
London Particular

The Dickens Fellowship Newsletter

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS A renewal form for 2019 is enclosed. Members are invited to complete and return it asap, with subscription fee, to the Membership Secretary, Dickens Fellowship, 48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX. Fees are unchanged. Those who have already elected to pay by Standing Order need not complete a form.

FREE ENTRY FOR MEMBERS Please ensure, when visiting the Charles Dickens Museum in Doughty Street, that you have proof of membership with you – either a membership card of the Central Fellowship or of an affiliated Branch.

PROF MICHAEL SLATER'S BOOKS Michael has decided to find new homes for some of his books. If you would like to choose from any of the following, please contact Michael either by phone (07982 770 193) or by email (michael.slater6@virgin.net) to arrange collection, either at a meeting at Lumen or at the Charles Dickens Museum:

SJ Adair Fitzgerald, Dickens & the Drama (1910);
WJ Carlton, Charles Dickens, Shorthand Writer;
P Collins et al, Review of English Studies July 1961 (special Dickens number);

TP Cooper, With Dickens in Yorkshire (1923);

S Connor, Dickens (1985);

T Cook (ed.), Nicholas Nickleby (Wordsworth Classics 1995);

Dickens, Our English Watering-place (reprinted as booklet);

Dickens, Collected Papers, vol. 19 of Biographical Edition of Dickens, intro. Arthur Waugh (1906);

Dickens, Mary Angela, Dickens's Dream Children (1929);

Dexter, W and Ley, J, The Origin of Pickwick (1936);

Dubreiz Fawcett, Dickens the Dramatist (1952);

Garis R, The Dickens Theatre (1963);

Harper C, Mr Pickwick's Second Time on Earth, illus. Paul Hardy (1927). More to follow in next edition of LP.

A taste for literature In her biography, "The Reading Cure", author Laura Freeman, a chronic anorexic, says reading the classics awakened a pleasure in food and eating; particularly successful was the self-imposed task of reading CD's complete novels in his bi-centenary year in 2012. The description of Mrs Cratchit's Christmas pudding, "like a speckled cannon-ball", delighted her so much that she amazed her family by 'trying half a spoonful of pud'. Yet another benefit from reading CD! ...

... Food Glorious Food Exhibition Starting 28 November, a lavish party is being recreated at CDM. Guest curator, Pen Vogler, has used first-hand accounts from the novelists' guests to make it as accurate as possible. Visitors can choose to be a guest or a servant for differing views on life in the CD household. One item on display is an inventory of beer, wine and spirits in CD's own handwriting. Ms Vogler said his love of food came from his poverty-stricken childhood, when for a time he often went hungry. She said: "*What Dickens does with food is show how essential it is for psychological and emotional comfort. For him food was about sharing and bringing people together, which is why in the Museum we've done it as 'Come to dinner with Dickens'.*"

A Dickensian note from eastern Europe Our thanks to Edin Volk Dervisefendic, a member of the Central Fellowship, who informs LP that "*in July 2018 all real music lovers in the region of the former Yugoslavia were sorry to hear of the death, at 71, of the legendary Croatian singer/songwriter Oliver Dragojević. It seems he was named after Oliver Twist, since the family lived in poverty-stricken conditions after WW2; it is remarkable that they knew about Dickens and Oliver Twist. Oliver Dragojević's songs contained elements of Dalmatian and Italian canzona, chanson and even rock; he was one of the few Croatian musicians who has performed at major music venues such as Royal Albert Hall, Olympia in Paris and Carnegie Hall. He confirmed, during his life, that he was bravely wearing the name of that Dickens character. Staunch, decent, refined and selfless to help others, a good-hearted soul, he will always be remembered for his fantastic songs ... and*

more than that.” As Edin says, “A lovely connection”.

More effort required In the last LP, under the title, **An early effort**, I mentioned a nonsense letter written at school by CD, drawn to my attention by DF member Robert Missen. What I hadn't realised was that this letter is actually on display in the nursery at the Charles Dickens Museum and CDM has also produced a vlog about it, starring Michael Slater! A timely reminder for the Ed. to visit CDM regularly and keep up-to-date! Thanks to Cindy Sughrue, Director of the Museum, and to Michael, for pointing this out.

