both in the Irish and in the English peerage, began his remarkable career under Elizabeth, and had even got fairly into the road to wealth and distinction before the end of her reign; but he, of all men, both from the circumstances of his history and the character of his mind, must be classed with his latest rather than with his earliest contemporaries. He owed little or nothing to the past; he was the sole maker of his own greatness; nor did he ever show a disposition to take either his rest or his stand even upon any vantage-ground which his own efforts had gained, as if it had been the end of his ambition or a possession which could not be taken from him; it was only a position from which he might advance to something higher. 'Forward' was the word with him to the last; forward, if need were, at any cost and any venture. It was the true spirit of movement and progress that animated him; not at all that of rapacious accumulation. No man had ever less of the narrow-souled timidity of the mere gatherer of wealth: the fine thing about him was that, evidently, at any time of his life, if he had been stripped of all he had in the world, he would not have given a moment to idle lamentation or regret, but would have instantly set to work to reëstablish himself with as much activity and energy, and the same cheerfulness and hope, as before. When, in his last days, this necessity actually threatened him, he looked it in the face as firmly as any man ever did. He was one of those strong bright natures in whom the mind never grows old, and life burns in age with as intense a flame as in youth. It is this unconquerable vitality that chiefly makes him interesting."

The facts in the following summary of the Peerage are curious, though the philosophy founded on them may not be quite true. By the time an adventurer enters the House of Peers, he is generally old, and probably satisfied—"in life's cool evening, satiate of applause." The difficulty of gaining a step in the peerage is, however, worthy of consideration.

"It might seem to be only the natural course of things, or what we should expect to happen not unfrequently, that the man who has risen (otherwise than by succession) from being a commoner to be a peer should afterwards make his way from the lowest to the highest rank in the peerage. The same impulse or buoyancy—whatever it may have consisted in, or come of, whether extraordinary merit and services, or persevering ambition, or consummate dexterity and insinuation, or mere good fortune, which has carried him so far—ought, it may be thought, to carry him still farther. Having lifted him up to be a Baron or a Viscount, why should its action stop till it has elevated him to a Marquisate or a Dukedom?

"But the fact is, that to surmount the barrier which separates the peerage from the rest of the community is, generally speaking, easier than to pass from one rank of the peerage to another. The structure narrows faster than it rises. Of its three tiers or stages, (for the Viscounts may be regarded as only a higher division of the Barons, and the Marquises as a subordinate kind of Dukes,) the lowest is nearly twice as spacious as the one next above it, and the latter three times as spacious as the highest. At present the number of English Barons and Viscounts is about two hundred and twenty, that of the Earls about one hundred and twenty, that of the Dukes and Marquises about forty. Above two hundred and fifty English peerages were conferred in the reign of George the Third, but only three of them were Dukedoms. From the accession of George the Second, indeed, to the present day, a period of more than a hundred and twenty years, (if we except the variation of the Newcastle patent in 1756,) only six hereditary Dukedoms have been created; and of these, one (that of Montagu) is already extinct. Of nearly two hundred and seventy Irish peers made in the reign of George the Third, only one was a Duke."

## DICKENS'S DAVID COPPERFIELD.*

THIS story has less of London life and town-bred character than most of its predecessors; but what may thus be gained in variety is lost in raciness, breadth, and effect. The peculiar classes forced into existence by the hotbed of a great city, and owing part of their gusto to town usage, may be narrow enough if compared with general nature, but they are broader than the singularities whom Mr. Dickens copies or invents as representatives of genteel country life, or human nature in general. In the mere style there is frequently an improvement—less effort and greater ease, with occasional touches of the felicity of Goldsmith; but we should have thought the work was likely to be less popular than many of the previous tales of Mr. Dickens, as well as rather more open to unfavourable criticism.

Any prose fiction that is to take rank in the first class, must have what in epic poetry is called a fable,—some lesson of life embodied in a story that combines the utile and the dulce. This fable should not only please the reader by its succession of coherent events, and by the variety of its persons and fortunes, but should touch by appeals to the common kinship of humanity, and teach worldly conduct or ethical lessons by particular incidents, as well as by the general development. And when this end is attained, whether by design or instinct, technical rules are readily forgotten; even the great rule of unity of action can be dispensed with. It does not appear that Mr. Dickens has the critical training necessary to feel the importance of this principle, or a knowledge of life sufficiently deep and extensive to enable him to embody it unconsciously, as a well-chosen story will always compel an author to do. So far as *David Copperfield* appears designed with any other object than as a vehicle for writing a number of sketches, it would seem intended to trace the London career of an inexperienced young man, with infirmity of purpose, a dangerous friend, and no very experienced advisers. Any purpose of this kind is only prosecuted by snatches; "the theme" is constantly deserted, and matters are introduced that have no connexion with the hero further than his being present at them, or their occurring to his acquaintance. In fact, from the time that David Copperfield emerges from boyhood, the interest in *his* adventures ceases, beyond that sort of feeling which many readers entertain of wishing to know "how it ends."

