Probably there is no single individual who, during the last fourteen years, has occupied so large a space in the thoughts of English folk as Charles Dickens. Not that these years have been by any means deficient in events. This time of profound peace (as it is officially designated) has seen many a contest fought out head to head, horn to horn, in the good old John Bull style. More than one combatant has distinguished himself from the herd, been hailed as a veritable hero by all his brethren, minus one, and worshipped accordingly. During these fourteen years kings have been turned from their thrones and set up again, unless killed by the fall; ministers have been ousted and reinstalled; demagogues have been carried on the popular shoulders, and then trampled under the popular feet; innumerable reputations have flared up and gone out; but the name and fame of Charles Dickens have been exempt from all vicissitude. One might suppose him born to falsify all the common-places about the fickleness of public favour, to give the lie to all the proverbs, to destroy the semblance of all the similes. In his case this same public favour is a tide that never ebbs, a moon that never wanes; his wheel of fortune has a spoke in it, and his popularis aura is a trade wind. Almost on his first appearance his own countrymen unanimously voted him a prophet, and have held by the doctrine with unrivalled devotion ever since. In every other subject men find matter for doubt, discussion, and quarrel; whether protection can be restored; whether corpses conduce to the health of congregations; whether man be what the Scotch folk call him—merely 'mon,' a curtailed monkey; whether Colonel Sibthorp’s beard be real; whether the Rev. R. Montgomery or Master J. Milton be the greater poet: everywhere the pugnacity natural to the human race finds room to join issue on.

And, specially confining ourselves to contemporary literature, we have heard men gravely doubt the philosophic depth of Bulwer, the perspicuity of Tennyson, the impartiality of Macaulay, and the orthodoxy of Carlyle: Dickens only dwells in a little Goshen of his own, away from the shadow of criticism. The very mention of his 'last number' in any social gathering, is sure to be the signal for a chorus of eager admiration. Go where you will, it is the same. There is not a fireside in the kingdom where the cunning fellow has not contrived to secure a corner for himself as one of the dearest, and, by this time, one of the oldest friends of the family. In his company the country squire shakes his jolly sides, the City merchant smooths his care-wrinkled forehead— as he tells his tale to misses in their teens, mammas, grandmamas, and maiden aunts—God bless them all—their eyes glisten and flow over with the precious diamond-drops of sympathy.

We have been told, that when The Old Curiosity Shop was drawing to a close, he received heaps of anonymous letters in female hands, imploring him 'not to kill little Nell.' The wretch ungallantly persisted in his murderous design, and those gentle readers only wept and forgave him.

How are we to account for this wide-spread popularity? Not because the author is faultless—he is too human for that; not because his plots are of absorbing interest—neither Shakespeare's nor Scott's are so; but because of his kindly, all-pervading charity, which would cover a multitude of failings, because of his genial humour and exquisite comprehension of the national character and manners, because of his tenderness, because of his purity, and, above all, because of his deep reverence for the household gods, his enthusiastic worship of the household gods.

By means of all these blandishments he has nestled close to our hearts, and most men would as soon think of dissecting a first cousin as of criticizing Charles Dickens. Moreover, he is so thoroughly English, and is now part and parcel of that mighty aggregate of national fame which we feel bound to defend on all points against every attack. Upon our every-day language his influence has been immense—for better or
worse. We began by using Wellerisms and Gampisms in fun, till they have got blended insensibly with our stock of conversational phrases; and now in our most serious moments we talk slang unwittingly, to the great disgust of the old school, who complain that, instead of seeking the well of English undeeped by Twickenham, we draw at haphazard from the muddy stream that has washed Mile End.

The truth is that people, as soon as they have done growing, set up for language, as for everything else, a fixed standard of perfection, and stigmatize all deviation by the name of corruption. Whereas in reality, fixity of phraseology would argue stagnation of thought. On the other hand, the increase of the national vocabulary may be regarded as a tolerably exact measure of the development of the national intelligence. Look at America. What a vast number of strange words and phrases have been coined, as exponents of strange things and strange doings! These again, by means of steam-presses and steam-ships, have been familiarized to England and her colonies, and, in spite of all purists, indissolubly amalgamated with the common mother-speech. A legion of academicians could not prevent it. By virtue of a law, as certain as the laws of physical motion or chemical combination, the slang of one age becomes the serious phraseology of the next. We have nothing for it but to submit, and talk like the rest of the world. After all, much that the purists censure as barbarism is nothing but genuine Saxon, which has been current by immemorial tradition in province or metropolis, and which is now once more introduced to polite life, its respectability being vouched for by a popular author or a good story.' Pantagruel, Sancho Panza, and Falstaff, are as guilty in their way as Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp; and for Dickens it may be said, to his eternal honour, that if he has corrupted our tongue ever so much, his whole efforts have been directed to purify our hearts.

The time will come when 'The Life of Charles Dickens' (in half-a-dozen volumes), will take its place beside the lives of Samuel Johnson and Walter Scott, when the curious public will be able to ascertain what

and whom he had to dinner on any given day (say the 1st of December, 1850), with all manner of statistics respecting the Lion's private life. Meanwhile we must be content with such scanty and scattered notices as he has given of himself in the prefaces to his various books, especially those prefixed to the recent cheap editions, which, from their unaffected modesty and exquisitely polished style, are among the most charming of his productions. They show that the author, while proud of his success, has not been spoilt by it. The blaze of triumph has not dazzled him.

