CHARLES DICKENS

AND MARIA BEADNELL ("DORA")

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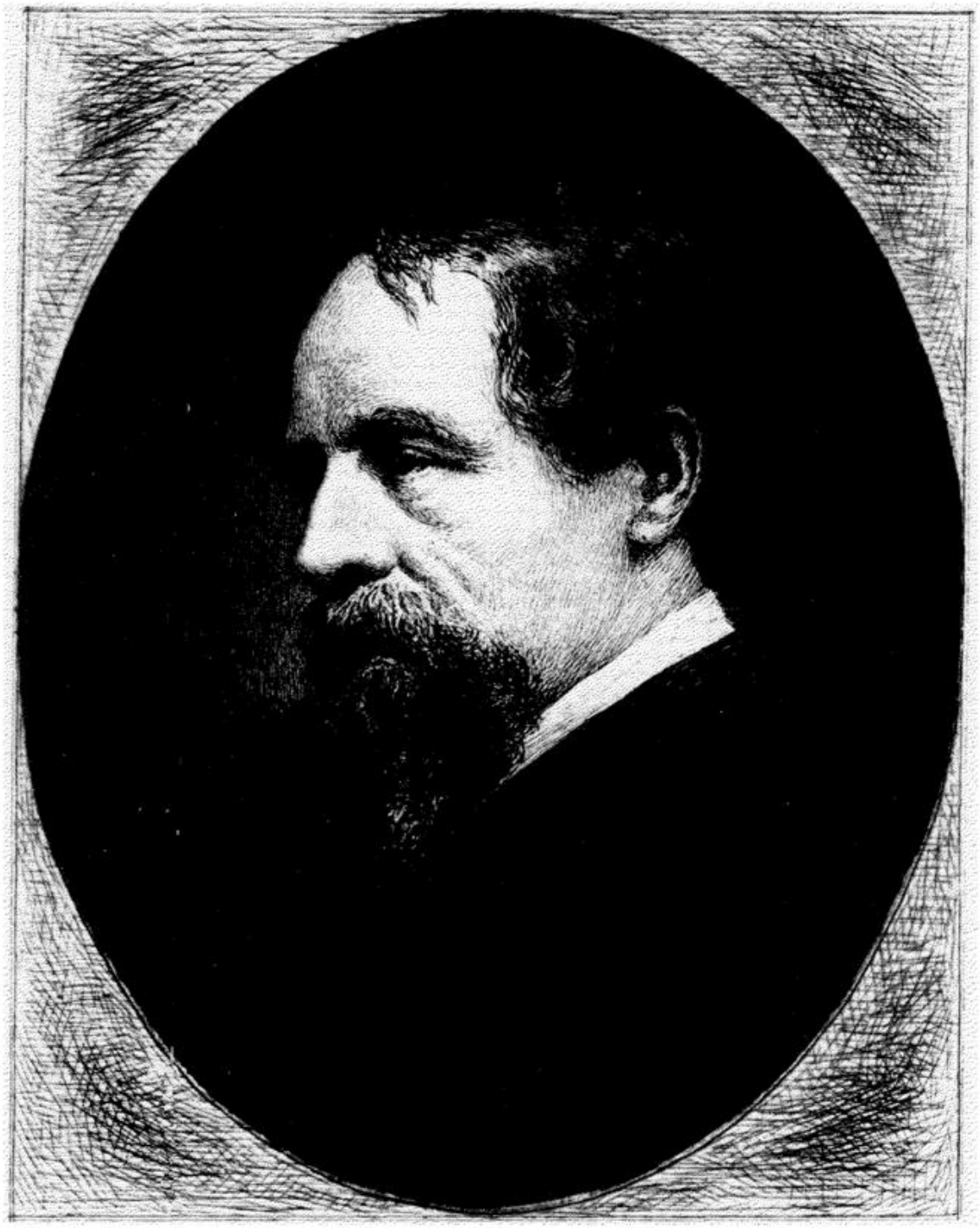

W.H.W. Bicknell sc.
1907

CHARLES DICKENS

Etching by W. H. W. BICKNELL, from an original painting, signed "E. P. 1870," found in the collection of J. L. Toole, the celebrated actor. This painting is now in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

GAD'S HILL PLACE

From the rear

Sketched and engraved on copper by WALTER M. AIKMAN, for The Bibliophile Society.


DICKENS' HOME
GAD'S HILL PLACE

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CHARLES DICKENS

AND

MARIA BEADNELL ("DORA")

Private Correspondence

BETWEEN CHARLES DICKENS AND MRS. HENRY WINTER
(NÉE MARIA BEADNELL), THE ORIGINAL OF DORA
SPENLOW IN "DAVID COPPERFIELD"
AND FLORA FINCHING IN
"LITTLE DORRIT"

EDITED BY

PROFESSOR GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY

PRIVATELY PRINTED

FOR WILLIAM K. BIXBY, SAINT LOUIS, MO.

MDCDVIII

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

AFTER the Dickens-Dora papers came into my possession I agreed to allow The Bibliophile Society all the rights to print same that I possessed, with the understanding that, after the edition had been printed by them for the members, I should, omitting their titlepage, print two hundred and fifty copies as a second edition for my own use, for presentation to friends who are not members of The Bibliophile Society, and that the copyrights should be assigned to me.

In the introduction and the preface to the first edition are contained all the facts regarding this correspondence and the parties connected with it that I feel at liberty to print. I trust that the letters may prove as interesting to other admirers of Charles Dickens as they have been to those who have read the original letters.

W. K. B.

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PREFACE

THE originals of the letters by Charles Dickens printed in this volume are, with one exception,[1] in the handwriting of the author. Some of them are herein reproduced in photographic facsimile. The letters in the early series were written to Miss Maria Beadnell, the young lady with whom Dickens had his first love affair, just prior to becoming of age. Those in the later series, beginning in 1855, were written about twenty-two years after, to the same person, who in the meantime had married Mr. Henry Louis Winter, of Number 12 Artillery Place, London. At this period Dickens had reached great prominence in the literary world.

The members of The Bibliophile Society are indebted to the unceasing generosity of Mr. William K. Bixby for the rare privilege

[1] The exception is a letter that was returned to Dickens by Miss Beadnell, after a lovers' quarrel, but which before returning she carefully copied in her own handwriting. See facsimile at p. 46.

of possessing the first printed edition of these excessively valuable MSS. That a collection of such important autobiographical material should have remained so long in obscurity is a most singular fact. So sacredly were these letters guarded after their discovery and purchase from a daughter of Mrs. Winter in England by one who realized their worth, that their owner allowed only a single one of them ever to be copied, and that only for private reference, with all the names omitted. Finding that their publication in England would be prohibited, he personally brought them to America, when the entire collection was purchased by Mr. Bixby.

If an authentic autobiography of Dickens were suddenly to spring into existence, it would produce a literary sensation. If such a work were found to contain many important identifications of characters and personal traits of the author which were unknown to his most intimate friends, and new even to the members of his own family, it would immediately excite the interest of the entire literary world. The present is, in effect, such a volume. The letters of which it consists — which were written in the strictest confidence

and intended for no eyes but those of the one to whom they were addressed — are earnest, sincere, and direct from the heart. They disclose certain life experiences of the author never before imparted to the world; in his own words, "things that I have locked up in my own breast, and that I never thought to bring out any more." Aside from their personal bearing, they furnish a key to the characters and incidents in several of the more important novels, some of which have been the subjects of heated discussion ever since the death of the author. For instance, they positively verify many disputed points in *David Copperfield*, the greatest and most personal of the novels, and show that the love affairs of its hero were almost identical with those of Dickens himself. They further prove conclusively that in *Little Dorrit* Dickens narrated much of his own experience. The personal character of that work now becomes second only to *David Copperfield;* and many scenes which have seemed commonplace, when regarded merely as fruits of the novelist's imagination, become at once enlivened with dramatic interest.

But for the fortunate discovery of these

letters, no one would ever have imagined the extent to which *Little Dorrit* is in reality a continuation of "The Personal History Adventures, Experience and Observation" of the hero of *David Copperfield*. In dealing with the anticlimax of his old love affair Dickens masquerades in the rôle of Arthur Clennam in *Little Dorrit*, while the girl who had distracted his heart in boyhood (the original of Dora in *David Copperfield*) was assigned the garrulous part of the flippant Flora Finching. Flora's father, Mr. Casby (who in real life was George Beadnell, the father of Maria Beadnell, of Number 2 Lombard Street, London, and in *David Copperfield* was Mr. Spenlow, the father of Dora), comes in for his share of raillery, and is penalized severely for the part he is supposed to have played in separating the young lovers. He is "the wooden-headed old Christopher," of "elephantine build," — the close-fisted old patriarch with bottle-green coat, of whom his own daughter (Flora) is made to say, that he "is always tiresome and putting his nose everywhere where he is not wanted." The verses by Dickens in *The Bill of Fare* (never before printed) identify the originals of a number of characters in his works which were taken from

real life. In a letter to Mrs. Winter, referring to the love affairs of David Copperfield, he says that his readers little thought what reason he had to "know it was true, and nothing more nor less." In another of the letters he said: "A few years ago (just before Copperfield) I began to write my Life, intending the manuscript to be found among my papers when its subject should be concluded. But as I began to approach within sight of that part of it [referring to his early love], I lost courage and burned the rest."

It is a significant fact that he refers to this circumstance as having occurred "just before Copperfield." There can be little doubt that on this account he changed his purpose, and either before or after destroying the manuscript, determined to write the story of his life, which, mingled with supposititious incident, was put forth under the pseudonym of *David Copperfield.* The object of his youthful devotion is therein impersonated as "Dora." He doubtless felt an irresistible impulse to write and unburden his mind of the tragic experiences and disappointments of his youth, and when in the course of outlining these he came up to the Maria Beadnell episode, he was

at a loss to know how to handle it so as to give it the required impressiveness without offending the members of his family, — particularly his wife. He could not treat it lightly, for it was the all-absorbing event of his life. The whole plan of an acknowledged autobiography was therefore abandoned.

Again, he was probably not unmindful of the pecuniary side of the matter, and took into consideration the fact that in storing his manuscript away until "its subject should be concluded," he would be burying one of his most profitable works. It is extremely doubtful if even after his death the Dickens family would ever have published the MS. of *David Copperfield* under any autobiographical title; for it is observable that, even to this day, his descendants are unwilling to admit publicly that Dora and Flora were more than lay figures, existing only in the author's imagination.

These letters would have been an excessively valuable asset to any of Dickens' biographers, and even Forster himself would have found in them many disclosures of significant facts which were entirely strange to him.

From a reading of the first series of the letters written by Dickens in his boyhood days,

it may be inferred that the coquettish girl to whom they were addressed resorted to artful and surreptitious tactics in repulsing and discouraging his persistent attentions after she became tired of him, although she had previously encouraged him to lavish his "entire devotion" upon her. Whether on account of parental interference, or change of heart, or perhaps both, it seems sure that she was determined to get rid of him, and doubtless wished to do this as gracefully as possible, and without wounding his pride too deeply. It seems quite plausible that with this in mind she may have designedly arranged with her friend Mary Anne Leigh for her to display a lively and unwonted interest in Dickens and his affairs, and then she proceeded to reprove him for faithlessness and fickleness, and hypocritically assumed the air of one deeply injured. In defending himself against this accusation, he said of Miss Leigh: —

"You certainly totally and entirely misunderstand my feeling with regard to her — that you could suppose, as you clearly do (that is to say, if the subject is worth a thought to you), that I have ever really thought of M. A. L. in any other than my old way, you are mistaken. That she has for some reason, and to

suit her own purposes, of late thrown herself in my way I could plainly see, and I know it was noticed by others. For instance, on the night of the play, after we went upstairs, I could not get rid of her. God knows that I have no pleasure in speaking to her, or any girl living, and never had. May I add that *you* have been the sole exception."

It is clear, also, that Miss Beadnell accused Dickens of having confided inviolable secrets to Miss Leigh, while she herself seems to have been the offender in this respect. In his own defence he wrote: "I never by word or deed, in the slightest manner, directly or by implication, made in any way a confidante of Mary Anne Leigh. . . . Her duplicity and disgusting falsehood, however, renders it quite unnecessary to conceal the part she has acted, and I therefore have now no hesitation in saying that she, quite unasked, volunteered the information [to friends] that YOU had made her a confidante *of all that had ever passed between us without reserve.* In proof of which assertion she not only detailed facts which I undoubtedly thought she could have heard from none but yourself, but she also communicated many things which certainly never occurred at all."

In the heat of his boyish anger he wrote a scathing note to Miss Leigh, in which he said: "I can safely say that I never made a confidante of any one. I am perfectly willing to admit that if I had wished to secure a confidante in whom candour, secrecy, and kind honorable feeling were indispensable requisites, I could have looked to none better calculated for this office than yourself; but still the making you the depository of my feelings or secrets is an honor I never presumed to expect, and one which I certainly must beg most positively to decline. . . . I would much rather mismanage my own affairs than have them ably conducted by the officious interference of any one. I do think that your interposition in this instance, however well intentioned, has been productive of as much mischief as it has been uncalled for."

In *David Copperfield* Dickens immortalized the name, if not the character, of this girl who had been such a disturbing element in his love-making difficulties, and one can almost see the self-satisfied smile of "sweet revenge" playing upon his features as he wrote: —

"We had a servant, of course. She kept house for us. I have a still latent belief that

she must have been Mrs. Crupp's daughter in disguise, we had such an awful time with Mary Anne. . . . She was the cause of our first little quarrel. . . . Mary Anne's cousin [a soldier] deserted into our coal-hole, and was brought out, to our great amazement, by a piquet of his companions in arms, who took him away handcuffed in a procession that covered our front garden with ignominy. This nerved me to get rid of Mary Anne, who went so mildly, on receipt of wages, that I was surprised, until I found out about the tea-spoons, and also about the little sums she had borrowed in my name of the tradespeople without authority."

In 1832 Dickens was a mere youth, and gave no immediate promise of fortune or fame. His literary talents were undeveloped, and Miss Beadnell, the daughter of a banker, was perhaps not attracted by his inauspicious prospects, although in the early stages of their courtship days she seems to have been quite fascinated by him, and to have given no thought to such gross and material considerations. She afterwards married Mr. Winter, a merchant in good standing, who in later years became a bankrupt, and after renewing

her correspondence with Dickens twenty-three years later, she suffered the humiliating act of appealing to him to use his influence in obtaining some employment for her husband. The unpromising youth whose idolatrous love she had spurned, and whose consequent "wretchedness and misery" had been the object of her "pity," afterwards became the popular idol of all England and America, while the propitious fortunes of the man of her choice had meanwhile vanished and become hopelessly dissipated.

In the most fanciful of all Dickens' imaginations he could scarcely have conceived a more dramatic spectacle than this, in which he involuntarily played the leading part. Happily, however, for the world at large — and perhaps for Dickens himself — this early love affair ended as it did; for if he had married the object of his first love, the complacency of his mind — for the time being, at least — would have neutralized the ambition which, fired by the sting of defeat and adversity, produced one of the world's greatest literary geniuses.

In the fortunes of war the issue of a great battle has often turned upon an incident of

apparently trivial consequence; and it has frequently happened that single episodes of seeming unimportance have brought fortune and great renown to those of whom these achievements were least expected. The most painful experiences often prove to be blessings in disguise, and it would be difficult to find a more splendid demonstration of this truth than we have in the life of Charles Dickens.

In a letter to Mrs. Winter (née Miss Beadnell) in 1855, he wrote: "Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to me, I never have separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman — you — whom it is nothing to say I would have died for with the greatest alacrity. . . . It is a matter of perfect certainty to me that I began to fight my way out of poverty and obscurity with one perpetual idea of you."[1]

There can be no doubt that Dickens was conscious of the fact that the stinging rebuff administered to him was due to his lowly position in life, and that this animated him with a

[1] He embarked at once in the field of literature, and in less than eight months after the separation the first of his *Sketches* made their appearance in magazine form. See passage from his letter to Forster, quoted on pages 5 and 6, *infra*.

zeal which he had never before experienced, and which otherwise he would never have possessed. This came at a singularly opportune time, when his mind was in its formative stages, and the resolutions and impressions of that period remained with him through life.

In writing to Mrs. Winter in later years he said: "I forget nothing of those times. They are just as still and plain and clear as if I had never been in a crowd since, and had never seen or heard my own name out of my own house. . . . You so belong to the days when the qualities that have done me most good since were growing in my boyish heart that I cannot end my answer to you lightly." His first love letters furnish unmistakable evidence of his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose, — qualities which ruled supreme to the end. There have perhaps been few men who throughout their lives have clung more tenaciously to the memories and ideals of youth.

Those who have commonly ascribed a cold-blooded and unresponsive nature to Dickens will be surprised to learn from these letters that there was concealed within him an abundance of the tenderest sentiment, and that his mind was highly impressible. There appears,

however, to have been but one thing capable of completely awakening these delicate sensibilities, and that was the remembrance of his first love. In his letter of February 15, 1855, in which he tenderly recalls the sad memories of his youthful devotion, he said: "When I find myself writing to you again, *all to yourself*, how can I forbear to let as much light in upon them as will show you that they are there still!"

In writing of Dora, in part XV of *David Copperfield* (issued in July, 1850), under the chapter heading, "Our Housekeeping," Dickens said: "I look back on the time I write of; I invoke the innocent figure that I dearly loved, to come out from the mists and shadows of the past and turn its gentle head towards me once again; and I can still declare that this one little speech was constantly in my memory." Is it to be wondered that the still living Dora should be seized with an impulse to respond to this imploring speech by a man who had already become world-renowned, any more than that the lost dove in the wilderness will respond to the distant call of its mate? Is it surprising, moreover, when she did respond by writing to him, that there

should be "a stirring of the old fancies," as he says? That Dickens was not overstating his former devotion for the original of Dora may be seen from the following passage from *David Copperfield:* "If I may so express it, I was steeped in Dora. I was not merely over head and ears in love with her, but I was saturated through and through. Enough love might have been wrung out of me, metaphorically speaking, to drown anybody in; and there would have remained enough within me, and all over me, to pervade my entire existence. . . . The sun shone Dora, and the birds sang Dora. The wind blew Dora, and the wild flowers in the hedges were all Doras, to a bud."

The later letters show that in order to establish a sure footing for the much desired cordial relationship, Mrs. Winter felt herself called upon to offer some plausible explanation for her actions in early years, and whatever her excuses were, assuredly they were accepted at their full face value. Precisely what she wrote to Dickens we shall never know, except by inference from his reply,[1] in which he said:

[1] It would appear that Mrs. Winter told Dickens how she had pined for him after their relationship in early years was broken off;

"If you had ever told me then what you tell me now, I know myself well enough to be thoroughly assured that the simple truth and energy which were in my love would have overcome everything. . . . All this again you have changed and set right — at once so courageously, so delicately and so gently, that you open the way to a confidence between us which still once more in perfect innocence and good faith, may be between ourselves alone."

Although Dickens was married to Miss Hogarth three years after boldly vowing to Maria Beadnell, — "I have never loved and I never can love any human creature breathing but yourself," it is left to the reader to judge whether or not these seemingly rash vows of undying devotion had any bearing upon the "incompatibility of temperaments" which, unhappily, resulted in estrangement and separation from his wife more than twenty years

for in *Little Dorrit* he thus tauntingly records her explanation: "One more remark," proceeded Flora with unslackened volubility, "I wish to make, one more explanation I wish to offer, for five days I had a cold in the head from crying which I passed entirely in the back drawing-room — there is the back drawing-room still on the first floor and still at the back of the house to confirm my words." It is noteworthy, however, that this was written after his disenchantment, which occurred subsequent to writing the letter from which the extract is taken.

later. The father of nine children, he wrote Mrs. Winter in 1855,—"Nobody can ever know with what a sad heart I resigned you, or after what struggles and what a conflict. My entire devotion to you and the wasted tenderness of those hard years which I have ever since half-loved, half-dreaded to recall, made so deep an impression on me that I refer to it a habit of suppression which now belongs to me, which I know is no part of my original nature, but which makes me chary of showing my affections, even to my children, except when they are very young." Here is the first self-confessed reason for a dominant characteristic in Dickens. His "habit of suppression" is a matter of common knowledge, but perhaps no one ever supposed it to be "no part of his original nature," or that it was acquired through disappointment in love.

Let it not be supposed, however, that the Mrs. Winter who later came into his life was a contributory factor in his unfortunate domestic infelicity. It was in Dickens' nature to live more in his books and idealities than in the bosom of his family, and it is doubtful if there was to be found one woman in a thousand who could have made both him and

herself happy under these conditions. Later developments prove that he was more in earnest than might have been imagined when in 1833 he wrote Maria Beadnell, — "My feeling on *one* subject was early roused; it has been strong, and it will be lasting."

Although of a private nature, the correspondence contains nothing which need shock the most sensitive morals. The author does not expose himself to unfavorable comment; for the sentiments expressed are mostly animated reflections of passions and impulses of bygone days, which he has permanently recorded, and given dramatic color by the eloquent descriptive powers of a brilliant and matured mind. There is nothing in the letters that could militate against his reputation, or minimize the reverence in which his memory is held. The letters having been written to one outside of the author's own family, we may be absolved from any charge of exposing inviolable confidences.

If while reflecting upon fondly cherished memories of the past, Dickens unbosomed himself in an unguarded moment, with no thought that the world would ever be the wiser, this affords no reason why his admirers of

to-day should be denied admission to his confidence, and to a resultant better understanding of his true character. He was to a large extent a public servant, because he was dependent upon the patronage of the public for his popularity and support; therefore the world at large has perhaps a higher claim upon him than Mrs. Winter ever had, and there can be no logical excuse at this time for withholding facts which will be as new and interesting to his readers as they were precious to Mrs. Winter. No matter how studiously we may have pondered over the writings and biographies of Charles Dickens, after reading the contents of this volume we shall surely know him as we never knew him before, and feel a greatly renewed interest in many of his writings, — particularly in *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit.*

By no means the least interesting among these letters are the ones written last in the second series, after the author's disenchantment. It is to be remembered that the letters which are so overflowing with tender remembrances and gushing sentiment were all written before the "meeting" took place. One of the strangest features of the whole romance is

that Dickens appears to have lived for years in a perpetual dream, in which he could never picture the girl he had loved in any real or imaginative situation apart from that in which he had known her in his boyhood. In one of his exuberant moods he wrote to Mrs. Winter, — "'You are always the same in my remembrance. When you say you are 'toothless, fat, old, and ugly' (which I don't believe), I fly away to the house in Lombard Street, which is pulled down, as if it were necessary that the very bricks and mortar should go the way of my airy castles, and see you in a sort of raspberry colored dress with a little black trimming at the top — black velvet it seems to be made of — cut into vandykes — an immense number of vandykes — with my boyish heart pinned like a captured butterfly on every one of them." But when the awakening finally came, alas, he found that the "vision of his youth" had, as a living reality, fallen far short of his fanciful idealization. The dream of twenty years was over, and the displeasures of the sudden awakening were forthwith recorded in *Little Dorrit*,[1] where the Dora of his youth

[1] If the reader has a copy of *Little Dorrit* at hand, turn to one of its early chapters, entitled "Patriarchal," and read it through. For

was transformed into the Flora of his mature years.

Note. — The foregoing Preface was written before the manuscripts were placed in the hands of Professor Baker, and the impressions and deductions recorded are such as presented themselves to the writer after a careful study of the correspondence. It was the intention to omit from these prefatory remarks any passages that might prove to be a repetition of comments made by the editor, but upon comparing this with his work it was found that scarcely any of the comments are paralleled, and that conclusions disagree in but a single instance — that in relation to the Mary Anne Leigh episode. It will be seen that Professor Baker contends that she herself was in love with Dickens and that the seed of dissension sowed by her resulted from this

Clennam, substitute Dickens; for Flora Finching, substitute Mrs. Winter; and supplant Mr. Casby by Mr. George Beadnell, Maria Beadnell's father. How undisguisedly Dickens expresses his characteristic melancholy in making Clennam say, as he sat musing before the dying embers in the fireplace, — "And turned his gaze back upon the gloomy vista by which he had come to that stage in his existence: 'So long, so bare, so blank! No childhood, no youth, except for one remembrance;' the one remembrance proved, only that day, to be a piece of folly! . . . The one tender recollection of his experience would not bear the test, and melted away."

attachment and her consequent pique over her inability to obtain any responsiveness from him. Although with no thought of putting forth any theory in opposition to that of the distinguished editor, yet the point is admittedly an interesting one, and since intricate puzzles are more or less absorbing, particularly when they concern the bewildering mysteries of a woman's heart, it may be that the reader will enjoy the contrasting views presented.

HENRY H. HARPER

"DORA"

After original painting by James Fagan, specially for The Bibliophile Society; in the colors of the original.

"I never saw such curls—how could I, for there never were such curls!—as those she shook out to hide her blushes. As to the straw hat, and blue ribbons, which was on the top of the curls, if I could only have hung it up in my room in Buckingham Street, what a priceless possession it would have been!"—DAVID COPPERFIELD.

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CHARLES DICKENS

AND MARIA BEADNELL ("DORA")

LETTERS written by Charles Dickens in his youth are extremely rare. Four only have been printed. His *Letters,* edited by his sister-in-law, Miss Georgina Hogarth, and his daughter Mary, contain only three dated before 1837, when Dickens was already twenty-five years old. One of these, written in 1833, is to his future brother-in-law, Henry Austin, and two, of 1835, are to his fiancée, Miss Catherine Hogarth. The editors state that though their "request for the loan of letters was so promptly and fully responded to, that we have been provided with more than sufficient material for our work," yet they "have been able to procure so few early letters of any general interest that we have put these first years together."[1] Under the dates 1833–36 they print only the three letters already mentioned, — one of these, as given, only a fragment.

[1] *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1 vol., 1893, pp. vii, 3.

In Hotten's *Charles Dickens, the Story of his Life*, a letter of the reportorial days of Dickens on the *Morning Chronicle* (1835–36) is printed with the comment, — "This is, in all likelihood, the only letter of Dickens' reporting days now in existence."[1]

That letters written to Dickens in this early part of his career should be lacking is easily explained. In September, 1860, he carefully destroyed all correspondence up to that time received by him. Writing to Mr. Wills, his fellow-editor of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, he said: —

"Yesterday [Sept. 3] I burnt in the field at Gad's Hill the accumulated letters and papers of twenty years. They sent up a smoke like the genie when he got out of the casket on the seashore; and as it was an exquisite day when I began, and rained very heavily when I finished, I suspect my correspondence of having overcast the face of the heavens."[2]

Any admirer of Dickens and his work must echo very regretfully the words of Charles

[1] It is reported that some ten years ago a series of letters from Dickens to the friend of his youth, Henry Kolle, changed hands in Birmingham, England. The present editor hopes that the publication of the letters in this book may bring this set to light, for they should supplement and explain the letters here given.