The outline of the story is this. Mrs. Copperfield is left a young widow, and is foolish enough to marry again. Her stern husband, and a stiff morose sister, soon worry her out of life: David, who has been snubbed and kept down while his mother lived, is first neglected, and then sent to London as a bottle-washer and drudge at his stepfather's establishment. Getting tired of this life, he runs away; travels to Dover on foot, to an aunt whom he has heard of but never seen; is adopted by her, educated, and placed out in life as a proctor's articled clerk, and goes through some further adventures, including a marriage, the loss of his wife, and a second wedding; the "finis" leaving him successful as an author, and happy. This story is extended by incidents,—as young David's first school-days at Salem House, Blackheath; an exaggeration in itself, and in its subject a repetition of Do-the-boys Hall. It is expanded by descriptions of reminiscences, feelings, persons, and things, in the usual style of Dickens; which seem often flat, and empty enough when read as portions of an entire novel, but may have been brisker taken fresh and fresh in monthly parts. The interest of Copperfield himself, however, is lost in that of other characters. There are Dr. Strong, an old schoolmaster of Canterbury, his young wife, and her scheming mother; the two first singular, but the whole three finished with great care. There is Mr. Micawber, a goodnatured, unfortunate, hopeful man, with elevated ideas but very uncertain means, living as he can, with his wife and family; not very new in the conception, and made rather too much of, but a truthful, and, what is more for the reader, an amusing bit of London life. There are the Peggottys, one of them Copperfield's nurse, the other a Yarmouth boatman,—the woman apparently designed to represent the "prisca fides," the old domestic fidelity; the man, to embody Mr. Dickens's idea of humble virtue: they are both very elaborate paintings, but Mr. Peggotty is the more successful. There are his household or family,—Mrs. Gummidge, Ham, and his niece "Em'ly"; the last the victim of a seduction. There is also Steerforth, the seducer, Copperfield's school-friend, the dashing irresistible young Oxonian and man of town; with a variety of other persons and their stories or scenes, which were long to tell, and perhaps hardly worth the telling.

Consistency in fiction is of two kinds. One is a perfect coherence of incident, action, and discourse; but this exact consistency is not often realized, and cannot be looked for in books that are published piecemeal. There is another consistency which arises from the present cause being adequate to the immediate effect; and this is mostly wanting in *David Copperfield*. The incidents connected with Murdstone and his conduct are improbable and inconsistent, not only with one another but in themselves. The reader is led by Mrs. Strong's conduct to suppose that the suspicions against her are well-founded; but when the eclaircissement takes place, the looker-on has been deceived as well as the players, and purposely for the objects of the author. The elements of the Yarmouth seduction are as old as tale-writing. A humble lover abandoned for a Don Juan from town—the manly fortitude of the betrayed and agonized rustic—the grief and affection of the parent or the "loco in parentis"—are now too worn-out even for the stage. Mr. Dickens, by a knowledge of town life and society, as well as by his power of writing, imparts to the materials some apparent freshness; but in his anxiety to load the poor with virtues, he mars the effect by making the ingratitude and treachery of Emily alike to Ham and her uncle too great, so as to lessen the sympathy for her. It is, however, the only episode in this book of episodes which has the interest of a story that one cares to follow to the end.

Considered as a series of sketches, where each part is to be looked on as complete in itself, with little or no regard to what precedes or follows it, we do not think that *David Copperfield* is the happiest of the publications of Mr. Dickens. The first numbers are slow, not to say prosy; the same may be said of the last. Some defects of structure may possibly have arisen from a change of purpose: we think we can see traces of an alteration of the plan, if any plan there was, when Copperfield is sent to town as drudge; and after the elopement of Emily and its immediate consequences there seems to be another break. Good descriptions of life and remarks on society frequently turn up; there are sketches of men, things, and social institutions, sometimes cleverly expanded, sometimes powerfully compressed; but the most real pictures are those which relate to London life.

When Copperfield first came up to town as bottle-washer, Mr. Micawber was a sort of traveller on commission to the firm; and Copperfield was introduced to him by the manager arranging for David to lodge at Micawber's.