We are not going to quote largely from what must be familiar to almost all our readers. We give only one passage from the preface to the last edition of Pickwick, which narrates the real origin of that 'world-famous' book:

I was a young man of three-and-twenty, when the present publishers, attracted by some pieces I was at that time writing in the Morning Chronicle newspaper (of which one series had lately been collected and published in two volumes, illustrated by my esteemed friend, Mr. George Cruikshank), waited upon me to propose a something that should be published in shilling numbers; then only known to me, or I believe to anybody else, by a dim recollection of certain in- terminable novels in that form, which used, some five-and-twenty years ago, to be carried about the country by pedlers, and of some of which I remember to have shed innumerable tears, before I served my apprenticeship to Life.

When I opened my door in Furnival's Inn to the managing partner who represented the firm, I recognized in him the person from whose hands I had bought, two or three years previously, and whom I had never seen before or since, my first copy of the magazine in which my first effusion—dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street—appeared in all the glory of print; on which occasion, by the bye—how well I recollect it—I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half-an-hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there. I told my visitor of the coincidence, which we both hailed as a good omen, and so fell to business.

This auspicious bargain was struck in 1835. Before the close of the 3c
following year 'Boz' was one of the most famous names in England. The young author had sprung at one bound over the heads of his elder rivals. He had penetrated into the very heart of public opinion, and carried it by storm before the advanced forts of criticism had had time to open their fire upon him. And so, when they did fire, it was only to hail the conqueror with a salvo of applause. For, if possession is nine-tenths of the law, it is all in all of the battle.

But a truce to these warlike metaphors, which cannot without force be applied to one who has done more, we verily believe, for the promotion of peace and goodwill between man and man, class and class, nation and nation, than all the congresses under the sun. One good joke and one general laugh melts reserve into hilarity, and converts the stiffest company into a set of 'jolly good fellows.' Boz, and men like Boz, are the true humanizers, and therefore the true pacificators, of the world. They sweep away the prejudices of class and caste, and disclose the common ground of humanity which lies beneath factitious, social, and national systems. They introduce the peasantry to the peerage, the grinder at the mill to the millionaire who owns the grist. They make John, Jean, and Jonathan, shake hands over the same board—which is not a board of green cloth by any means. Sam Weller, we suppose, made England more 'merry' than it had ever been since Falstaff drank, and roared, and panned, at the Globe Theatre. In the interval Britannia had grown haggard and sad, and worn with the double duty of taking care of the pence and providing sops for her lion to keep him content; and now, once more, the old lady laughed till the tears ran down her wrinkles. It has done her a world of good. La Belle France, too, who is somewhat chary of her applause, has condescended to pronounce Boz un gentil enfant; and Germany has learnt some things from him which were not dreamed of in her philosophy. For his fun is not mere fun. Had it been so we should have tired of it long ago. Deep truths are hidden, scarcely hidden, beneath. Bacchus and his rout would soon have palled on the taste of old Hellas, but for the mystic and solemn meanings that lurked beneath the external riot. The baskets, carried aloft, to all appearance filled only with 'various leaves,' contained in reality the sacred symbols of eternal verities. The mask grinned grotesquely, but you felt that grave, earnest eyes were watching you from behind it. So our sly philosopher dresses himself in motley to attract grown-up children to his chair. All experience, as embodied in a host of proverbs—those axioms of life—attests the wisdom of such a course. The preacher is left alone in the desert, while a summerset thrown in the street gathers a crowd at once. And if the mountebank cares to seize the opportunity, he can make the spectators auditors. Or, again, the lips of the chalice may be smeared with honey, though there is salutary absinthe in the draught.

And now that we are on classic ground, indulge us, gentle reader, in one more old saw (hacked though it be) for the sake of the modern instance, and instead of 'Horatius Flaccus,' please to read 'Charles Dickens.'

Omne vafer vitium ridenti Flaccus amico
Tangit et admissus circum prececordia ludit.

So wily Horace, while he strove to mend,
Probed every foible of his laughing friend,
Played lightly round and round the pock-

cant part,

And won unfelt an entrance to his heart.

We have read Pickwick many times over, each time with increased pleasure. Nevertheless, in these re-perusals we cannot fail to be made aware of certain defects which escape notice in the tumultuous applause of a first reception. The most notable of these defects is the change which takes place in the character of Mr. Pickwick and his friends, who from being at first purely ridiculous come in the end to be objects of our affectionate sympathy and admiration. The author has himself noticed this change in his recent preface:

I do not think this change will appear forced or unnatural to my readers if they will reflect, that in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man, who has anything whimsical about him, generally impress us first; and that it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we usually begin to look below these super-

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and what a name for a hero! — is a mere walking gentleman. Many of the characters — Smike and old Nickleby, for instance — are distorted out of all human compass. Arthur Griffe was a second edition of Trap-boys in the Fortunes of Nigel. Unfortunately, too, about this time, the young author seems to have conceived a notion that it was his mission to exterminate special abuses, and he went about the task with a zeal worthy of a Paladin or Herecules himself. This time he fixed on the cheap Yorkshire schools, which in real truth are by no means the hells of brimstone-and-treacle which he represented them to be. In those remote uplands twenty pounds a-year goes a great deal farther than in the populous districts, and will keep a boy well in corduroy dittos and cold mutton. One of the most famous of the schoolmasters thereabouts was unlucky enough to have only one eye, and a monosyllabic name beginning with S.; so that he was immediately dubbed Squeers, and his ‘establishment for young gentlemen’ Dotheboys Hall. The poor man’s occupation was gone, and the distress of mind consequent thereon was said to have shortened his nights and, ultimately, his days.

In the next novel, Oliver Twist, the monster marked out for attack was the New Poor Law. This ulterior object was so apparent, that the effect of the tale was in some degree marred. On the other hand, the fun of the tale diverted people from its serious object; and we are not sure even that the purpose was right. At all events the design failed; and the author, thenceforward, instead of framing his story to suit a moral, framed it to suit nature, and left the moral to shift for itself; which is a much more truthful, pleasant, and profitable method. Besides, these sweeping attacks are seldom wholly just or well-aimed. The reckless spirit of knight-errantry is prone to mistake windmills for giants.

