so exceedingly heavy." His letters have also examples now and then of what he called his conversational triumphs. "I have distinguished myself" (28th of April 1861) "in two respects lately. I took a young lady, unknown, down to dinner, and, talking to her about the Bishop of Durham's nepotism in the matter of Mr. Cheese, I found she was Mrs. Cheese. And I expatiated to the member for Marylebone, Lord Fermoy, generally conceiving him to be an Irish member, on the contemptible character of the Marylebone constituency and Marylebone representation."

Among his good things should not be omitted his telling of a ghost story. He had something of a hankering after them, as the readers of his briefer pieces will know; and such was his interest generally in things supernatural that, but for the strong restraining power of his common sense, he might have fallen into the follies of spiritualism. As it was, the fanciful side of his nature stopped short at such pardonable superstitions as those of dreams, and lucky days, or other marvels of natural coincidence; and no man was readier to apply sharp tests to a ghost story or a haunted house, though there was just so much tendency to believe in any such, "well-authenticated," as made perfect his manner of telling one. Such a story is related in the 125th number of All the Year Round, which before its publication both Mr. Layard and myself saw at Gadshill, and identified as one related by Lord Lytton. It was published in September, and in a day or two led to what Dickens will relate. "The artist himself who is the hero of that story" (to Lord Lytton, 15th of September 1861) "has sent me in black and white his own account of the whole experience, so very original, so very extraordinary, so very far beyond the version I have published, that all other like stories turn pale before it." The ghost thus reinforced came out in the number published on the 5th of October; and the reader who cares to turn to it, and compare what Dickens in the interval (17th of September) wrote to myself, will have some measure of his readiness to believe in such things. "Upon the publication of the ghost story, up has started the portrait-painter who saw the phantoms! His own written story is out of all distance the most extraordinary that ever was produced; and is as far beyond my version or Bulwer's, as Scott is beyond James. Everything connected with it is amazing; but conceive this--the portrait-painter had been engaged to write it elsewhere as a story for next Christmas, and not unnaturally supposed, when he saw himself anticipated in All the Year Round, that there had been treachery at his printer's. 'In particular,' says he, 'how else was it possible that the date, the 13th of September, could have been got at? For I never told the date, until I wrote it.' Now, my story had NO DATE; but seeing, when I looked over the proof, the great importance of having a date, I (C. D.) wrote in, unconsciously, the exact date on the margin of the proof!" The reader will remember the Doncaster race story; and to other like illustrations of the subject already given, may be added this dream. "Here is a curious case at first-hand" (30th of May 1863). "On Thursday night in last week, being at the office here, I dreamed that I saw a lady in a red shawl with her back towards me (whom I supposed to be E.). On her turning round I found that I didn't know her, and she said 'I am Miss Napier.' All the time I was dressing next morning, I thought--What a preposterous thing to have so very distinct a dream about nothing! and why Miss Napier? for I never heard of any Miss Napier. That same Friday night, I read. After the reading, came into my retiring-room, Mary Boyle and her brother, and the Lady in the red shawl whom they present as 'Miss Napier!' These are all the circumstances, exactly told."

Another kind of dream has had previous record, with no superstition to build itself upon but the loving devotion to one tender memory. With longer or shorter intervals this was with him all his days. Never

from his waking thoughts was the recollection altogether absent; and though the dream would leave him for a time, it unfailingly came back. It was the feeling of his life that always had a mastery over him. What he said on the sixth anniversary of the death of his sister-in-law, that friend of his youth whom he had made his ideal of all moral excellence, he might have said as truly after twenty-six years more. In the very year before he died, the influence was potently upon him. "She is so much in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, and have greatly prospered in anything, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is." Through later troubled years, whatever was worthiest in him found in this an ark of safety; and it was the nobler part of his being which had thus become also the essential. It gave to success what success by itself had no power to give; and nothing could consist with it, for any length of time, that was not of good report and pure. What more could I say that was not better said from the pulpit of the Abbey where he rests?