"At the appointed time in the evening, Mr. Micawber reappeared. I washed my hands and face, to do the greater honour to his gentility; and we walked to our house, as I suppose I must now call it, together; Mr. Micawber impressing the names of streets and the shapes of corner houses upon me as we went along, that I might find my way back easily in the morning.

"Arrived at his house in Windsor Terrace, (which I noticed was shabby like himself, but also, like himself, made all the show it could,) he presented me to Mrs. Micawber; a thin and faded lady, not at all young, who was sitting in the parlour, (the first floor was altogether unfurnished, and the blinds were kept down to delude the neighbours,) with a baby at her breast. This baby was one of twins; and I may remark here, that I hardly ever, in all my experience of the family, saw both the twins detached from Mrs. Micawber at the same time. One of them was always taking refreshment.

"There were two other children; Master Micawber, aged about four, and Miss Micawber, aged about three. These, and a dark-complexioned young woman, with a habit of snorting, who was servant to the family, and informed me, before half an hour had expired, that she was 'a Orfling,' and came from St. Luke's Workhouse, in the neighbourhood, completed the establishment. My room was at the top of the house, at the back; a close chamber, stencilled all over with an ornament which my young imagination represented as a blue muffin; and very scantily furnished.

"'I never thought,' said Mrs. Micawber, when she came up, twin and all, to show me the apartment, and sat down to take breath, 'before I was married, when I lived with papa and mama, that I should ever find it necessary to take a lodger. But Mr. Micawber being in difficulties, all considerations of private feeling must give way.'

* The Personal History, Adventures, Experience, and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger, of Blunderstone Rookery; which he never meant to be published on any account. By Charles Dickens. With Illustrations, by H. K. Browne. Published by Bradbury and Evans.

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"I said, 'Yes, ma'am.'

"'Mr. Micawber's difficulties are almost overwhelming just at present,' said Mrs. Micawber; 'and whether it is possible to bring him through them, I don't know. When I lived at home with papa and mama, I really should have hardly understood what the word meant, in the sense in which I now employ it; but experientia does it—as papa used to say.'

"I cannot satisfy myself whether she told me that Mr. Micawber had been an officer in the Marines, or whether I have imagined it. I only know that I believe to this hour that he *was* in the Marines once upon a time, without knowing why. He was a sort of town-traveller for a number of miscellaneous houses, now; but made little or nothing of it, I am afraid.

"'If Mr. Micawber's creditors will not give him time,' said Mrs. Micawber, 'they must take the consequences; and the sooner they bring it to an issue the better. Blood cannot be obtained from a stone, neither can anything on account be obtained at present (not to mention law expenses) from Mr. Micawber.'

"I never can quite understand whether my precocious self-dependence confused Mrs. Micawber in reference to my age, or whether she was so full of the subject that she would have talked about it to the very twins if there had been nobody else to communicate with, but this was the strain in which she began, and she went on accordingly all the time I knew her.

"Poor Mrs. Micawber! She said she had tried to exert herself; and so, I have no doubt, she had. The centre of the street-door was perfectly covered with a great brass-plate, on which was engraved 'Mrs. Micawber's Boarding Establishment for Young Ladies': but I never found that any young lady had ever been to school there; or that any young lady ever came, or proposed to come; or that the least preparation was ever made to receive any young lady. The only visitors I ever saw or heard of, were creditors. They used to come at all hours, and some of them were quite ferocious. One dirty-faced man—I think he was a bootmaker—used to edge himself into the passage as early as seven o'clock in the morning, and call up the stairs to Mr. Micawber—'Come! You ain't out yet, you know. Pay us, will you? Don't hide, you know; that's mean. I wouldn't be mean if I was you. Pay us, will you? You just pay us, d'ye hear? Come!' Receiving no answer to these taunts, he would mount in his wrath to the words 'swindlers' and 'robbers'; and these being ineffectual too, would sometimes go to the extremity of crossing the street and roaring up at the windows of the second floor, where he knew Mr. Micawber was. At these times, Mr. Micawber would be transported with grief and mortification, even to the length (as I was once made aware by a scream from his wife) of making motions at himself with a razor; but within half an hour afterwards, he would polish up his shoes with extraordinary pains, and go out, humming a tune with a greater air of gentility than ever. Mrs. Micawber was quite as elastic. I have known her to be thrown into fainting-fits by the king's taxes at three o'clock, and to eat lamb-chops, breaded, and drink warm ale (paid for with two tea-spoons that had gone to the pawnbroker's) at four. On one occasion, when an execution had just been put in, coming home through some chance as early as six o'clock, I saw her lying (of course with a twin) under the grate in a swoon, with her hair all torn about her face; but I never knew her more cheerful than she was that very same night over a veal-cutlet before the kitchen-fire, telling me stories about her papa and mama, and the company they used to keep."