Oliver Twist is the only novel in which one can trace any resemblance between Dickens and Ainsworth. Bill Sykes, and Fagin, and Nancy, might have been creations of the latter. The Artful Dodger, however, is a ‘kinchin’ of Dickens’s own brain.
Master Humphrey's Clock appeared in a new form, and at weekly instead of monthly intervals. Mr. Pickwick and the Wellers were resuscitated without much success. But the machinery of the clock was soon found to be as cumbrous as that of the club, and discarded accordingly. The Old Curiosity Shop, with Dick Swiveller to laugh at, Quilp to hate, and little Nell to love, made amends for all. Only Tom Moore has cause to complain, that after Mr. Swiveller's misquotations his melodies can never be taken en sérieux again.

Barnaby Rudge had been advertised to appear years before as a romance in three volumes, under the name of 'Gabriel Varden.' Perhaps it was in part composed before Pickwick. A Scott-ish influence is palpable throughout. The opening scene, for example, at the village inn, reminds one of Kenilworth; the assault on Newgate sniffs strongly of the Heart of Mid-Lothian. The Raven, we are informed, was taken from the life,—a favourite pet of the author's having kindly sat for the portrait. We have heard that one of his friends, an indifferent punster, observed on some social occasion that Dickens was raven-mad; the only foundation for a story generally current about that time, that he was raving-mad,—he being all the while as sane as ever, that is, as nearly allied to sanity as a 'great wit' can be.

About this time Dickens made an expedition to America. There he was received as if he had been a sovereign or a soprano; feasted, fêted, banqueted, and bored to death. On his return he wrote the American Notes, which, though conceived generally in a kindly spirit, grievously disappointed the expectations of our Transatlantic brothers. The rage they manifested throws some doubt on the genuineness of their hospitality. They had counted on praise for their pudding. The quiet banter to which we in England had been long ago accustomed was incomprehensible to them. There was one passage, especially, about a drove of pigs which Charles Dickens met on the road, which excited their ire amazingly. That matter-of-fact people cannot understand a joke, and persisted in fixing upon the unconscious author some arrière pensée. Another chapter about the slave-trade was peculiarly riling, since it consisted chiefly of extracts from their own newspapers and indisputable facts. Let an American be the strongest possible abolitionist at home, he is always prepared to defend slavery against all attacks from without.

We will venture to say, that none of the multifarious criminals who have fled for refuge to the bosom of the Republic, ever deserved a tenth part of the abuse that was lavished on Dickens. One of our friends happened to be at a theatre at Boston, and witnessed a travesty of Macbeth. Into the witches' caldron were thrown all the most useless things on earth—Pennsylvania bonds, Mexican rifles, &c. &c. Finally, as a ne plus ultra, was consigned to the infernal flame 'Dickens's last new work,' amid the applause of the happy gods.

This unmerited abuse put our author on his mettle. So he laid the scene of his next novel, Martin Chuzzlewit, partly in America, in order to show that sensitive young people what he could say of them when no friendly recollections bound him to reticence. The exasperation, of course, increased tenfold; and if we may judge from the sentiments of casual 'statemen,' still continues unaltered. We have heard more than one apathetic-looking stranger express a savage desire to 'lick' him the next opportunity. On the former occasion they only licked his shoes. But, we suppose Dickens would no more dream of showing himself in Broadway, than Haymow of revisiting London.

Mrs. Gamp, the virtual heroine of this tale, achieved a tremendous success. The United Kingdom pealed and repealed with laughter, though we suspect that the mothers of England looked upon a monthly nurse as too sacred a character to be jested with. Mrs. Harris was a glorious creation, or rather conception. Only the numerous and respectable persons who hear that name must feel themselves aggrieved, for their very existence is now made a matter of doubt. By one breath of the magician the solid flesh-and-blood of all the Harrises has been volatilized into a hypothetical phantom.
Talking of phantoms brings us to the Winter Tales, now five in all—
the Carol, the Chimes, the Cricket, the Battle of Life, and the Haunted Man. One might have expected that, _à propos_ of this genial season, this time of immemorial saturnalia, we should have been treated to a duo-
decimo of pure fun, and riot, and frolic, like Blindman’s-buff, or Hunt-
the-slipper. The reverse, however, is the case; in spite of a few comic
touches, the tone of these tales is sad and solemn. They seem to have
been inspired by the night-winds wailing without, and not at all by the
Yule-logs roaring within. In consequence, these tales are the least
popular of all his works. Besides,
the metaphysics and the ghosts do
not harmonize. There is a natural
antipathy between the two. They
cannot be co-existent. Each class
feels itself to be an anachronism in
the presence of the other. We can-
ot conceive Aristotle or Archbishop
Whately being haunted. There-
fore, in this false position, the meta-
physics grow hazy, and the ghosts
prosy; which, indeed, ghosts are
always apt to be. Darius, and Ham-
net the elder, and the White Lady,
were obviously, none of them, on
speaking terms with the _soul of wit._

Dickens’s ghosts, however, are ani-
mated by the best motives, and come
from below to enforce the angels’
message—Peace and goodwill. He
who lies awake of a winter’s night to
listen to the music of these chimes
will rise in the morning, if a sadder,
yet a wiser and better man. They
ring, as Tennyson would have his
Christmas Bells ring,—

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light;
The year is dying in the night:
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow;
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor;
Ring in redress for all mankind.