[2] *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 1893, p. 501.

Dickens the younger in regard to this wholesale destruction of letters and papers: "Who shall say what records invaluable to the biographer blew into ashes that September morning, in the meadows by the cedars!"[1]

In this absence of early letters to or from Dickens, the discovery of some half-dozen written before he had won any literary position for himself, and antedating any heretofore published, would be interesting enough. But when these letters are seen to be not only thoroughly characteristic and intimately personal, but proof of an early love affair of great intensity at the time and of lasting significance for Dickens and his work, the find becomes exciting. When chance, or the assiduity of a collector, adds to these early letters another set which dramatically reveals an aftermath of this youthful romance, occurring some twenty years later, surely the collection has the greatest possible interest for all readers of Dickens.

John Forster, the closest friend of the novelist, and his literary executor, comparing Dickens and David Copperfield in his *Life of Charles Dickens*, wrote: "He too had his Dora at ap-

[1] Introduction to *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 1892.

parently 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 the motive to exertion for the time, and otherwise opening out to the idolater, both in fact and in 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." [1]

The importance of this early love affair the Dickens family has either ignored or, apparently, sought to minimize. In the *Letters* appear one letter and part of another, both written in 1855, to the object of his youthful love, then married and settled as the wife of Mr. Henry Winter. The only reference to Mrs. Winter in the *Narrative* preceding the letters of this section of the book is — "A very dear friend and companion of Charles Dickens in his youth." In the Biographical Edition of

[1] Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1872, vol. i. pp. 92, 93.

the works of Dickens, his eldest son, as editor, after urging that Mr. Forster in certain remarks of his should have exercised "some of that discretion which is always supposed to be left to biographers, but which, unfortunately, they do not always think fit to employ," says: "There is some reference in Mr. Forster's *Life* to a 'Dora,' who came across Charles Dickens' path very early in his career — when he was eighteen, in fact, — but as she married somebody else, and developed afterwards into the 'Flora' of *Little Dorrit*, she could have had in reality very little to do with Dora Spenlow, except in so far as the 'child-wife' was the idealized recollection of the dream of a romantic young man."[1] Yet Dickens himself wrote to Forster in 1855, when the latter persisted in refusing to believe that Dora reproduced at all accurately any past experience of his friend: —

"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

[1] *David Copperfield*, Introduction, p. xxi.

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 much emotion as I should see anyone 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."

And in one of the second set of letters printed in this book Dickens wrote: "I fancy—

though you may not have thought in the old time how manfully I loved you, — that you may have seen in one of my books a faithful reflection of the passion I had for you, and may have thought that it was something to have been loved so well, and may have seen in little bits of 'Dora' touches of your old self sometimes, and a grace here and there that may be revived in your little girls, years hence, for the bewilderment of some other young lover — though he will never be as terribly in earnest as I and David Copperfield were. People used to say to me how pretty all that was, and how fanciful it was, and how elevated it was above the little foolish loves of very young men and women. But they little thought what reason I had to know it was true and nothing more nor less. . . . As I have said, I fancy you know all about it quite as well as I do, however. I have a strong belief — there is no harm in adding hope to that — that perhaps you have once or twice laid down the book, and thought 'How dearly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly the man remembers it!'"

Surely, after these two statements of Dickens, it is idle further to contend that Dora

Spenlow is only an "idealized recollection of the dream of a romantic young man."

How, too, can any except the most conventional and the habitually censorious find anything to censure in an ardent but honorable love affair preceding the engagement of Dickens to Miss Hogarth by some two years or more? How many men marry the first woman adored by them? What possible criticism is it on the woman one marries, that one may already have been in love with another? In love, as in other human relations, one's judgment may be tempered to sanity and wisdom by earlier experience. Romeo had his Rosalind, and to that extent at least most men are Romeos. And many a wifely Juliet knows that for nothing does her spouse more devoutly thank his Fate than that Rosalind threw him over, thus saving him for a wiser and truer companionship. Even if the second choice prove not wholly happy, why must the first, out of respect for the second, be ignored or denied by biographers? As we shall see, the conduct of young Dickens as mirrored in these love letters gave him no ground for later mortification or even regret.

Except to the most hypercritical mind, read-

ing these early letters can bring no sensation except pleasure in their manly ardor, only sympathy for the deeply moved and suffering youth, and a better understanding of the mood in which *David Copperfield* was written, as well as of the man who wrote it.

The only valid objection against publishing these letters years ago, when some at least of the second set were known to the editors of the *Letters*, was that it might have pained the woman to whom both sets were written to see them in print — not because there was any wrong in them, but because they are intimately personal. Now that she has been dead over twenty years and it is the day of the grandchildren of her contemporaries, surely it is not necessary to hold any of them back longer if they contain important information, either corrective or supplementary, for the student of Dickens and his work. Such information the two sets — and they cannot be given separately — do provide.

Who was this early love of Dickens? In 1830 the manager at Smith, Payne and Smith's, the bankers, of Number 1 Lombard Street, was John Beadnell. He lived close by, at Number 2 Lombard Street. Sharing his quarters was

his brother, George Beadnell. After starting life as an architect, George Beadnell had been induced by his brother to enter the service of the bank, in which, by 1830, he held a responsible position. Later he became its manager. This George Beadnell had three daughters, Margaret, Anne, and Maria. In 1830 Maria Beadnell was nineteen. To this family young Dickens was introduced by his friend Henry Kolle, a quilt-printer of Number 14 Addle Street, Aldermanbury. This was about a year and a half after Dickens had once for all given up Law by withdrawing from the office of Ellis and Blackmore of Gray's Inn.

When Dickens was first introduced to the Beadnells, he was either just at the close of his seventeenth or just entering on his eighteenth year. His introduction to this family, well-to-do, and fond of entertaining a large circle of friends, also comfortably placed in life, meant a real metamorphosis in the life of the hypersensitive youth.

In order to appreciate rightly this metamorphosis we must remember what had been happening to Dickens in the period just preceding this introduction. The years between ten and this time had been full of miserable

unhappiness at first, later ameliorated; but still the youth was restless and full of blind discontent, because his life did not satisfy, or promise to satisfy, certain vague longings, ambitions, dreams, — call them what you will. It is somewhat hard for any American lad to read with perfect sympathy the bitter outpourings of the mature Dickens as to his experiences as a coverer of paste pots in the "Warren's Blacking" establishment. So intense was his feeling of the degradation this work meant for him that after it was over he never mentioned the experience to any one till a chance remark of a friend to Forster that he had seen Dickens as a lad working in this place induced him, after a hard struggle with himself, to disburden his mind of this nightmare.

Apparently, he had not feared moral deterioration, but was outraged by the sense that as an individual he was slipping under in the social current, — was losing, perhaps forever, the position into which he had been born and the possibilities of advancement of which he had dreamed, if not definitely, at least unceasingly. It is necessary to speak of this earlier experience in some detail, for unless one thoroughly comprehends the morbid

sensitiveness of the lad, one misses the full significance of both the early and the late correspondence in the pages to follow. As a youth Dickens was not only morbidly sensitive, but he carried always with him a sense that he had been defrauded of much that home life meant to most of his contemporaries. The shifting from place to place, the ebbing fortunes of his family, the easy-going temperament of his father, had all made his childhood trying enough. Dickens must have felt that he had been to some extent neglected by his parents, — that he had been cheated by Fate of his birthright. Any home of even ordinary stability and comfort into which he could enter freely must, therefore, have seemed to him a real haven.

Moreover, as has been said, a sense of his own fitness for unusual things, a vague vision of his own latent powers, came early to the precocious boy. This is what moved him to tears of mortified ambition when his sister Fanny, as a pupil of the Royal Academy of Music, received a prize in public. These are his own words describing his feelings at the time: "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."[1]

Certainly this seems very like petty envy, unless one can read the words with a clear comprehension of the unquestionable fact that a child of fourteen may have a dim prescience of his later fame. Read this passage sympathetically and it is easy to understand the agony with which the child, dimly sure that the vast world held great triumphs for him somehow, somewhere, at some time, but as yet too young to know how, where, or when, and only sure of ridicule if he spoke out his vague sensations, saw the doors of opportunity slowly, inevitably for his little strength, closing upon him. Grasp this state of mind, and the misery of the "Warren's Blacking" experience at once becomes clear.

But what had made the child intractably miserable had made the youth extremely restless. After some two years as an office lad with lawyers, he recognized the painful slowness

[1] Forster's *Life*, vol. i. p. 66.

of any possible rise in the Law, and, ever ready to better himself, took a hint from his father. The latter had either recently learned shorthand reporting or had within a few months brought to mastery some knowledge of it already acquired by him as a clerk to the Navy at Portsmouth and Chatham. In *David Copperfield* Dickens has described the perseverance by which he conquered the mysteries of Gurney's system of shorthand: —

"I had heard that many men distinguished in various pursuits had begun life by reporting the debates in Parliament. Traddles having mentioned newspapers to me, as one of his hopes, I had put the two things together, and told Traddles in my letter that I wished to know how I could qualify myself for this pursuit. . .

"I bought an approved scheme of the noble art and mystery of stenography (which cost me ten and sixpence), and plunged into a sea of perplexity that brought me, in a few weeks, to the confines of distraction. . . .

"It might have been quite heart-breaking, but for Dora, who was the stay and anchor of my tempest-driven bark. Every scratch in the scheme was a gnarled oak in the forest of difficulty, and I went on cutting them down,

one after another, with such vigor, that in three or four months I was in a condition to make an experiment on one of our crack speakers in the Commons. Shall I ever forget how the crack speaker walked off from me before I began, and left my imbecile pencil staggering about the paper as if it were in a fit!"

All this indomitable purpose, however, was eventually so effective that a friend made in the gallery of the House of Commons declared long afterward: "There never was such a shorthand reporter." Even as a youngster of seventeen or eighteen, Dickens had discovered the rules of life which were to carry him to success: "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."

At first, after leaving Ellis and Blackmore, he worked as a reporter for one of the offices in Doctors' Commons, with some opportunities in other law courts. It would seem that when he first met the Beadnell family he was

out of this drudgery, but was not as yet started on his career as a parliamentary reporter. It could not, however, have been very long after this meeting that he joined the forces of the *True Sun*, for this opening came to him in 1831.

Nor is the rapidity with which his intimacy with the Beadnells developed at all remarkable. A youth of unusual social capacity and personal charm found in the family a home life that offered him much that he had, in his own home, longed for in vain. The young men frequenting the house numbered among them two warm friends of his, David Lloyd and Henry Kolle. Each of these was in love with a daughter of Mr. Beadnell. Lloyd married the eldest, Margaret, April 20, 1831, and Kolle married the second sister, Anne, May 21, 1833. What wonder that young Dickens, following suit, should fall in love with the youngest daughter, Maria! Evidently Mrs. Beadnell was kind to him, for he wrote of her: —

> It chances to 've been by the fates brought about,
> That she was the means of first bringing me out: —
> All my thanks for that & her kindness since then
> I 'd vainly endeavor to tell with my pen.[1]

[1] See the verses in *The Bill of Fare*, *infra*.

CHARLES DICKENS

At the age of eighteen

Etched on copper by W H. W. BICKNELL, after original miniature on Ivory, by Dickens' aunt, Mrs. Janet Barrows The earliest Dickens portrait.

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What wonder, too, that Maria Beadnell flirted with him, and rather desperately! One has only to look at Mrs. Barrows' miniature of Dickens at the age of eighteen to see the truth of a description of him as a fellow-clerk in the lawyers' office remembered him at sixteen, and to understand how great must have been the charm of his face when in the full play of animated conversation. The fellow-clerk wrote:

"He was rather a short but stout-built boy, and carried himself very upright — his head well up — and the idea he gave me was that he must have been drilled by a military instructor. His dress in some measure, perhaps, contributed to that impression. He wore a frock-coat (or surtout, as it was then generally called), buttoned up, of dark blue cloth, trousers to match, and (as was the fashion at the time) buttoned with leather straps over the boots; black neckerchief, but no shirt collar showing. His complexion was of healthy pink — almost glowing — rather a round face, fine forehead, beautiful expressive eyes full of animation, a firmly set mouth, a good-sized, rather straight nose, but not at all too large. His hair was a beautiful brown, and worn long, as was then the fashion. His cap was like the undress cap

of an officer in the army, of some shining material with a narrow shining leather strap running round the point of the chin. His appearance was altogether decidedly military. I always thought he must have adopted this from his having lived at Chatham. He looked very clean and well fed and cared for."

Young Dickens was not only keenly intelligent, he was also well read. He more than once declared that he regarded these years of his later teens as perhaps the most useful in his life, and very properly, for when he was not busy with his stenographic work or with mellowing social intercourse he was reading assiduously at the British Museum. He took out his first card on the eighth of February, 1830, the earliest possible moment at which he could have a card of his own. He had reached eighteen, the prescribed age, the day before.

He had, too, that charm so telling with the inexperienced and sentimental feminine mind which springs from a reputed "knowledge of the world." During the years between ten and nineteen he saw a vast deal of London life in all its ins and outs. He had had unusual opportunities to know its seamy side from the days of his father's insolvency and

his own bitter associations with that social Sindbad, the blacking establishment, through his days in the lawyers' offices, to his work as reporter even for the police courts. Dickens once said of this period to Forster: "I looked at nothing in particular, but nothing escaped me."

How worldly-wise he must have felt at times when the other dark but frequent mood of self-pity was not uppermost! How experienced he must have seemed to the Beadnell daughters, and even to his far less experienced friends, Lloyd, the tea merchant, and Kolle, the prosperous young quilt-printer! When one remembers that a wild humor, a genius for caricature, were with him inborn, one knows his talk must have seemed to this young circle of friends as brilliant as possible. Nor did he at all lack the assurance necessary for bringing out to the best conversational advantage his memories and ideas. Skill in dealing with his fellows was another inborn power. Forster first met him, on the *True Sun*, when Dickens had just been the successful leader of a strike among the reporters.

To an unusual knowledge of the world and a humorous appreciation of what he saw and heard, young Dickens added great mimetic

power. Almost as early as we can trace Dickens as a child we find him and his sister on the table singing songs, and acting them out as they sang, for the edification of admiring parents and friends. The ability that made his readings later in life famous all over the English-speaking world was early manifested. He thought seriously at one time — apparently when he was about twenty — of going on the stage.[1]

[1] "I have often thought that I should certainly have been as successful on the boards as I have been between them. When I was about twenty, and knew three or four successive years of Mathews' *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 had 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' 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 newspapers which made me like it; began to write, didn't want money, had never thought of the

ON SATURDAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1833,

At Seven o'clock precisely. The performances will commence with

AN INTRODUCTORY PROLOGUE;

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS BY

MR. EDWARD BARROW; MR. MILTON, MR. CHARLES DICKENS; MISS AUSTIN; AND MISS DICKENS.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED THE OPERA OF

CLARI.

The Duke Vivaldi	MR. BRAMWELL,
Rolamo, a Farmer, (Father to Clari)	MR C. DICKENS,
Jocoso, (Valet to the Duke) . .	MR H. AUSTIN,
Nicolo	MR. MILTON,
Geronio	MR. E. BARROW,
Nimpedo	MR R. AUSTIN,
Pages to the Duke	MASTERS F. DICKENS & A. DICKENS.
Clari	MISS DICKENS,
Fidalma (her Mother) . . .	MISS L. DICKENS,
Vespina	MISS AUSTIN,
Ninette	MISS OPPENHEIM.

CHARACTERS IN THE EPISODE.

The Nobleman	MR. HENRY KOLLE,
Pelgrino, a Farmer	MR. JOHN DICKENS,
Wife of Pelgrino	MISS URQUHART,
Leoda	MISS OPPENHEIM.

AFTER WHICH THE FAVOURITE INTERLUDE OF

The Married Bachelor.

Sir Charles Courtall	MR. C. DICKENS,
Sharp	MR. JOHN URQUHART,
Lady Courtall	MISS L. DICKENS,
Grace	MISS DICKENS.

TO CONCLUDE WITH THE FARCE OF

Amateurs & Actors.

David Dulcet, Esq (*a Musical Dramatic Amateur, who employs Mr. O. P. Bustle, and attached to Theatricals and Miss Mary Hardacre*)	MR. H. AUSTIN,
Mr. O. P Bustle, (*a Provincial Manager, but engaged to superintend some Private Theatricals*)	MR. BRAMWELL,
Wing, (*a poor Country Actor*) .	MR. C. DICKENS,
Berry, (*an Actor for the heavy Business*)	MR. BOSTON,
Elderberry, (*a retired Manufacturer, simple in wit and manners, and utterly unacquainted with Theatricals*)	MR. J. DICKENS,
Timkins, (*Elderberry's Factotum*)	MR. R. AUSTIN,
Geoffry Muffincap, (*an elderly Charity Boy, let out as a Servant at Bustle's Lodging*) .	MR. E. BARROW,
Miss Mary Hardacre, (*a fugitive Ward of Elderberry's* . .	MISS DICKENS,
Mrs. Mary Goneril, (*a Strolling Tragedy Actress, and a serious evil to her Husband*) . .	MISS OPPENHEIM

The Scenery by Messrs. H. Austin, Milton, H. Kolle, and Assistants.———The Band which will be numerous and complete, under the direction of Mr. E. Barrow.

J. & G. Nichols, Printers, Earl's Court, Cranbourn Street, Soho.

Though the Beadnells did not, so far as we know, share in his amateur theatricals, his friend Kolle certainly did. By 1833 — whether before or just after the break with Maria Beadnell is not perfectly clear — Dickens was engaged in writing a travesty of Shakespeare, *The O'Thello*, which was given privately by his own family. In the same year he took the leading parts in the group of plays named on the program inserted opposite.[1] It is earlier than any other playbill of performances by Dickens, and shows that he led all of his family and his intimates into the work that even when he was busiest later in life he could find time to treat as play. Indeed the bill introduces us to a group of friends in Dickens' youth not before known to the public. Ap-

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." *Life*, Forster, vol. ii. p. 205.

[1] Of the three pieces in the Bill, *Clari*, or *The Maid of Milan*, is a musical drama in two acts, by John Howard Payne. It is founded on the delights of home; the part of Clari was originally taken by Miss Paton and Miss M. Tree. The latter first brought the song *Home Sweet Home* into its great repute.

The Married Bachelor, or *Master and Man*, is a farce in one act by P. P. O'Callaghan. Elliston was the original representative of Sir Charles, and Harley was the lying valet.

Was the third item, *Amateurs and Actors*, written by Dickens himself?

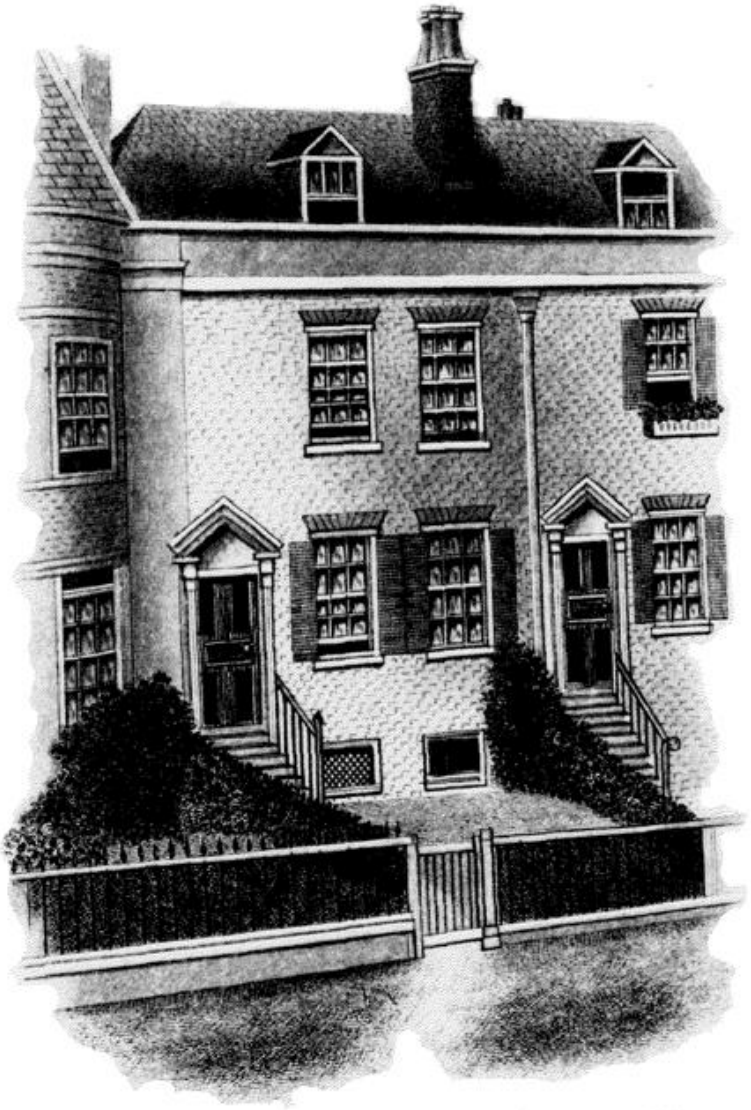
parently all of the Dickens family except the mother took part, for here are the father, John Dickens, Miss [Fanny] Dickens, Letitia, who later married the "Mr. H. Austin" of the cast, and the two brothers, Frederick and Augustus. Who John Urquhart and Miss Urquhart were we do not know, nor can we with certainty identify Mr. Boston, Mr. Milton, and Miss Oppenheim; but E. Barrow was doubtless a cousin. Dickens later went on the *Morning Chronicle* through an uncle John Barrow, and the miniature previously referred to was painted by another member of the family. Mr. R. Austin was probably a brother or cousin of Henry Austin.

Mr. Bramwell, who took the part of the Duke Vivaldi, was a son of George Bramwell, one of the partners in the well-known firm of bankers, Dorrien, Magens, Dorrien and Mello. He afterwards entered the law profession, in which he rose rapidly, and became a Judge, and a Peer of the Realm, as Lord Bramwell.

This early predilection for amateur theatricals is particularly interesting because if one overlooks his early and persistent passion for the theatre one misses the chief key to the secret of Dickens as a writer. He always saw

BIRTHPLACE OF CHARLES DICKENS

Engraved for The Bibliophile Society by J. A. J. WILCOX.



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life, even in his maturer days, a little through the shimmering haze of the old-fashioned gas footlights of the melodrama theatres in which he had passed many absorbed and happy hours. Those theatres, and his acting in some of their plays, gave him his love for striking situation, for strong emotion created chiefly by horror; his liking for static character, rather than character in evolution; his love for sharp contrasts, particularly of gloom and mirth; his fondness for types and for identifying "tag" speeches. It was his informing humor, his genius for characterization of certain figures derived from his unusual knowledge of London life, that transmogrified melodrama and Pierce Egan into his highly individual but masterly pictures of his time.

What wonder that Maria Beadnell found this youth, richly endowed and too much delighted with his sensations as a lover to wish at all to conceal his adoration, almost irresistibly attractive! What wonder, on the other hand, that she coquetted with him — for there was another side to the shield! How could any worldly-wise parent regard this youth, with all his attractiveness, as a wholly desirable son-in-law? True, he was handsome, win-

some, full of promise, but he had only the assets of a parliamentary reporter, and behind him stood a large family, at best always in straitened circumstances. Undoubtedly there was much of the wilful coquette in Maria Beadnell, for Dickens tells her in one of his second set of letters that he remembers her sister Anne writing to him "once (in answer to some burst of low-spirited madness of mine), and saying, 'My dear Charles, I really cannot understand Maria, or venture to take any responsibility of saying what the state of her affections is.'" As these later letters show, there was much writing to and fro, and a Cornish family servant devoted to Maria played nurse to this Romeo and Juliet. There were half-secret interviews, also, in the churches and by-lanes in the neighborhood of the Lombard Street house.

It is more than probable that some of the vacillation, the unevenness of mood, of which young Dickens wrote bitterly in the first set of letters, arose from the young girl's struggle between impulse and a sense of her duty as strongly presented by kindly but unromantic parents. After some impulsive responding to her ardent and fascinating wooer,

parental advice regained sway, or some other suitor more favored by her elders pleaded his cause, and the girl, looking Reason in the face, wavered, and became distraite or chilling when next she met young Dickens. Immediately the nerves of this over-sensitive youth were aquiver and his imagination rioted to fever heat, with consequent hours of torturing self-scrutiny and rebellion.

Apparently there was never any engagement, further than a mutually implied understanding between the lovers, but in the autumn of 1831 either Dickens showed an amazing amount of assurance, which he certainly never lacked, or else at the time the elder Beadnells regarded his parading of his admiration for Maria Beadnell with amused tolerance. In no other way can his frankness in speaking of Miss Beadnell in *The Bill of Fare* be explained.

The following lines, although mediocre as verse, possess two highly important qualities: they present the first authentic literary effort of Dickens — a feature in itself of the greatest interest — written some years before the *Sketches* appeared, and they introduce us to a group of his friends not mentioned in his

Letters, or even in Forster's *Life*, and give us at the same time a means of understanding the first group of letters.

Though Goldsmith might appreciate the compliment to his *Retaliation* shown in the general plan of these verses, it is painful to think how their labored measures would have rasped upon the delicate sensitiveness of his ear.

Mr. Langton, in his *Childhood and Youth of Charles Dickens*, says: "There is, I fancy, internal evidence in some of Dickens' very earliest works, of his having studied these burlesques and travesties [of *The Portfolio*, a publication in vogue for some time after 1823] to some purpose. There is still stronger evidence of this study, I am told, in some early attempts that were never printed."

THE BILL OF FARE

BY CHARLES DICKENS

As the great rage just now is imitation,
'Mong high-born and low, throughout the whole Nation,
I trust 't will excuse the few following lines,
Of which I'll say nothing, save these very poor rhymes,
As you might expect, in degenerate days

Like these, are entitled to no share of praise
Because they are novel, — the ground Work, at least,
Is a copy from Goldsmith's ever famed Feast.
" And a bad one it is too," — you 'll say, I fear ;
But let me entreat you, don't be too severe. —
If, in a fair face, 't will elicit a smile,
If one single moment 't will serve to beguile, —
I shall think on it with great satisfaction,
Et cet'ra, — and so forth : — now then to action !

Without further preface to waste the time in,
We 'll set to at once, — (if you please we 'll begin.)
We 'll say a small party to Dinner are met,
And the guests are themselves about to be eat ;
Without saying Grace, — (I own I 'm a Sinner, —)
We 'll endeavor to see what we 've for dinner.
Mr. Beadnell 's a good fine sirloin of beef,
Though to see him cut up would cause no small grief ;
And then Mrs. Beadnell, I think I may name,
As being an excellent *Rib* of the same.
The Miss B's [1] are next, who it must be confessed
Are two nice little Ducks, and very well dressed.
William Moule 's [2] of a trifle, or *trifling* dish ;
Mr. Leigh [3] we all know is a very great fish ;
Mrs. Leigh a Curry, smart, hot, and biting,
Although a dish that is always inviting.
For cooking our meat we utensils won't lack ;

[1] Two only, because the eldest, Margaret, of the three had become Mrs. David Lloyd in March, 1831.

