

The New Northwest.

FREE SPEECH, FREE PRESS, FREE PEOPLE.

VOLUME X.—NO. 47.

PORTLAND, OREGON, THURSDAY, AUGUST 4, 1881.

PER YEAR—\$3 00.

A DAY WITH DICKENS.

BY ABIGAIL SCOTT DUNIWAY.

Once, in my travels by stage, I found myself ensconced at nightfall in a village tavern away out at the foot of the Salmon River Mountains in Northern Idaho. The day's ride had been a hard and tedious one. I had compassed sixty-five miles of travel in an open vehicle on a route that ran over mountains and through valleys, up grades and down, through cañons, streams and swamps, and again over rocks and ridges, but amid such scenes of abounding beauty everywhere that I scarcely took note of passing hours.

The tavern in which I found refuge nestled in the center of the village at the base of a long succession of tree-studded steeps, at the extreme end of all wagon roads, and at the beginning of that peculiar style of transportation known among miners as "mule navigation."

My long day's ride was followed by a night of refreshing sleep, but I knew not a soul in the village, and the following morning dragged heavily. The tavern was undergoing repairs throughout, and there was no room ready for me that had facilities for fire. The long, cold ride of the previous day had chilled me almost into paralysis. At last I complained of the cold to the obliging landlady, who, after a few minutes' absence, returned with the information that a gentleman (an entire stranger), who did not even give me permission to thank him, would assign me his room and stove for daily use during my sojourn. This message was accompanied also by the instruction to make myself thoroughly at home.

It was easy enough to see that the room was a bachelor's. The stove and wood-box occupied one corner; a huge ox whip of the "blacksnake" variety lay coiled like a living representative of its class in another; a table with a confused litter of old magazines and antiquated gazettes of fashion stood near the lounge; a spittoon, filled with saw-dust and tobacco quids, sat under it; a rack, with hats and coats, two chairs, a single bedstead, a wash-stand, a cane, a crutch, a cribbage board, a deck of cards, and a little mirror, were messily noted, together with an odor of liniment, which was associated at once with my thought of the crutch, and led me to fear that my unknown friend's hospitality would result in a fresh attack of rheumatism, from which malady my landlady informed me that he was just recovering. But the good woman assured me that my apprehensions for her lodger's comfort were entirely unnecessary; and there being absolutely no other place for me to sit and enjoy a fire, I reluctantly installed myself in the convalescent's chair, while its self-banished owner took refuge in the bar-room below.

Under the pile of old magazines and antiquated gazettes of fashion lay a copy of the "Old Curiosity Shop." Twenty years had rolled over my head since I had read this book, and I welcomed it in my lonely retreat as an old and valued friend. I did not delve into its pages with the impatient eagerness with which one greets a new book from the pen of a well-known author; but I leisurely opened at the preface and pondered over the author's confession that this great novel had first appeared as a serial in 1841 in a weekly publication issued by himself, entitled *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

The world takes eager note of the achieved successes of a great author; but how many stop to think of the years of struggle, toil and disappointment that antedate his fame? And yet, we know, if we will but consider, that but for the struggles that mellowed the heart and the experiences that broadened the understanding of Charles Dickens—that brought him face to face and heart to heart with London's squalor and wretchedness and crime—we should have never known and pitied the occupants of the great city's alleys or shrunk from the criminals that hide from daylight in portions of its rat-infested "water side."

Who, save those who, like Dickens, have passed through the fiery trials of poverty and disappointment, can comprehend the ingenious confession that his "conscious pen wince" while he explains the rise and fall of *Master Humphrey's Clock*? How we admire the "mournful pride" with which, as he tells us, he welcomed in those days of trial "an essay in a literary journal, of which Little Nell was the principal theme;" and how we appreciate the "melancholy gratification" it afforded the author in his famous years to learn that "the writer of the essay," who was then "going slowly down to his grave," was Thomas Hood.