"He whom we mourn was the friend of mankind, a philanthropist in the true sense; the friend of youth, the friend of the poor, the enemy of every form of meanness and oppression. I am not going to attempt to draw a portrait of him. Men of genius are different from what we suppose them to be. They have greater pleasures and greater pains, greater affections and greater temptations, than the generality of mankind, and they can never be altogether understood by their fellow men. . . . But we feel that a light has gone out, that the world is darker to us, when they depart. There are so very few of them that we cannot afford to lose them one by one, and we look vainly round for others who may supply their places. He whose loss we now mourn occupied a greater space than any other writer in the minds of Englishmen during the last thirty-three years. We read him, talked about him, acted him; we laughed with him; we were roused by him to a consciousness of the misery of others, and to a pathetic interest in human life. Works of fiction, indirectly, are great instructors of this world; and we can hardly exaggerate the debt of gratitude which is due to a writer who has led us to sympathize with these good, true, sincere, honest English characters of ordinary life, and to laugh at the egotism, the hypocrisy, the false respectability of religious professors and others. To another great humourist who lies in this Church the words have been applied that his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations. But of him who has been recently taken I would rather say, in humbler language, that no one was ever so much beloved or so much mourned."

Volume III, Chapter 20 (1869-1870): The End

The End

THE summer and autumn of 1869 were passed quietly at Gadshill. He received there, in June, the American friends to whom he had been most indebted for unwearying domestic kindness at his most trying time in the States. In August, he was at the dinner of the International boat-race; and, in a speech that might have gone far to reconcile the victors to changing places with the vanquished, gave the healths of the Harvard and the Oxford crews. He went to Birmingham, in September, to fulfil a promise that he would open the session of the Institute; and there, after telling his audience that his invention, such as it was, never would have served him as it had done, but for the habit of commonplace, patient, drudging attention, he declared his political creed to be infinitesimal faith in the people governing and illimitable faith in the People governed. In such engagements as these, with nothing of the kind of strain he had most to dread, there was hardly more movement or change than was necessary to his enjoyment of rest.

He had been able to show Mr. Fields something of the interest of London as well as of his Kentish home. He went over its "general post-office" with him, took him among its cheap theatres and poor lodging-houses, and piloted him by night through its most notorious thieves' quarter. Its localities that are pleasantest to a lover of books, such as Johnson's Bolt-court and Goldsmith's Temple-chambers, he explored with him; and, at his visitor's special request, mounted a staircase he had not ascended for more than thirty years, to show the chambers in Furnival's Inn where the first page of Pickwick was written. One more book, unfinished, was to close what that famous book began; and the original of the scene of its opening chapter, the opium-eater's den, was the last place visited. "In a miserable court at night," says Mr. Fields, "we found a haggard old woman blowing at a kind of pipe made of an old ink-bottle; and the words which Dickens puts into the mouth of this wretched creature in Edwin Drood, we heard her croon as we leaned over the tattered bed in which she was lying."

Before beginning his novel he had written his last paper for his weekly publication. It was a notice of my Life of Landor, and contained some interesting recollections of that remarkable man. His memory at this time dwelt much, as was only natural, with past pleasant time, as he saw familiar faces leaving us or likely to leave; and, on the death of one of the comedians associated with the old bright days of Covent Garden, I had intimation of a fancy that had never quitted him since the Cheltenham reading. "I see in the paper to-day that Meadows is dead. I had a talk with him at Coutts's a week or two ago, when he said he was seventy-five, and very weak. Except for having a tearful eye, he looked just the same as ever. My mind still constantly misgives me concerning Macready. Curiously, I don't think he has been ever, for ten minutes together, out of my thoughts since I talked with Meadows last. Well, the year that brings trouble brings comfort too: I have a great success in the boy-line to announce to you. Harry has won the second scholarship at Trinity Hall, which gives him L50 a year as long as he stays there; and I begin to hope that he will get a fellowship." I doubt if anything ever more truly pleased him than this little success of his son Henry at Cambridge. Henry missed the fellowship, but was twenty-ninth wrangler in a fair year, when the wranglers were over forty.

He finished his first number of Edwin Drood in the third week of October, and on the 26th read it at my house with great spirit. A few nights before we had seen together at the Olympic a little drama taken from his Copperfield, which he sat out with more than patience, even with something of enjoyment; and another pleasure was given him that night by its author, Mr. Halliday, who brought into the box another dramatist, Mr. Robertson, to whom Dickens, who then first saw him, said that to himself the charm of his little comedies was "their unassuming form," which had so happily shown that "real wit could afford to put

off any airs of pretension to it." He was at Gadshill till the close of the year; coming up for a few special occasions, such as Procter's eighty-second birthday; and at my house on new-year's eve he read to us, again aloud, a fresh number of his book. Yet these very last days of December had not been without a reminder of the grave warnings of April. The pains in somewhat modified form had returned in both his left hand and his left foot a few days before we met; and they were troubling him still on that day. But he made so light of them himself; so little thought of connecting them with the uncertainties of touch and tread of which they were really part; and read with such an overflow of humour Mr. Honeythunder's boisterous philanthropy; that there was no room, then, for anything but enjoyment. His only allusion to an effect from his illness was his mention of a now invincible dislike which he had to railway travel. This had decided him to take a London house for the twelve last readings in the early months of 1870, and he had become Mr. Milner-Gibson's tenant at 5, Hyde Park Place.