[2] William Moule, who lived in Pound Lane, Lower Clapton.

[3] John Porter Leigh, corn-dealer, who lived at Lea Bridge Road, Lower Clapton, in 1828-33.

So Miss Leigh shall be called a fine *roasting* Jack, —
A thing of great use, when we dine or we sup,
A patent one too! — never wants winding up.
Mr. Moule 's a bottle of excellent Port;
Mrs. Moule of Champagne, — good humor 's her forte;
The Miss M's of Snipe are a brace, if you please,
And Joe is a very fine flavored Dutch-Cheese;
Mrs. Lloyd and her spouse[1] are a nice side dish,
(Some type of their most happy state I much wish
To produce; — let me see, I 've found out one soon)
Of Honey and sweets in the form of a *Moon.*
Arthur Beetham,[2] — this dish has cost me some pains, —
Is a tongue with a well made garnish of brains;
M'Namara, I think, must by the same rule
Be a dish of excellent gooseberry-fool;
And Charles Dickens, who in our Feast plays a part,
Is a young Summer Cabbage, without any heart; —
Not that he 's *heartless*, but because, as folks say,
He lost his, twelve months ago from last May.
Now let us suppose that the dinner is done,
And the guests have roll'd on the floor one by one; —
I don't mean to say they 're at the completion,
Trying the fam'd city cure for repletion;
Nor do I by any means raise up the question
Whether they owe their deaths to indigestion.
We 'll say they 're all dead; it 's a terrible sight.
But I 'll dry my tears, and their Epitaphs write:

[1] David Lloyd, a tea-merchant of Wood Lane, a friend of Dickens' very early days. Dickens puns on their honeymoon, spent in Paris, in the spring of 1831.

[2] A young surgeon, who lived in the parish of All Hallows, London Wall. He died in December, 1834.

Here lies Mr. Beadnell, beyond contradiction,
An excellent man, and a good politician;
His opinions were always *sound* and sincere,
Come here! ye Reformers, o'er him drop a tear:
Come here and with me weep at his sudden end,
Ye who 're to ballot and freedom a friend.
Come here, all of ye who to him ever listened,
Praise one rare quality — he was consistent;
And if any one can say so much for you
We 'll try to write on you an epitaph too.
He was most hospitable, friendly, and kind;
An enemy, I 'm sure, he 's not left behind;
And if he be fairly, and all in all ta'en,
"We never shall look upon his like again."

Here lies Mrs. Beadnell, whose conduct through life,
As a mother, a Woman, a friend, a Wife,
I shall think, while I possess recollection,
Can be summ'd up in one word — *PERFECTION.*
Her faults I 'd tell you beyond any doubt,
But for this plain reason — I ne'er found them out:
Her character from my own Knowledge I tell,
For when living she was, I then knew her well:
It chances to 've been by the Fates brought about,
That she was the means of first bringing me out: —
All my thanks for that and her kindness since then
I 'd vainly endeavor to tell with my pen:
I think what I say, — *I feel it*, that 's better,
Or I 'd scorn to write of these lines one letter.

Excuse me, dear reader, for pause now I must;
Here two charming Sisters lie low in the dust: —

But why should I pause? do they want my poor aid
To tell of their virtues while with us they stayed?
Can a few words from me add a hundredth part
To the regret felt for them in every heart?
No, no! 't is impossible: still i must try
To speak of them here, for I *can't* pass them by.
And first then for Anne I 'll my banner unfurl —
A truly delightful and sweet tempered girl;
And, what 's very odd, and will add to her fame,
Is this one plain fact, — she was always the same.
She was witty, clever, — you liked what she said;
Without being *blue*, she was very well *read*.
Her favorite Author, or else I 'm a fibber,
And have been deceived, was the famed *Colley*[1] Cibber.
I don't think, dear reader, 't will interest you,
But still, if you please, keep that quite *entre nous*.
I grow tedious, so of her I 'll not din more, —
Oh! — she sometimes drest her hair *à la Chinois*.
Ladies, if you want this fashion to follow,
And don't know where you the pattern can borrow,
Don't look in "the fashions" 'mong bows and wreathings,
You 'll find it on any antique China Tea things.
But who have we here? alas what sight is this!
Has her spirit flown back to regions of bliss?
Has Maria left this World of trouble and care
Because for us she was too good and too fair?
Has Heaven in its jealousy ta'en her away
As a blessing too great for us children of clay?
All ye fair and beautiful, sadly come here,

[1] Dickens puns on the name of his friend Kolle, later married to Anne Beadnell, — in 1833.

And Spring's early flowers strew over her bier ;
Fit emblems are they of life's short fleeting day,
Fit tributes are they to her memory to pay ;
For though blooming now, they will soon be decayed,
They blossom one moment, then wither and fade.
I linger here now, and I hardly know why,
I 've no wish, no hope now, but this one, — to die.
My bright hopes and fond wishes were all centred here —
Their brightness has vanished, they 're now dark and drear.
The impression that Memory engraves in my heart
Is all I have left, and with that I ne'er part.
I might tell you much, and I say 't with a sigh,
Of the grace of her form, and the glance of her eye ;
I might tell of happy days now pass'd away,
Which I fondly hoped then would never decay,
But 't were useless — I should only those times deplore,
I know that again I can see them no more.[1]
But what 's this small form that she folds to her breast,
As if it had only laid down there to rest ?
Poor thing is it living ? — Ah no, it 's dead quite ;
It is a small dog, liver-colored and white.[2]
Dear me, now I see — 't is the little dog that
Would eat mutton chops if you cut off the fat.
So very happy was its situation,
An object it was of such admiration,
That I 'd resign all my natural graces,
E'en now if I could with " Daphne " change places.

[1] Little did Dickens dream at the time of writing this how accurately he was foretelling his future.

[2] Dora's pet dog, Jip.

William Moule next, alas, with the dead lieth here,
And his loss we shall ne'er recover I fear;
No more shall the young men, among whom am I,
Regard with great envy his elegant tie;
No more shall the girls with anxiety wait
At a party, and mourn that he came in late;
Though it was not his fault, it must be confess'd
We knew very well that he lived "*in the West*"[1]
And men of great fashion now never go out,
Till long after twelve when engaged to a rout.
No more shall he waltz an hour with one lady,
To the delight of his tut'ress Miss A. B.
Who no more shall turn to me, and whispering low,
Say "Does n't he waltz well? I taught him, you know."
No more shall he curse all the City Folks' Balls,
And vow that he never will honor their halls;
No more from "the London" will he be turned back
Because of his wearing a Kerchief of Black;
No more when we sit round the blithe supper table
Shall he hush to silence the prattling Babel,
By, — When a lady a speech made upon her, —
Rising to return us her thanks for the honor.
No more, — But I think I 'll use that phrase *no more*,
I feel that I can't this loss enough deplore.

Momus and Bacchus, both be merry no more,
Your friend Mr. Leigh now lies dead on the floor.
Weep both of ye; each hide your sorrowful head,
For he is n't dead drunk, but he 's really dead.
We shall never again see his good humored face,

[1] The purlieus of Tottenham Court Road. [In original.]

We shall never again much admire the grace
With which he would drink off his bottle of Wine,
Or with which he 'd ask you next Sunday to dine.
We shall never again laugh aloud at his fun,
We shall never in turn amuse him with a pun.
In his Will I hope as a Legacy that
He 's left me that elegant, pretty, dress hat,
The Shape, make, and color of which were so rare,
And which on all extra occasions he 'd Wear.
I really do his loss most deeply regret,
As the kindest best temper'd man I e'er met.
I 'm as *hale* and as hearty as any one here,
So I 'll help to carry him to his *new bier*.

Mrs. Leigh's life, alas, has come to an end ; —
But I can't speak of her I fear to offend ;
I don't think the truth need her feelings much gall,
But if I can't tell it I won't write at all.
If 't were not for the lesson that I 've been taught
I 'd have painted her as in justice I ought ;
I 'd have said she was friendly, good hearted, and kind,
Her wit I 'd have praised and intelligent mind ;
'Bout scandal or spreading reports without heed,
Of course I 'd say nothing, how could I indeed ?
Because if I did I should certainly lie,
And my remarks here doubtless would not apply ;
So as I fear either to praise or to blame,
I will not her faults or her virtues here name.

And Mary Anne Leigh's death I much regret too,
Though the greatest tormentor that I e'er knew ;
Whenever she met you, at morn, noon, or night,

To tease and torment you was her chief delight;
To each glance or smile she 'd a meaning apply,
On every flirtation she kept a sharp eye.
Though — tender feelings I trust I 'm not hurting, —
She ne'er herself much objected to flirting.[1]
She to each little secret always held the candle,
And I think she liked a small bit of scandal.
I think, too, that she used to dress her hair well,
Although Arthur said, — but that tale I won't tell.
In short though she was so terribly teasing,
So pretty she looked, her ways were so pleasing,
That when she had finished I used to remain
Half fearing, half hoping to be teased again.

Here lies — Mr. Moule, at whose plentiful board
We often have sat, and where, with one accord,
Mirth, pleasure, good humor and capital Wine,
Seem'd always to meet when one went there to dine.
To his friends he was always good humored and kind,
And a much better host 't would be hard to find.
If he for an instant his good humor missed
I 've heard it would be at a rubber of Whist;
At least I 've sometimes heard his Partners say so;
Though of course I myself this fact cannot know.
His hospitality deserved great credit;
Indeed I much wish all men did inherit
That merit from him; I 'm sure it is needed
That some should prize it as highly as he did.
I think his opinions were not always quite
So kind or so just as they should be of right.

[1] A singular fact. [This note is in original.]

However, that question I 'll not travel through,
'T would not I think become me so to do.
Some others in this point like him we may see,
So I will say *requiescat in pace.*

Mrs. Moule, alas, lieth here with the dead,
Her good temper vanished, her light spirits fled;
I 'd say much of her, but all knew her too well
To leave anything new for me here to tell;
So I 'll only say, — in thus speaking of her
I 'm sure all she e'er knew will concur —
If kindness and temper as virtues are held
She never by any one yet was excelled.

Louisa Moule 's next, — I can't better call her
Than the same pattern, — N. B. a size smaller.
Here lies Fanny Moule, of whom 't may be said,
That romance or sentiment quite turned her head.
Her chief pleasure was, I cannot tell why
To sit by herself in a corner and sigh.
You might talk for an hour to her, thinking she heard,
And find out at last she had not heard a word;
She 'd start, turn her head, — the case was a hard one, —
And say with a sigh, " Dear ! I beg your pardon."
Whether this arose from love, doubt, hesitation,
Or whether indeed, 't was all affectation,
I will not by my own decision abide,
I 'll leave it to others the point to decide.
Thus much though, I will say, — I think it is droll,
That one who so pleasing might be on the whole
Should take so much trouble, it must be a toil,
All her charms and graces entirely to spoil.

Here lies honest Joe, and I 'm sure when I say
That he 'd a good heart, there's no one will say nay.
The themes, of all others on which he would doat
Were splendid gold lace and a flaming red coat;
His mind always ran on battles and slaughters,
Guards, Bands, Kettledrums and splendid Head Quarters.
I 've heard that the best bait to catch a young girl
Is a red coat and a moustachio's curl;
Bait your hook but with this, and Joe would soon bite;
Hint at it, he 'd talk on from morning to night.
In portraits of Soldiers he spent all his hoard;
You talked of a penknife — he thought of a sword.
Inspecting accounts he ne'er could get through;
His mind would revert to some former *review.*
He ne'er made a bill out smaller or larger
But he thought he was then mounting his *charger.*
He ne'er to the counting house trudged in a heat
But he thought of *forced marches* and a *retreat;*
And ne'er from the play to his home went again
But trembling he thought of the roll call at *Ten.*
But fallen at last is this "gay young deceiver,"
A prey to Death and a bad *Scarlet fever.*

Here lies Mrs. Lloyd, I am sorry to say
That she too from us is so soon snatched away;
That her fate is most hard it can't be denied,
When we think how recently she was a bride.
That she became one is no source of surprise,
For if all that 's charming in critical eyes
Is likely to finish a dull single life
I 'm sure that she ought t've been long since a wife.
Though we lament one so pleasing, so witty,

And though her death we may think a great pitty,
I really myself do quite envy her fate,
And I wish when with Death I 've my tête à tête,
He 'd do me the favor to take me away
When my prospects here were bright, blooming and gay,
When I 'm quite happy, ere with sorrows jaded,
I wish for my grave when my hopes are faded, —
When I might be certain of leaving behind
Those who would ne'er cease to bear me in mind.
She 's gone and who shall now those sweet ballads sing
Which still in my ears so delightfully ring ?
" We met," " Friends depart," — I those sweet sounds
retain,
And I feel I shall never forget them again.

And down here Mr. Lloyd's remains lie beside
Those of his so recently blooming young bride.
I 'm sorry he 's dead, for I knew him to be
Good humored, most honest, kind hearted and free.
That he was consistent, I ne'er had a doubt,
Although scandal said, and 't was whispered about,
That when he last summer from Paris came home
(I think 't was his marriage induced him to roam)
He his principles changed, — so runs the story,
Threw off the *Whigs*, and became a staunch Tory.
Be that as it may, I think it 's but fair,
To say that I know that he enjoyed the *fresh air*.

And is Arthur Beetham for the first time hush'd ?
And has he returned to his original dust ?
Has he gone the way of all flesh with the rest,

And in spite of the great care he took of his Chest,[1]
At our snug coteries will he never make one?
Will he never again gladden us with his fun?
Poor fellow! I fear, now he 's laid in the earth,
That of our amusement we 'll all find a dearth;
And yet he 'd his faults, — to speak without joking,
He had a knack of being very provoking;
So much so that several times t' other day
I devoutly, heartily, wished him away;
But after I 'd done so, my Conscience me smote —
And here perhaps a couple of lines I may quote —
Missing his mirth and agreeable vein,
I directly wished him back again.

And does M'Namara with the dead recline?
Poor Francis, his waistcoats were wond'rously fine;
He certainly was an elegant fellow,
His coats were well made, his gloves a bright yellow;
Florists shall hold up his Pall by the corners,
Morgan[2] and Watkins[3] shall be his chief mourners.

Last, here 's Charles Dickens who 's now gone for ever;
It 's clear that he thought himself very clever;
To all his friends' faults — it almost makes me weep,
He was wide awake — to his own fast asleep.
Though blame he deserves for such wilful blindness,
He had one merit — he ne'er forgot kindness.

[1] The reason assigned by Mr. A. B. for constantly wearing his coat buttoned up to his chin was his extreme anxiety to preserve his chest from cold. [This note is in original.]

[2] A celebrated glove-maker. [This note is in original.]

[3] A celebrated Tailor. [This note is in original.]

Perhaps I don't do right to call that a merit
Which each human creature 's bound to inherit ;
But when old Death claimed the debt that he owed him,
He felt most grateful for all that was showed him.
His faults, — and they were not in number few,
As all his acquaintance extremely well knew,
Emanated, — to speak of him in good part —
I think rather more from the head than the heart.
His death was n't sudden, he had long been ill, —
Slowly he languished and got worse, until
No mortal means could the poor young fellow save,
And a sweet pair of eyes sent him home to his grave.

There is much of the character of Dickens in these lines, in the veiled impudence toward Mrs. Leigh, in his flattery of Mrs. Beadnell, in the swift turn to serious sentimentality in the last few lines, in the reprimand given Fanny Moule. They were evidently written in the autumn of 1831 ; for Dickens, in speaking of David Lloyd, mentions his visit to Paris "last summer" and "his marriage" as the occasion. The Lloyds — they were married in April, 1831 — passed their honeymoon in Paris.

As to Maria Beadnell, he wrote much more effectively of the "grace of her form and the glance of her eye" when he gave her to posterity as Dora. Between the autumn of 1831 and the letters of 1833, Miss Beadnell was sent

to Paris for "finishing off," as the commonplace old phrase went. Or was the real reason the aroused fears of the elder Beadnells that this fascinating but penniless young Dickens might actually win for good and all the heart of their daughter? Whatever the cause of her absence, during it Dickens nursed his love till it became infatuation. To him, full of unqualified devotion, the girl on her return seemed changeable and distant, yet ready to keep him dangling as an offset to other lovers. Whatever may have been the cause, — her instability of mood, her unsureness as to her exact feelings, or a sense of duty to her parents, — she wrung the young fellow's heart. It was Maria Beadnell who taught Dickens to understand the bewildered wretchedness of Pip in his love affair, in *Great Expectations*. Pip said of Estella: —

"She made use of me to tease other admirers, and she turned the very familiarity between herself and me to the account of putting a constant slight on my devotion to her. If I had been her secretary, steward, half-brother, poor relation — if I had been a younger brother of her appointed husband — I could not have seemed to myself further from my hopes

when I was nearest to her. The privilege of calling her by her name and hearing her call me by mine, became under the circumstances an aggravation of my trials; and while I think it likely that it almost maddened her other lovers, I knew too certainly that it almost maddened me. She had admirers without end. . . . There were picnics, fête days, plays, operas, concerts, parties, all sorts of pleasures, through which I pursued her — and they were all miseries to me. I never had one hour's happiness in her society, and yet my mind, all round the four-and-twenty hours, was harping on the happiness of having her with me unto death."

Compare with the foregoing this passage from the first of the letters to follow: —

"Thank God I can claim for myself and *feel* that I deserve the merit of having ever throughout our intercourse acted fairly, intelligibly and honorably. Under kindness and encouragement one day and a total change of conduct the next I have ever been the same. I have ever acted without reserve. I have never held out encouragement which I knew I never meant; I have never indirectly sanctioned hopes which I well knew I did not intend to

fulfil; I have never made a mock confidante to whom to entrust a garbled story for my own purposes, and I think I never should (though God knows I am not likely to have the opportunity) encourage one dangler as a useful shield for — an excellent set off against — others more fortunate and doubtless more deserving."

At the date of these verses Dickens had not, apparently, come to distrust "Mary Anne" Leigh, or, as he calls her later in his letters — the change probably originated with her — Marianne Leigh. The tone of —

> So pretty she looked, her ways were so pleasing,
> That when she had finished I used to remain
> Half fearing, half hoping to be teased again —

is very different from the biting sarcasm of his letter to her in 1833.

The very qualities in her that Dickens had censured in the following lines ultimately brought about the catastrophe in this love affair: —

> Whenever she met you, at morn, noon, or night,
> To tease and torment you was her chief delight;
> To each glance or smile she 'd a meaning apply,
> On every flirtation she kept a sharp eye.

Though — tender feelings I trust I 'm not hurting, —
She ne'er herself much objected to flirting.
She to each little secret always held the candle,
And I think she liked a small bit of scandal.

Mary Anne Leigh stopped at nothing to embroil the lovers. Possessed of personal attractions and a lively wit, she had inherited in marked degree the bad qualities of her mother and was a born mischief-maker. It looks as if, being herself in love with Dickens, she made use of all around her, even his sister Fanny, to bring misunderstandings between the lovers. She told Maria Beadnell that all the stages of the love affair had been confided to her. Evidently she wished to imply that this was a mark of the deeper confidence and possibly affection which Dickens felt for her. Certainly the letters show that she brought matters to such a pass that Miss Beadnell had to choose between the word of her friend and that of her lover. When she showed that she would not entirely throw over Miss Leigh, young Dickens, outraged by her vacillation, by the consequent bickerings, and, above all, by her failure completely to accept his straightforward statement of his real relations with Miss Leigh, broke off the already strained relationship.

All of Miss Beadnell's letters to Dickens have disappeared — perhaps they perished in the epistolary holocaust of 1860, already mentioned. Of his letters to her only the following five survive. In exasperation at what has passed he writes a touchingly boyish set of letters, in which his misery of mind breaks through the sentences which try to be dignified and restrained. But not even his misery sweeps him out of the self-pity and self-consciousness that were throughout his life characteristic. One feels, in reading these letters, that however well the manly air was maintained by the somewhat stilted phrases, it concealed bitter heart-burnings and tempests of outraged pride as well as deeply wounded affection.

The somewhat loose phrasing, the punctuation, often most conspicuous for its absence in the originals, probably result more from the great excitement of the youth as he wrote than from his inexperience as an author. Yet both are in sharp contrast with the skilled phrase and the adequate punctuation of the second set of letters.

Unfortunately, the first set of letters is not dated; consequently it is nearly impossible to

be sure what is their correct order, for their contents permit them to be arranged in more than one way.

Miss Hogarth in the *Letters* said of the early correspondence: "He had a careless habit in those days about dating his letters, very frequently putting only the day of the week on which he wrote, curiously in contrast with the habit of his later life, when his dates were always of the very fullest."

18 BENTINCK STREET,[1]
March 18th

DEAR MISS BEADNELL, — Your own feelings will enable you to imagine far better than any attempt of mine to describe the painful struggle it has cost me to make up my mind to adopt the course which I now take — a course than which nothing can be so directly opposed to my wishes and feelings, but the necessity of which becomes daily more apparent to me. Our meetings of late have been little more than so many displays of heartless indifference on the one hand, while on the other they have never failed to prove a fertile source of wretchedness and misery; and seeing, as I cannot fail to do, that I have engaged in a pursuit which has long since been worse than

[1] The paper of this letter is watermarked, "G. H. Green, 1831." But the text of this and the succeeding letters show that this was written in March, 1833. This letter is a copy in Maria Beadnell's handwriting, the original having been returned by her to Dickens, as stated in his letter at page 52, *infra*.

hopeless and a further perseverance in which can only expose me to deserved ridicule, I have made up my mind to return the little present I received from you sometime since (which I have always prized, as I still do, far beyond anything I ever possessed) and the other enclosed mementos of our past correspondence which I am sure it must be gratifying to you to receive, as after our recent relative situations they are certainly better adapted for your custody than mine.

Need I say that I have not the most remote idea of hurting your feelings by the few lines which I think it necessary to write with the accompanying little parcel? I must be the last person in the world who could entertain such an intention, but I feel that this is neither a matter nor a time for cold, deliberate, calculating trifling. *My* feelings upon any subject, more especially upon this, must be to you a matter of very little moment; still *I have* feelings in common with other people, — perhaps as far as they relate to you they have been as strong and as good as ever warmed the human heart, — and I do feel that it is mean and contemptible of me to keep by me one gift of yours or to preserve one single line or word of remembrance or affection from you. I therefore return them, and I can only wish that I could as easily forget that I ever received them.

I have but one more word to say and I say it in my own vindication. The result of our past acquaintance is indeed a melancholy one to me. I have felt too long ever to lose the feeling of utter desolation and wretchedness which has succeeded our former correspondence. Thank God I can claim for myself and *feel* that I deserve

under providence encouragement on earth to bear change of scene
which the heart have ever been the seat. I have ever acted
without deceit - I have never held out to encouragement
which I never meant, I have never indulged those
original hopes which I have said I did not intend to fulfil
I have never made a mock confidante to whom to
entrust a pocket story for my own purpose, &c. &c.
Such I never should, though God knows I am not to be
so sure the opportunity of encouraging one daughter
as a bosom friend for the excellent letter of my
other more fortunate & dog blest more deserving
I have done nothing that I could say would be very
useful to you - Ill I can hardly believe it possible
[illegible] that any thing I should have that effect I can
only ask you to plan yourself for the future in my
behaviour & you will find a much better guide than
I can possibly be with for your happiness all
it comes from me may not be the best or for being
sincere - I can tell it with a heart & tongue
that perhaps may be ever afford me more real delight than
to hear that you - the object of my first & my last love,
are happy. If you are not happy as I hope you
may be, you will indeed perhaps carry a blessing that
this world can afford.

C. D.

Miss Maria Beadnell

the merit of having ever throughout our intercourse acted fairly, intelligibly and honorably. Under kindness and encouragement one day and a total change of conduct the next I have ever been the same. I have ever acted without reserve. I have never held out encouragement which I knew I never meant; I have never indirectly sanctioned hopes which I well knew I did not intend to fulfil. I have never made a mock confidante to whom to entrust a garbled story for my own purposes, and I think I never should (though God knows I am not likely to have the opportunity) encourage one dangler as a useful shield for — an excellent set off against — others more fortunate and doubtless more deserving. I have done nothing that I could say would be very likely to hurt you. If (I can hardly believe it possible) I have said any thing which can have that effect I can only ask you to place yourself for a moment in my situation, and you will find a much better excuse than I can possibly devise. A wish for your happiness altho' it comes from me may not be the worse for being sincere and heartfelt. Accept it as it is meant, and believe that nothing will ever afford me more real delight than to hear that you, the object of my first and my last love are happy. If you are as happy as I hope you may be, you will indeed possess every blessing that this world can afford.

C. D.

MISS MARIA BEADNELL

The following letter is undated, and its paper has no watermark. Yet it would appear from its contents that it just preceded those which

are printed after it. Indeed, it looks as if the remaining five letters were all written during the week preceding that of May 21, 1833, when Anne Beadnell was married to Henry Kolle. It is of Kolle's honeymoon that young Dickens is thinking when in the last letter of this series he says, "Knowing that the opportunity of addressing you through Kolle will shortly be lost."

There had now been a breach lasting perhaps two months:—

I do feel, Miss Beadnell, after my former note to you that common delicacy and a proper feeling of consideration alike require that I should without a moment's delay inform you (as I did verbally yesterday) that I never, by word or deed, in the slightest manner, directly or by implication, made in any way a confidante of Mary Anne Leigh, and never was I more surprised, never did I endure more heartfelt annoyance and vexation than to hear yesterday by chance that days even weeks ago she had made this observation — not having the slightest idea that she had done so of course it was out of my power to contradict it before. Situated as we have been once I have — laying out of consideration every idea of common honour not to say common honesty — too often thought of our earlier correspondence, and too often looked back to happy hopes the loss of which have made me the miserable reckless wretch I am, to breathe the slightest hint to any creature living of one single

circumstance that ever passed between us — much less to her.

In replying to your last note I denied Mary Anne Leigh's interference, and I did so hoping to spare you the pain of any recrimination with her. Her duplicity and disgusting falsehood, however, renders it quite unnecessary to conceal the part she has acted, and I therefore have now no hesitation in saying that she, quite unasked, volunteered the information that YOU had made her a confidante *of all that had ever passed between us without reserve.* In proof of which assertion she not only detailed facts which I undoubtedly thought she could have heard from none but yourself, but she also communicated many things which certainly never occurred at all, equally calculated to excite something even more than ordinary angry feelings.