* * * * *

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right;
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold,
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

May the time come—we trust
that it is even now coming—when a
peal like this shall ring out from
every town, every village, and every
lonely upland church, frightening away,
as of old, the evil spirits from men’s
souls! Let the night-winds howl
never so loud, or the earth be muf-
fled never so deep with snow, that
chime shall be heard by all with
the mind’s ear, and the burden of
the music shall be, Peace and Good-
will, Goodwill and Peace—the old
words still.

While upon the subject of the
minor works we ought not to omit
all mention of the _Pictures from Italy_,
which was the result of a Continental
tour, and, we have no doubt, paid
the expenses of the same. Like all
that has ever come from that pen,
it is pleasant, amiable, and readable;
but still we are of opinion that such
success as it had was due rather
to the established reputation of the
author than to the intrinsic merits
of the book. Italy, ‘cradle of the
arts,’ and all the rest that Corinne
says it is, might be covered through-
out its length and breadth with the
sheets which have been written and
printed about it during the present
century. We have had Classical
Tours, Artistic Tours, Mediæval-
antiquities-and-Machicolated-battle-
ments Tours,—all more or less dull
and valuable. There is still room
for a Manners-and-customs-of-the-
lower-orders Tour, such as we ex-
pected, and did not find, in Mrs.
Stisted’s _Highways and Byways_.

Now Dickens, we should suppose, is
not profoundly versed either in old
Latin or modern Italian, and he is too
honest to pretend it; he has no sterling
knowledge of art, and despises
the spurious cant of connoisseur-
ship, so his observation was necessa-
rially confined to the _still life_ of Italy;
and his ‘Pictures’ are mere flower
and fruit pieces, pretty enough in
their way, but far inferior to those
larger ‘Pictures from England,’ which
are executed with all the humour of
Ward, the piety of Redgrave, and the brilliancy of Muradny. To them we return with a feeling of pleasure, akin to the pleasure of coming home.

_Dombey and Son_ has been out so long that everybody must have read it, and so lately that nobody can have forgotten it. We therefore pass over it, not without a tearful glance at little Paul's coffin, and a smile of recognition for Toots and Captain Cuttle; and proceed to the examination of our new friend, _David Copperfield_, who, after many trials, was at length happily settled for life on the 31st of October. This, the last, is, in our opinion, the best of all the author's fictions. The plot is better contrived, and the interest more sustained, than in any other. Here there is no sickly sentiment, no prolix description, and scarcely a trace of exaggerated passion. The author's taste has become gradually more and more refined; his style has got to be more easy, graceful, and natural. The principal groups are delineated as carefully as ever; but instead of the elaborate Dutch painting to which we had been accustomed in his backgrounds and accessories, we have now a single vigorous touch here and there, which is far more artistic and far more effective. His winds do not howl, nor his seas roar through whole chapters, as formerly; he has become better acquainted with his readers, and ventures to leave more to their imagination. This is the first time that the hero has been made to tell his own story,—a plan which generally ensures something like epic unity for the tale. We have several reasons for suspecting that, here and there, under the name of David Copperfield, we have been favoured with passages from the personal history, adventures, and experience, of Charles Dickens. Indeed, this conclusion is in a manner forced upon us by the peculiar professions selected for the ideal character, which is first a newspaper reporter and then a famous novelist. There is, moreover, an air of reality pervading the whole book, to a degree never attained in any of his previous works, and which cannot be entirely attributed to the mere form of narration. We will extract one of the passages which seem most unquestionably autobiographical, and which have, therefore, a double interest for the reader (the 'book,' in all probability, was _Pickwick_):—

I laboured hard at my book, without allowing it to interfere with the punctual discharge of my newspaper duties; and it came out and was very successful. I was not stunned by the praise which sounded in my ears, notwithstanding that I was keenly alive to it, and thought better of my own performance, I have little doubt, than anybody else did. It has always been in my observation of human nature, that a man who has any good reason to believe in himself never flourishes himself before the faces of other people in order that they may believe in him. For this reason, I retained my modesty in very self-respect; and the more praise I got, the more I tried to deserve.

It is not my purpose, in this record, though in all other essentials it is my written memory, to pursue the history of my own fictions. They express themselves, and I leave them to themselves. When I refer to them, incidentally, it is only as a part of my progress.

Having some foundation for believing, by this time, that nature and accident had made me an author, I pursued my vocation with confidence. Without such assurance I should certainly have left it alone, and bestowed my energy on some other undertaking. I should have tried to find out what nature and accident really had made me, and to be that, and nothing else.

I had been writing, in the newspaper and elsewhere, so prosperously, that when my new success was achieved I considered myself reasonably entitled to escape from the dreary debates. One joyful night, therefore, I noted down the music of the parliamentary bagpipes for the last time, and I have never heard it since; though I still recognize the old drone in the newspapers, without any substantial variation (except, perhaps, that there is more of it), all the livelong session.

_David Copperfield_ the Younger was born at Blunderstone, near Yarmouth—there is really a village of that name. We do not know whether Charles Dickens was born there too; at all events, the number and minuteness of the local details indicate an intimate knowledge of, and fondness for, Yarmouth and its neighbourhood—which are anything but charming at first sight, or on a slight acquaintance. We have reason, however, to believe that the sons of the land are as honest and true-hearted Englishmen as you will find.
anywhere. We are indebted to one of them for the information that the local details in *Copperfield* are singularly accurate, only in one place he says ‘the sands’ where he ought, in Yarmouth phrase, to have said ‘the deens.' Our friend also says that he has detected many Norfolk provincialisms in Dickens; for instance, he talks of ‘standing anything up,’ where in current English one says ‘setting’ or ‘placing.’ Our author probably uses such phrases wittingly, in order to recommend them for general adoption.