The climax of Mr. Micawber's first appearance is the King's Bench, where Copperfield dines with him on the Sunday after his incarceration.

"Mr. Micawber was waiting for me within the gate, and we went up to his room, (top story but one,) and cried very much. He solemnly conjured me, I remember, to take warning by his fate; and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year for his income, and spent nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence, he would be happy, but that if he spent twenty pounds one he would be miserable. After which he borrowed a shilling of me for porter, gave me a written order on Mrs. Micawber for the amount, and put away his pocket-handkerchief, and cheered up.

"We sat before a little fire, with two bricks put within the rusted grate, one on each side, to prevent its burning too many coals; until another debtor, who shared the room with Mr. Micawber, came in from the bakehouse with the loin of mutton which was our joint-stock repast. Then I was sent up to 'Captain Hopkins' in the room overhead, with Mr. Micawber's compliments, and I was his young friend, and would Captain Hopkins lend me a knife and fork.

"Captain Hopkins lent me the knife and fork, with his compliments to Mr. Micawber. There was a very dirty lady in his little room, and two wan girls, his daughters, with shock heads of hair. I thought it was better to borrow Captain Hopkins's knife and fork, than Captain Hopkins's comb. The Captain himself was in the last extremity of shabbiness, with large whiskers, and an old, old brown great-coat with no other coat below it. I saw his bed rolled up in a corner; and what plates and dishes and pots he had, on a shelf; and I divined (God knows how) that though the two girls with the shock heads of hair were Captain Hopkins's children, the dirty lady was not married to Captain Hopkins. My timid station on his threshold was not occupied more than a couple of minutes at most; but I came down again with all this in my knowledge, as surely as the knife and fork were in my hand.

"There was something gipsy-like and agreeable in the dinner, after all. I took back Captain Hopkins's knife and fork early in the afternoon, and went home to comfort Mrs. Micawber with an account of my visit. She fainted when she saw me return, and made a little jug of egg-hot afterwards to console us while we talked it over."

The power of Dickens in natural pathos is occasionally exhibited. The following account of Mrs. Copperfield's death, as described by the old nurse, displays real tenderness and feeling. We are not called upon here, as we so frequently are, to attend to the *writing* of Mr. Dickens.

"'She was never well,' said Peggotty, 'for a long time. She was uncertain in her mind, and not happy. When her baby was born, I thought at first she would get better; but she was more delicate, and sunk a little every day. She used to like to sit alone before her baby came, and then she cried; but afterwards she used to sing to it—so soft, that I once thought, when I heard her, it was like a voice up in the air, that was rising away.

"'I think she got to be more timid, and more frightened-like, of late; and that a hard word was like a blow to her. But she was always the same to me. She never changed to her foolish Peggotty, didn't my sweet girl.'

"Here Peggotty stopped, and softly beat upon my hand a little while.

"'The last time that I saw her like her own old self, was the night when you came home, my dear. The day you went away, she said to me, 'I never shall see my pretty darling again. Something tells me so, that tells the truth, I know.'

"'She tried to hold up after that; and many a time, when they told her she was thoughtless and light-hearted, made believe to be so; but it was all a bygone then. She never told her husband what she had told me—she was afraid of saying it to anybody else—till one night, a little more than a week before it happened, when she said to him, 'My dear, I think I am dying.'

"'It's off my mind now, Peggotty,' she told me, when I laid in her bed that night. 'He will believe it more and more, poor fellow, every day for a few days to come; and then it will be past. I am very tired. If this is sleep, sit by me while I sleep: don't leave me. God bless both my children! God protect and keep my fatherless boy!'

"'I never left her afterwards,' said Peggotty. 'She often talked to them two down stairs—for she loved them; she couldn't bear not to love any one who was about her—but when they went away from her bedside, she always turned to me, as if there was rest where Peggotty was, and never fell asleep in any other way.

"'On the last night, in the evening, she kissed me, and said, 'If my baby should die too, Peggotty, please let them lay him in my arms, and bury u[s] together.' (It was done; for the poor lamb lived but a day beyond her.) 'Let my dearest boy go with us to our resting-place,' she said, 'and tell him that his mother, when she lay here, blessed him not once but a thousand times.'