St. James's Hall was to be the scene of these Readings, and they were to occupy the interval from the 11th of January to the 15th of March; two being given in each week to the close of January, and the remaining eight on each of the eight Tuesdays following. Nothing was said of any kind of apprehension as the time approached; but, with a curious absence of the sense of danger, there was certainly both distrust and fear. Sufficient precaution was supposed to have been taken by arrangement for the presence, at each reading, of his friend and medical attendant, Mr. Carr Beard; but this resolved itself, not into any measure of safety, the case admitting of none short of stopping the reading altogether, but simply into ascertainment of the exact amount of strain and pressure, which, with every fresh exertion, he was placing on those vessels of the brain where the Preston trouble too surely had revealed that danger lay. No supposed force in reserve, no dominant strength of will, can turn aside the penalties sternly exacted for disregard of such laws of life as were here plainly overlooked; and though no one may say that it was not already too late for any but the fatal issue, there will be no presumption in believing that life might yet have been for some time prolonged if these readings could have been stopped.

"I am a little shaken," he wrote on the 9th of January, "by my journey to Birmingham to give away the Institution's prizes on Twelfth Night, but I am in good heart; and, notwithstanding Lowe's worrying scheme for collecting a year's taxes in a lump, which they tell me is damaging books, pictures, music, and theatres beyond precedent, our 'let' at St. James's Hall is enormous." He opened with Copperfield and the Pickwick Trial; and I may briefly mention, from the notes taken by Mr. Beard and placed at my disposal, at what cost of exertion to himself he gratified the crowded audiences that then and to the close made these evenings memorable. His ordinary pulse on the first night was at 72; but never on any subsequent night was lower than 82, and had risen on the later nights to more than 100. After Copperfield on the first night it went up to 96, and after Marigold on the second to 99; but on the first night of the Sikes and Nancy scenes (Friday the 21st of January) it went from 80 to 112, and on the second night (the 1st of February) to 118. From this, through the six remaining nights, it never was lower than 110 after the first piece read; and after the third and fourth readings of the Oliver Twist scenes it rose, from 90 to 124 on the 15th of February, and from 94 to 120 on the 8th of March; on the former occasion, after twenty minutes' rest, falling to 98, and on the latter, after fifteen minutes' rest, falling to 82. His ordinary pulse on entering the room, during these last six nights, was more than once over 100, and never lower than 84; from which it rose, after Nickleby on the 22nd of February, to 112. On the 8th of February, when he read Dombey, it had risen from 91 to 114; on the 1st of March, after Copperfield, it rose from 100 to 124; and when he entered the room on the last night it was at 108, having risen only two beats more when the reading was done. The pieces on this occasion were the Christmas Carol, followed by the Pickwick Trial; and probably in all his life he never read so well. On his return from the States, where he had to address his effects to audiences composed of immense numbers of people, a

certain loss of refinement had been observable; but the old delicacy was now again delightfully manifest, and a subdued tone, as well in the humorous as the serious portions, gave something to all the reading as of a quiet sadness of farewell. The charm of this was at its height when he shut the volume of Pickwick and spoke in his own person. He said that for fifteen years he had been reading his own books to audiences whose sensitive and kindly recognition of them had given him instruction and enjoyment in his art such as few men could have had; but that he nevertheless thought it well now to retire upon older associations, and in future to devote himself exclusively to the calling which had first made him known. "In but two short weeks from this time I hope that you may enter, in your own homes, on a new series of readings at which my assistance will be indispensable; but from these garish lights I vanish now for evermore, with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, affectionate farewell." The brief hush of silence as he moved from the platform; and the prolonged tumult of sound that followed suddenly, stayed him, and again for another moment brought him back; will not be forgotten by any present.