Dickens is always great on the subject of childhood — that sunny time, as it is conventionally called, but which, as Dickens represents it, and as we recollect it, is somewhat showery withal. Little David is quite as successful a portrait as little Paul. Who cannot confirm, from his own earliest recollections, the exquisite truth of the following passage? —

There is nothing half so green that I know anywhere, as the grass of that churchyard; nothing half so shady as its trees; nothing half so quiet as its tombstones. The sheep are feeding there, when I kneel up, early in the morning, in my little bed in a closet within my mother’s room, to look out at it; and I see the red light shining on the sun-dial, and think within myself, ‘Is the sun-dial glad, I wonder, that it can tell the time again?’

Here is our pew in the church. What a high-backed pew! With a window near it, out of which our house can be seen, and to be seen many times during the morning’s service, by Peggotty, who likes to make herself as sure as she can that it’s not being robbed, or is not in flames. But though Peggotty’s eye wanders, she is much offended if mine does, and frowns to me, as I stand upon the seat, that I am to look at the clergyman. But I can’t always look at him — I know him without that white thing on, and I am afraid of his wondering why I stare so, and perhaps stopping the service to inquire — and what am I to do? It’s a dreadful thing to gape, but I must do something. I look at my mother, but she pretends not to see me. I look at a boy in the aisle, and he makes faces at me. I look at the sunlight coming in at the open door through the porch, and there I see a stray sheep — I don’t mean a sinner, but mutton — half making up his mind to come into the church. I feel that if I looked at him any longer, I might be tempted to say something out loud; and what would become of me then? I look up at the monumental tablets on the wall, and try to think of Mr. Bodgers late of this parish, and what the feelings of Mrs. Bodgers must have been, when affliction sore long time. Mr. Bodgers bore, and physicians were in vain. I wonder whether they called in Mr. Chillip, and he was in vain; and if so, how he likes to be reminded of it once a week. I look from Mr. Chillip, in his Sunday neckcloth, to the pulpit; and think what a good place it would be to play in, and what a castle it would make, with another boy coming up the stairs to attack it, and having the velvet cushion with the tassels thrown down on his head. In time my eyes gradually shut up; and, from seeming to hear the clergyman singing a drowsy song in the heat, I hear nothing, until I fall off the seat with a crash, and am taken out, more dead than alive, by Peggotty.

And now I see the outside of our house, with the latticed bedroom-windows standing open to let in the sweet-smelling air, and the ragged old rooks’ nests still dangling in the elm-trees at the bottom of the front garden. Now I am in the garden at the back, beyond the yard where the empty pigeon-house and dog-kennel are — a very preserve of butterflies, as I remember it, with a high fence, and a gate and padlock; where the fruit clusters on the trees, riper and richer than fruit has ever been since, in any other garden, and where my mother gathers some in a basket, while I stand by, boltling furtive gooseberries, and trying to look unmoved. A great wind rises, and the summer is gone in a moment. We are playing in the winter twilight, dancing about the parlour. When my mother is out of breath, and rests herself in an elbow-chair, I watch her winding her bright curls round her fingers, and straitening her waist, and nobody knows better than I do that she likes to look so well, and is proud of being so pretty.

On the whole, these early numbers, for their freshness of tone, their naturalness, and their quiet pathos, are perhaps superior to all the rest. One is tempted to make in favour of Dickens’s fictitious children the wish which in our own childhood we fondly expressed in reference to kittens and lambs, namely, that they might never grow up into cats and sheep respectively. *Dixi alter visum.*

Further on, how well the petty tyrannies and manifold meannesses of Salem House are contrasted with the mild and manly régime of Dr. Strong! — a broad hint to parents.
and guardians, who turn away from the good old grammar-schools, with their endowed masters (endowed in more senses than one), and send their children and wards to some ignorant charlatan, who by dint of shameless puffing induces a gullible public to try his newly-invented hothed for young minds. We should like to send those schoolmasters abroad.

Miss Trotwood, the kind-hearted ogress of an aunt, fortiter in modo, suaviter in re, is excellent throughout, though her admiration for Mr. Dick passes the bounds of probability. About the husband, too, there is a mystery ending in nothing. The Micawbers, both Mr. and Mrs., are glorious, with their long speeches, reckless improvidence, everlasting troubles, and hearty appetites; they must be of Irish extraction, though the author does not say so. We never read anything more deliciously absurd, more exquisitely ludicrous, than the following:

'We all came back again,' replied Mrs. Micawber. 'Since then, I have consulted other branches of my family on the course which it is most expedient for Mr. Micawber to take; for I maintain that he must take some course, Master Copperfield,' said Mrs. Micawber, argumentatively. 'It is clear that a family of six, not including a domestic, cannot live upon air.'

'Certainly, ma'am,' said I.

'The opinion of those other branches of my family,' pursued Mrs. Micawber, 'is, that Mr. Micawber should immediately turn his attention to coals.'

'To what, ma'am?'

'To coals,' said Mrs. Micawber. 'To the coal trade. Mr. Micawber was induced to think, on inquiry, that there might be an opening for a man of his talent in the Medway Coal Trade. Then, as Mr. Micawber very properly said, the first step to be taken clearly was, to come and see the Medway. Which we came and saw. I say 'we,' Master Copperfield; for I never will,' said Mrs. Micawber, with emotion, 'I never will desert Mr. Micawber.'

I murmured my admiration and approbation.