"Another silence followed this, and another gentle beating on my hand.

"'It was pretty far in the night,' said Peggotty, 'when she asked me for some drink; and when she had taken it, gave me such a patient smile, the dear!—so beautiful!—

"'Daybreak had come, and the sun was rising, when she said to me, how kind and considerate Mr. Copperfield had always been to her, and how he had borne with her, and told her when she doubted herself, that a loving heart was better and stronger than wisdom, and that he was a happy man in hers. 'Peggotty, my dear,' she said then, 'put me nearer to you,' for she was very weak. 'Lay your good arm underneath my neck,' she said, 'and turn me to you, for your face is going far off, and I want it to be near.' I put it as she asked; and oh Davy! the time had come when my first parting words to you were true—when she was glad to lay her poor head on her stupid cross old Peggotty's arm—and she died like a child that had gone to sleep!'"

## M'GREGOR'S COMMERCIAL STATISTICS.*

MR. M'GREGOR has now concluded his elaborate labours on the commercial statistics, the mercantile laws, the diplomatic engagements, the taxes upon trade, and "the monies, weights, and measures of all nations"; aggregates of individuals where these things are not, being to be reckoned as tribes, not nations. The new subjects of this fifth volume are the Chinese Empire, the British *Colonies* in Africa, Asia, and Australia, and the British *Possessions* (it is the author's classification) in America and the West Indies. There are supplements besides, containing new treaties, new modifications or alterations of tariffs, with various other information similar to that in the body of the former volumes, but brought down to the latest date, collected from documents that have appeared since the publication of the previous parts.

There has not appeared of late years, if at all, a work of such extent and magnitude, with such an immense accumulation of facts, and such a unity of purpose: for although Montgomery Martin's book on the British Colonies might be as extensive, its subjects were more indiscriminate. At the same time, it must be said that, critically speaking, the design is better than the execution; a remark which seems more applicable to this volume than to its predecessors, because in them the facts had a larger bearing, and if not more numerous were in many cases of a newer date. The volume is rather an immense repertory of materials than a magazine of commodities ready for general use. Whoever shall *master* Mr. M'Gregor's volume, will become an authority in commercial statistics and international trading law. Whoever shall be at the trouble of closely examining the plan so as to comprehend its matter and scope, will have means of vast and various information within his reach. For purposes of ready reference—of dictionary use as it were, it is not so well adapted. The mass of the statistics is overwhelming to an untrained person; the textual account, especially where it gives a description of the country, its configuration and productions, is rather too much like a geography book. It wants more liveliness and life. How different, for example, is the sketch of Canada, of which Mr. M'Gregor has a personal knowledge, from that of some other countries. The treaties, the tariffs, the commercial laws and charges, have a more business interest, but are overlaid by other matter: a good digest of them might form a useful book.

The peculiarity we speak of is by no means confined to *Commercial Statistics*; it belongs more or less to all books of tabular facts that we ever met with. "A godless Regent trembled at a star": an utilitarian, who sets at nought all common superstitions, is superstitious to the last degree over anything that comes to him in the form of tables. He might lay his hand upon the ark without scruple, but he would shrink from touching an official return: its facts, or rather its figures, are sacred in his eyes; the very heading, albeit verbosely technical always, and sometimes not over intelligible to common understandings, is tabooed to the statist. Hence, from the little vade-mecum that will go in your waistcoat pocket to the imperial octavo quarto or folio that makes a library-shelf groan under its weight, the reader is presented with transcripts of the emanations of the red-tapist mind, whose immediate contents it takes the uninitiated some time to puzzle out, and whose bearings when he knows the facts which they contain, he cannot always perceive; besides which, he is frequently liable to repetitions of professedly the same figures in different aspects with different results. It is curious that a statist, who will not master tables, and further recast or reproduce their figures, has little scruple about the written text: he will select, he will abridge, nay, he will even comment upon the litera scripta: there seems, however, some question when it is an annotation upon a table by the table-monger himself.

* Commercial Statistics. A Digest of the Productive Resources, Commercial Legislation, Customs Tariffs, Navigation, Port, and Quarantine Laws, and Charges, Shipping, Imports and Exports, and the Monies, Weights, and Measures of all Nations. Including all British Commercial Treaties with Foreign States. Collected from authentic Records, and consolidated with especial Reference to British and Foreign Products, Trade, and Navigation. By John M'Gregor, M.P., late Secretary of the Board of Trade. In five volumes. Published by Whittaker.

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