I turned from the preface to the book itself, and as I read and pondered, I could not but ask myself, as I now ask you, kind reader, why it is that the literary world, which so loves to quote Dickens, so seldom mentions his masterpiece of villainy, Daniel Quilp? Nowhere, among all the villains of story, do you meet this person's equal in combined deformity, shrewdness, good

nature, cruelty, personal hideousness, and general deviltry. Shakespeare has never painted a Daniel Quilp. Scott has not attempted such a masterpiece. Mrs. Stowe's Legree makes you shudder, but he was not versatile in devilish talents nor fertile in villainous resources like Daniel Quilp. And there were Mrs. Quilp and Mrs. Jiniwin. How clever the satire upon match-making mothers which is immortalized in Mrs. Jiniwin; and how stinging is the good-natured sarcasm of the Satyr-like son-in-law, whose delight in making Mrs. Quilp utterly wretched and helpless is only equaled by his felicity in compelling Mrs. Jiniwin to realize that the match was of her own making. One cannot refrain from saying of Mrs. Jiniwin, "Served her right." But with the same breath comes a shuddering pity for the meek and timid wife, who obeys and serves the hideous dwarf in mortal terror, while his very presence is a loathing and a pestilence.

Of Mrs. Jarley and her "wax work," the world has known much, and the name of Little Nell has long been a household word in song and story. But whoever thinks of the old grandfather except in connection with the child? And yet, how vivid is the great master's picture of the terrible fascinations of the gambling table, under the inspiration of a life-long struggle with poverty; fascinations that seize hold of the old man in his dotage and drive him mad under the lash of the ever unsated demon, Acquisitiveness.

The strength of Dickens lies in his heart. He goes down into the common walks of human life and angles there for characters that weaker men have seen daily, but have failed to think worthy of note. He touches the reader's heart with the infirmities and misfortunes of the poor and the lowly, and leads him to despise the oppressor and the bigot.

It is comforting, in these days of skepticism, to know that Dickens was a firm believer in the immortality of the Divine in human nature. Even Daniel Quilp had some redeeming traits, albeit they were few and scant and badly discolored with wickedness. And, to those whose loved ones have passed beyond the vale, the lessons of restoration that he teaches have a power to console and comfort that is irresistible.

She [Little Nell] was looking at a humble stone which told of a young man who had died at twenty-three years old, fifty-five years ago, when she heard a faltering step approaching, and looking round, saw a feeble woman bent with the weight of years, who tottered to the foot of the same grave and asked her to read the writing on the stone. The old woman thanked her when she had done, saying that she had had the words by heart for many a long year, but could not see them now.

"Were you his mother?" said the child.
"I was his wife, my dear."
She the wife of a young man of three and twenty!
"You wonder to hear me say that," remarked the old woman, shaking her head. "You're not the first. Other folk than you have wondered at the same thing before now. Yes, I was his wife. Death doesn't change us more than life, my dear."

Then, growing garrulous upon a theme which was new to one listener, though but a child, she told how she had wept and moaned and prayed to die herself when this happened; and how, when she first came to that place, a young creature, strong in love and grief, she had hoped her heart was breaking, as it seemed to be. But now that five and fifty years were gone, she spoke of the dead man as though he had been her son or grandson, with a kind of pity for his youth growing out of her old age, and an exalting strength of his manhood growing out of her own weakness and decay; and yet, she spoke of him as her husband, too; and thinking of herself in connection with him, as she used to be, and not as she was now, talked of their meeting in another world as if he were dead but yesterday, and she, separated from her former self, were thinking of the happiness of the comely girl who seemed to have died with him.

To Dickens the seen and unseen worlds were blended, and all was natural. Superstitions he had none, for the reason that the physical and the supersensuous were intermingled in his idea, and each was part of the universal whole. How naturally he describes the closing hours of Little Nell: "Waking, she never wandered in her mind but once, and that was of beautiful music that she said was in the air. God knows, it may have been."

Dickens carries one from the sublimely spiritual to the abominably nefarious in human nature with the artistic power of a master. We shudder with disgust when Daniel Quilp gets home, after Mrs. Quilp and Mrs. Jiniwin have thought him drowned. And we involuntarily wish it had been true on account of the timid wife, who, because it seems to be her duty, professes joy at his unexpected return—joy which he knows is manufactured for the occasion, but which delights him beyond measure because he knows it is assumed through fear of him.