On hearing this yesterday (and no consideration on earth shall induce me ever to forget or forgive Fanny's[1] not telling me of it before) my first impulse was to go to Clapton: my next to prevent misrepresentation, to write immediately. I thought on reflection however that the most considerate and proper course would be to state to you exactly what I wish to do. I ask your consent previously for this reason — because it is possible that you may think that my writing a violent note would have the effect of exciting ill nature which had better be avoided. I candidly own that I am most anxious to write. I care as little for her malice as I do for her, but as you are a party who would perhaps be mixed up with her story I think it is proper to ask you whether you object to my send-

[1] His sister.

ing the note which I have already written. I need hardly say that if it be sent at all it should be at once, and I therefore hope to receive your decision tomorrow, assuring you that I will abide by it whatever it be.

I will not detain you or intrude upon your attention by any more observations. I fear I could say little calculated to interest or please you. I have no hopes to express, no wishes to communicate. I am past the one and must not think of the other. Though surprised at such inconceivable duplicity I can express no pleasure at the discovery, for I have been so long used to inward wretchedness and real, real misery, that it matters little, very little to me what others may think of or what becomes of me — I have to apologize for troubling you at all but I hope you will believe that a sense of respect for and deference to your feelings has elicited this note to which I have once again to beg your immediate answer.

CHARLES DICKENS

18 BENTINCK STREET,
Tuesday Afternoon.

18 BENTINCK STREET,
Thursday 4 o'clock.

I cannot forbear replying to your note this moment received, Miss Beadnell, because you really seem to have made two mistakes. In the first place you do not exactly understand the nature of my feelings with regard to your alleged communications to M[ary] A[nne] L[eigh], and in the next you certainly totally and entirely misunderstand my feeling with regard to her — that you could suppose, as you clearly do (that is to say if the subject

is worth a thought to you), that I have ever really thought of M A L in any other than my old way you are mistaken. That she has for some reason and to suit her own purposes, of late thrown herself in my way, I could plainly see, and I know it was noticed by others. For instance on the night of the play,[1] after we went up stairs I could not get rid of her. God knows that I have no pleasure in speaking to her or any girl living, and never had. May I say that *you* have ever been the sole exception? "Kind words and winning looks" have done much, much with me — but not from her — *unkind* words and *cold* looks, however, have done much, much more. That I have been the subject of both from *you* as your will altered and your pleasure changed, *I* know well — and so I think must you. I have often said before, and I say again, I have borne more from you than I do believe any creature breathing ever bore from a woman before. The slightest hint, however, even now of change or transfer of feeling I cannot bear and do not deserve.

Again, I never supposed nor did this girl give me to understand that you ever breathed a syllable *against* me. It is quite a mistake on your part, but knowing (and there cannot be a stronger proof of my disliking her) what she was; knowing her admirable qualifications for a confidante and recollecting what had passed between ourselves, I was more than hurt, more than annoyed at the bare idea of your confiding the tale to *her* of all people living. I reflected upon it. I coupled her communication with what I saw (with a jaundiced eye per-

[1] Perhaps his burlesque *The O'Thello*.

haps) of your own conduct; on the very last occasion of seeing you before writing that note[1] I heard even among your own friends (and there was no Mary Ann present), I heard even among them remarks on your own conduct and pity — pity, Good God! — for my situation, and I did think (you will pardon my saying it for I am describing my *then* feelings and not my *present*) that the same light butterfly feeling which prompted the one action could influence the other. Wretched, aye almost brokenhearted, I wrote to you — (I have the note for you returned it,[2] and even now I do think it was written "more in sorrow than in anger," and to my mind — I had almost said to your better judgment — it must appear to breathe anything but an unkind or bitter feeling), — you replied to the note. I wrote another and that at least was expressive of the same sentiments as I ever had felt and ever should feel towards you to my dying day. *That note you sent me back by hand wrapped in a small loose piece of paper without even the formality of an envelope and that note I wrote after receiving yours.* It is poor sport to trifle on a subject like this: I knew what your feelings must have been and by them I regulated my conduct.

To return to the question of what is best to be done. I go to Kolle's at 10 o'clock tomorrow Evening and I will inclose to you and give to him then a copy of the note which if I send any I *will* send to Marianne Leigh. I do not ask your *advice;* all I ask is whether you see any

[1] The one of March 18 in which he broke off all relations with Maria Beadnell.

[2] This explains why the first letter is in Maria Beadnell's hand, not that of Dickens.

reason to *object*. You will perhaps inclose it after reading it, and say whether you object to its going or not.

With regard to Fanny if she owed a duty to you she owed a greater one to me — and for this reason *because she knew* what Marianne Leigh had said of *you;* she heard from you what she had said of *me* and yet she had not the fairness the candour the feeling to let me know it — and if I were to live a hundred years I never would forgive it.

As to sending my last note back, pray do not consult *my* feelings but *your own.* Look at the note itself. Do you think it is unkind, cold, hasty, or conciliatory and deliberate? I shall — indeed I need — express no wish upon the subject. You will act as you think best. It is too late for me to attempt to influence your decision. I have said doubtless both in this and my former note much more than perhaps I ought or should have said had I attempted disguise or concealment to you and I have no doubt more than is agreeable to yourself. Towards *you* I never had and never can have an angry feeling. If you had ever felt for me one hundredth part of my feeling for you there would have been little cause of regret, little coldness little unkindness between us. My feeling on *one* subject was early roused; it has been strong, and it will be lasting. I am in no mood to quarrel with any one for not entertaining similar sentiments, and least of all, Miss Beadnell, with you. You will think of what I have said and act accordingly — Destitute as I am of hope or comfort, I have borne much and I dare say can bear more.

Yours, CHARLES DICKENS

The following letter, dated only "Friday," was evidently written the day after the preceding. Recall the words: "I go to Kolle's at 10 o'clock tomorrow Evening and I will inclose to you and give to him then a copy of the note which if I send any I *will* send to Marianne Leigh." —

Agreeably to my promise I beg to Inclose you a Copy of the note I propose to send to Marianne Leigh, which you will perhaps be so good as to return me (as I have no other copy from which to write the original) as soon as possible. I had intended to have made it more severe but perhaps upon the whole the inclosed will be sufficient — Until receiving any answer you may make to my last note I will not trouble you with any further observation. Of course you will at least on this point (I mean Marianne Leigh's note) say what you think without reserve and any course you may propose or any alteration you may suggest shall on my word and honor be instantly adopted. Should anything you may say (in returning her note) to *me* make me anxious to return any answer, may I have your permission to forward it to you?

I find I have proceeded to the end of my note without even inserting your name. May I ask you to excuse the omission and to believe that I would gladly have addressed you in a very, very different way?

CHARLES DICKENS

MISS MARIA BEADNELL

18 BENTINCK STREET,
Friday.

The next letter, to Miss Leigh, is from a copy in Maria Beadnell's handwriting, for the original was returned by her to Dickens, in accordance with his request. The copy was apparently written on the fly-leaf of the original, for on the outside is "Miss Beadnell" in the handwriting of Dickens. —

DEAR MISS LEIGH, — I am very happy to avail myself of the opportunity of inclosing your Album (which I regret to say want of a moment's time has quite prevented me writing in). To say a very few words relative to an observation made by you the other day to one of the Miss Beadnells I believe; and which has only I regret to say just reached my ears quite accidentally. I should not have noticed it at all were it merely an idle gossiping remark, for one is necessarily compelled to hear so many of them and they are usually so trifling and so ridiculous that it w'd be mere waste of time to notice them in any way. The remark to which I allude however is one which if it had the slightest foundation in truth — w'd so strongly tend to implicate me as a dishonorable babbler, with little heart and less head, that in justice to myself I cannot refrain from adverting to it — You will at once perceive I allude to your giving them to understand (if not directly by implication) that I had made you my confidante, with respect to anything which [may] have [?][1] passed between Maria B—— and myself. Now, [?][1] passing over any remark which may have been art-

[1] The brackets mark torn places in the MS.

fully elicited from me in any unguarded moment, I can safely say that I never made a confidante of any one. I am perfectly willing to admit that if I had wished to secure a confidante in whom candour, secrecy and kind honorable feeling were indispensable requisites I could have looked to no one better calculated for this office than yourself; but still the making you the depositary of my feelings or secrets, is an honor I never presumed to expect, and one which I certainly must beg most positively to decline — A proof of self denial in which so far as I learn from other avowed confidantes of yours, I am by no means singular.

I have not hesitated to speak plainly because I feel most strongly on this subject. The allegation — if it were not grossly untrue — I again say tending so materially to inculpate me, and the assertion itself having been made (so far as I can learn at least, for it has reached me in a very circuitous manner) certainly not in the most unaffected or delicate way.

I hope you will understand that in troubling you, I am not actuated by any absurd idea of self consequence. I am perfectly aware of my own unimportance, and it is solely because I am so; because I w'd much rather mismanage my own affairs, than have them ably conducted by the officious interference of any one, because I do think that your interposition in this instance, however well-intentioned, has been productive of as much mischief as it has been uncalled for; and because I am really and sincerely desirous of sparing you the meanness and humiliation of acting in the petty character of an unauthorized go-between that I have been induced to write

this note — for the length of which I beg you will accept my apology.

I am, Dear Miss Leigh,

Yours &c., CHARLES DICKENS[1]

To be corresponding again with Maria Beadnell, no matter how unsatisfactorily, was too much for the self-control of the youth, so he flings aside all pride and pleads in the following letter for reinstatement: —

18 BENTINCK STREET,
Sunday Morning.

DEAR MISS BEADNELL. — I am anxious to take the earliest opportunity of writing to you again, knowing that the opportunity of addressing you through Kolle — now my only means of communicating with you — will shortly be lost, and having your own permission to write to you — I am most desirous of forwarding a note which had I received such permission earlier, I can assure you you would have received 'ere this. Before proceeding to say a word upon the subject of my present note let me beg you to believe that your request to see Marianne Leigh's answer is rendered quite unnecessary by my previous determination to shew it you, which I shall do immediately on receiving it — that is to say, if I receive any at all. If I know anything of her art or disposition however you are mistaken in supposing that her remarks will be directed against yourself. *I* shall be the mark at which all the anger and spleen will be directed — and I

[1] The last three letters are watermarked "1832."

shall take it very quietly for whatever she may say I shall positively decline to enter into any further controversy with *her*. I shall have no objection to break a lance, paper or otherwise, with any champion to whom she may please to entrust her cause but I will have no futher correspondence or communication with her personally or in writing. I have copied the note and done up the parcel which will go off by the first Clapton Coach to-morrow morning.

And now to the object of my present note. I have considered and reconsidered the matter, and I have come to the unqualified determination that I will allow no feeling of pride, no haughty dislike to making a conciliation to prevent my expressing it without reserve. I will advert to nothing that has passed; I will not again seek to excuse any part I have acted or to justify it by any course you have ever pursued; I will revert to nothing that has ever passed between us, — I will only openly and at once say that there is nothing I have more at heart, nothing I more sincerely and earnestly desire, than to be reconciled to you. — It would be useless for me to repeat here what I have so often said before; it would be equally useless to look forward and state my hopes for the future — all that any one can do to raise himself by his own exertions and unceasing assiduity I have done, and will do. I have no guide by which to ascertain your present feelings and I have, God knows, no means of influencing them in my favor. I never have loved and I never can love any human creature breathing but yourself. We have had many differences, and we have lately been entirely separated. Absence, however, has not

18 Bentinck Street.
Sunday Morning.

Dear Miss Beadnell.

I am anxious to take the earliest opportunity of writing to you again, knowing that the opportunity of addressing you through Rolle - now my only means of communicating with you - will shortly be lost, and having your own permission to write to you - I am most desirous of forwarding a note which had I received such permission earlier, I can assure you you would have received ere this. Before proceeding to say a word upon the subject of my present note let me beg you to believe that your request to see Marianne Leigh's answer is rendered quite unnecessary by my previous determination to shew it to you, which I shall

to immediately on receiving it — that is to say if I receive any at all. If I know anything of her art or disposition however you are mistaken in supposing that her remarks will be directed against yourself. I shall be the mark at which all the anger and spleen will be directed — and I shall take it very quietly for whatever she may say. I shall certainly decline to enter into any further controversy with her. I shall have no objection to break a lance later or otherwise with any champion to whom she may please to entrust her cause but I will have no further correspondence or communication with her personally or in writing. I have copied the note and done up the parcel which will go off by the first Clapton coach tomorrow morning.—

And now to the object of my present note. I have considered and reconsidered the matter, and I have come to the unqualified

determination that I will allow no feeling of pride or haughty dislike to making a conciliation to present my expressing it without reserve. — I will advert to nothing that has passed. I will not again seek to excuse any part I have acted or to justify it by any course you have ever pursued. I will revert to nothing that has ever passed between us; I will only openly and at once say that there is nothing I have more at heart, nothing I more sincerely and earnestly desire than to be reconciled to you. — It would be useless for me to repeat here what I have so often said before; it would be equally useless to look forward and state my hopes for the future — all that any one can do to raise himself by his own exertions and unceasing assiduity I have done, and will do. I have no guide by which to ascertain your present feelings and I have

altered my feelings in the slightest degree, and the Love I now tender you is as pure and as lasting as at any period of our former correspondence. I have now done all I can to remove our most unfortunate and to me most unhappy misunderstanding. The matter now of course rests solely with you, and you will decide as your own feelings and wishes direct you. I could say much for myself and I could entreat a favourable consideration on my own behalf but I purposely abstain from doing so because it would be only a repetition of an oft told tale and because I am sure that nothing I could say would have the effect of influencing your decision in any degree whatever. Need I say that to me it is a matter of vital import and the most intense anxiety? — I fear that the numerous claims which must necessarily be made on your time and attention next week will prevent your answering this note within anything like the time which my impatience would name. Let me entreat you to consider your determination well whatever it be and let me implore you to communicate it to me as early as possible. — As I am anxious to convey this note into the City in time to get it delivered today I will at once conclude by begging you to believe me,

Yours sincerely, CHARLES DICKENS[1]

It certainly is difficult to understand Maria Beadnell's treatment of this ardent youth. She was interested enough to keep careful copies of such letters of his as for one reason or

[1] Paper watermarked "1831."

another she returned; yet in response to this last unreservedly loving appeal she answered him "coldly and reproachfully," [1] and thus they parted, not to meet again for more than twenty years.

If the editor is right in thinking that the reference to the "numerous claims which must necessarily be made on your time and attention next week" concerns the wedding of Anne Beadnell in May, 1833, then the relations with Maria were not broken off earlier than the middle of May, 1833. "If youth but knew!" "I never have loved and never can love any human creature breathing but yourself," the youth cried in May, 1833, yet in 1835, at most not over two years later, he became engaged to Miss Catherine Hogarth, daughter of George Hogarth, his colleague on the *Morning Chronicle*, and author of *The History of Opera*. On the second of April, 1836, he was married.

Indeed, nothing could better demonstrate the fundamental sanity and normality of Dickens' apparently somewhat overwrought nature than his reaction from this intense love affair. Of

[1] In the later series of letters, Dickens wrote Mrs. Winter on February 22, 1855, — "You answered me coldly and reproachfully, and so I went my way."

course he suffered, but ambition re-enforced by the impulsive energy of youth swiftly pulled him out of any depths of despair. Wounded pride bade him cut himself free from the group in which the painful experience had come to him. This he seems, wisely, to have done. The following letter to the father of Maria Beadnell shows clearly that however much the young man may have lingered in memory over his lost love, he cut himself loose from her circle of friends and saw no more of them till his success as a writer had established him in a totally different part of society. While the letter is friendly enough, it shows that there could have been no intimate intercourse.

This letter was in reply to an invitation of Mr. George Beadnell to visit him at his country place, Myford, Welshpool. —

OFFICE OF *HOUSEHOLD WORDS*,
16 WELLINGTON STREET, NORTH-STRAND,
Tuesday, fourth May, 1852.[1]

MY DEAR SIR, — Receiving your note as I was coming out at my door this morning, I brought it with me down here to answer. Your handwriting is like a breath of my hobbledehoyhood and is delightful to encounter.

I am sorry to say that I cannot enjoy the pleasure you

[1] This was only three years before the opening of the correspondence with Mrs. Winter.

propose to me. I should like it very much, but I can never take any private enjoyment on these occasions. For what Sir James Graham calls "the reasons of," I sketch the following short list of my avocations.

I am on the stage all day, rehearsing with everybody, from breakfast until dinner. I preside at all the meals of the amateur company, and carve all the large joints. We carry into the country a perfect army of carpenters, gasmen, tailors, barbers, property-men, dressers and servants; all of whom have become accustomed to do everything with the utmost precision and accuracy under the Managerial eye, but none of whom would do anything right, if that luminary were withdrawn from any of them for five minutes at a stretch. So I am perpetually hovering among and fluttering these smaller birds; at the last minute when the Hall has been filled for weeks, all sorts of impossible people want all sorts of impossible places, and have to be given the most urbane explanations. I then settle down for an hour or so before the rising of the Curtain, to dress, enter upon two parts, something longer (I should say) than the whole play of Hamlet — am dressed fourteen times in the course of the night — and go to bed a little tired.

Add to this, that we start for Birmingham on Tuesday morning to do all this over again, and act in the Town Hall two nights running — and I leave you to guess what hope of Wales is in me!

I should like to shake hands with you nevertheless — I hope I may find time for that! — And if you should ask for me at the Music Hall on Monday between 11 and 2 you are sure to find me in full — career of botheration.

Pray give my love to Margaret,[1] and ask her to give the same to Maria if she should see her. (I am exactly nineteen when I write their names.) Also remember me kindly to Mr. David Lloyd, and believe me ever, with ten thousand old recollections,

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

GEORGE BEADNELL ESQ.

What helped Dickens to disentangle himself was his persistent, vigorous interest in life,—his insatiable curiosity as to all human experience. He had, too, as the theatrical program already printed proves, other friends to turn to, and new friends were in the making. The theatre itself unfailingly interested him: he could never resist a chance at amateur theatricals. He was rising as a reporter, and, most important of all, he began in December, 1833, to print in the *Old Monthly Magazine* the first of his *Sketches by Boz*. Nine more were printed in this magazine before March, 1835. The pseudonym "Boz" was first used with the article of August, 1834. So prompt was his success, that early in 1836 he brought together for publication his *Sketches by Boz*, and on the last day of March, 1836, issued the first number of his

[1] Mrs. Lloyd, Maria's eldest sister.

Pickwick Papers. A year is a long time at twenty-one, and, as Mr. Chesterton has clearly said, the suffering of youth is especially painful because it has no vision of the alleviation which time surely brings for any pain: it sees only the past and the miserable present, — never the future. Undoubtedly Dickens suffered for a time; undoubtedly he looked back on these years later with the deep pity which any retrospect into his youth seemed always to arouse in him. It is clear, too, from his early writing, that the people whom he had met in the circle of the Beadnell family made a deep impression on him, and that his own sensations in this intercourse left him a large residuum of material for his novels.

What also must have helped Dickens greatly at this time was his artist instinct for expression. He took hints from the Beadnell group for figures in his *Sketches*, or he frankly put his memories on paper, of course heightening the effect a little in most cases because he looked at what he had seen, if not at what he had felt, through the medium of his fantastic humor. For the artist of any sort, conditions, people, emotions expressed in his proper medium become at once of the past rather than

the harassing present. The selective presentation which any art necessitates brings a sense of proportion.

The second of the *Sketches by Boz* published in January, 1834, has the title, *Mrs. Joseph Porter over the Way*. As any Dickens lover will recall, the mischief-making of Mrs. Porter causes the complete and ignominious failure of an amateur performance of *Othello*. Now Dickens had in 1833 arranged an amateur performance of a burlesque of his on *Othello*, and the verses of his already printed indicate that Mrs. John Porter Leigh — who, by the way, lived not at Clapham as does Mrs. Porter, but at Clapton — was the same sort of person. —

> Mrs. Leigh a Curry, smart, hot and biting,
> Although a dish that is always inviting —
> . . . . . .
> 'Bout scandal or spreading reports without heed,
> Of course I 'd say nothing, how could I indeed?
> Because if I did I should certainly lie,
> And my remarks here doubtless would not apply;
> So as I fear either to praise or to blame,
> I will not her faults or her virtues here name.

Certainly the resemblance between the names of place and person strengthens the suspicion

roused by the similarity of conditions, that Mrs. Leigh sat for the portrait of Mrs. Porter.

It looks, too, as if in his sketch, *The New Year*, Dickens was thinking of the Beadnell circle. It is reasonably sure that William Moule suggested the ubiquitous Mr. Tupple.

It is easy to believe that one sees in the early writings of Dickens other memories and portraits from the Beadnell circle, but such identifications are at best dangerous, for Dickens was skilled in all the novelist's accustomed mixing of characteristics observed in two different people and of obvious and imagined qualities. Moreover, his field of observation steadily widened, so that there may well be more than one possible original for many of his figures, even in the early writings.

The memory of those early days in Lombard Street lingered long after the time of which I am writing, for there is recollection of Joseph Moule in the Military Young Gent of *Sketches of Young Gents*, and Fanny Moule foreshadows a well-known figure of *David Copperfield*.

That Joe Moule, referred to in *The Bill of Fare*, sat for the portrait is evident from the following:—

"The whole heart and soul of the military

young gentleman are concentrated in his favorite topic. There is nothing that he is so learned upon as uniforms; he will tell you without faltering for an instant, what the habiliments of any one regiment are turned up with, what regiment wear stripes down the outside and inside of the leg, and how many buttons the Tenth had on their coats, he knows to a fraction how many yards and odd inches of gold lace it takes to make an ensign in the Guards, is deeply read in the comparative merits of different bands, and the apparelling of trumpeters and is very luminous indeed in descanting upon 'crack regiments' and the 'crack' gentlemen who compose them, of whose mightiness and grandeur he is never tired of telling." [1]

Again the lines in *The Bill of Fare* relating to Fanny Moule [2] show where Dickens first watched the sentimental melancholy which he later satirized in the Miss Julia Mills of *David Copperfield*, and the Miss Mills of *Our English Watering Place.*

In *David Copperfield*, Miss Mills is described as "that amiable, though quite used-up recluse; that little patriarch of something less than twenty, who had done with the world

[1] See page 36, *ante.* [2] See page 35, *ante.*

and must n't on any account have the slumbering echoes in the caverns of Memory awakened . . . having been unhappy in a misplaced affection, and being understood to have retired from the world on her awful stock of experience, but still to take a calm interest in the unblighted hopes and loves of youth."

Even out of the very real suffering that was the youth's for a time, the longing that caused him to throw aside all wounded pride, to come from behind his reserves and beg for a renewal of the old relations, — out of all this developed the enriched art that searching emotion always leaves with the artist who has gone through vital experiences. Even as he ran — with an unusually intense nature — the gamut of youthful passion, from puzzled scrutiny of the waywardness of Maria Beadnell, through wounded pride, despised love, to passionate devotion that recked nothing so long as it might serve the charmer, the human heart in all its moods of interest, attachment, love, and passion was revealing itself to him. The emotions and observations of this early period made possible the characters of David Copperfield, Pip, Bradley Headstone, and even Toots.

They are quite as much the creations of his

imagination reacting on these personal experiences as they are the results of close observation. Indeed, Dickens always wrote from within out, tempering his realism with a remarkably original and personal imagination. It is easy to see in the words of Hexam and Pip the reflection of the successive moods by which he passed to the state in which he could look back on the whole painful experience as kindly as he does in one of his letters of 1855. What drew young Dickens back to Maria Beadnell, what made him ask for a renewal of their relations, was the mood he paints in Headstone's appeal to Lizzie: —

"I have never been quit of you since I first saw you. Oh, that was a wretched day for me! That was a wretched, miserable day! . . . I have in my way won a station which is considered worth winning. . . . You draw me to you. If I were shut up in a strong prison, you would draw me out. I should break through the wall to come to you. If I were lying on a sick bed, you would draw me up to stagger to you and fall there. . . .

"No man knows, till the time comes, what depths are within him. To some men it never comes; let them rest and be thankful! To

me, you brought it; on me, you forced it; and the bottom of this raging sea," striking himself upon the breast, "has been heaved up ever since. . . . You know what I am going to say. I love you. What other men may mean when they use that expression, I cannot tell; what *I* mean is, that I am under the influence of some tremendous attraction which I have resisted in vain, and which overmasters me. You could draw me to fire, you could draw me to water, you could draw me to the gallows, you could draw me to any death, you could draw me to anything I have most avoided, you could draw me to any exposure and disgrace. This and the confusion of my thoughts, so that I am fit for nothing, is what I mean by your being the ruin of me. But, if you would return a favourable answer to my offer of myself in marriage, you could draw me to any good — every good — with equal force. My circumstances are quite easy, and you would want for nothing. My reputation stands quite high, and would be a shield for yours. If you saw me at my work, able to do it well and respected in it, you might even come to take a sort of pride in me; — I would try hard that you should. . . . I don't know that I

could say more if I tried. . . . I only add that, if it is any claim on you to be in earnest, I am in thorough earnest, dreadful earnest."

As time passed, the mood became the quieter one shown by Pip when Estella says that he will shortly be able to put her out of his thoughts: —

"Out of my thoughts! You are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line I have ever read, since I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then. You have been in every prospect I have ever seen since — on the river, on the sails of the ships, on the marshes, in the clouds, in the light, in the darkness, in the wind, in the woods, in the sea, in the streets. You have been the embodiment of every graceful fancy that my mind has ever become acquainted with. The stones of which the strongest London buildings are made, are not more real, or more impossible to be displaced by your hands, than your presence and influence have been to me, there and everywhere, and will be. Estella, to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character, part of the little good in me, part of the evil. But, in this separation, I asso-

ciate you only with the good, and I will faithfully hold you to that always, for you must have done me far more good than harm, let me feel now what sharp distress I may. Oh, God bless you, God forgive you! . . . All done, all gone! So much was done and gone, that when I went out at the gate, the light of day seemed of a darker colour than when I went in."[1]

Comparing the last passage here with the letter of February 22, 1855, in the second set of letters to be given shortly, one sees fresh proof of the interplay of experience, imagination, and memory in the characterization of Dickens.

Also in the letter of February 15, 1855:—

"Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration, and determination belong to me, I have never separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman — you — whom it is nothing to say I would have died for, with the greatest alacrity! I never can think and I never seem to observe, that other young people are in such desperate earnest or set so much so long upon one absorbing hope. It is a matter of perfect cer-

[1] *Great Expectations*, Biog. Ed. p. 312.

tainty to me that I began to fight my way out of poverty and obscurity, with one perpetual idea of you. This is so fixed in my knowledge that to the hour when I opened your letter last Friday night, I have never heard anybody addressed by your name or spoken of by your name, without a start. The sound of it has always filled me with a kind of pity and respect for the deep truth that I had, in my silly hobbledehoyhood, to bestow upon one creature who represented the whole world to me. I have never been so good a man since, as I was when you made me wretchedly happy. I shall never be half so good a fellow again."

