

CHARLES DICKENS AND ENGLISH FICTION

THE OREGONIAN'S HOME STUDY COURSE. DIRECTED BY PROF. SEYMOUR EATON

GOLDEN AGES OF LITERATURE

XIII.—THE GOLDEN AGE OF ENGLISH FICTION.

BY THOMAS MARC PARROTT, PH. D. His Flowering Time.

During the 19 years following the first appearance of "Pickwick," Dickens was working at his pen as the "Oliver Twist" was begun before "Pickwick" was finished and "Nicholas Nickleby" was well under way before the end of "Oliver" was in sight. More "Sketches" or the old fashion appeared; a weekly paper, composed of essays, sketches and short stories was undertaken, and when these failed to attract, two complete novels, "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Barnaby Rudge" were published. In 1843 Dickens made his famous visit to America, passed through the land in a more than royal progress, and vehemently abused his hosts for their sins in the matter of international copyright and negro slavery. Shortly after his return he began one of the greatest of his works, "Martin Chuzzlewit," which perhaps underrated in America, and not unnaturally, seeing what visits of satire which its author poured out upon certain American precedents. But we may at least take comfort in the fact that the immortal Pecksniff is not an American, and never could by any possibility have belonged to any other nation under heaven than the English. The most vigorous runs strongly through this book. Selfishness in all its forms, the national sin of brag, the national sin of hypocrisy, are held up in "Martin Chuzzlewit" to scorn and ridicule. But, after all, it is not for the moral purpose that we remember the book, nor for the confused and improbable plot, nor for the high comedy of the scenes at Todgers' and in America for the life and movement of the dialogue, and for the superb power of character creation, which reached its zenith in the figure of Sairee Gamp.

cause he was of it, the voice as no one had heard before of the most numerous and, perhaps, the most influential of English classes.

And this explains, too, something in the style of Dickens which has called forth the remarks of critics. It is always simple, often vivid and impressive, but it lacks distinction; it is not based upon the best models. His trick of dropping into rhymed verse in scenes where he is very much in earnest betrays an ignorance of the real secrets of prose style. There is not a passage anywhere in his works that will compare for beauty of rhythm and charm of diction with that which could be culled from the pages of Thackeray.

But when all this is said, how much remain! Dickens left a great mass of work, not all of it by any means equal

value, but all permeated by the essential characteristics of his genius. First, perhaps, among these is his immense vitality. Dickens is a larger-than-life figure and there is a sense of power in his work that denotes the master. His very imperfections are in a way a testimony to his strength. He is no painter of delicate miniature, but works with a broad brush, dashing off one masterpiece and hurrying on to another, without stopping to correct imperfections or put on the finishing touches. Closely connected with this vitality is his immense power of imagination. It was in his true sense creative. The people in his books are real to us because in the process of composition he became real to him. He heard every word they said and has told us; he had but to sit down at his desk, and straightway he saw. Yet this imagination never strayed from real life. It springs from the living scene around him, and certain phases of life, of the great world of London and the people that dwell therein, of the little provincial towns of Central and Southern England, of the roads and stopping-places, characters that these to the capital. He was no Shakespeare; he had little sympathy with the classic or romantic past; but what he himself is a greater number of characters that he has created, and he has done so with a certainty of hand rarely equaled. And this power of imagination shows itself alike in description and characterization. His power of observation and his keen eye for the real in life are shown to us with a thousand touches of exact description that make it more than life-like—that make it live. We can taste the air of one of his London fogs. And so, in fact, a certain amount of bitterness in some of his later works, which is at once new and distressing. He experimented, too, not always successfully in unaccommodated methods. "The Christmas Lectures" is a novel of pure incident, "Hard Times" a novel of unmitigated polemic. And, as always, he took upon himself labor enough to crush a dozen men.

In the last years of his life Dickens was not only a most prolific novelist, but an editor, a public speaker and an amateur actor. He seemed possessed by a demon craving for sympathy and relief. "I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break and die if I spared myself." Finally, in his desire for action and sensation, he threw himself on the famous public readings, which gave him the excitement he craved, doubled his fortunes and eventually killed him.

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

Few writers of our century have put more of themselves into their work than did Charles Dickens. Not only did he use his own observations and experience, make free with the characters of his friends, introduce his own parents in more or less ridiculous roles, but his whole work, from the "Sketches" to "Edwin Drood," is an embodiment and expression of himself. He actually proposed at one time to dedicate his work to himself, "Charles Dickens, Conductor by Himself," and this title might be given to the whole body of his work. Certain characteristics of his work stand out for explanation. If they do not altogether excuse, the more striking deficiencies of his work. Dickens sprang from the lower middle class, and was practically uneducated. His point of view, in consequence, while often that of the man of genius, is never that of the born gentleman or of the scholar. He raised himself above circumstances that would have broken the spirit of a weaker youth by his undaunted spirit and indefatigable exertion. His sunny temper, love of fun and infinite capacity for seeing the humorous side of things saved him from any bitterness that these circumstances might have entailed. He was sincerely religious, and his religion was of a very pure, if not of a very intellectual type. There was something wanting in Dickens. To put it brutally, his manners had not that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. There is something which jars the sense in his impatient self-will, his restless activity, his desire to keep on good terms with the public. Probably no author living would have thought it necessary to issue the statement in regard to his separation from his wife that Dickens published in "Household Words." And something of this is seen in his work. He is too dependent upon the sympathy and quick response of his readers. Conscious that "Chuzzlewit" was the best work he had ever done, he was none the less appalled at its comparatively unfructiferous reception, and took immediate measures to stimulate the waning interest in his work. He altered the proposed fate of Walter Gay in "Dombey" because he doubted "if the public would stand it." Yet we must not think that Dickens ever consciously wrote down to his public. On the contrary, he wrote for this public be-

A DAY OF GOOD SPORTS

RAILROAD MEN'S RELAY RACE AT IRVINGTON.