My day in the bachelor's quarters is wearing to its close. I shut the book and stand for an hour at the uncurtained window, looking out upon the adjacent mountains. There has been a hard, rain storm, but the sun is shining now, bathing with a flood of golden light the rugged steeps upon which the miners' trail is visible, as it winds through the trees.

Three and twenty years ago! Ah, me! One whose memory I love to honor, who was young then, and full of life and hope, clambered up that

mountain's side on his weary way to the gold mines. I think of him, and of his battles with destiny; of my own changing years, and of the good and ill that seem alike inherent in human nature; and I turn from the contemplation of evil as personified in Daniel Quilp to good as illustrated in the closing words of Little Nell. And with that mountain trail before my eyes, the memory of the three and twenty years that sweep over my spirit fills my waking dreams with fancies that seem to fill the air. "God knows. It may be so."

A fresh shower falls, and a rainbow of vivid brightness spans the horizon, just above the clear-cut green of the still tree tops. I gaze abroad till the sun goes down, and then, laying aside the "Old Curiosity Shop," I cast a lingering look upon the dingy furniture in the bachelor's room, and repair to my own apartment, devoutly thankful for the opportunity that, in spite of lonely surroundings, gave me a day with Dickens.

HONEST INDIGNATION.

SAN JOSE, Cal., July 26, 1881.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW NORTHWEST:
I enclose check for my subscription up to January 1, 1882. Time flies so fast I was not aware I was so far behind.

I am glad to see by your paper that you have a prospect of getting the suffrage in Oregon, which I consider is due principally to your untiring energy. The question here in California seems at a stand-still. The only symptoms of life in that direction (except in individual cases) seems to have concentrated in the Social Science Association and the *Woman's Herald of Industry*, a thoroughly live paper, which I hope will be a success. You, of course, have received a copy, with Mrs. J. W. Stow's "Night behind the Bars." Is it not awful that such things can go on as she describes in the jail, especially in regard to those seven young girls? Does it seem possible that sane men would countenance such doings or permit such men as she describes to hold office? It seems unreasonable that Mrs. Stow should have been arrested and treated in such a brutal manner for just refusing to repair the street. I was under the impression that the Street Commissioners, in a case of that kind, would have the work done, and then compel the owner to pay for it, and could sell the property if need be; but I was not aware that a woman could be arrested and put in prison, and that her doors could be broken open as Mrs. Stow describes. If such is really the case, the newspapers have been very remiss in their duty, that they did not blazon forth such injustice to the world. It is a shame and a disgrace to the State that women and young girls should be under the control of such unprincipled ruffians, anyway. If women and girls must be imprisoned for crimes indulged in through the entreaties and by the suggestion usually of their "natural protectors," there should at least be women officers to see that they are made no worse by being subjected to the laws, "not of the people nor by the people," but most certainly for women when it comes to taxes and crimes.

Your sincere friend and co-worker,
SARAH L. KNOX-GOODRICH.

CHEERING WORDS.

Mrs. L. A. Moffett, of Lower Cascades, writes: "Yours Truly's" last letter is just splendid. No doubt many women could tell of similar experiences if they only had the moral courage to do so. "Yours Truly's" experience will do good in more families than one. If more men would pocket their pride and the fear that their wives want to encroach upon their inherent dignity, or "britches" as you so well say, they would read such articles with profit, and there would be many more happy homes than now. By the way, my husband enjoyed that "adorable Jim's" discomfiture quite as much as I did, and he looks for the *NEW NORTHWEST* quite as eagerly every week; says it fills a want long felt by many who are not able to take more than one or two papers and still desire a variety of reading matter. We always look for the editorial correspondence first. Often I read it twice. Its descriptive power seems to increase, if that were possible, every week. We think a collection of the same in book form would be a valuable acquisition to any library. To those who wish to change their places of abode, the book would be of great assistance, and those who stay at home, who wish to understand "the lay of the land" in their own State or Territories, would not fail to appreciate it."

Col. T. W. Higginson says: "The reason why many women don't like the equal rights movement is because they have too little thought in them to appreciate it. They may have literary culture and social polish, but for want of an idea to brighten their eyes and strengthen their souls, these things are only glitter and worthlessness."