Yet, of course Dickens recovered from the blow, and as youth blessedly does, recovered rapidly. Nevertheless, as the last quotation proves, he looked back upon it as the most significant experience of his life.

The Dickens who came out of this, as it seemed to him, tragic and blighting affair, was not at all the lad who had gone into it — a curious combination of social callowness and far too sophisticated knowledge of seamier London, a creature of instincts rather than of well-understood emotions. He had known

and intimately shared a comfortable family life which initiated him into the social humanities. He had discovered the real man in himself. A passion intense, yet thoroughly idealistic, had metamorphosed vague instincts of greatness into a determination to win for her he loved all he had dimly dreamed, and this determination, when he broke off in his outraged pride the impossibly galling relations, changed to a grim, half-indignant purpose to prove himself the man he felt himself to be, — a person by no means to be played with and scorned, but to be taken as seriously, — well, as he liked to take himself.

Nor is it surprising that, as years passed, he somewhat idealized the whole affair. Lucky the youth who finds his manhood in an intense emotional experience which stimulates him to his best accomplishment, which matures him in knowledge of himself and of the human heart, without debasement for himself or others; which opens to him for his own all the region of romances for a time his individual possession, before experience can talk to him of propinquity, the superman or any motives lower than the seemingly irresistible attraction that makes him ready to believe all

that is good of one person and ready to do all that is brave for her. Young love like that no man forgets wholly, whether or not it result in winning the woman loved. So sentimental a man as Dickens could not possibly forget it. He must cherish it, linger over it, and, as the great idealizer of the supposedly commonplace, must idealize it too. Moreover, as the years passed, he must have seen as any sane person would, that youth is not so wise as it thinks itself. He must have felt that all the details of this love affair had not been as perfectly conducted by him as he had once thought, and that possibly a somewhat different behavior on his part might have brought a more satisfactory ending. At any rate, such judicial inquiry as to one's past conduct is the beginning of tolerance for the person previously held to be entirely in the wrong.

Finally, though Dickens was at first happy enough in his marriage, it was not many years before he was feeling a sense of "one happiness I have missed in my life, and one friend and companion I have never made," as he phrased it in a letter to Forster. Naturally, his thoughts turned to the "might-have-been," which presented itself none the less attractively

because seen through the coloring lens of imagination as contrasted with the white light of his harassing marital experience. Consequently, when writing *David Copperfield*, that book which is in large part but the playing of a richly fertile imagination about biographical incident and experience, he told in David's love for Dora his own passion of twenty years before for Maria Beadnell. It will be remembered that the novel grew out of a futile attempt of Dickens to write his autobiography. When he came to the period in his early manhood to which his infatuation for Maria Beadnell belonged, he "lost courage and burned the rest." The semi-autobiographic nature of the book was largely responsible for his intense pleasure in writing it. He said to Mrs. Watson, September 24, 1850: —

"There are some things in the next *Copperfield* that I think better than any that have gone before. After I have been believing such things with all my heart and soul two results always ensue; first, I can't write plainly to the eye; secondly, I can't write sensibly to the mind."

To Forster he wrote thus, on October 21: "I am 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."

The intense reality of the book for Dickens is revealed in his original preface: —

"I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this Book, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require. My interest in it, is so recent and strong; and my mind is so divided between pleasure and regret — pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions — that I am in danger of wearying the reader whom I love, with personal confidences and private emotions. . . .

"It would concern the reader little, perhaps, to know how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two years' imaginative task; or how an Author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his

brain are going from him for ever. Yet, I have nothing else to tell; unless, indeed, I were to confess (which might be of less moment still) that no one can ever believe this Narrative, in the reading, more than I have believed it in the writing." "Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is David Copperfield."

That David and Dora marry and that Dora dies militate in no way against the declaration of Forster, and Dickens' own repeated assertions, that Dora sprang from an original in his own experience. The changes are but those of the trained story-teller properly regardful both of the eternal unwillingness of the public to part any sooner than is absolutely necessary with the characters it has come to feel interested in, and his own purposes in tracing the development of his hero, David. How unwillingly he yielded to the imperative demands of his underlying purpose in the story is shown by the following: Forster says, "His principal hesitation occurred in connection with the

child-wife Dora, who had become a great favorite as he went on." On the seventh of May Dickens wrote: "Still undecided about Dora, but *must* decide today"; yet on the twentieth of the following August he could add: "I have been very hard at work these three days, and have still Dora to kill. But with good luck I may do it tomorrow."

An experience which gave Dickens several figures in his early sketches, and suggested others, like Miss Mills; which opened to him a complete understanding of the passionate moods of Headstone, Pip, and David, and gave him a large part of his material for *David Copperfield* itself; which, in brief, as man and as writer, matured and developed him greatly, is worthy to be recorded. The personality of Dickens as it shows itself in these early letters and verses is, moreover, such as greatly to increase the interest of this record.

There are, however, even in the novels of Dickens himself, few more dramatic coincidences than this love story offers. It sounds like one of the author's own imaginings; that twenty-two years after his parting with Miss Beadnell a letter should one day open afresh, for both Dickens and Miss Beadnell his long

hidden romance. She had married, February 25, 1845, Henry Louis Winter, a business man in comfortable circumstances at the time of this renewing of the correspondence. Dickens, married then for some nineteen years and the father of a family of nine, had already won a high position in the literary world. The letter in question chanced, dramatically enough, to reach him just when his mind was full of the memories that any re-reading by him of *David Copperfield* must arouse. On Jan. 29, 1855, he wrote to his friend, Arthur Ryland: "I have been poring over 'Copperfield' (which is my favourite) with the idea of getting a reading out of it, to be called by some such name as 'Young Housekeeping and Little Emily.'" The words of the answer of Dickens to Mrs. Winter's first letter may best describe the renewal of the correspondence. —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Saturday, Tenth February, 1855.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER, — I constantly receive hundreds of letters in great varieties of writing, all perfectly strange to me, and (as you may suppose) have no particular interest in the faces of such general epistles. As I was reading by my fire last night, a handful of notes was laid down on my table. I looked them over,

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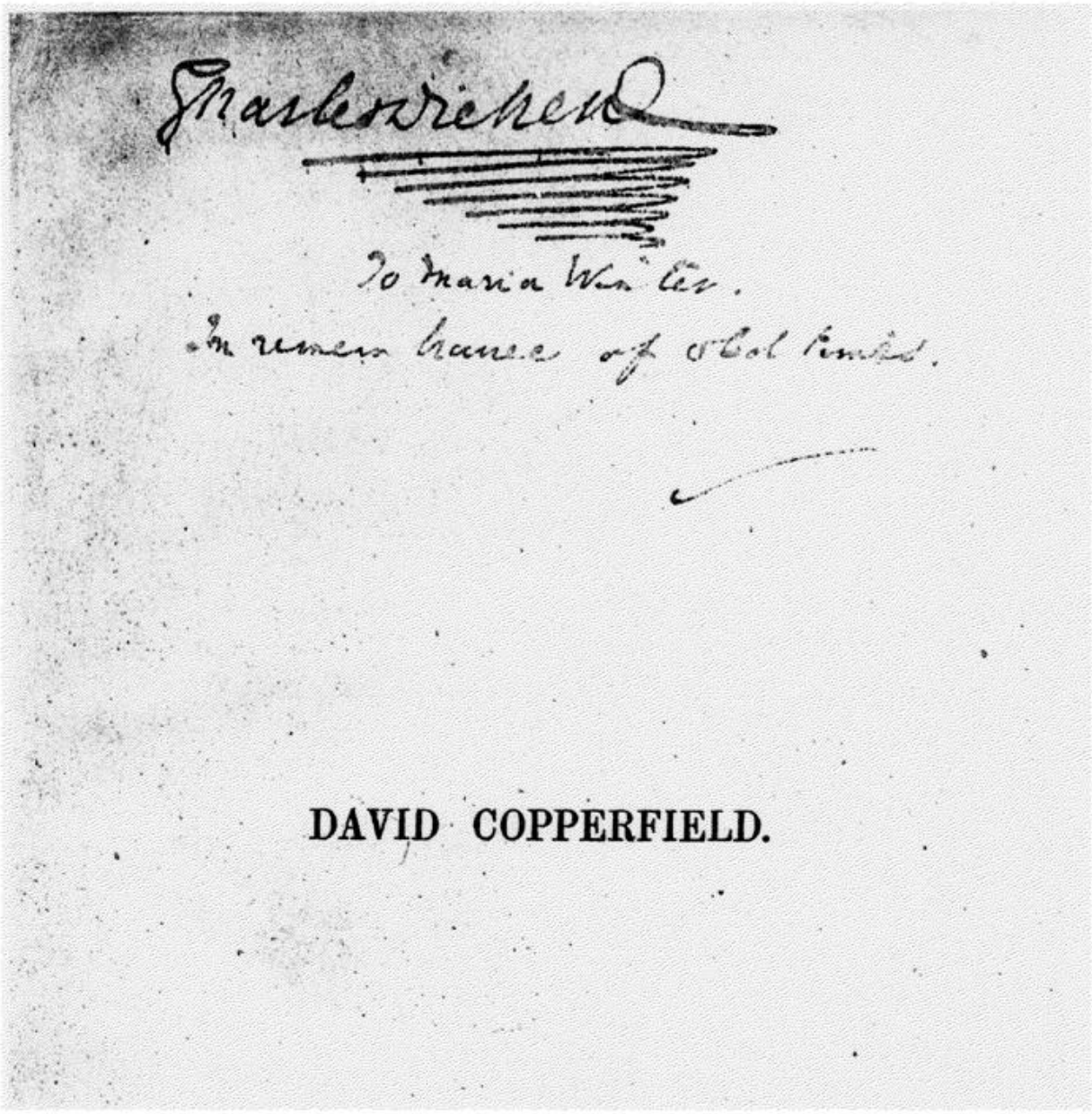
DORA SPENLOW and DAVID COPPERFIELD

(MARIA BEADNELLL and CHARLES DICKENS)

Etchi·g by W H. W. BICKNELL, after painting by J. A. WILLIAMS, specially for The Bibliophile Society. The central figure is from Mr. Bicknell's own sketch of "Dora."



DAVID COPPERFIELD.

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and, recognizing the writing of no private friend, let them lie there, and went back to my book. But I found my mind curiously disturbed, and wandering away through so many years to such early times of my life, that I was quite perplexed to account for it. There was nothing in what I had been reading, or immediately thinking about, to awaken such a train of thought, and at last it came into my head that it must have been suggested by something in the look of one of those letters. So I turned them over again, — and suddenly the remembrance of your hand came upon me with an influence that I cannot express to you. Three or four and twenty years vanished like a dream, and I opened it with the touch of my young friend David Copperfield when he was in love.

There was something so busy and so pleasant in your letter — so true and cheerful and frank and affectionate — that I read on with perfect delight until I came to your mention of your two little girls. In the unsettled state of my thoughts, the existence of these dear children appeared such a prodigious phenomenon, that I was inclined to suspect myself of being out of my mind, until it occurred to me that perhaps I had nine children of my own! Then the three or four and twenty years began to rearrange themselves in a long procession between me and the changeless Past, and I could not help considering what strange stuff all our little stories are made of.

Believe me, you cannot more tenderly remember our old days and our old friends than I do. I hardly ever go into the City but I walk up an odd little court at the back of the Mansion House and come out by the corner

of Lombard Street.[1] Hundreds of times as I have passed the church there — on my way to and from the Sea, the Continent, and where not — I invariably associate it with somebody (God knows who) having told me that poor Anne[2] was buried there. If you would like to examine me in the name of a good-looking Cornish servant you used to have (I suppose she has twenty-nine great grandchildren now, and walks with a stick), you will find my knowledge on the point correct, though it was a monstrous name too. I forget nothing of those times. They are just as still and plain and clear as if I had never been in a crowd since, and had never seen or heard my own name out of my own house. What should I be worth, or what would labour and success be worth, if it were otherwise!

Your letter is more touching to me from its good and gentle association with the state of Spring in which I was either much more wise or much more foolish than I am now — I never know which to think it — than I could tell you if I tried for a week. I will not try at all. I heartily respond to it, and shall be charmed to have a long talk with you, and most cordially glad to see you after all this length of time.

I am going to Paris to-morrow morning, but I purpose being back within a fortnight. When I return, Mrs. Dickens will come to you, to arrange a day for our seeing you and Mr. Winter (to whom I beg to be remembered) quietly to dinner. We will have no intruder or foreign creature on any pretence whatever, in order that

[1] One of their old trysting places.

[2] Her sister; she married the early friend of Dickens, Henry Kolle.

we may set in without any restraint for a tremendous gossip.

Mary Ann Leigh[1] we saw at Broadstairs about fifty years ago. Mrs. Dickens and her sister, who read all the marriages in all the papers, shrieked to me when the announcement of hers appeared, what did I think of *that?* I calmly replied that I thought it was time. I should have been more excited if I had known of the old gentleman with several thousand a year, uncountable grown-up children, and no English grammar.

My mother has a strong objection to being considered in the least old, and usually appears here on Christmas Day in a juvenile cap,[2] which takes an immense time in the putting on. The Fates seem to have made up their minds that I shall never see your Father when he comes this way. David Lloyd is altogether an impostor — not having in the least changed (that I could make out when I saw him at the London Tavern) since what I suppose to have been the year 1770, when I found you three[3] on Cornhill, with your poor mother, going to St. Mary Axe to order mysterious dresses — which afterwards turned out to be wedding garments. That was in the remote period when you all wore green cloaks, cut (in my remembrance) very round, and which I am resolved to be-

[1] Married, Nov. 14, 1854, to Mr. William Back.

[2] This confirms the popular supposition that Mrs. Dickens was the original of Mrs. Nickleby; her juvenile airs and fondness for her caps are specially noted in the novel.

[3] Apparently Margaret, Anne and Maria Beadnell, going to arrange for dresses for the wedding of Margaret with David Lloyd. It took place April 20, 1831.

lieve were made of Merino. I escorted you with native gallantry to the Dress Maker's door, and your mother, seized with an apprehension — groundless upon my honor — that I might come in, said emphatically: "And now Mr. Dickin" — which she always used to call me — "we 'll wish *you* good morning."

When I was writing the word Paris[1] just now, I remembered that my existence was once entirely uprooted and my whole Being blighted by the Angel of my soul being sent there to finish her education! If I can discharge any little commission for you, or bring home anything for the darlings, whom I cannot yet believe to be anything but a delusion of yours, pray employ me. I shall be at the Hôtel Meurice — locked up when within, as my only defence against my country and the United States — but a most punctual and reliable functionary if you will give me any employment.

My Dear Mrs. Winter, I have been much moved by your letter; and the pleasure it has given me has some little sorrowful ingredient in it. In the strife and struggle of this great world where most of us lose each other so strangely, it is impossible to be spoken to out of the old times without a softened emotion. You so belong to the days when the qualities that have done me most good since, were growing in my boyish heart that I cannot end my answer to you lightly. The associations my memory has with you make your letter more — I want a word — invest it with a more immediate address to me than such a letter could have from anybody else. Mr. Winter will not mind that. We are all sailing away

[1] "Dora" was sent to Paris to finish her education.

to the sea, and have a pleasure in thinking of the river we are upon, when it was very narrow and little.

Faithfully your friend,

CHARLES DICKENS

This is, of course, only the cordial letter of a man who, when a figure from the past emerges unexpectedly, — a figure that once had done much to develop in him the qualities which had done him "most good since," — was pleased and even deeply touched at the interest shown after the lapse of years. This voice from the past aroused within him a train of long cherished memories; and when one considers the intensity of his feelings on this matter, and the vividness of his recollections, it is easy to imagine that the re-opening of the correspondence was productive of many thrilling sensations.

The next letter from Mrs. Winter was evidently more intimate in tone. How could it fail to be? A very famous man, once her lover, had not only told her in friendliest fashion how much she had once meant to him, but—far subtler compliment — had shown a remarkable memory for small details of their former association. Her second letter brings a reply which must have gratified her keenly; a reply, in

its detailed statement of the influence of this long past love affair on his life and on David Copperfield in particular, which makes the letter of the utmost importance to the student of Dickens.—

HÔTEL MEURICE, PARIS,
Thursday, Fifteenth February, 1855.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER,— (I had half a mind, when I dipped my pen in the ink, to address you by your old natural Christian name.)

The snow lies so deep on the Northern Railway, and the Posts have been so interrupted in consequence, that your charming note arrived here only this morning. I reply by return of post — with a general idea that Sarah[1] will come to Finsbury Place with a basket and a face of good-humoured compassion, and carry the letter away, and leave me as desolate as she used to do.

I got the heartache again when I read your commission, written in the hand which I find now to be not in the least changed, and yet it is a great pleasure to be entrusted with it, and to have that share in your gentler remembrances which I cannot find it still my privilege to have without a stirring of the old fancies. I need not tell you that it shall be executed to the letter — with as much interest as I once matched a little pair of gloves for you which I recollect were blue ones. (I wonder whether people generally wore blue gloves when I was nineteen, or whether it was only you!) I am very, very sorry

[1] Evidently the Cornish servant, spoken of in the last letter. Mrs. Winter lived in Finsbury Square.

you mistrusted me in not writing before your little girl was born; but I hope now you know me better you will teach her, one day, to tell her children, in times to come when they may have some interest in wondering about it, that I loved her mother with the most extraordinary earnestness when I was a boy.

I have always believed since, and always shall to the last, that there never was such a faithful and devoted poor fellow as I was. Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to me, I never have separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman — you — whom it is nothing to say I would have died for, with the greatest alacrity! I never can think, and I never seem to observe, that other young people are in such desperate earnest or set so much, so long, upon one absorbing hope. It is a matter of perfect certainty to me that I began to fight my way out of poverty and obscurity, with one perpetual idea of you. This is so fixed in my knowledge that to the hour when I opened your letter last Friday night, I have never heard anybody addressed by your name, or spoken of by your name, without a start. The sound of it has always filled me with a kind of pity and respect for the deep truth that I had, in my silly hobbledehoyhood, to bestow upon one creature who represented the whole world to me. I have never been so good a man since, as I was when you made me wretchedly happy. I shall never be half so good a fellow any more.

This is all so strange now both to think of, and to say, after every change that has come about; but I think, when you ask me to write to you, you are not unpre-

pared for what it is so natural to me to recall, and will not be displeased to read it. I fancy, — though you may not have thought in the old time how manfully I loved you — that you may have seen in one of my books a faithful reflection of the passion I had for you, and may have thought that it was something to have been loved so well, and may have seen in little bits of "Dora" touches of your old self sometimes, and a grace here and there that may be revived in your little girls, years hence, for the bewilderment of some other young lover — though he will never be as terribly in earnest as I and David Copperfield were. People used to say to me how pretty all that was, and how fanciful it was, and how elevated it was above the little foolish loves of very young men and women. But they little thought what reason I had to know it was true and nothing more nor less.

These are things that I have locked up in my own breast, and that I never thought to bring out any more. But when I find myself writing to you again "all to yourself," how can I forbear to let as much light in upon them as will shew you that they are there still! If the most innocent, the most ardent, and the most disinterested days of my life had you for their Sun — as indeed they had — and if I know that the Dream I lived in did me good, refined my heart, and made me patient and persevering, and if the Dream were all of you — as God knows it was — how can I receive a confidence from you, and return it, and make a feint of blotting all this out!

As I have said, I fancy that you know all about it quite as well as I do, however. I have a strong belief

— there is no harm in adding hope to that — that perhaps you have once or twice laid down that book, and thought, "How dearly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly this man remembers it!"

I shall be here until Tuesday or Wednesday. If the snow allows this letter to come to you in the meantime, perhaps it would allow one to come to me, "all to myself," if you were to try it. A number of recollections came into my head when I began, and I meant to have gone through a string of them and to have asked you if they lived in your mind too. But they all belong to the one I have indulged in — half pleasantly, half painfully — and are all swallowed up in that, so let them go.

My dear Mrs. Winter,

Ever affectionately yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

[P. S.] I wonder what has become of a bundle of letters I sent you back once (according to order) tied with a blue ribbon, of the color of the gloves!

This second letter, full of sentiment and tender recollections of the past, must have read for Mrs. Winter very much like a love letter. She has spoken of having a letter "all to myself," and he writes frankly, movedly, as he recalls the past, closing with a request for an answer "all to myself." Surely this seems like dangerous ground and drifting rapidly away from the region of calm, common-sense middle-age. Yet it is easy to see how all this

could have been written without any intention of bringing as warm a reply as it doubtless called forth.

Full of memories of his youth from a recent re-reading of *David Copperfield*, Dickens is suddenly confronted by a figure out of this very past. The figure speaks to him in words of unmistakable interest and kindliness. What wonder, with the pleasant reverses Time has brought in their relative positions clearly before him, that he should fall to mulling over even the smallest details of that early association! What wonder, when his persistent attitude of keenest pity toward his youth and his skill as a narrator are remembered, that the letter which flows from his pen as he thinks should seem to the recipient almost a new declaration of abiding affection! As the man of family and wide literary reputation, hedged in by all the social barriers, he writes to a woman supposedly well settled in life, and happy. His pen runs away with him, and, presto, he has written something very like a love letter, when it was meant only for as definite as possible a picture of the emotions of the past. To Mrs. Winter those words about a letter "all to myself" were fairly and squarely

an invitation to answer him as frankly. It is not surprising that her reply told for the first time her view of her conduct at the date of the painful breaking off between them.

The words of the next letter of Dickens, — "How it all happened as it did, we shall never know on this side of Time; but if you had ever told me then what you tell me now, I know myself well enough to be thoroughly assured that the simple truth and energy which were in my love would have overcome everything," bear out the editor's earlier surmise that Maria Beadnell's parents had regarded Dickens as by no means a desirable suitor on account of his poverty, family troubles, and impulsiveness. There is support for this theory, too, in the words, "I have never blamed you at all, but I have believed until now that you never had the stake in that serious game which I had."

Had the last letter of Mrs. Winter given him permission to use her Christian name, as in his preceding letter he had thought of doing? The exuberance of emotion and the intimacy of this letter — the last before his disenchantment — are perhaps unparalleled in anything that ever fell from his pen: —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Thursday, Twenty-second February, 1855.

MY DEAR MARIA,—The old writing is so plain to *me*, that I have read your letter with great ease (though it is just a little crossed), and have not lost a word of it. I was obliged to leave Paris on Tuesday morning before the Post came in; but I took such precautions to prevent the possibility of any mischance, that the letter came close behind me. I arrived at home last night, and it followed me this morning. No one but myself has the slightest knowledge of my correspondence, I may add, in this place. I could be nowhere addressed with stricter privacy or in more absolute confidence than at my own house.

Ah! Though it is so late to read in the old hand what I never read before, I have read it with great emotion, and with the old tenderness softened to a more sorrowful remembrance than I could easily tell you. How it all happened as it did, we shall never know on this side of Time; but if you had ever told me then what you tell me now, I know myself well enough to be thoroughly assured that the simple truth and energy which were in my love would have overcome everything. I remember well that long after I came of age—I say long; well! It seemed long then[1]—I wrote to you for the last time of all, with a dawn upon me of some sensible idea that we were changing into man and woman, saying would you forget our little differences and separations and let us begin again? You answered me very coldly and reproachfully,—and so I went my way.

[1] As the letter given on pp. 57–59 shows, it was three months after he became of age.

resigned you, or after that struggles and what a conflict
of entire devotion there, and the wasted tenderness of those
hard years which I can never trace but shrouded by
the all made to dwell on impressions on me that I hope & it
a habit of suppression which now always that, which I know
is not part of my original nature, but which makes me chary
of showing my affections, even to children, except when
they are very young. A few years ago (just before Copperfield)
I began to write my life, intending the manuscript to be
found among my papers when it's subject should be concluded
but as I began to approach within sight of that point
I left off, & lost courage and destroyed the rest. I have never
since had courage to attempt it, but I have believed with you that
you never had the stake in that serious game which I had.

All this must pass away before your earnest
words; and then I find myself I have been in your
mind at that thoughtful crisis in your life which you
so masterly and feelingly describe, & in quite subdued
and strangely enlightened. When poor Fanny died I
think she always knew that I never cared for her
as I cared for any common person I met with out of home, and
I never heard of you
living in Devonshire Terrace
but of all in my room! I never heard of you in
connection with that time, until I read your letter
today. I could not, however - really could not - at any
time within these nineteen years, have been so unmindful
of my old truth, and have so set my old passion aside as
to look upon you like a person in any ordinary relation
towards me. And this I think is the main reason why
my wishes, the few opportunities that there have been
of your seeing me another again, have died out.

all this again; you have changed and set right — not once so courageously, so delicately and gently. That you open the way to a confidence between us — it still one more in perfect innocence and good faith, may be between ourselves alone. all that you propose I accept with my whole heart. whom can you ever trust if it is not your old lover! Lady Cliffe asked me in Paris the other day (we are, in one way, confidential you must know) whether it was really true that I used to love Maria Beatrille so very, very much? I told her that there was no woman in the world, and there were very few men, who could ever imagine how much.

You are always the same in my remembrance. When you say you are "toothless, fat, old, and ugly," which I don't believe), I fly away to the house in Arundel Street which is pulled down, as if it were necessary that the very bricks and mortar should go the way of my airy castles, and see you in a sort of raspberry colored dress with a little black trimming at the top — black velvet it seems to be made of — cut into bandy legs — an immense number of bandy legs — with my little heart pinned like a captured butterfly on every one of them. I have never seen you play the harp from that day to this, but my phantasie has been instantly overcome, and that one single room has stood before me so plainly that I mean to write a most accurate description of it. — I remember that there used to be a tendency in your eyebrows to join together; and sometimes in the most unlikely places — in Scotland, America, Italy — on the strictest occasions and the most unceremonious — when I have been tucking up my sleeves, full and have observed even such a slight —

But nobody can ever know with what a sad heart I resigned you, or after what struggles and what a conflict. My entire devotion to you, and the wasted tenderness of those hard years which I have ever since half loved, half dreaded to recall, made so deep an impression on me that I refer to it a habit of suppression which now belongs to me, which I know is no part of my original nature, but which makes me chary of showing my affections, even to my children, except when they are very young. A few years ago (just before Copperfield) I began to write my life, intending the manuscript to be found among my papers when its subject should be concluded. But as I began to approach within sight of that part of it, I lost courage and burned the rest. I have never blamed you at all,[1] but I have believed until now that you never had the stake in that serious game which I had.