Dickens's second American visit Dr Roberta Berryman, a Central Fellowship member living in Virginia, has sent in an extract from “*Dickens Days in Boston, A Record of Daily Events*” by Mr Edward F Payne, President of the Boston Branch of the DF, (pub. 1927). It illustrates how much CD's popularity had grown in the 25 years since his first visit to America: **“Boston, Dec 2, 1867. Ever since it was announced that Mr Dickens would give his first reading on this side of the Atlantic in Boston, the inhabitants of our quaint old-fashioned city have been in a state of feverish excitement. No sooner was the news flashed along the cable, that he was coming, than everything was immediately put in apple-pie order. The streets were all swept... The cigar shops came out as one man with their brands all newly christened, and nothing is smoked, chewed, or taken in snuff to-day but ‘Little Nelle Cigars’, the ‘Mantolini Plug’, and the genuine ‘Pickwick Snuff’...”**

CD versus Rudyard Kipling Last time, I quoted a letter from ‘*A Blessed Girl: Memoirs of a Victorian Girlhood Chronicled in an Exchange of Letters*’ by Lady Emily Lutyens. 16-year old Emily had written to 74-year old Rev Whitwell Elwin, indicating that she loves Dickens but dislikes Kipling. The Rev Elwin replies: ‘*When the vulgarity of a character is part of the comedy, it does not offend. It adds to the fun. But it revolts when the intention of the author is to pass it off for good manners and fine feeling. All the persons in his {CD's} books, high and low, who are supposed to behave with propriety, repel you. Their pathos and especially their love-making have a taint which disgusts you.*

‘Like the perpetual drinking, the vulgarity belonged to the class from which Dickens sprung and was deeply ingrained in him. He could not even relish the company of gentlemen. I tried Rudyard Kipling and broke down....’

.... Kipling strikes back! DF member Terry Wickens has been reading ‘*Something of Myself and other Autobiographical Writings*’, the last thing Kipling wrote in 1936 before his death. In it he recalls visits to the South Kensington Museum (now the V & A) in 1877, when he was 11 or 12. He notes seeing ‘*a big bluish book which was the manuscript of one of Dickens's novels. That man seemed to me to have written very carelessly, leaving out lots which he had to squeeze in between the lines afterwards*’.

A new David Copperfield Michael Slater notes from a recent *Guardian* article that a new film of the above is being made at Ealing Studios. The adult David is to be played by the Indian actor Dev Patel. Michael says “*there is a picture of him (looking a bit old for the part, I think) in full Victorian costume. Presumably the child David will also have to be played by an Indian actor. The film should be out next year, so we shall see. I wonder what CD would have said?*”

No fairy tale for the Dickens family A play called *A Very Very Very Dark Matter* by Martin McDonagh has just opened at the Bridge Theatre in London and will run until 6 January. It stars Phil Daniels as Charles Dickens and Jim Broadbent as Hans Christian Andersen. It concerns a dark secret that the writer of fairy-tales keeps upstairs in his attic... When Andersen came to visit Dickens at Gad's Hill in 1857, he turned out to be simple, almost childish, weeping bitterly over a “nasty criticism” of one of his stories and a moment later laughing as he cut a circle of dancing elves out of a folded square of paper. CD reported his family was “*suffering a good deal from Andersen... His unintelligible vocabulary was marvellous. In French or Italian, he was Peter the Wild Boy; in English, the Deaf and Dumb Asylum. My eldest boy swears that the ear of man cannot recognise his German; and his translatress declares that he can't speak Danish!*” Andersen had come to Gad's Hill for two weeks, but stayed for five, innocently unaware that he was outstaying his welcome. Regarded by Mamey and Katey as “a bony bore”, when he was gone, CD stuck a card on his dressing-table mirror, reading “*Hans Christian Andersen slept in this room for five weeks which seemed to the family ages*”.

“Something will come of this. I hope it mayn't be human gore!” (Sim Tappertit, Barnaby Rudge). Far preferable to human gore would be more contributions, please, to be sent to: Alison Gowans, “Danesdyke”, 27A Ashcombe Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3ET, or by email – aligowans17@outlook.com