'We came,' repeated Mrs. Micawber, 'and saw the Medway. My opinion of the coal trade on that river is, that it may require talent, but that it certainly requires capital. Talent, Mr. Micawber has; capital, Mr. Micawber has not. We saw, I think, the greater part of the Medway; and that is my individual conclusion. Being so near here, Mr. Mi-

cawber was of opinion that it would be rash not to come on, and see the Cathedral. Firstly, on account of its being so well worth seeing, and our never having seen it; and, secondly, on account of the great probability of something turning up in a cathedral town. We have been here,' said Mrs. Micawber, 'three days. Nothing has, as yet, turned up; and it may not surprise you, my dear Master Copperfield, so much as it would a stranger, to know that we are at present waiting for a remittance from London to discharge our pecuniary obligations at the hotel. Until the arrival of that remittance,' said Mrs. Micawber, with much feeling, 'I am cut off from my home (I allude to lodgings in Pen-tonville), from my boy and girl, and from my twins.'

One of the finest passages to be found in this, or indeed any, book, is that description of the storm at Yarmouth, which flings the dead body of the seducer on the shore, to lie amid the wrecks of the home he had desolated. The power of the artist impresses such an air of reality upon it all, that we do not think of questioning the probability of such poetical justice.

We have said that in David Copperfield there was scarcely a trace of exaggerated passion. But for Rosa Dartle, we should have said there was no trace. Her character we must think unnatural, and her conduct melodramatic. A wound, even on a woman's cheek, inflicted by a child in a fit of passion, is not a sufficient cause to turn all the tenderness of that woman's nature to bitterness. It is impossible that any woman could have behaved as she did when David brought to Mrs. Steerforth the news of her only son's death:

'Rosa!' said Mrs. Steerforth, 'come to me!' She came, but with no sympathy or gentleness. Her eyes gleamed like fire as she confronted her mother, and broke into a frightful laugh. 'Now,' she said, 'is your pride appeased, you madwoman? Now has he made atonement to you——with his life! Do you hear?——His life!' Mrs. Steerforth, fallen back stiffly in her chair, and making no sound but a moan, cast her eyes upon her with a wide stare. 'Ay!' cried Rosa, smiting herself passionately on the breast, 'look at me! Moan, and groan, and look at me! Look here! Striking the scar, 'at your dead child's handy-work!'
The moan the mother uttered, from time to time, went to my heart. Always the same. Always inarticulate and stifled. Always accompanied with an incapable motion of the head, but with no change of face. Always proceeding from a rigid mouth and closed teeth, as if the jaw were locked and the face frozen up in pain.

‘Do you remember when he did this?’ she proceeded. ‘Do you remember when, in his inheritance of your nature, and in your pampering of his pride and passion, he did this, and disfigured me for life? Look at me, marked until I die with his high displeasure; and moan and groan for what you made him!’

‘Miss Dartle,’ I entreated her. ‘For Heaven’s sake——’

‘I will speak!’ she said, turning on me with her lightning eyes. ‘Be silent, you! Look at me, I say, proud mother of a proud false son! Moan for your nurture of him, moan for your corruption of him, moan for your loss of him, moan for mine!’

She clenched her hand, and trembled through her spare, worn figure, as if her passion were killing her by inches.

‘You, resent his selfish!’ she exclaimed. ‘You, injured by his haughty temper! You, who opposed to both, when your hair was grey, the qualities which made both when you gave him birth! You, who from his cradle reared him to be what he was, and stunted what he should have been! Are you rewarded, now, for your years of trouble?’

‘O Miss Dartle, shame! O cruel!’

‘I tell you,’ she returned, ‘I will speak to her. No power on earth should stop me, while I was standing here! Have I been silent all these years, and shall I not speak now? I loved him better than you ever loved him!’ turning on her fiercely. ‘I could have loved him, and asked no return. If I had been his wife, I could have been the slave of his caprices for a word of love a-year. I should have been. Who knows it better than I? You were exacting, proud, punctilious, selfish. My love would have been devoted—would have trod your paltry whimpering under foot!’

With flashing eyes, she stamped upon the ground as if she actually did it.

And so she continues for a page more, with still increasing violence. Similarly, that scene where she seeks out the poor unfortunate Emily, to trample upon and triumph over her, shocks us by its un feminine violence. Even were such a scene ever so natural, ever so probable, it would be wearisome from its length. Whatever conveys to the reader’s mind unmingled pain and horror, should be dispatched as quickly and as lightly as possible, not dwelt upon. Rosa Dartle is not a being cast in the same mould of humanity as those around her; and she destroys the harmony of the picture. Such a character is as incongruous and out of place as one of the tragedy queens from a minor theatre would be parading the Strand in full costume in common daylight. Fortunately Miss Dartle is not one of the most prominent characters, and only parades a back street, not the main thoroughfare, of the story. Mrs. Dombey, in the former tale, was a blemish of the same kind, only more conspicuous. We hope the genus is becoming extinct, and that the next fictitious world of our author’s creation will contain only the familiar animals, and be free from the visitations of any similar Mastodon. Such creatures are common in the Radcliffian formations. If resuscitated in our era, they can be nothing but galvanized fossils, salient anarchisms, frightful to all men.

This last paragraph of ours, which began in English, has slid somehow into Carlylese; which brings us to the Latter-Day Pamphlets in general, and No. II. in particular—that on Model Prisons—which has an immediate connexion with our present subject, inasmuch as our author has consigned his two villains-in-chief, Heep and Littimer, to one of these establishments, with the double purpose of punishing the former and satirizing the latter. Fourteen years ago he exposed (by means of the resolute Piekwick) our system, if it could be called, of Imprisonment for Debt; now he assails our system, systematized to the last degree, of Imprisonment for Crime. Then, we left our debtors to rot unheeded, as if they had been the most hopeless of criminals; now, we cherish the malefactors, as if they had been the bene-factors, of society. Then, we persecuted Misfortune, now, we pamper Vice. We have rushed from extreme to extreme, missing in our haste that most precious of all things, the golden mean. Our Humanity has sickened, died, and been corrupted into Humanitarianism. We admit that the error is not willful, nay, that it may arise

End here. Or instead, could include the next pages on model prisons in order to capture the comparison to Carlyle on bottom of page 709 ("...no one is more instrumental than Dickens in fostering [the] spirit of charity...")
from the kindest and noblest motives; but for all that, the actual damage inflicted on society may be, we believe, great. Our kind and noble-hearted pilots, being not over-skilled in navigation, in their fear that the ship might strike upon Seylla, have put her head round and run her into Charybdis, which notable whirlpool swallows up a vast amount of the crew’s bread and other stores, without much chance of our being able to find them after any assignable number of days.