All this mist passes away upon your earnest words; and when I find myself to have been in your mind at that thoughtful crisis in your life which you so unaffectedly and feelingly describe, I am quite subdued and strangely enlightened. When poor Fanny[2] died (I think she always knew that I never could bear to hear of you as of any common person) we were out of town, and I never heard of your having been in Devonshire Terrace

[1] Compare this with the following passage in *Little Dorrit*, — the dialogue between Arthur Clennam and Flora Finching: "I can't, Arthur," returned Flora, "be denounced as heartless . . . without setting myself right," etc. "My dear Mrs. Finching, you were not to blame, and I have never blamed you. We were both too young, too dependent and helpless to do anything but accept our separation."

[2] His sister, who died in 1848.

— least of all in my room! I never heard of you in association with that time until I read your letter to-day. I could not, however, — really *could not* — at any time within these nineteen years, have been so unmindful of my old truth, and have so set my old passion aside, as to talk to you like a person in any ordinary relation towards me. And this I think is the main reason on my side why the few opportunities that there have been of our seeing one another again have died out.

All this again you have changed and set right — at once so courageously, so delicately and gently, that you open the way to a confidence between us which still once more, in perfect innocence and good faith, may be between ourselves alone. All that you propose, I accept with my whole heart. Whom can you ever trust if it be not your old lover! Lady Olliffe asked me in Paris the other day (we are, in our way, confidential you must know) whether it was really true that I used to love Maria Beadnell so very, very, very much? I told her that there was no woman in the world, and there were very few men, who could ever imagine how much.

You are always the same in my remembrance. When you say you are "toothless, fat, old, and ugly" (which I don't believe), I fly away to the house in Lombard Street, which is pulled down, as if it were necessary that the very bricks and mortar should go the way of my airy castles, and see you in a sort of raspberry colored dress with a little black trimming at the top — black velvet it seems to be made of — cut into vandykes — an immense number of vandykes — with my boyish heart pinned like a captured butterfly on every one of them. I have never

MARIA BEADNELL WINTER

(The original of Dora in DAVID COPPERFIELD, and of Flora in LITTLE DORRIT).

Born, 1811; died, September 30, 1886.

Engraved by J. A. J. WILCOX, from a daguerreotype taken, perhaps, between 1855 and 1860.

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seen a girl play the harp, from that day to this, but my attention has been instantly arrested, and that drawing room has stood before me so plainly that I could write a most accurate description of it. I remember that there used to be a tendency in your eyebrows to join together; and sometimes in the most unlikely places — in Scotland, America, Italy — on the stateliest occasions and the most unceremonious — when I have been talking to a strange face and have observed even such a slight association as this in it, I have suddenly been carried away at the rate of a thousand miles a second, and have thought "Maria Beadnell!"[1] When we were falling off from each other, I came from the House of Commons many a night at two or three o'clock in the morning, only to wander past the place you were asleep in. And I have gone over that ground within these twelve months,[2] hoping it was not ungrateful to consider whether any reputation the world can bestow is repayment to a man for the loss of such a vision of his youth as mine. You ask me to treasure what you tell me, in my heart of hearts. O see what I have cherished there, through all this time and all these changes!

In the course of Saturday I will write to you at Artillery Place, sending the little brooches and telling you when Catherine will come — not forgetting the little niece,

[1] Dickens uses this tendency of his in *Little Dorrit*, where Clennam says: "Little more than a week ago, at Marseilles, the face of the pretty girl from whom he had parted with regret had had an unusual interest for him, and a tender hold upon him, because of some resemblance, real or imagined, to this first face that had soared out of his gloomy life into the bright glories of fancy."

[2] When writing *Hard Times*.

:hough I don't expect her to remind me of Somebody or Anybody. And now to what I have reserved for the last.

I am a dangerous man to be seen with, for so many people know me. At St. Paul's, the Dean and the whole chapter know me. In Paternoster Row of all places,[1] the very tiles and chimney pots know me. At first, I a little hesitated whether or no to advise you to forego that interview or suggest another — principally because what would be very natural and probable a fortnight hence,[2] seems scarcely so probable now. Still I should very much like to see you before we meet when others are by — I feel it, as it were, so necessary to our being at ease — and unless I hear from you to the contrary, you may expect to encounter a stranger whom you may suspect to be the right person if he wears a moustache. You would not like better to call here on Sunday, asking first for Catherine and then for me? It is almost a positive certainty that there will be no one here but I, between 3 and 4. I make this suggestion, knowing what odd coincidences take place in streets when they are not wanted to happen; though I know them to be so unlikely, that I should not think of such a thing if any one but you were concerned. If you think you would not like to come here, make no change. I will come there.

I cannot trust myself to begin afresh, or I should have my remembrances of our separation, and think yours hard to me. I remember poor Anne writing to me once (in answer to some burst of low-spirited madness of

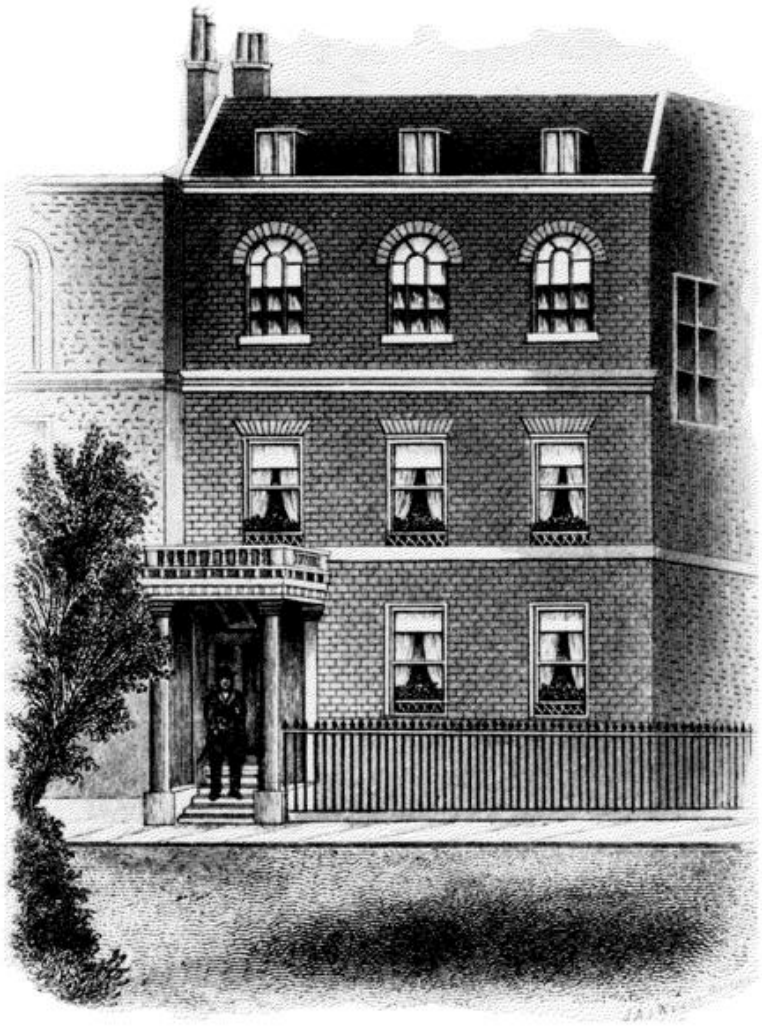
[1] Because of his connection as reporter with Doctors' Commons.

[2] After Mrs. Dickens had called and the Winters had dined with Dickens and his wife.

TAVISTOCK HOUSE

Where Dickens resided at the time Mrs. Winter first wrote to him in 1855.

Engraved for The Bibliophile Society by J. A. J. Wilcox



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mine), and saying "My dear Charles, I really cannot understand Maria, or venture to take the responsibility of saying what the state of her affections is" — and she added, I recollect, God bless her, a long quotation about Patience and Time. Well, well! It was not to be until Patience and Time should bring us round together thus.

Remember, I accept all with my whole soul, and reciprocate all.

Ever your affectionate friend,

CHARLES DICKENS

Some of Maria Beadnell's old coquetry was in that missing letter, plainly, for though she writes of herself as "toothless, fat, old, and ugly," she asks for an interview, unattractive and disillusionizing as she would be if her words were true. But her portrait shows that she was not what she describes, only at the worst — except to the eye that looked at her through the kindly lens of memory — undistinguishable from thousands of other women of the day.

The step of Dickens from wisdom in asking for a letter all to himself had led to far greater unwisdom on the part of Mrs. Winter. In her new request Dickens should have felt his warning, for it was foolishly romantic. He did recognize that for them to meet by themselves after the Winters had been entertained

at his house, and new relations established, would seem more natural and fortuitous, but sentiment owned him too. The old friendship glows into rather surprisingly strong flame in those final words, "Remember, I accept all with my whole soul, and reciprocate all." On the other hand, there must have been for Dickens a keen satisfaction, even delight, in the situation. Here was Maria Beadnell, who, in playing fast and loose with him, had given him the bitterest experience of his life, now, after twenty years, explaining away her past conduct, and pressing her friendship and even her affection upon him.

Whether rightly or wrongly, Dickens was increasingly unhappy in his married life, and now suddenly a dream, for years regarded as only what might have been, seemed to give promise of changing into the most cordial, the most comprehending of friendships. Satisfied vanity, curiosity, sentiment, even a persistent craving for a companionship he did not find in his home, urged him to the interview. But like Bluebeard's wife, he met with a shock of the severest kind. Certainly he did not find that, as one of our English dramatists has declared, the future is but the past entered

through another door. His disillusionment was dramatic and complete.

After the intensity of the preceding letter, that which immediately follows, friendly as it is, sounds chilling. Probably, as it is dated but two days after the other, its tone is due only to the fact that, as it accompanied gifts, it might well fall under other eyes than those of Mrs. Winter. —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Saturday, Twenty-fourth February, 1855.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER, — I have had fearful suspicions on my way home from Paris, that those little bits of velvet which are worn round the neck ought to fasten with a sort of clasp; but the disinterested merchant with whom I executed your commission, assured me that the little ornaments I enclose were the right things, and would adjust such bits of velvet, "of a manner very ravishing." He was so rapturous in the expression I translate, — so excessively voluble on the subject, and so injured in his honor by my harboring the least doubt, that I meekly submitted to him.

So here they are, right or wrong. The smaller one with the blue stones, I designed for your little girl; the other for yourself. You must let me give them to you. They are of no worth, except as a remembrance.

I should have brought your baby a toy, but that the only packable toys I saw were all hideous saucer-eyed creatures bursting out of boxes — and dreadful old men and women with inflamed noses.

Catherine proposes to come to you on Tuesday at between half past two and three, when a day must be arranged for you and Mr. Winter's dining with us. And while I think of it, pray let me expressly stipulate for your bringing Margaret's[1] daughter with you. What you say of her makes me wish to see her very much, and I should venture to send my love to her by name, if I could make out whether you call her; Pebby — or Pebbly — or Mebby — or Webbly. Being quite unable to settle this point to my satisfaction (though you write with such astonishing plainness), I send my love to her as your niece and her mother's child.

Believe me ever,
Very faithfully yours,
CHARLES DICKENS

Compare the foregoing letter with the passage in *Little Dorrit* developed from this incident: —

Arrived at Paris, and resting there three days, Mr. Dorrit strolled much about the streets alone, looking in at the shop-windows, and particularly the jewellers' windows. Ultimately, he went into the most famous jeweller's, and said he wanted to buy a little gift for a lady.

It was a charming little woman to whom he said it — a sprightly little woman, dressed in perfect taste, who came out of a green velvet bower to attend upon him, from posting up some dainty little books of account which one could hardly suppose to be ruled for the entry

[1] Mrs. David Lloyd's daughter.

of any articles more commercial than kisses, at a dainty little shining desk, which looked in itself like a sweetmeat.

For example, then, said the little woman, what species of gift did monsieur desire? A love gift?

Mr. Dorrit smiled, and said, Eh, well! Perhaps. What did he know? It was always possible; the sex being so charming. Would she show him some?

Most willingly, said the little woman. Flattered and enchanted to show him many. But pardon! To begin with, he would have the great goodness to observe that there were love gifts, and there were nuptial gifts. For example, these ravishing ear-rings, and this necklace so superb to correspond, were what one called a love gift. These brooches and these rings, of a beauty so gracious and celestial, were what one called, with the permission of monsieur, nuptial gifts.

Perhaps it would be a good arrangement, Mr. Dorrit hinted, smiling, to purchase both, and to present the love gift first, and to finish with the nuptial offering?

Ah Heaven! said the little woman, laying the tips of the fingers of her two little hands against each other, that would be generous indeed, that would be a special gallantry! And without doubt the lady so crushed with gifts would find them irresistible.

Mr. Dorrit was not sure of that. But, for example, the sprightly little woman was very sure of it, she said. So Mr. Dorrit bought a gift of each sort, and paid handsomely for it.

Did Dickens and Mrs. Winter meet as he suggested, or did she see the wisdom of his

suggestion, in his letter of February 22, and wait till the two couples dined together? In any case, there was keen and sudden disillusionment on his part, for the next letter of the series, written about a fortnight after the last one printed, shows not the eager affectionateness of the letter from Paris; not even a man ready for an interview with his correspondent, but rather one who was more than willing to avoid a meeting. Could contrast in tone be sharper than between the letters of February twenty-second and March tenth? —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Saturday Morning, Tenth March, 1855.

MY DEAR MARIA, — Your letter was delivered here yesterday evening at half past seven. Being out, I did not receive it until I returned home at midnight. This answer is necessarily very short, for I have a fear that it may not reach you otherwise.

I think we are pretty sure to be at home before three tomorrow. I cannot *positively* speak for myself, as I am one of a committee on some public literary business, which may have to make an official representation some time tomorrow. I have undertaken to say what is necessary to be said, whenever the interview comes off; and it is not impossible (the matter pressing), that Sunday may be profaned for the purpose. I do not think it is very likely, however.

Your cold is a very well-disposed one, to improve in

such weather, and it has my warmest commendation for being so good. I am so busy that I have not had time to consider whether I took it by sympathy on Wednesday evening — but I think I heard somebody sneezing at my desk half the day yesterday, who sounded like the incomparable author.

You make me smile when you picture to yourself how weak I might be, and what poor thoughts I might have, and in what unworthy lights it might be my spoiled nature to shew myself. With faults enough to answer for, I believe I have never been that kind of person for a day.

Little Ella shall hear from me on Monday.

In the ghostly unrest of going to begin a new book,[1] my time is like one of the Spirits in Macbeth, and "will not be commanded" — even by me.

You may be perfectly sure that in writing to me, you write to no one else.

Ever affectionately yours, C. D.

The fourth paragraph of the foregoing letter probably reveals in part the cause of the change. The tables were completely turned. Twenty years before, the youth had been played with, heartlessly, as it then seemed to him; for nothing he could do or say made the girl, Maria Beadnell, less obdurate in her wilful unresponsiveness. Now Dickens, ready to found on the old relations an intimately sympathetic friendship, was repelled by a coquetry

[1] This was *Little Dorrit*; the first number appeared in December of the same year.

that tried persistently to give a sentimental significance to the commonplaces of every-day intercourse.

What a vengeance time had brought! Dora had become Flora in *Little Dorrit*. There can be no doubt whatever of that; although in the introduction to the Biographical Edition of the latter, Charles Dickens the younger wrote:

"Flora is supposed to have been taken for the lady who sat for Dora in *David Copperfield*, as she appeared after the lapse of years and without the halo of romance; but I confess I have always found considerable difficulty in believing *that*." Yet in the introduction to *David Copperfield* in the same edition he remarked: "There is some reference in Mr. Forster's *Life* to a 'Dora' who came across Charles Dickens' path very early in his career — when he was eighteen, in fact — but as she married somebody else, and developed into the 'Flora' of *Little Dorrit*, she could have had in reality very little to do with Dora Spenlow." There seems to be some contradiction here. There can, however, be no doubt that in the relations of Flora and Clennam Dickens drew on his later knowledge of Mrs. Winter, just as his association with Maria Beadnell had given

him much material for *David Copperfield*. In the first place, as the succeeding letters will show, Mrs. Winter followed him up much as Flora follows Clennam. In the second place, he said to both Forster and the Duke of Devonshire that Flora was a fact, not merely an imagination. To the first he wrote on April seventh, 1856: "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?"

To the second he said in a letter dated July fifth of the same year: "I am so glad you like Flora. It came into my head one day that we have all had our Floras, and that it was a half-serious, half-ridiculous truth which had never been told. It is a wonderful gratification to me to find that everybody knows her. Indeed, some people seem to think I have done them a personal injury and that their individual Floras (God knows where they are, or who!) are each and all Little Dorrits."

In the light of this last letter and those to follow, the following from *Little Dorrit* reads as merely a humorously intensified account of the first meeting of Dickens and Mrs. Win-

ter. It will be seen that Dickens assigned himself a dual part; for in the Paris jewellery store we found him playing Mr. Dorrit, and here he assumes the rôle of Clennam. About the only attempt he has made to disguise the identity of Mrs. Winter and himself in this remarkable narrative is that he gives her the character of Flora Finching, a tall widow, and he, as Arthur Clennam, pretends to be an unmarried man: —

"My daughter Flora," said Mr. Casby, "as you may have heard probably, Mr. Clennam, was married and established in life, several years ago. She had the misfortune to lose her husband when she had been married a few months. She resides with me again. She will be glad to see you, if you will permit me to let her know that you are here."

"By all means," returned Clennam. "I should have preferred the request, if your kindness had not anticipated me."

Upon this, Mr. Casby rose up in his list shoes, and with a slow, heavy step (he was of an elephantine build), made for the door. He had a long wide-skirted bottle-green coat on, and a bottle-green pair of trowsers, and a bottle-green waistcoat. The Patriarchs were not dressed in bottle-green broadcloth, and yet his clothes looked patriarchal. . . .

Clennam's eyes no sooner fell upon the object of his old passion, than it shivered and broke to pieces.

Most men will be found sufficiently true to themselves to be true to an old idea. It is no proof of an inconstant mind, but exactly the opposite, when the idea will not bear close comparison with the reality, and the contrast is a fatal shock to it. Such was Clennam's case. In his youth he had ardently loved this woman, and had heaped upon her all the locked-up wealth of his affection and imagination. That wealth had been, in his desert home, like Robinson Crusoe's money; exchangeable with no one, lying idle in the dark to rust, until he poured it out for her. Ever since that memorable time, though he had, until the night of his arrival, as completely dismissed her from any association with his Present or Future as if she had been dead (which she might easily have been for anything he knew), he had kept the old fancy of the Past unchanged, in its old sacred place. . . .

Flora, always tall, had grown to be very broad too, and short of breath; but that was not much. Flora, whom he had left a lily, had become a peony; but that was not much. Flora, who had seemed enchanting in all she said and thought, was diffuse and silly. That was much. Flora, who had been spoiled and artless long ago, was determined to be spoiled and artless now. That was a fatal blow.

This is Flora!

"I am sure," giggled Flora, tossing her head with a caricature of her girlish manner, such as a mummer might have presented at her own funeral, if she had lived and died in classical antiquity, "I am ashamed to see Mr. Clennam, I am a mere fright, I know he'll find

me fearfully changed, I am actually an old woman, it's shocking to be so found out, it's really shocking!"

He assured her that she was just what he had expected, and that time had not stood still with himself.

"Oh! But with a gentleman it's so different and really you look so amazingly well that you have no right to say anything of the kind, while, as to me you know — oh!" cried Flora with a little scream, "I am dreadful! . . .

"But if we talk of not having changed," said Flora, who, whatever she said, never once came to a full stop, "look at Papa, is not Papa precisely what he was when you went away, isn't it cruel and unnatural of Papa to be such a reproach to his own child, if we go on in this way much longer people who don't know us will begin to suppose that I am Papa's Mama!"

That must be a long time hence, Arthur considered.

"Oh Mr. Clennam you insincerest of creatures," said Flora, "I perceive already you have not lost your old way of paying compliments, your old way when you used to pretend to be so sentimentally struck you know — at least I don't mean that, I — oh I don't know what I mean!" Here Flora tittered confusedly, and gave him one of her old glances. . . .

"You mustn't think of going yet," said Flora — Arthur had looked at his hat, being in a ludicrous dismay, and not knowing what to do; "you could never be so unkind as to think of going, Arthur — I mean Mr. Arthur — or I suppose Mr. Clennam would be far more proper — but I am sure I don't know what I'm saying — without a word about the dear old days gone forever,

however when I come to think of it I dare say it would be much better not to speak of them and it 's highly probable that you have some much more agreeable engagement and pray let Me be the last person in the world to interfere with it though there *was* a time, but I am running into nonsense again."

Was it possible, that Flora could have been such a chatterer, in the days she referred to? Could there have been anything like her present disjointed volubility, in the fascinations that had captivated him?

" Indeed I have little doubt," said Flora, running on with astonishing speed, and pointing her conversation with nothing but commas, and very few of them, " that you are married to some Chinese lady, being in China so long and being in business and naturally desirous to settle and extend your connection nothing was more likely than that you should propose to a Chinese lady and nothing was more natural I am sure than that the Chinese lady should accept you and think herself very well off too. I only hope she 's not a Pagodian dissenter."

" I am not," returned Arthur, smiling in spite of himself, " married to any lady, Flora."

" Oh good gracious me I hope you never kept yourself a bachelor so long on my account!" tittered Flora; " but of course you never did why should you, pray don't answer, I don't know where I 'm running to, oh do tell me something about the Chinese ladies whether their eyes are really so long and narrow always putting me in mind of mother-of-pearl fish at cards and do they really wear tails down their back and plaited too or is it only the men, and when they pull their hair so very tight off

their foreheads don't they hurt themselves, and why do they stick little bells all over their bridges and temples and hats and things or don't they really do it!" Flora gave him another of her old glances. Instantly she went on again, as if he had spoken in reply for some time.

"Then it 's all true and they really do! good gracious Arthur! — pray excuse me — old habit — Mr. Clennam far more proper — what a country to live in for so long a time, and with so many lanterns and umbrellas too how very dark and wet the climate ought to be and no doubt actually is, and the sums of money that must be made by those two trades where everybody carries them and hangs them everywhere, the little shoes too and the feet screwed back in infancy is quite surprising, what a traveller you are!" . . .

Flora had at last talked herself out of breath for one moment. One moment; for she recovered breath in the act of raising a minute corner of her pocket-handkerchief to her eye, as a tribute to the ghost of the departed Mr. F., and began again.

"No one could dispute, Arthur — Mr. Clennam — that it 's quite right you should be formally friendly to me under the altered circumstances and indeed you could n't be anything else, at least I suppose not you ought to know, but I can't help recalling that there *was* a time when things were very different."

"My dear Mrs. Finching," Arthur began, struck by the good tone again.

"Oh not that nasty ugly name, say Flora!"

"Flora. I assure you, Flora, I am happy in seeing you once more, and in finding that, like me, you have

not forgotten the old foolish dreams, when we saw all before us in the light of our youth and hope."

"You don't seem so," pouted Flora, "you take it very coolly, but however I know you are disappointed in me, I suppose the Chinese ladies — Mandarinesses if you call them so — are the cause or perhaps I am the cause myself, it 's just as likely."

"No, no," Clennam entreated, "don't say that."

"Oh I must you know," said Flora, in a positive tone, "what nonsense not to, I know I am not what you expected, I know that very well."

In the midst of her rapidity, she had found that out with the quick perception of a cleverer woman. The inconsistent and profoundly unreasonable way in which she instantly went on, nevertheless, to interweave their long-abandoned boy and girl relations with their present interview, made Clennam feel as if he were lightheaded.

The following letter in the series phrases better than anything else by Dickens the great restlessness that always came upon him when a new book was forming in his mind, and that was intensified between 1854 and 1858 by the increasing harassment he felt in his relations with Mrs. Dickens. —

Tuesday, third April, 1855.

MY DEAR MARIA,— Going down to Ashford this day week, already with a bad cold, I increased it so much by getting into the intense heat consequent upon a reading of three hours and then coming up in the night (which I

was obliged to do, having business in town next morning), that I was very unwell all the week, and on Friday night was so completely knocked up that I came home at 9 o'clock to bed. A necessity is upon me now — as at most times — of wandering about in my own wild way, to think. I could no more resist this on Sunday or yesterday, than a man can dispense with food, or a horse can help himself from being driven. I hold my inventive capacity on the stern condition that it must master my whole life, often have complete possession of me, make its own demands upon me, and sometimes for months together put everything else away from me. If I had not known long ago that my place could never be held, unless I were at any moment ready to devote myself to it entirely, I should have dropped out of it very soon. All this I can hardly expect you to understand — or the restlessness and waywardness of an author's mind. You have never seen it before you, or lived with it, or had occasion to think or care about it, and you cannot have the necessary consideration for it. "It is only half an hour" — "it is only an afternoon" — "it is only an evening" — people say to me over and over again — but they don't know that it is impossible to command one's self sometimes to any stipulated and set disposal of five minutes — or that the mere consciousness of an engagement will sometimes worry a whole day. These are the penalties paid for writing books. Whoever is devoted to an Art must be content to deliver himself wholly up to it, and to find his recompense in it. I am grieved if you suspect me of not wanting to see you, but I can't help it; I must go my way, whether or no.

I thought you would understand that, in sending the card for the box, I sent an assurance that there was nothing amiss. I am pleased to find that you were all so much interested with the play. My ladies say that the first part is too painful and wants relief. I have been going to see it a dozen times, but have never seen it yet, and never may. Madame Céleste is injured thereby (you see how unreasonable people are!) and says in the Green Room, with a very tight cheek, "M. Dickens est artiste! Mais il n'a jamais vu Janet Pride!"

It is like a breath of fresh spring air to know that that unfortunate baby of yours is out of her one close room and has about half a pint of very doubtful air per day. I could only have become her godfather on the condition that she had 500 gallons of open air at any rate, every day of her life. And you would soon see a rose or two in the face of my other little friend, Ella, if you opened all your doors and windows throughout the whole of all fine weather, from morning to night.

I am going off, I don't know where or how far, to ponder about I don't know what. Sometimes I am half in

[1] Reading these words of kindly interest in the child of Maria Beadnell, one sees from what experience grew such a passage as the following: —

"No man ever really loved a woman, lost her, and knew her with a blameless though an unchanged mind when she was a wife and a mother, but her children had a strange sympathy with him — an instinctive delicacy of pity for him. What fine hidden sensibilities are touched in such a case, no echoes tell; but it is so, and it was so here. Carton was the first stranger to whom little Lucy held out her chubby arms, and he kept his place with her as she grew." *Tale of Two Cities.*

the mood to set off for France, sometimes I think I will go and walk about on the sea shore for three of four months, sometimes I look towards the Pyrenees, sometimes Switzerland. I made a compact with a great Spanish authority last week, and vowed I would go to Spain. Two days afterwards Layard and I agreed to go to Constantinople when Parliament rises. To-morrow I shall probably discuss with somebody else, the idea of going to Greenland or the North Pole. The end of all this, most likely, will be that I shall shut myself up in some out of the way place I have never yet thought of, and go desperately to work there.