Little remains to be told that has not in it almost unmixed pain and sorrow. Hardly a day passed, while the readings went on or after they closed, unvisited by some effect or other of the disastrous excitement shown by the notes of Mr. Beard. On the 23rd of January, when for the last time he met Carlyle, he came to us with his left hand in a sling; on the 7th of February, when he passed with us his last birthday, and on the 25th, when he read the third number of his novel, the hand was still swollen and painful; and on the 21st of March, when he read admirably his fourth number, he told us that as he came along, walking up the length of Oxford-street, the same incident had recurred as on the day of a former dinner with us, and he had not been able to read, all the way, more than the right-hand half of the names over the shops. Yet he had the old fixed persuasion that this was rather the effect of a medicine he had been taking than of any grave cause, and he still strongly believed his other troubles to be exclusively local. Eight days later he wrote: "My uneasiness and hemorrhage, after having quite left me, as I supposed, has come back with an aggravated irritability that it has not yet displayed. You have no idea what a state I am in to-day from a sudden violent rush of it; and yet it has not the slightest effect on my general health that I know of." This was a disorder which troubled him in his earlier life; and during the last five years, in his intervals of suffering from other causes, it had from time to time taken aggravated form.

His last public appearances were in April. On the 5th he took the chair for the Newsvendors, whom he helped with a genial address in which even his apology for little speaking overflowed with irrepressible humour. He would try, he said, like Falstaff, "but with a modification almost as large as himself," less to speak himself than to be the cause of speaking in others. "Much in this manner they exhibit at the door of a snuff-shop the effigy of a Highlander with an empty mull in his hand, who, apparently having taken all the snuff he can carry, and discharged all the sneezes of which he is capable, politely invites his friends and patrons to step in and try what they can do in the same line." On the 30th of the same month he returned thanks for "Literature" at the Royal Academy dinner, and I may preface my allusion to what he then said with what he had written to me the day before. Three days earlier Daniel Maclise had passed away. "Like you at Ely, so I at Higham, had the shock of first reading at a railway station of the death of our old dear friend and companion. What the shock would be, you know too well. It has been only after great difficulty, and after hardening and steeling myself to the subject by at once thinking of it and avoiding it in a strange way, that I have been able to get any command over it or over myself. If I feel at the time that I can be sure of the necessary composure, I shall make a little reference to it at the Academy to-morrow. I suppose you won't be there." The reference made was most touching and manly. He told those who listened that since he first entered the public lists, a very young man indeed, it had been his constant fortune to number among his nearest and dearest friends members of that Academy who had been its pride; and who had now, one by one, so dropped from his side that he was grown to believe, with the Spanish monk of whom Wilkie spoke, that the only realities around him were the

pictures which he loved, and all the moving life but a shadow and a dream. "For many years I was one of the two most intimate friends and most constant companions of Mr. Maclise, to whose death the Prince of Wales has made allusion, and the President has referred with the eloquence of genuine feeling. Of his genius in his chosen art, I will venture to say nothing here; but of his fertility of mind and wealth of intellect I may confidently assert that they would have made him, if he had been so minded, at least as great a writer as he was a painter. The gentlest and most modest of men, the freshest as to his generous appreciation of young aspirants and the frankest and largest hearted as to his peers, incapable of a sordid or ignoble thought, gallantly sustaining the true dignity of his vocation, without one grain of self-ambition, wholesomely natural at the last as at the first, 'in wit a man, simplicity a child,'--no artist of whatsoever denomination, I make bold to say, ever went to his rest leaving a golden memory more pure from dross, or having devoted himself with a truer chivalry to the art-goddess whom he worshipped." These were the last public words of Dickens, and he could not have spoken any worthier.

Upon his appearance at the dinner of the Academy had followed some invitations he was led to accept; greatly to his own regret, he told me on the night (7th of May) when he read to us the fifth number of Edwin Drood; for he was now very eager to get back to the quiet of Gadshill. He dined with Mr. Motley, then American minister; had met Mr. Disraeli at a dinner at Lord Stanhope's; had breakfasted with Mr. Gladstone; and on the 17th was to attend the Queen's ball with his daughter. But she had to go there without him; for on the 16th I had intimation of a sudden disablement. "I am sorry to report, that, in the old preposterous endeavour to dine at preposterous hours and preposterous places, I have been pulled up by a sharp attack in my foot. And serve me right. I hope to get the better of it soon, but I fear I must not think of dining with you on Friday. I have cancelled everything in the dining way for this week, and that is a very small precaution after the horrible pain I have had and the remedies I have taken." He had to excuse himself also from the General Theatrical Fund dinner, where the Prince of Wales was to preside; but at another dinner a week later, where the King of the Belgians and the Prince were to be present, so much pressure was put upon him that he went, still suffering as he was, to dine with Lord Houghton.