Let us hear Carlyle’s description of a model prison, as given in No. II. the pamphlet before alluded to:

Several months ago, some friends took me with them to see one of the London Prisons; a Prison of the exemplary or model kind. An immense circuit of buildings; cut out, girt with a high ring-wall, from the lanes and streets of the quarter, which is a dim and crowded one. Gateway as to a fortified place; then a spacious court, like the square of a city; broad staircases, passages to interior courts; fronts of stately architecture all round. It lodges some thousand or twelve-hundred prisoners, besides the officers of the establishment. Surely one of the most perfect buildings, within the compass of London. We looked at the apartments, sleeping-cells, dining-rooms, working-rooms, general courts or special and private; excellent all, the se-plut-utra of human care and ingenuity; in my life I never saw so clean a building; probably no Duke in England lives in a mansion of such perfect and thorough cleanliness.

The bread, the cocoa, soup, meat, all the various sorts of food, in their respective cooking-places, was really found of excellence superlative. The prisoners sat at work, light work, picking oakum, and the like, in airy apartments with glass-rafts, of agreeable temperature and perfect ventilation; silent, or at least conversing only by secret signs: others were out, taking their hour of promenade in clean flagged courts; methodic composure, cleanliness, peace, substantial wholesome comfort reigned everywhere supreme. The women in other apartments, some notable murderesses among them, all in the like state of methodic composure and substantial wholesome comfort, sat sewing: in long ranges of washhouses, drying-houses, and whatsoever pertains to the getting up of clean linen, were certain others, with all conceivable mechanical furtherances, not too arduously working. The notable murderesses were, though with great precautions of privacy, pointed out to us; and we were requested not to look openly at them, or seem to notice them at all, as it was found to ‘cherish their vanity,’ when visitors looked at them. Schools too were there; intelligent teachers of both sexes, studiously instructing the still ignorant of these thieves.

Now let us hear Dickens, who follows as junior on the same side. (We ought to premise, for the benefit of those who have not yet read Copperfield, if such there be, that Mr. Creakle was the tyrannous schoolmaster who nearly bullied little David’s incipient manliness out of him, and is a Middlesex magistrate, and leading Humanitarian. Not that the Humanitarians are all Creakeles, by any means.)

As we were going through some of the magnificent passages, I inquired of Mr. Creakle and his friends what were supposed to be the main advantages of this all-governing and universally over-riding system? I found them to be the perfect isolation of prisoners—so that no one man in confinement there knew anything about another; and the reduction of prisoners to a wholesome state of mind, leading to sincere contrition and repentance.

Now, it struck me, when we began to visit individuals in their cells, and to traverse the passages in which those cells were, and to have the manner of the going to chapel and so forth, explained to us, that there was a strong probability of the prisoners knowing a good deal about each other, and of their carrying on a pretty complete system of intercourse. This, at the time I write, has been proved, I believe, to be the case; but, as it would have been flat blasphemy against the system, we have refrained from such a doubt, then, I looked out for the penitence as diligently as I could.

And here, again, I had great misgivings. I found as prevalent a fashion in the form of the penitence, as I had left outside in the forms of the coats and waistcoats in the windows of the tailors-shops. I found a vast amount of profession, varying very little in character: varying very little (which I thought exceedingly suspicious), even in words. I found a great many foxes, disparaging whole vineyards of inaccessible grapes; but I found very few foxes whom I would have trusted within reach of a bunch. Above all, I found that the most professing men were the greatest objects of interest; and that their conceit, their vanity, their want of excitement, and their love of deception (which many of them possessed to an almost incredible extent, as their histories showed), all
prompted to these professions, and were all gratified by them.

However, I heard so repeatedly, in the course of our goings to and fro, of a certain Number Twenty-seven, who was the favourite, and who really appeared to be a Model Prisoner, that I resolved to suspend my judgment until I should see Twenty-seven. Twenty-Eight, I understood, was also a bright particular star; but it was his misfortune to have his glory a little dimmed by the extraordinary lusture of Twenty-seven. I heard so much of Twenty-seven, of his pious admonitions to everybody around him, and of the beautiful letters he constantly wrote to his mother (whom he seemed to consider in a very bad way), that I became quite impatient to see him.

I had to restrain my impatience for some time, on account of Twenty-seven being reserved for a concluding effect. But at last we came to the door of his cell; and Mr. Cratchit, looking through a little hole in it, reported to us, in a state of the greatest admiration, that he was reading a hymn-book.

There was such a rush of heads immediately to see Number Twenty-seven reading his hymn-book, that the little hole was blocked up, six or seven heads deep. To remedy this inconvenience, and give us an opportunity of conversing with Twenty-seven in all his purity, Mr. Cratchit directed the door of the cell to be unlocked, and Twenty-seven to be invited out into the passage. This was done; and whom should Traddles and I then behold, to our amazement, in this converted Number Twenty-seven, but Uriah Heep!

He knew us directly; and said, as he came out, with the old writh,—

'How do you do, Mr. Copperfield? How do you do, Mr. Traddles?'