WOMAN AND INDEPENDENCE.

[Letter to the New York Sun.]

To the Editor:—In recent issues of the *Sun* are several letters, each boiling over with zeal about a grand Fourth of July celebration. As one-half of the people of this country are yet held in the same political subjection in which they were held before the Declaration of Independence was written, and as I belong to that subjugated half, I beg the *Sun* to give a small space to my ideas on Fourth of July celebrations.

First, I will state that I fully recognize the good work that our forefathers did for themselves and their male posterity when they seceded from the British Government and founded a freer. But I fail to see wherein the Declaration of Independence has left women in any freer condition. Our much-lauded forefathers found the women of America subjects of one sovereign—a man of education, of an educated race, and of gentlemanly manners. They left them helpless subjects under a million sovereigns, black, white, and yellow, native and foreign-born, sober and drunk, selfish, arrogant, brutal, or—good, just as it happens. Have we any reason to help on Fourth of July celebrations? The woman who engages in or encourages such celebrations is like those slaves in the olden time of slavery, who, because tolerably well-fed, housed and clothed, were so penetrated and permeated through and through by the demoralizing spirit of slavery as to be utterly unconscious that they were slaves; in fact, so unconscious as to fancy themselves part and parcel of their master's grandeur and honor.

The great body of American women are in this state of mind with regard to their political masters. When but a small girl, I myself felt in that way. My small heart would fire with fervor as I read the story of our forefathers' struggle against kingly power, and the heroes of that struggle loomed up before my childish imagination grand and glorified in the white light of liberty. But, alas! and alas! as years come on, and the cruel realities of life and the law's oppressions to one-half of the people in this so-called republic made themselves visible and dispelled the delusions of youth, the giants of the revolution shrunk to the ordinary size of other imperfect sons of Adam. The fact that our forefathers had only taken a few steps onward toward the promised land of freedom, that the work of carrying this people on to that land yet remains to be done, forced itself upon me.

The women of this country are free to admit that this is the best government in the world, but that admission only shows how bad are the other governments, not how good is ours. This government can be made as much better than it is, as it is better than the monarchies of the Old World. For this reason we protest against Fourth of July celebrations, which only begot the people's minds and dull their moral perceptions by too much praise of what is so very defective.

How are a people to improve if they are taught to believe themselves already perfect? We have looked backward long enough. We have adulated our forefathers quite enough. It is time we should cease this senseless praise of the good work they did and turn our attention to the work they left undone.

We have had too many spread-eagle speeches about the freedom of this country. There is no true freedom in any country which holds one-half of its people in absolute subjection to the other half; there must inevitably be a very dull sense of justice in that country where such gross injustice is done.

For the last hundred years Fourth of July orators have shouted themselves hoarse in praises of the founders of this government, and that fraudulent old bird, the American eagle, has spread his wings and screamed hosannas to freedom; but every thinking woman in the land knows and keenly feels the falsehood and the mockery. In the name of the enslaved half of this country, we protest against any more of this spread-eagle nonsense. It would be far wiser were men to critically examine the signs of the times and keep their eyes open to the danger they are in of losing the freedom their forefathers won for them.

The evil spirit of monarchy is not yet exorcised from this land; the snake was not killed by the Revolutionary war, only scotched. It has at last squirmed itself loose and lifted its head, and is eagerly watching its chances to resume its ancient power. Were the true spirit of republicanism to prevail, the poorest private soldier who did his duty, who marched up to the cannon's mouth, or stood on guard during the long watches of the night in freedom's cause, would receive as much praise as the men who filled easier, more comfortable, and far less dangerous places. There are human beings in this city who work from daylight until dark and on toward midnight, and earn thereby the pitiful sum of ten cents, making shirts at five cents each (they can only make two a day), and this, while men in office roll in riches, feasting every day of their lives, clothed in purple and fine linen. It is the growing power of the spirit of monarchy that widens the difference in the conditions of the rich and poor. It is time we called a halt. We are going backward toward despotism, instead of forward toward freedom.

ELIZABETH AVERY MERIWETHER.