We met for the last time on Sunday the 22nd of May, when I dined with him in Hyde Park Place. The death of Mr. Lemon, of which he heard that day, had led his thoughts to the crowd of friendly companions in letters and art who had so fallen from the ranks since we played Ben Jonson together that we were left almost alone. "And none beyond his sixtieth year," he said, "very few even fifty." It is no good to talk of it, I suggested. "We shall not think of it the less" was his reply; and an illustration much to the point was before us, afforded by an incident deserving remembrance in his story. Not many weeks before, a correspondent had written to him from Liverpool describing himself as a self-raised man, attributing his prosperous career to what Dickens's writings had taught him at its outset of the wisdom of kindness, and sympathy for others; and asking pardon for the liberty he took in hoping that he might be permitted to offer some acknowledgment of what not only had cheered and stimulated him through all his life, but had contributed so much to the success of it. The letter enclosed L500. Dickens was greatly touched by this; and told the writer, in sending back his cheque, that he would certainly have taken it if he had not been, though not a man of fortune, a prosperous man himself; but that the letter, and the spirit of its offer, had so gratified him, that if the writer pleased to send him any small memorial of it in another form he would gladly receive it. The memorial soon came. A richly worked basket of silver, inscribed "from one who has been cheered and stimulated by Mr. Dickens's writings, and held the author among his first remembrances when he became prosperous," was accompanied by an extremely handsome silver centrepiece for the table, of which the design was four figures representing the Seasons. But the kindly donor shrank from sending Winter to one whom he would fain connect with none but the brighter and milder days, and he had struck the fourth figure from the design. "I never look at it,"

said Dickens, "that I don't think most of the Winter."

A matter discussed that day with Mr. Ouvry was briefly resumed in a note of the 29th of May, the last I ever received from him; which followed me to Exeter, and closed thus. "You and I can speak of it at Gads by and by. Foot no worse. But no better." The old trouble was upon him when we parted, and this must have been nearly the last note written before he quitted London. He was at Gadshill on the 30th of May; and I heard no more until the telegram reached me at Launceston on the night of the 9th of June, which told me that the "by and by" was not to come in this world.

The few days at Gadshill had been given wholly to work on his novel. He had been easier in his foot and hand; and, though he was suffering severely from the local hemorrhage before named, he made no complaint of illness. But there was observed in him a very unusual appearance of fatigue. "He seemed very weary." He was out with his dogs for the last time on Monday the 6th of June, when he walked with his letters into Rochester. On Tuesday the 7th, after his daughter Mary had left on a visit to her sister Kate, not finding himself equal to much fatigue, he drove to Cobhamwood with his sister-in-law, there dismissed the carriage, and walked round the park and back. He returned in time to put up in his new conservatory some Chinese lanterns sent from London that afternoon; and, the whole of the evening, he sat with Miss Hogarth in the dining-room that he might see their effect when lighted. More than once he then expressed his satisfaction at having finally abandoned all intention of exchanging Gadshill for London; and this he had done more impressively some days before. While he lived, he said, he should like his name to be more and more associated with the place; and he had a notion that when he died he should like to lie in the little graveyard belonging to the Cathedral at the foot of the Castle wall.

On the 8th of June he passed all the day writing in the Chalet. He came over for luncheon; and, much against his usual custom, returned to his desk. Of the sentences he was then writing, the last of his long life of literature, a portion has been given in facsimile on a previous page; and the reader will observe with a painful interest, not alone its evidence of minute labour at this fast-closing hour of time with him, but the direction his thoughts had taken. He imagines such a brilliant morning as had risen with that eighth of June shining on the old city of Rochester. He sees in surpassing beauty, with the lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air, its antiquities and its ruins; its Cathedral and Castle. But his fancy, then, is not with the stern dead forms of either; but with that which makes warm the cold stone tombs of centuries, and lights them up with flecks of brightness, "fluttering there like wings." To him, on that sunny summer morning, the changes of glorious light from moving boughs, the songs of birds, the scents from garden, woods, and fields, have penetrated into the Cathedral, have subdued its earthy odour, and are preaching the Resurrection and the Life.