This recognition caused a general admiration in the party. I rather thought that every one was struck by his not being proud, and taking notice of us.

'Well, Twenty-seven,' said Mr. Cratchit, respectfully admiring him, 'how do you find yourself to-day?'

'I am very well, sir,' replied Uriah Heep.

'You are always so, Twenty-seven,' said Mr. Cratchit.

Here another gentleman asked, with extreme anxiety,—

'Are you quite comfortable?'

'Yes, I thank you, sir,' said Uriah Heep, looking in that direction. 'Far more comfortable here, than ever I was outside. I see my follies now, sir. That's what makes me comfortable.'

Several gentlemen were much affected; and a third questioner, forcing himself to

the front, inquired with extreme feeling, 'How do you find the beef?'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Uriah, glancing in the new direction of this voice, 'it was tougher yesterday than I could wish, but it's my duty to bear. I have committed follies, gentlemen,' said Uriah, looking round with a meek smile, 'and I ought to bear the consequences without repining.'

A murmur, partly of gratification at Twenty-seven's celestial state of mind, and partly of indignation against the contractor who had given him any cause of complaint (a note of which was immediately made by Mr. Cratchit), having subsided, Twenty-seven stood in the midst of us, as if he felt himself the principal object of merit in a highly meritorious museum.

The inference at which Dickens hints is identical with that which Carlyle draws; that is to say, an entire condemnation of the whole system. When from points of view so widely different two independent observers have come to the same conclusion, we have the strongest presumption that the said conclusion is right. When a fortress, or bastille, is attacked by strong bodies from opposite quarters at the same time, the said fortress, or bastille, is in imminent danger. If the garrison do not forthwith bring some cogent arguments, or some practical proofs to bear upon the foe, their cause is lost.

The coincidence of opinion between the two writers is the more remarkable, as they are probably divided in opinion upon every other subject, secular or sacred. We even remember a passage in Dombey and Son which looks like an overt declaration of war against the priest of Hero-worship.

However this may be, it is certain that no one has been more instrumental than Dickens in fostering that spirit of kindly charity which impels a man to do what he can, however narrow his sphere of action may be, to relieve the sufferings and to instruct the ignorance of his brethren; while Carlyle, on the other hand, treats all such efforts with lofty disdain, and would call them mere attempts to tap an ocean by gimlet-holes, or some such disparaging metaphor. But that is neither here nor there. What we are concerned with just now is, that we
have two men, shrewd observers both, who, starting from the opposite poles of opinion, have for once coincided on a practical question. Fortunately both these gentlemen have front seats on the platform, and are sure of a hearing; we in the body of the room, though sorely incommoded by stouter and taller men, can yet manage to raise our humble voice and cheer both the speakers as they denounce the grievous injustice of taxing the honest labourer to support the lazy thief; and the grievous impolicy of making the gaol more comfortable than the cottage.

The moral duties of every individual are threefold in their aspect; they have relation, first, to the God who is everywhere; secondly, to his fellow-men who are around him; and, thirdly, to the devil that is within him. And similarly the social duties of every government have relation, first, to the Eternal Justice; secondly, to the community; and, thirdly, to the criminal. Considerations of the first must determine the degree of punishment to be inflicted, considerations of the second and third must determine the kind. If a government (and by government we mean all constituted authorities), out of sympathy for the criminal, does not inflict the punishment which it believes the crime to deserve, that government fails in its first and greatest duty, and violates the divine conditions of its appointment by ‘bearing the sword in vain.’ Again, if a government inflicts punishment of such a kind as is not likely to deter the criminal from a repetition, or others from an imitation, of his offence, that government fails in its second duty, its duty to the community. When these two primary obligations are satisfied, then we may think about the third; which means, practically, that we are to reform the said criminal if we can. Whatever efforts are made to reform him, they should be always preceded or accompanied by some punishment terrible in proportion to the magnitude of the offence; but terrible always, both to him who suffers and to those who hear of it. Our new-fangled schemers ignore the first two duties, and thus take up a false position in setting about the third. What wonder if they fail in it? We should like to know why those sentenced to transportation for a short term are not sent? If sent to the Antipodes, they might fall on their feet in their new world. As it is, they are returned, after a brief coddling in prison, to their old haunts, their old associates, and their old associations. Of course the old habits of crime recur too, with double force, for they have tried the punishment, and find it rather pleasant than otherwise. If they are in want now, they reflect on the plenty of the gaol; if they are ragged, filthy, and obliged to sleep in a ditch, they look back with regret to the clothes, bed, and baths, of the privileged felon. In the barren wilderness, they long for the flesh-pots of Egypt. For it is, as it was three thousand years ago, only too natural for men to prefer bondage with plenty to freedom with privation.

But this is not a subject which can be discussed at the fag-end of an article destined to light literature. We leave it, knowing that the cause is in right good hands. Only, we trust that it may be argued temperately and without acrimony. We would do all honour to the motives of those good souls who stickle for the reformation of the criminal; we merely differ as to the means. We would have the State begin the work earlier—in the lanes, and alleys, and byeways, not in the prisons; we prefer formation to reformation, prevention to cure. We would take the possible felons of six years old by the forelock, and lead them to church and to school, that the earliest lessons impressed on the little heart might not be the lessons of vice, selfishness, and brutality, but the lessons of reverence, self-respect, and duty.

We take leave of Charles Dickens with a thankful acknowledgment of the great services he has rendered to society, and a sincere hope that he may outlive by many years these new model-prisons, strong as they look, and may long enjoy health and strength to aid in putting a score of such nuisances down.*

* We had purposed to include in our examination two other periodical novels,—Peneleus and The Ladder of Gold; but our summing up on Copperfield has been so lengthy, that we must remind them till next month.