Once upon a time I didn't do such things, you say. No, but I have done them through a good many years now, and they have become myself and my life.

Ever affectionately, C. D.

This letter shows even more clearly than its predecessor the completely changed attitude of Dickens toward Mrs. Winter. This is the writing of a man in whom all ardency of feeling for the person addressed is forever dead, but who yet wishes to remain on terms of pleasant and even of intimate acquaintanceship, provided the intimacy is not exacting. After the letter of March tenth it is not surprising that Mrs. Winter evidently said she feared Dickens did not really care to see her. Maria Beadnell must have changed greatly in

the years since 1830, — that, as Mrs. Winter, she was not chilled into indifference and silence by such sentences as these of the letter: "I am grieved if you suspect me of not wanting to see you, but I can't help it; I must go my way, whether or no. . . . Once upon a time I didn't do such things, you say. No, but I have done them through a good many years now, and they have become myself and my life." From "Remember, I accept all with my whole soul, and reciprocate all," to something not far from rudeness must signify great disillusionment, dramatic in its suddenness and completeness. Could time have brought a more complete, and a more theatrical, turning of the tables?

The next letter further strengthens the evidence as to the great change in Dickens toward his old love. Is there a touch of ironic humor in that "but one," — inserted as an afterthought in the first line? Certainly there would seem to be a hint in the last lines that other thoughts than of him should be absorbing the mother's mind. — "I shall be very happy to receive your little token of remembrance, when you have less care on your mind, and have set your baby up — as I hope and

trust you soon will — twenty times stronger than before."

Kindly tolerance of an exacting friend who has been given some ground for her assiduities by an unwise impetuosity on his part very early in their renewal of their friendship has replaced all the stronger feeling. Clearly enough, Dickens had no longer any hearty interest in the correspondence, but was unwilling to break it off lest he should sorely wound the woman he had once deeply loved and whom he had welcomed to his friendship again with unwise enthusiasm. —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Eleventh June, 1855.

MY DEAR MARIA, — I answered your last letter, but one,[1] almost as soon as I received it, to let you know that I should be out of town that Sunday, and for several Sundays in succession. This note of mine must have gone astray somehow or somewhere, for I posted it myself. It has happened on a former occasion — but only on one — that a letter of mine failed to reach its destination. How this comes to be missing, I cannot comprehend.

Your account of your poor little child is distressing indeed, and makes me heartily sorry for your fatigues and anxieties. I have never had any faith in the homœopathic system and therefore have never tried it. I am

[1] In MS., the words " but one " are added above the line.

inclined to think that it is principally successful with people who have nothing the matter with them, and that active diseases where there is a vigorous action for evil going on, require more decided remedies. Still, it is indubitably successful in some violent cases even.

I shall be very happy to receive your little token of remembrance, when you have less care on your mind, and have set your baby up — as I hope and trust you soon will — twenty times stronger than before. Take care of your baby's mother, and God bless her.

Ever faithfully yours, C. D.

The next letter of the set is conspicuous for its beauty of feeling and of phrase. It is perhaps noteworthy that even this very sympathetic letter opens with "My dear Mrs. Winter," the form Dickens henceforth used always in the correspondence, except in the last letter of all. It is but another evidence of the steady if kindly diminishing by Dickens of the intimacy cordially sought by both at first. —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE,
Wednesday, thirteenth June, 1855.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER, — I am truly grieved to hear of your affliction in the loss of your darling baby. But if you be not, even already, so reconciled to the parting from that innocent child for a little while, as to bear it gently and with a softened sorrow, I know that that not unhappy state of mind must soon arise. The death of

infants is a release from so much chance and change — from so many casualties and distresses — and is a thing so beautiful in its serenity and peace — that it should not be a bitterness, even in a mother's heart. The simplest and most affecting passage in all the noble history of our Great Master, is his consideration for little children. And in reference to yours, as many millions of bereaved mothers poor and rich will do in reference to theirs until the end of time, you may take the comfort of the gracious words "And he took a child, and set it in the midst of them."

In a book by one of the greatest English writers,[1] called A Journey from this World to the Next, a parent comes to the distant country beyond the grave, and finds the little girl he had lost so long ago, engaged in building a bower to receive him in, when his aged steps should bring him there at last. He is filled with joy to see her — so young — so bright — so full of promise — and is enraptured to think that she never was old, wan, tearful, withered. This is always one of the sources of consolation in the deaths of children. With no effort of the fancy, with nothing to undo, you will always be able to think of the pretty creature you have lost, *as a child* in Heaven.

A poor little baby of mine lies in Highgate Cemetery — and I laid her, just as you think of laying yours, in the catacombs there, until I made a resting-place for all of us in the free air.

It is better that I should not come to see you. I feel quite sure of that, and will think of you instead.

[1] Defoe.

God bless and comfort you! Mrs Dickens and her sister send their kindest condolences to yourself and Mr Winter. I add mine with all my heart.

Affectionately your friend

CHARLES DICKENS

Here there is a break of three years in the correspondence. Meantime *Little Dorrit* had been written (1855–57), and in Flora Finching Dickens had half sadly mocked at his own sentimentality in thinking for a moment that the charmer of his youth must inevitably be as charming for him at middle age. The original of Dora and Flora must have read her second presentation with very different feelings. It is most likely, however, that with the blessed power we have not to see ourselves as others see us and to be able to explain our worst vagaries to ourselves with entire satisfactoriness, Mrs. Winter never dreamed that Flora owed anything to her. Certainly, during all this period she was on terms of intimacy with the Dickens family, for in July, 1857, the faithful sister-in-law of Dickens, Georgina Hogarth, wrote to her freely of intimate family matters. Walter Dickens, the fourth child, whom his father had called "Young Skull" because of his high cheek-bones, went out to India in

July, 1857, as a cadet in the "Company's service." He died in the hospital at Calcutta in 1863. —

GAD'S HILL, July 21st, 1857.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER, — I cannot tell you how much we all feel your kind recollection of and sympathy with us in our parting with dear Walter. It has been a sad trial, but thank God! it is over, and you will be glad to hear that the dear boy bore it a *very great deal better* than we could have hoped. We, that is to say, his mother and sisters and I parted with him at Tavistock House on Sunday morning. Charles and Charley went with him to Southampton. He broke down very near at the moment of bidding us goodbye, but his father (who with Charley returned here last night, after seeing him off) says he soon recovered, and was never so much cut up again. He was immensely delighted and astonished with the magnificence and comfort of the fitting up of the vessel — all his previous experience of steam boats having been the very uncomfortable Boulogne packets. They made acquaintance with the Captain whom they liked extremely, and most lucky of all, he found an old school-fellow on board, who is going the whole journey to Calcutta. This, Charles said, seemed to set him up entirely, and when they left him finally, he looked a great deal less sad than they did. This is all very cheering, is it not? and reconciles us very much to the separation. Please God that he may keep his health and do well! I assure you your suggestions were *most valuable*. Charles desires me, with his love to you, to say how much he was obliged to you for them. Flannel he was well provided

with, and his father spoke to him strongly over the imperative necessity of his wearing it — but the medicines he had *not* got, and we lost no time on Saturday in going to Savory & Moore's and providing him with a little case containing plenty of quinine, Jeremy's opium and essence of ginger which the man recommended to be added. So you see your letter was of essential service to our young traveller, as, strange to say, the necessity of giving him these things had not occurred to his father who generally thinks of everything.

I am very sorry you have hurt your hand. It is such a miserable thing to be disabled in that way, especially with the right hand.

Our plays[1] have been a tremendous success, and I am happy to say the Fund is going on increasing in a most satisfactory manner. We have one more performance of "The Frozen Deep" Saturday. I am very glad you were pleased the night you were there. It was all perfectly right about the money.

The Queen and her party[2] made a most excellent audience — so far from being cold, as we expected, they cried and laughed and applauded and made as much demonstration as so small a party (they were not more than fifty) could do. She sent, through Colonel Phipps, an expression of her immense delight at the whole affair. But she *did not come* for the Jerrold Fund. *That* was

[1] For the Douglas Jerrold Fund. "An amateur company, including many of Mr. Jerrold's colleagues on 'Punch' gave subscription performances of 'The Frozen Deep' [Jerrold's play] at the Gallery of Illustration, Regent St." "*Letters*," p. 416.

[2] In July a performance of "The Frozen Deep" was given at her request before the Queen and the Prince Consort.

distinctly understood beforehand. When the application was made to her to attend the performance for the Fund on the 11th July, she sent Col. Phipps to Charles to explain how sorry she was that she could not break through an unwritten rule not to patronize anything of the kind for the benefit of *Individuals,* as she might be called upon to do so every day, which one can easily understand. But, at the same time, she begged Col. Phipps to say how much she had always wished to see the play of which she had heard a great deal, and to ask Charles if he would bring it to Buckingham Palace, choose what room he liked there, and do it as he pleased. To which Charles replied that he was very anxious to oblige the Queen, but as neither he nor any of his fellow actors nor his family went to Court he would rather not go there, and especially would rather not take his ladies there, in the quality of actors and actresses, but that, if the Queen would come to a private representation at the Gallery, to which she should invite her own party, he would be very happy to get it up for her alone. The Queen sent back a most amiable message, to say that she quite felt the propriety of Charles' objection to go to the Palace, accepting his proposal and fixing the evening for coming to the Gallery. *This* is the *exact real story* which has given rise to the absurd paragraph in the newspapers.

I am so very sorry to hear your dear little girl missed her prize. It must have been a great disappointment to her. It is a great disadvantage to a clever little girl to be put into a class with much older ones—and it often happens.

We have all our school boys at home now, enjoying

their holidays immensely. Dear Walter's last week was very happy, for they were all together, and they had young friends down, and had cricket matches in the field, and of course everybody did their utmost to make much of him and keep up his spirits and he enjoyed himself extremely. The play, too, at the last, was a good thing for us all, for it was an excitement and distraction and kept us from dwelling on the one subject.

I hope your sister's invalids are all better.

Goodbye, dearest Mrs. Winter, with love from all, believe me

Affectionately yours,
GEORGINA HOGARTH

Apparently Mrs. Winter, just like Flora, clung to the idea of an intimate friendship even when, as we have seen, she was repeatedly checked by courteous but somewhat formal letters. At any rate, some communication of hers brought forth the following kindly but brief and firm refusal to have busy time cut into by a useless interview. The Anne referred to, the author of the verses printed at the end of this volume, was probably Anne Beadnell Kolle, who had died in May, 1836.—

GAD'S HILL PLACE,
HIGHAM BY ROCHESTER, KENT,
Monday, Sixteenth August, 1858.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER,—I have read poor dear Anne's prayer with great sorrow, and with many

emotions of sadly affectionate remembrance. It was written, no doubt, under a presentiment of Death; but it must always be remembered that such a presentiment often exists when it fails to be fulfilled; and it is very commonly engendered in the state of mind belonging to the condition in which she composed the prayer.

It would give me great pleasure to see you at Liverpool, if I had the least confidence in my own freedom for a moment under the circumstances which will take me there. But I have so much business to transact at times, and have to keep myself so quiet at other times, and have so many people to give directions to, and make arrangements with (four travel with me), that I see no one while I am on this Tour, and have to be always grimly self-denying and heroic. So I shall hope to see you in London, at some time when I am in a less virtuous, and less hurried and worried condition.

With my love to Ella, and kindest regard to Mr Winter,

Ever affectionately yours,

CHARLES DICKENS

About three months later a great blow came to Mrs. Winter in the financial failure of her husband. She apparently asked Dickens to aid him to a fresh start in life. Like all the later letters of the series, however, this, though kind in tone, is firm in its refusal to be drawn into any entangling alliances or responsibilities. A few years later Mr. Winter entered the ministry, becoming a curate at Little Eversham,

Cambridge, in 1866. He was afterwards Vicar of Alnmouth, Northumberland, where he died, March 22, 1871. —

BRIGHTON,
Saturday, Thirteenth November, 1858.

MY DEAR MRS. WINTER, — I have been so constantly and rapidly changing from place to place during the past week, that I am only just now in receipt of the intelligence of your misfortune. With the utmost sincerity and earnestness of which my heart is capable, I condole with you upon it, and assure you of my true sympathy and friendship. It has distressed me greatly. Not because I am so worldly or so unjust as to couple the least reproach or blame with a reverse that I do not doubt to have been unavoidable, and that I know to be always easily possible of occurrence to the best and most fortunate of men, but because I know you feel it heavily.

I wish to Heaven it were in my power to help Mr Winter to any new opening in life. But you can hardly imagine how powerless I am in any such case. My own work in life being of that kind that I must always do it with my own unassisted hand and head, I have such rare opportunities of placing any one, that for years and years I have been seeking in vain to help in this way a friend of the old days when the old house stood unchanged in Lombard Street. To this hour, I have not succeeded, though I have strenuously tried my hardest, both abroad and at home. Commercial opportunities, above all, are so far removed from me, that I dare not encourage a hope of my power to serve Mr Winter with my good

word, ever coming within a year's journey of my will and wish to do it.

But I really think that your father, who could do much in such a case without drawing at all heavily upon his purse,[1] might be induced to do, what — I may say to you, Maria — it is no great stretch of sentiment to call his duty. Has not Margaret[2] great influence with him? Have not you *some?* And don't you think that if you were to set yourself steadily to exert whatever influence you can bring to bear upon him, you would do the best within your reach for your husband, your child, and yourself? Is it not all important that you should try your utmost with him, at this time?

Forgive my recommending this, if you have so anticipated the recommendation as to have done all that possibly can be done to move him. But what you tell me about George seems so strange, so hard, and so ill balanced, that I cannot avoid the subject.

I write in the greatest haste, being overwhelmed by business here. On Monday I hope to be at Gad's Hill, and to remain either there or at Tavistock House for months to come. I enclose a few lines to M^r^ Winter,[3] and am ever,

Your faithful friend,
CHARLES DICKENS

[1] Mr. Beadnell left a property of some £40,000.

[2] Mrs. David Lloyd, the eldest sister.

[3] BRIGHTON,
Saturday, Thirteenth November, 1858.

MY DEAR MR. WINTER, — In the hope that a friendly word of remembrance in season may not be unacceptable to you, I write to assure you of my sympathy with you in your trouble. Pray do not

Again there is a gap in the correspondence till the 17th of November, 1862. Twelve days before, George Beadnell had died at the age of eighty-nine. How different the treatment of the past in this last letter as compared with his sentimental reflections in the first three of this second series! Here the mood is grave, moved, but unsentimental, and noticeably detached, instead of being almost passionately personal. The erstwhile beautiful "visions of his youth" are now reflected upon his memory in the form of hideous ghosts.—

PARIS, RUE DU FAUBOURG S^{T} HONORÉ, 27
Monday, Seventeenth November, 1862.

MY DEAR MARIA, — I had read in Galignani that your poor father was dead, before I received your touching account of his last moments. Of course I could not be

let it cast you down too much; what has happened to you, has happened to many thousands of good and honorable men, and will happen again in a like manner, to the end of all things. If you should feel the bitterness of losing belief in any nature you had previously trusted in, consider that the truth is always better than falsehood, even though the truth involves the detection of such skin-deep friendships as that which can cool towards a man in temporary misfortune. It is better lost than kept, as all things worthless are.

Be strong of heart for yourself, and look forward to a better time. You will not think, I know, that I obtrude myself upon you in asking to be borne in mind among the friends who feel truly towards you.

Faithfully yours always,
CHARLES DICKENS

surprised, knowing his great age, by the wearing out of his vitality; but — almost equally of course — it was a shock too, for all the old Past comes out of its grave when I think of him, and the Ghosts of a good many years stand about his memory.

He died among his children, and could have died with no better words and no better hopes. God be thanked for it, and may such mercy and comfort be in store for us!

Always yours affectionately

CHARLES DICKENS

Pray give my kind regard to Margaret and your brother.

What a perfect contrast, when we place the two sets of letters side by side! The very anti-climax of the last of the second set is significant. Can the importance of the two sets for an understanding of the experiences which underlay parts of *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit* be gainsaid? Maria Beadnell, the young girl, and Mrs. Winter, the mature woman, gave Dickens his Dora and Flora. As he says again and again, Maria Beadnell's influence was at one time the strongest in his life, and remained effective in his character for many years. Her group of friends, of whom we first hear in these MSS., gave him suggestions or the originals for some of the notable figures in his earlier works.

The letters readjust and correct some previous misapprehensions as to the relations of his work to his life, and justify Forster, as contrasted with Charles Dickens the younger, who persistently attempted in the introductions to the Macmillan edition to minimize the autobiographical and the personal in his father's novels.

Above all, these letters reveal the man in his youth, and later the youth in the man, — impetuous always, but as the years passed, too trained of eye, too skilled in humanity, not to see at once, when he and Mrs. Winter faced each other, the real proportions of a situation into which he had dashed at the call of his naturally sentimental imagination. And when finally he saw the real proportions, he did not wholly draw back, leaving only bitterness and pain to the woman whose unwise but easily comprehensible coquetry with an old affection was painful to him, but so managed the delicate situation as to remain her friend and to give her in his family a position of affectionate regard with those he loved and honored most.

Surely Dickens loses nothing from these letters, particularly the second set. Both sets are as human as the man always was, and in the end they are chivalrous and, as a whole,

tactful. Reading them, one cannot respect Dickens less; rather one knows him better, seeing the kindliness and the deep regard he had for friendship, even when past, and how patient he was willing to be for its sake.

There remain in the collection of letters placed in the hands of the editor two which for the reason just mentioned, namely, that their final effect is to right some misunderstanding of Dickens, it seems advisable to print. One is from his sister-in-law, Miss Georgina Hogarth to Mrs. Winter; the other is from Charles Dickens the younger to his mother. Both concern that very painful episode, the separation of Dickens and his wife in the latter part of May, 1858. At the time there was, of course, much petty gossip, some of it hostile to Dickens, some of it most unkind and unjust to Mrs. Dickens.

There has been in the many years since some censure of Dickens, ranging from innuendoes, particularly exasperating because of their vagueness, to severe blame for his alleged selfishness as the cause of the separation. As might be expected, the responsibility must be laid to some extent on the shoulders of both husband and wife. Clearly, in the light of

these two letters it cannot be accounted for as simply, if alluringly, as that brilliant lover of the paradoxical, Mr. Chesterton, would have us believe. He has said: "Dickens had a bad quality not intrinsically very terrible, which he allowed to wreck his life. He also had a small weakness that could sometimes be stronger than all his strengths. His selfishness was not, it need hardly be said, the selfishness of Gradgrind; he was particularly compassionate and liberal. Nor was it in the least the selfishness of Skimpole. He was entirely self-dependent, industrious, and dignified. His selfishness was wholly a selfishness of the nerves. Whatever his whim or the temperature of the instant told him to do, must be done. He was the type of man who would break a window if it would not open and give him air. And this weakness of his had, by the time of which we speak, led to a breach between himself and his wife which he was too exasperated and excited to heal in time. If London bored him, he must go to the Continent at once; if the Continent bored him, he must back to London at once. If the day was too noisy, the whole household must be quiet; if night was too quiet, the whole household must

wake up. Above all, he had this supreme character of the domestic despot — that his good temper was, if possible, more despotic than his bad temper. When he was miserable (as he often was, poor fellow!), they only had to listen to his railings. When he was happy, they had to listen to his novels. All this, which was mainly mere excitability, did not seem to amount to much; it did not in the least mean that he had ceased to be a clean-living and kind-hearted and quite honest man. But there was this evil about it — that he did not resist his little weakness at all; he pampered it as Skimpole pampered his. A mere silly trick of temperament did everything that the blackest misconduct could have done. A random sensibility, started about the shuffling of papers or the shutting of a window, ended by tearing two clean, Christian people from each other, like a blast of bigamy or adultery."[1]

The trouble with this clever passage is its avoidance of the fact that one of the chief sources of fallacy in the logic of human conduct lies in multiplicity of causes. Of course, the irritability, the hypersensitiveness of Dickens

[1] *Charles Dickens*, G. H. Chesterton, pp. 209--210.

played its part in preparing for the catastrophe, but it was not the only cause.

But first to recall the separation: "Thenceforward [after the end of May, 1858] 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. [We shall see that this last statement requires a slight modification.] 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 have been more determinedly 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."[1]

To understand the mood which could make possible such an address as the following by an individual to the great public concerning his most intimate personal affairs, one must recall that for years Dickens had every right which constant adulation from the people of Great Britain and America could give to feel that whatever touched his life was of the keenest interest to them. The pronunciamento makes sad reading at this distant day, but here it is, as it appeared in *Household Words*, June 12, 1858:—

Three-and-twenty years have passed since I entered on my present relations with the Public. They began when I was so young, that I find them to have existed for nearly a quarter of a century.

Through all that time I have tried to be as faithful to the Public, as they have been to me. It was my duty never to trifle with them, or deceive them, or presume upon their favor, or do any thing with it but work hard to justify it. I have always endeavoured to discharge that duty.

My conspicuous position has often made me the subject of fabulous stories and unaccountable statements.

[1] Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*.

Occasionally, such things have chafed me, or even wounded me; but, I have always accepted them as the shadows inseparable from the light of my notoriety and success. I have never obtruded any such personal uneasiness of mine, upon the generous aggregate of my audience.

For the first time in my life, and I believe for the last, I now deviate from the principle I have so long observed, by presenting myself in my own Journal in my own private character, and entreating all my brethren (as they deem that they have reason to think well of me, and to know that I am a man who has ever been unaffectedly true to our common calling), to lend their aid to the dissemination of my present words.

Some domestic trouble of mine, of long standing, on which I will make no further remark than that it claims to be respected, as being of a sacredly private nature, has lately been brought to an arrangement, which involves no anger or ill-will of any kind, and the whole origin, progress, and surrounding circumstances of which have been, throughout, within the knowledge of my children. It is amicably composed, and its details have now but to be forgotten by those concerned in it.

By some means, arising out of wickedness, or out of folly, or out of inconceivable wild chance, or out of all three, this trouble has been made the occasion of misrepresentations, most grossly false, most monstrous, and most cruel — involving, not only me, but innocent persons dear to my heart, and innocent persons of whom I have no knowledge, if, indeed, they have any existence — and so widely spread, that I doubt if one reader in a thousand will peruse these lines, by whom some touch of the

breath of these slanders will not have passed, like an unwholesome air.

Those who know me and my nature, need no assurance under my hand that such calumnies are as irreconcilable with me, as they are, in their frantic incoherence, with one another. But, there is a great multitude who know me through my writings, and who do not know me otherwise; and I cannot bear that one of them should be left in doubt, or hazard of doubt, through my poorly shrinking from taking the unusual means to which I now resort, of circulating the Truth.

I most solemnly declare, then — and this I do, both in my own name and in my wife's name — that all the lately whispered rumours touching the trouble at which I have glanced, are abominably false. And that whosoever repeats one of them after this denial, will lie as wilfully and as foully as it is possible for any false witness to lie, before Heaven and earth.

For some time previous to the parting it had been apparent to his friends that a special spirit of unrest had entered into his life. It showed itself in the boisterous mirth of his home circle, the reckless gaiety of his trips with Stansfield, Collins, and his other friends to Paris; the wanderings to and fro on his reading engagements and of private theatricals in various parts of the country. The naturally restless energy of his character had received an intense if morbid stimulus from the rest-

lessness of his mind. He phrased his restlessness in a letter, of July 22, 1857, to Miss Mary Boyle: "This is one of what I call my wandering days before I fall to work. I seem to be always looking at such times for something I have not found in life, but may possibly come to a few thousand years hence, in some other part of some other system. God knows!" It appeared, too, as has already been pointed out in a number of his letters from 1856 to 1858 to Forster. For instance, — "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. . . . The old days — the old days! Shall I ever, I wonder, get the frame of mind back as it used to be then? . . . I find that the skeleton in my domestic closet is becoming a pretty big one."[1]

The following extract from an unpublished letter of Dickens to Mr. W. H. Wills, the manager of *Household Words*, dated Paris, April 27, 1858, well shows the intensely irritated condition of Dickens which preceded the separation: —

[1] *Life*, Forster, vol. iii. pp. 184–185.

"My arrangements are these — the tent is striking here, and I can't work in the midst of the unsettled domesticity. The Hogarth family don't leave Tavistock House till next Saturday, and I cannot in the meantime bear the contemplation of their imbecility any more (I think my constitution is already undermined). The sight of Hogarth at breakfast! I am therefore going to leave here by the mail next Tuesday morning for Dover, where I shall stay at the Ship (working I hope in the mornings), etc."

Clearly enough, the saddest of all causes, because the most irreconcilable, incompatibility of temperament lay back of all this. Steadily it sapped away all the foundations of an affection originally very strong. In the light of the letters to follow, it is evident that Dickens' own statement of the case was more correct than it has been held to be, — is, indeed, entirely just. He thus wrote to Forster: —

"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 tomorrow, 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." Again he wrote to Forster: "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 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." [1]

This letter of Miss Hogarth, written without the remotest thought of publication, and an extremely intimate letter of the younger Charles Dickens to his mother, sufficiently prove the truth of this analysis by Dickens of the unhappy situation. The originals of both letters are in Mr. Bixby's possession. Miss Hogarth wrote thus, just at the end of the very trying month which had ended with the separation: —

TAVISTOCK HOUSE, May 31st, 1858.

MY DEAREST MARIA, — There will be no mistake about your tickets this time.[2] Charles has charged Mr Arthur Smith with full particulars and he will forward them to you, in due course.

[1] *Life*, Forster, vol. iii. pp. 186–188.

[2] For one of the famous "Readings." Mr. Arthur Smith was the manager for these lectures.

I am now going to tell you something which will, I am sure, surprise you, and, at the first, shock and distress you. It is that Charles and his wife have agreed to live apart, in future. Believe me when I assure you that I am *perfectly convinced* that this plan will be for the happiness of all. I worked hard to prevent it, as long as I saw any possibility, but latterly I have come to the conviction that there was no other way out of the domestic Misery of this house. For my sister and Charles have lived unhappily for years — they were totally unsuited to each other in almost every respect — and as the children grew up this unsuitability developed itself more strongly, and disagreements and Miseries which used to be easily kept out of sight have forced themselves into notice.

Unhappily, also, by some constitutional misfortune and incapacity, my sister always, from their infancy, threw her children upon other people, consequently as they grew up, there was not the usual strong tie between them and her — in short for many years, although we have put a good face upon it, we have been very miserable at home. My sister has often expressed a desire to go and live away, but Charles never agreed to it on the girls' account; but latterly he thought it must be to their advantage as well as to his own and Catherine's, to consent to this and remodel their unhappy home. So, by *mutual consent* and for the reasons I have told you, *and no other*, they have come to this arrangement. She is to have a house of her own in London, and her eldest son (at his father's request and not taking any part or showing any preference in doing it) is to live with and take care of her. The other children remain with their father — his eldest

daughter naturally taking her mother's place, as mistress of the house. She and Katy and I will divide the *work* amongst us, but all the dignity will be Mary's, and she will do the honours modestly, gracefully and prettily, I know.