He was late in leaving the Chalet; but before dinner, which was ordered at six o'clock with the intention of walking afterwards in the lanes, he wrote some letters, among them one to his friend Mr. Charles Kent appointing to see him in London next day; and dinner was begun before Miss Hogarth saw, with alarm, a singular expression of trouble and pain in his face. "For an hour," he then told her, "he had been very ill;" but he wished dinner to go on. These were the only really coherent words uttered by him. They were followed by some, that fell from him disconnectedly, of quite other matters; of an approaching sale at a neighbour's house, of whether Macready's son was with his father at Cheltenham, and of his own intention to go immediately to London; but at these latter he had risen, and his sister-in-law's help alone prevented him from falling where he stood. Her effort then was to get him on the sofa, but after a slight struggle he sank heavily on his left side. "On the ground" were the last words he spoke. It was now a little over ten minutes past six o'clock. His two daughters came that night with Mr. Beard, who had also been telegraphed for, and whom they met at the station. His eldest son arrived early next morning, and was joined in the evening (too late) by his younger son from Cambridge. All possible medical aid had

been summoned. The surgeon of the neighbourhood was there from the first, and a physician from London was in attendance as well as Mr. Beard. But all human help was unavailing. There was effusion on the brain; and though stertorous breathing continued all night, and until ten minutes past six o'clock on the evening of Thursday the 9th of June, there had never been a gleam of hope during the twenty-four hours. He had lived four months beyond his 58th year.

The excitement and sorrow at his death are within the memory of all. Before the news of it even reached the remoter parts of England, it had been flashed across Europe; was known in the distant continents of India, Australia, and America; and not in English-speaking communities only, but in every country of the civilised earth, had awakened grief and sympathy. In his own land it was as if a personal bereavement had befallen every one. Her Majesty the Queen telegraphed from Balmoral "her deepest regret at the sad news of Charles Dickens's death;" and this was the sentiment alike of all classes of her people. There was not an English journal that did not give it touching and noble utterance; and the Times took the lead in suggesting that the only fit resting-place for the remains of a man so dear to England was the Abbey in which the most illustrious Englishmen are laid.

With the expression thus given to a general wish, the Dean of Westminster lost no time in showing ready compliance; and on the morning of the day when it appeared was in communication with the family and representatives. The public homage of a burial in the Abbey had to be reconciled with his own instructions to be privately buried without previous announcement of time or place, and without monument or memorial. He would himself have preferred to lie in the small graveyard under Rochester Castle wall, or in the little churches of Cobham or Shorne; but all these were found to be closed; and the desire of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester to lay him in their Cathedral had been entertained, when the Dean of Westminster's request, and the considerate kindness of his generous assurance that there should be only such ceremonial as would strictly obey all injunctions of privacy, made it a grateful duty to accept that offer. The spot already had been chosen by the Dean; and before mid-day on the following morning, Tuesday the 14th of June, with knowledge of those only who took part in the burial, all was done. The solemnity had not lost by the simplicity. Nothing so grand or so touching could have accompanied it, as the stillness and the silence of the vast Cathedral. Then, later in the day and all the following day, came unbidden mourners in such crowds, that the Dean had to request permission to keep open the grave until Thursday; but after it was closed they did not cease to come, and "all day long," Doctor Stanley wrote on the 17th, "there was a constant pressure to the spot, and many flowers were strewn upon it by unknown hands, many tears shed from unknown eyes." He alluded to this in the impressive funeral discourse delivered by him in the Abbey on the morning of Sunday the 19th, pointing to the fresh flowers that then had been newly thrown (as they still are thrown, in this fourth year after the death), and saying that "the spot would thenceforward be a sacred one with both the New World and the Old, as that of the representative of the literature, not of this island only, but of all who speak our English tongue." The stone placed upon it is inscribed

CHARLES DICKENS. BORN FEBRUARY THE SEVENTH 1812. DIED JUNE THE NINTH 1870.

The highest associations of both the arts he loved surround him where he lies. Next to him is RICHARD CUMBERLAND. Mrs. PRITCHARD'S monument looks down upon him, and immediately behind is DAVID GARRICK'S. Nor is the actor's delightful art more worthily represented than the nobler genius of the author. Facing the grave, and on its left and right, are the monuments of CHAUCER, SHAKESPEARE, and DRYDEN, the three immortals who did most to create and settle the language to which CHARLES DICKENS has given another undying name.

FINIS.

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