Fine Track and Field Events—Y. M. C. A. Road Race—The Regatta.

The railway men and Y. M. C. A. have just cause for commendation for the spirited afternoon's sport that was afforded by them at Irvington track, the proceeds being entirely devoted to the benefit of the Baby Home. A very large crowd, which filled the grandstand and crowded the fences along the stretch, swarmed from the starting line to the finish line, being entirely devoted to the benefit of the Baby Home. A very large crowd, which filled the grandstand and crowded the fences along the stretch, swarmed from the starting line to the finish line, being entirely devoted to the benefit of the Baby Home.

CHURCHES ARE SHIRKING.

A Call for United Expansion From a Corresponding Secretary.

At the annual meeting of the Presbyterian Union for Church Extension, held

in Brooklyn, Rev. D. H. Overton, corresponding secretary of the organization, made a strong plea for united expansion. Speaking Brooklyn as an instance of religious slothfulness, he said: "As yet only a few of the churches are awake to the great opportunity and the great duty that is ours regarding church extension. There is no better field for church extension in the world than right here in Brooklyn. I doubt if you can find any where in the Western continent a city that has had the increase in the year that Brooklyn has, or suburbs that have grown as our suburbs have grown. From 80,000 to 100,000 increase in population is a great responsibility upon the churches of this borough, and a great opportunity as well. The denomination that best recognizes this and takes up the responsibility and uses the opportunity is the denomination for the future. The denomination that is simply proud of the past, content with its present, and makes no effort for the future will have no future in a city where population is shifting as it is here. The old churches will be weakened, the new ones will be formed, and the denomination will become weak. It is our duty to recognize this and take up the responsibility and use the opportunity that is ours regarding church extension. There is no better field for church extension in the world than right here in Brooklyn. I doubt if you can find any where in the Western continent a city that has had the increase in the year that Brooklyn has, or suburbs that have grown as our suburbs have grown. From 80,000 to 100,000 increase in population is a great responsibility upon the churches of this borough, and a great opportunity as well. The denomination that best recognizes this and takes up the responsibility and uses the opportunity is the denomination for the future. The denomination that is simply proud of the past, content with its present, and makes no effort for the future will have no future in a city where population is shifting as it is here. The old churches will be weakened, the new ones will be formed, and the denomination will become weak. It is our duty to recognize this and take up the responsibility and use the opportunity that is ours regarding church extension.

WHEELER AND WRIGHT TIED FOR FIRST IN OPEN HANDICAP.

There were probably 100 people who witnessed the links of the Waverly Golf Club yesterday, when Wheeler and Wright were tied for first prize.

REGATTA A FIZZLE.

The regatta of the Oregon Yacht Club yesterday afternoon was a fizzle. What was in the early part of the day a fair breeze changed suddenly to a dead calm, and the regatta was a fizzle.

THE CROWNING OF THE SLAIN.

When the blush of the rose is born, In the heart of the dawn, it robs, Receives at the bridal morn, We think of the heroes that slumber, Away from the light of the sun, And the music rivulets run, And the musical rivulets run.

THE NEW ERA IN PORTO RICO.

Harper's weekly is speaking at the inauguration of Governor Allen at Porto Rico last week, and it is to be hoped that the wise words, both of the retiring Military Governor and of the island's new executive, fell upon listening and appreciative ears.

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DR. PIERCE'S PELLETS ARE THE BEST FOR THE BOWELS.

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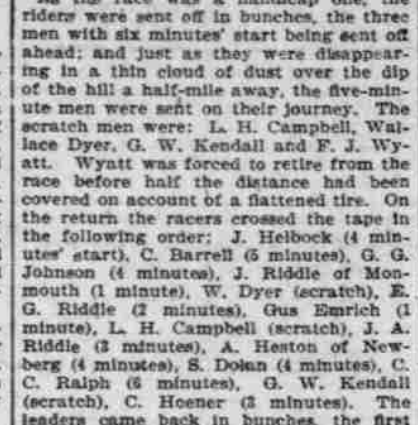
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THE NEW ERA IN PORTO RICO.

MUNSON'S INHALER CURES CATARRH Colds, Coughs, Hay Fever, Bronchitis, Asthma and all Diseases of the Throat and Lungs.

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BEECHAM'S PILLS cure bilious and nervous ills, sick headache, disordered liver and impaired digestion.

"GREAT NORTHERN FLYER" The Most Popular Train Across America.

Motion Argued. In the matter of the involuntary bankruptcy of J. D. Strauss, in the United States Court, a motion of the petitioning creditors to dismiss the petition was argued before Judge Bellinger.

Do You Feel Like This? Activity, energy, cheerfulness, a good digestion—all these belong to you, if your nerves are strong. HUDYAN will give you these, for HUDYAN strengthens the nerves and nerve-centers. HUDYAN will create new cheeks and bright eyes. HUDYAN is for men and women. It is agreeable to take, agreeable in its effect. HUDYAN possesses peculiar curative properties that belong to no other remedy.

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