Of course, Charles is too public a man to take such a step as this without exciting a more than usual nine days' wonder — and we have heard of the most wonderful rumours and wicked slanders which have been flying about the town as to the cause of this separation. To a few of our *real* friends Charles wishes the *truth* to be stated, and they cannot show their friendship better than by quietly silencing with the real solemn truth any foolish or wicked person who may repeat such lies and slanders.

Charles sends you his best love and to dear Ella his birthday congratulations. You can understand how much he has been harassed and occupied with all this business and his readings besides, and that he has very little time to write letters just now.

Give my particular love to Ella on Wednesday and wish her many happy returns of the day, and with our united kind regards to Mr Winter, believe me,

My dearest Maria,
Affectionately yours always,
GEORGINA HOGARTH

How filled with dramatic contrasts were the relations of Maria Beadnell and Dickens! Not only did the youth who had felt himself scorned and mortified come, twenty years later, to hold just the attitude of tolerant,

kindly indifference which in Maria Beadnell had maddened him at times, but she at forty odd, when ready to revive the old sentimental relationship, found herself taken into the family confidence concerning a separation from the woman who had in Dickens' youth replaced her.

That the sympathy of the children was with Dickens is shown by the arrangements made and by this letter written by the eldest son, some six weeks after the preceding: —

BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHIN,[1]
13 July, 1858.

MY DEAR MOTHER, — Although I much regret being the medium of the communication I have to make to you, still, as I know it is part of the duty I have set before myself I accept it without hesitation. It is this: —

On arriving this morning from Henley I found awaiting me a letter from my father referring to your letter to Frank. He says: "I myself took out of our Deed of Separation the usual formal clause inserted by her own solicitors, that she should have access to the children except at Tavistock House. That exception seemed to me to convey an unnecessary slight upon her, and I said that she should see them there or anywhere." You see therefore that you have a distinct right to see the children when, where, or how you please, but he places these re-

[1] This letter is printed from the original, which is in Mr. Bixby's collection.

strictions on their visits, which I am particularly desirous to impress upon you (*from myself*, and not from him), he has the most perfect right and power to do:

"I positively forbid the children ever to utter one word to their grandmother or to Helen Hogarth. If they are ever brought into the presence of either of these two, I charge them immediately to leave your mother's house and come back to me." — And further in reference to Mr. Lemon, "I positively forbid the children ever to see him or to speak to him, and for the same reason I absolutely prohibit them ever being taken to Mr. Evans' house."[1]

You will see that as far as you are concerned he has no desire, and, in fact no power, if he had the wish, to keep them from you; but he has, as their father, an absolute right to prevent their going into any society which may be distasteful to him, as long as they remain under age. I think it necessary to point this out to you *strongly*, in order that there may be no unnecessary and useless talk on this matter. And here, I trust, the subject will rest between us.

I shall sleep at Queen's Road to-night as I have a good deal to pack up there. I will be home to dinner tomorrow at six and will then permanently take up my quarters with you. Till then I remain, ever, your most affectionate son,

CHARLEY

Surely one cannot censure the details of the settlement itself. Rather, it is the lack of pro-

[1] The coupling of Mr. Lemon's name with that of Mr. Evans would suggest that the cause of offence of this old friend was similar, — an inability to agree with all the measures of Dickens at this time, especially his pronunciamento to the public.

portion, the willingness to rush into print, which one regrets. All that Dickens saw wrongly at the moment were his cherished relations with the public which had lionized him so long. Bewildered by the insistent fear that they would do him what he felt to be grave injustice, he lost all sense of real values. He even wanted *Punch*, of all papers, to print the pronunciamento which he had given in *Household Words*. When his old publishers and friends, Bradbury and Evans, refused very properly, he broke with them for good, writing thus to Mr. Evans, in the white heat of his anger: —

> DEAR SIR, — I have had stern occasion to impress upon my children that their father's name is their best possession, and that it would indeed be trifled with and wasted by him if either through himself or through them he held any terms with those who had been false to it in the very greatest need and under the very greatest wrong it has ever known. You know very well why (with hard distress of mind and bitter disappointment) I have been forced to include you in this class. I have no more to say.
>
> CHARLES DICKENS

It would, however, be most unjust to leave as the result of this examination of the letters

the idea that Dickens was probably as little to blame for the complicated marital relations as he was in the final settlement. Had the lot of Mrs. Dickens been easy? Dickens himself admitted: "There is plenty of fault on my side, I dare say." Evidently he did not recall the exact incidents, but was willing to grant this much. There lay the trouble: much that must have been most trying in him was done or said without the slightest thought of its effect on those around him. Mrs. Dickens married a rising young author when he was but twenty-four. "A very young man fighting his way, and excessively poor, with no memories for years that were not monotonous and mean, and with his strongest and most personal memories quite ignominious and unendurable, was suddenly thrown into the society of a whole family of girls [the Hogarth sisters]. I think it does not overstate his weakness and I think it partly constitutes his excuse, to say that he fell in love with all of them. As sometimes happens in the undeveloped youth, an abstract femininity simply intoxicated him. And again, I think we shall not be mistakenly accused of harshness if we put the point in this way; that by a kind of accident he got

hold of the wrong sister."[1] That statement of Mr. Chesterton needs modification, because he did not know of the love affair with Maria Beadnell; but the idea is fundamentally right. Just because of a rebuff in his recent experience, Dickens basked in the affection shown him by the Hogarth sisters, expanding gratefully in its warmth. He made his choice only to find, as has many another man who chose when young, that he had missed in a family the one who might have been the perfect helpmate of whom he dreamed.

But would this other have been the perfect helpmate? Very likely not; for Dickens, in his highly wrought sensitiveness, must at times have been, as Mrs. Carlyle said of her soul-wearying husband, "gey ill to live wi'." Moreover, it is one thing to be the wife, quite another the sympathizing friend, close, but neither so close as the wife, nor yet exempted from the many little courtesies which many a man expects his wife to do without. Immediately after the marriage and till her premature death in 1837, Mary Hogarth was constantly with the young wife. Of course Mrs. Dickens loved her sister, but would any affectionate

[1] *Charles Dickens*, G. H. Chesterton, pp. 66–67.

woman wholly enjoy hearing her husband talk freely of a love for her deceased sister so profound that he wished to be buried in the same grave with her? Surely such talk before the mother of his increasing family, and in the presence of others than those belonging to the immediate family circle, was scarcely tactful. And in 1842 Georgina Hogarth, competent, wise, controlled, alert for every need of Dickens, came into the household. As the years passed, Mrs. Dickens saw nearly all the duties and affections dearest to a woman as wife pass to Miss Hogarth. Admit that her own inertia or inability made all this necessary, — what we are responsible for cuts none the less deep. Nor is it a balm to the wounded spirit to know that we have no real ground for complaint. Dickens needed a wife who could at all times command his admiration; whose superiority to himself in household matters as well as matters of the spirit he could not but admit. Neither of these did Mrs. Dickens provide; hence the tragedy.

These last two letters make clear the truth of the analysis by Dickens of the situation published long ago by Forster. They should set at rest all hints and stories going to show

that this was more than a domestic tragedy resulting from incompatibility of temper. For this purpose, and this alone, the two letters are printed here.

Surely all the letters in this volume, but more particularly the last two, show that in all the puzzle of life, even to a great novelist when he must live it rather than write of it, Dickens did his best to be the man he could be in his best moods. Whatever his petulance at times, whatever his sensitiveness to public opinion, so great that even in his will he could insist that the amount he had allowed Mrs. Dickens for her support since the separation should be known, yet at all the crises of his experiences, as these letters show more than once, he revealed the finer and sounder humanity that was in him. From each crisis he comes forth, on the whole, as fundamentally right in feeling and as steadily striving toward his ideals.

GEORGE P. BAKER.

FAREWELL BEQUESTS

[Anne's Prayer, referred to on page 123.]

ERE the last fleeting ties of life are broken
While those I love around me weeping stand,
Let me dispense to each some parting token
Of one fast hastening to the spirit-land.
Language & gifts but feebly can impart
The deep affection of my ardent heart,
Yet, dearest friends, these last memorials take,
And prize them for my sake.

Father — thy high & stainless reputation
By the pure diamond well may imaged be,
Accept this ring — see how its radiation
Casts round its neighbourhood a brilliancy.
Within thy home I thus have honoured dwelt,
And when the world has praised me, I have felt
That in its homage I should not partake,
Save for my father's sake.

Mother — this locket thou wilt fondly cherish,
Not for its outward shrine of gold & pearls,
It guards a part of me that need not perish, —
One of my lavish store of auburn curls.
Methinks I could not to thy share assign
Aught that appeared so fully, truly mine —
This relic of thy grateful daughter take
And wear it for her sake.

Sister, — receive this lute, its sprightly numbers
Once gaily sounded by our joyous hearth,
But when thou see'st me laid in death's cold slumbers,
Touch it no more to songs of festal mirth.
Sing of the meetings of fond friends above,
Sing of God's wondrous grace & pardoning love;
These holy strains at peaceful evening wake,
For thy poor sister's sake.

Brother — my little brother — thou hast tended
Often with me my greenhouse plants & flow'rs;
Take their sole charge — they safely are defended
By fostering walls from sudden blights & showers.
Thus is thy childhood in its tender bloom,
Trained with fond care, & kept from storm and gloom;
Dear child, improvement daily strive to make
For thy kind parent's sake.

I seek in vain one absent, erring brother,
Alas! he wanders on a foreign sod,
Yet when thou next shalt see him, give him, mother,
This sacred volume — 't is the word of God.
Tell him his sister asked in constant prayer,
That he in its blest promises might share,
Bid him from sin's delusive trance awake,
For his soul's precious sake.

Lov'd ones — why gaze upon these gifts with sadness?
My worldly wants & wishes are at rest.
Dost thou not know I go in trusting gladness
To take possession of a vast bequest?

That heritage was by my Saviour given,
When he descended from his throne in heaven,
Sorrow & suffering on himself to take,
For man's poor sinful sake.

Not mine alone those treasures of salvation;
The precious boon extends, dear friends, to thee,
Then mourn not for our transient separation;
But when I leave thee, think & speak of me
As of a freed one mounting to the skies,
Called from a world of snares & vanities,
Her place amid the blessed Saints to take,
For her Redeemer's sake.

MARIA BEADNELL

(DORA)

Etching by W. H. W. BICKNELL, after original drawing by EDMUND H. GARRETT, made for The Bibliophile Society.

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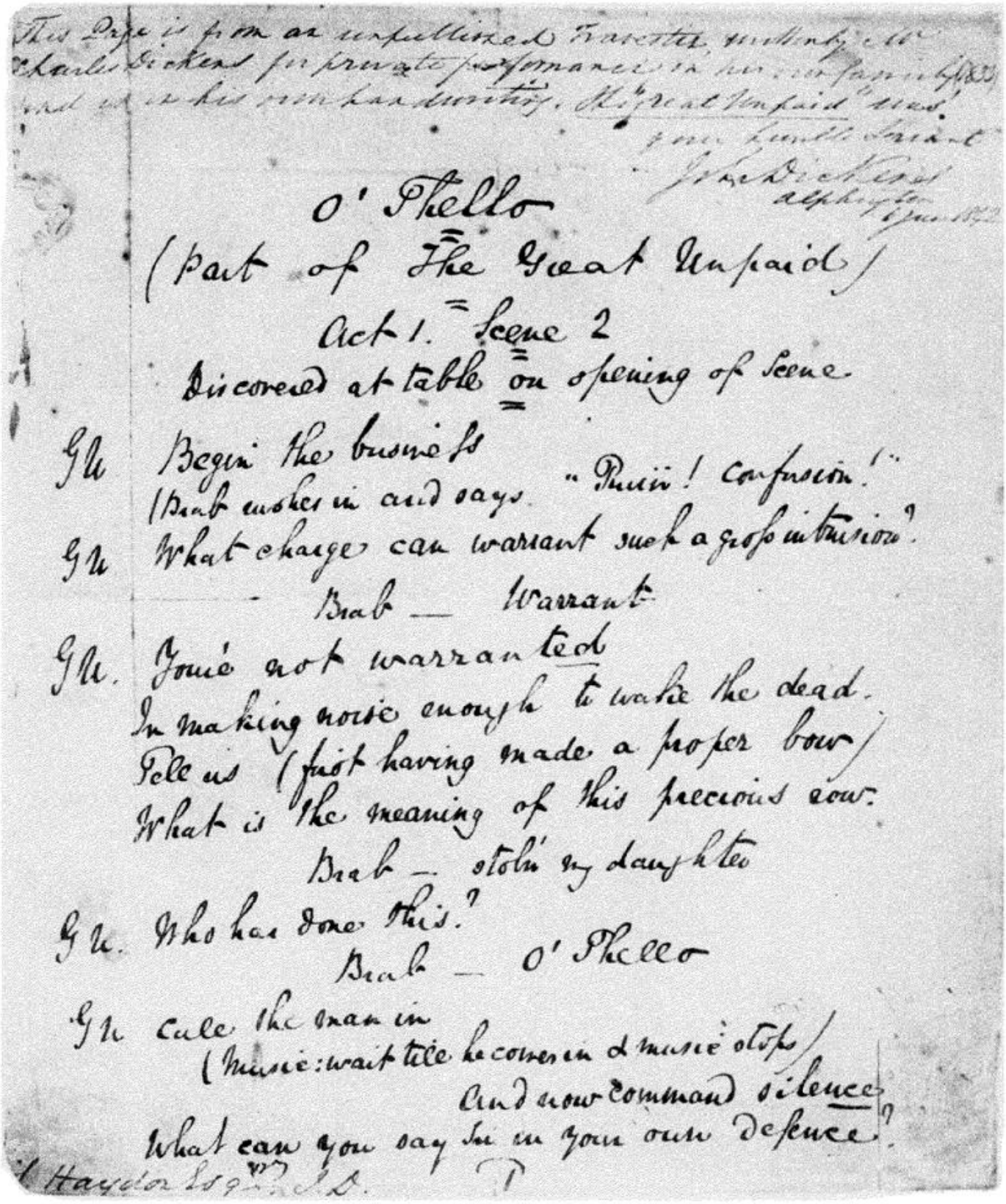
Although the manuscript of which this is a facsimile was listed and sold some years ago as "The earliest known Dickens manuscript," THE BILL OF FARE, printed on pp. 26-39 of this volume, proves to have been written a year or more previous.



This Page is from an unpublished Farcetta, written by Chas Dickens for private performance in 1833, and is in his own handwriting. The Great Unpaid was

O' Thello

(part of The Great Unpaid)

Act 1. Scene 2

Discovered at table on opening of Scene

Gh Begin the business

(Brab rushes in and says "Ruin! confusion!"

Gh What charge can warrant such a gross intrusion?

Brab — Warrant

Gh. Jou're not warranted

In making noise enough to wake the dead.

Tell us (first having made a proper bow)

What is the meaning of this precious row.

Brab — stole my daughter

Gh. Who has done this?

Brab — O' Thello

Gh Call the man in

(Music: wait till he comes in & music stops)

And now command silence

What can you say in in your own defence?

The earliest known Dickens Manuscript.

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CHARLES DICKENS

In 1835

Photographic facsimile of the original of the first etched portrait of Charles Dickens, by Phiz, now in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

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STUDIES OF DICKENS' CHARACTERS
BY PHIZ

Photographic facsimile from the original sketch in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

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GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

Containing five sketches of himself, the original design of "Oliver [Twist] asking for more," with sketched portrait of the Master of the Workhouse and "Hash Claypole."

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CHARLES DICKENS

Facsimile of original sketch of Dickens made by Pierre Morand at the Tremont House, Boston, January 23, 1842, the day after his arrival in America now in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

"When on Saturday evening, 22nd January, at their landing at the Boston wharf, a Press reception committee saluted Mr. Dickens from the shore, Mrs. Dickens called his attention to the inadequacy of his travelling costume for the occasion, when he nonchalantly replied: "Never mind that, dear, we are on the other side now."

"Next Sunday morning, however, he came down to the hotel parlor, dressed for a walk, precisely as represented in this sketch,—Navy blue cloth coat with gilt buttons, buff casimere vest and light gray trousers without the black band on the seams, and a somewhat heavy looking silk hat. He still wore the brown pea-coat as an overcoat, though he appeared in New York some weeks later in a more fashionable wrap. His expression, which was very changeable, seemed almost radiant on that morning, and upon being joined by his wife and Col. Normandy, he took a stroll over the Boston Common and some of the most notable streets, besides spending a brief time at a church."—PIERRE MORAND.

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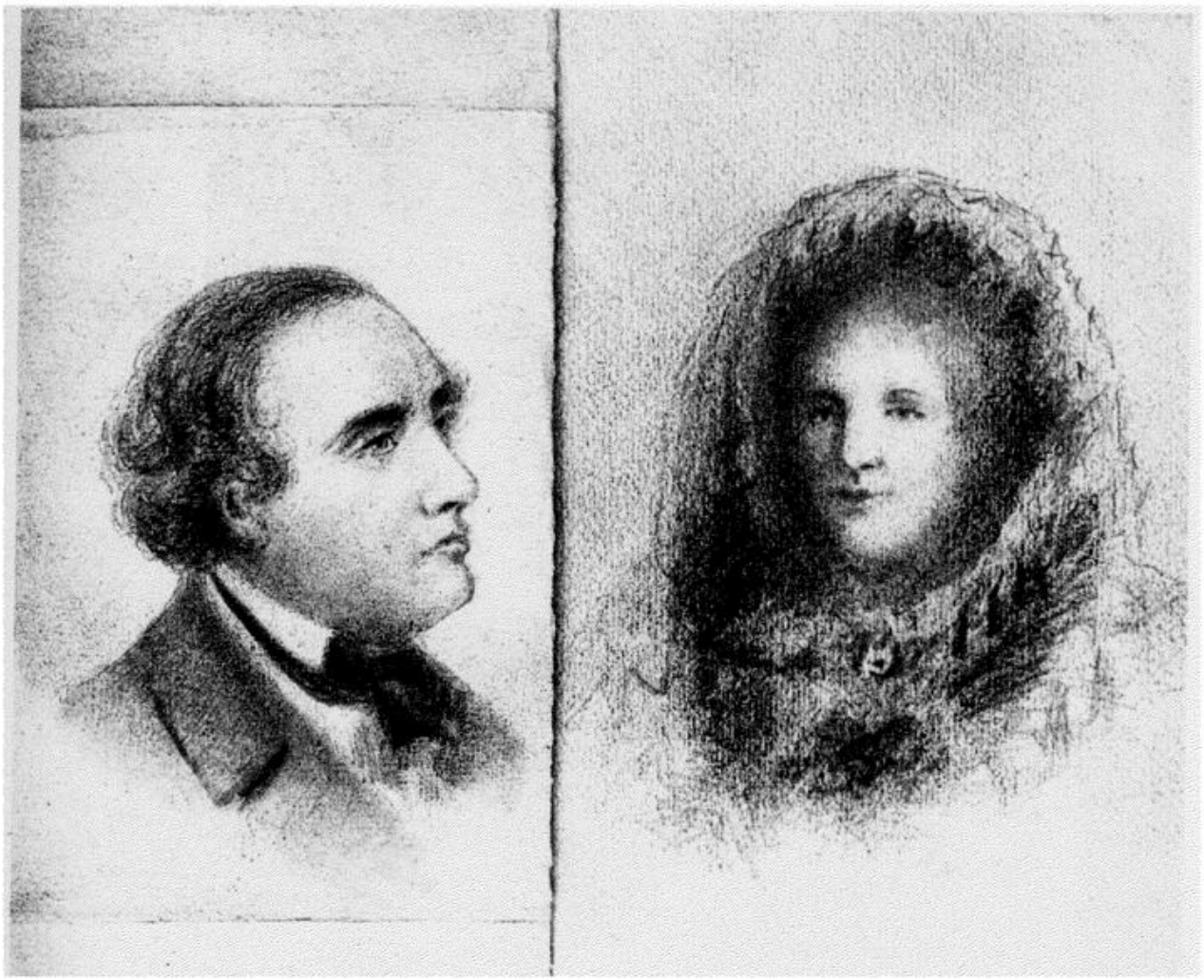
MR. AND MRS. CHARLES DICKENS

Photographic reproduction of original (unpublished) sketches made by Pierre Morand, an American, who sailed on the Britania with Mr. and Mrs. Dickens upon the occasion of their visit to America in January, 1842. The originals are in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.



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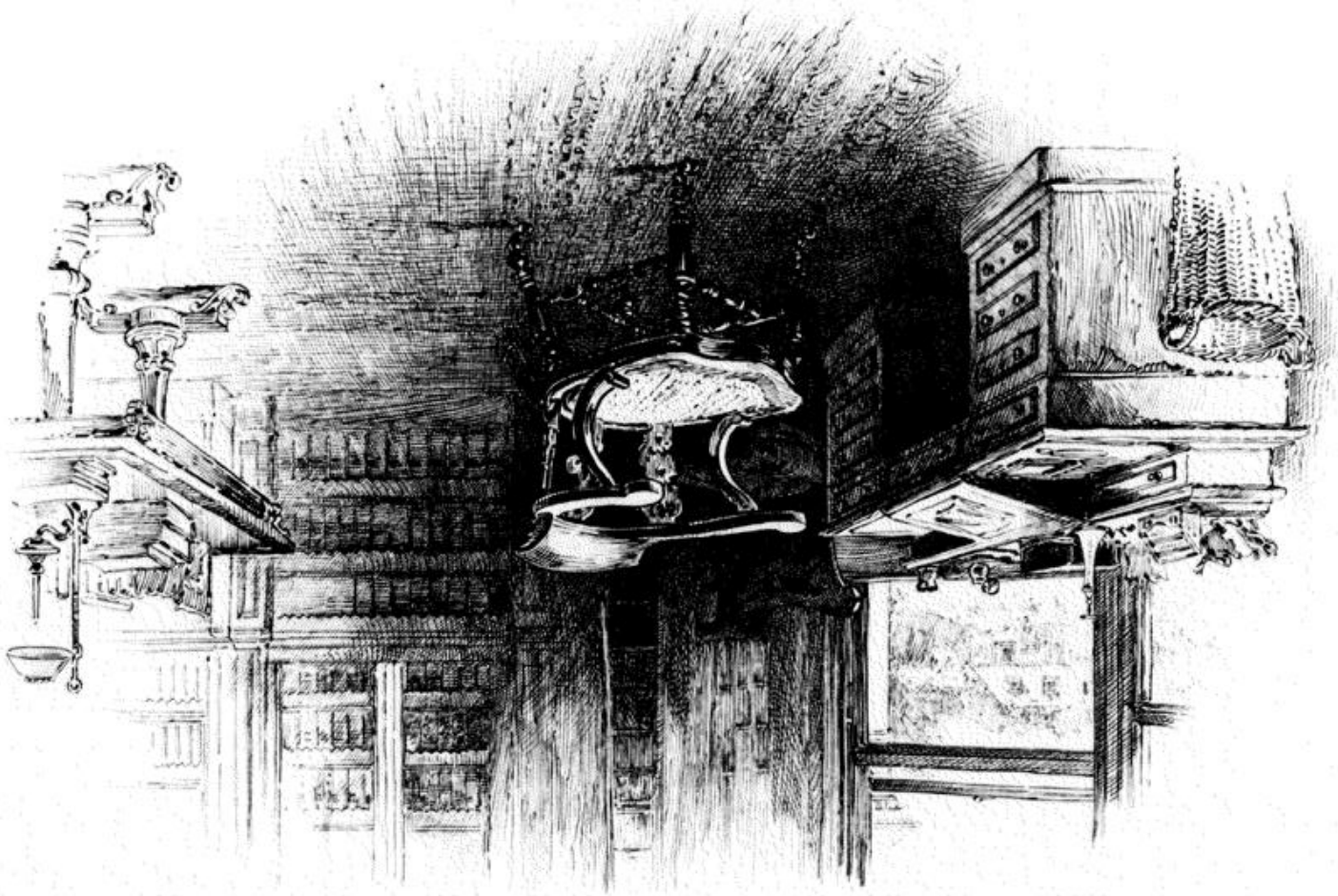
THE DICKENS ROOM

Engraved on copper by F. S. KING, for The Bibliophile Society.



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CHARLES DICKENS

Facsimile reproduction of an original (unpublished sketch by Pierre Morand,—in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

"This bust profile sketch was taken and nearly half finished on Sunday afternoon, 23rd January, 1842, while the original was standing at a window looking into the street. It being on a larger scale than the others, the likeness is greatly more perfect, and when I showed it to Mr. Dickens next morning, he was exceedingly pleased with it, though he pronounced it somewhat flattering. I do not remember any likeness of him published before the perfection of photography that expresses his character as faithfully as this." PIERRE MORAND

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GAD'S HILL PORCH

Sketched and engraved on copper by F. S. KING,
for The Bibliophile Society.

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CHARLES DICKENS

Photographic facsimile of the original (unpublished) drawing by Charles Martin,—now in the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby.

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The following invitation in rhyme, written by Charles Dickens, is addressed to Mark Lemon, the editor of *Punch.* It is signed by Charles Dickens as "T. Sparkler" (his signature as such is said to be unique), and by his wife and the two daughters, Mary and Katie. Mrs. Dickens' sister, Miss Georgina Hogarth, who is still living, was a member of the household at the time, and signed the invitation. About the time of separating from his wife, Dickens had a falling out with Mark Lemon and positively forbade the children "ever to see him or to speak to him," as will be seen by the letter printed on page 144.

New Song.

Tune – "Lesbia hath a beaming eye"

1.

Lemon is a little hissy-ah,
And this is Lemon's true position –
He is not pale, he's not white-hissed,
Yet wants a little fresh condition.
Sweeter 'tis to gaze upon
Old Bream's rising, falling, billers
Than on the Honest ugly one
That from the Street call'd Saint Anne's Willers!

Oh my Lemon round and fat
Oh my light, my right, my light'um,
Think a little what you're at –
Don't stay at home, but come to Brighton! –

/Please turn over/

Lemon has a coat of fierce,
But oh! so seldom Lemon wears it.
That it is a pity it bears it.
and ev'ry knot that's hungry, tears it.
oh! that coat's the coat for me.
that hates the railway sparks and sneers,
Leaving ev'ry engine free
To smoke it 'till its owner sneezes!

Then my Lemon rounds and fat
L, my bright, my right, my light'ner.
Think a little what you're at —
On Tuesday first come down to Brighton!

Catherine Dickens

Annie Leech

Georgina Hogarth

Mary Dickens.

Kate Dickens

John Leech.

T. Sparkles

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