

SOCAL DF GREETINGS



March 2024 Volume 15, Issue 2

NEXT MEETING

Date: Saturday, March 9, 2024
Time: 11:00 am PST

Place: ZOOM
Meeting ID: 917 1576 5881
Passcode: 730980

Discussion: *Great Expectations*, Ch. 15-29
(pt. 1, Ch. 15-19, pt. 2, Ch. 15-29)

Presenter: **Faye Russell**



Arlene Reese. She lived a wonderful full life of 95 years. God Bless her.



A Proud Branch Member since 1984

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Welcome to the second of our four *Great Expectations* issues; the chosen novel for the theme of this year's 44th annual Dickens Universe at U.C. Santa Cruz July 21-27.

Great Expectations is the most rare and scarce of any of Dickens' major works. It first ran in the author's own periodical, All the Year Round, for 18 months (1860-1861).

Aside from being published in three volumes in book form; nearly the entire first edition, first issue volumes were bought up by the British libraries. Today, the Chapman and Hall triple-decker goes for \$50,000 and upwards.

Please check out our back page 7 for upcoming March-April Zoom Dickensian-related events. We look forward to seeing you Zoom friends this coming Saturday the 9th as our Faye Russell leads us and moderates our second study of *Great Expectations*.

Featured is part 1 of a 1913 essay from The Dickensian, 'The Strange Case of Great Expectations' (pgs. 2 & 4).

Please enjoy our (pg. 3) informative GRAD GRIND (you can learn how to play WHIST with your family and friends!), along with our second GE character series of the popular 'Who Is This?' (pg. 6)

We are remembering (pg. 5) our dear friend Arlene Reese, (pictured opposite) who was a very active and integral member of The Greater Los Angeles Dickens Fellowship for over 30 years. We have lost another beloved friend.

Please see our Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/groups/1405191869718211/> and become a Friend. Your Zoom join info is in the box opposite, or you may contact Tim directly for the link. There will be an email blast later in the week that will remind you of the meeting on Saturday.

THE STRANGE CASE OF "GREAT EXPECTATIONS" (part I)

By Willoughby Matchett

No book of Dickens has of late years risen so rapidly in critical estimation as *Great Expectations*. So much so that the main point to decide about it now is whether it should be ranked among the first three best – or not. But the odd thing is that that public – not the special Dickens public, but the big public – has not wakened up to the fact, and is still apparently labouring under the idea that the novel is for Dickens quite a second-rate affair.

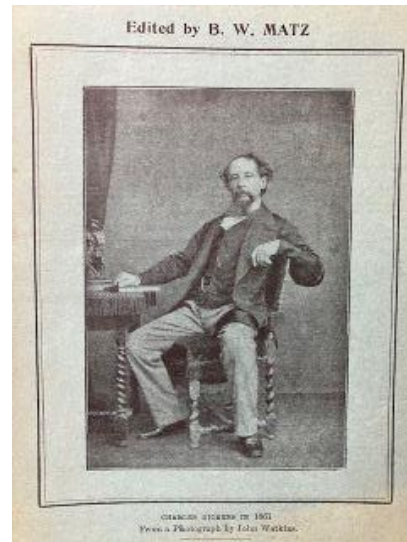
In a Truth competition a year or two back, the "worst" novel of six different authors, including Dickens had to be named. One gleaned from the large number of replies printed that *Great Expectations* was a very hot favourite indeed for the Dickens "worst." It may be said for the competitors that they must have been rather in a quandary, for where there are no poor novels there cannot properly be considered a "worst;" still it remains staggering that this particular work should be considered to belong to the tail-end of our author's list.

How this curious appraisal got planted in the public mind it would be perhaps difficult to say, but one may surmise that it dates back to the time of the book's original publication. We who are reading Dickens's works today, with an exact knowledge of their number, character, variety, and scope, are in a better position to extend to each separate achievement of his a truer need of appreciation than was the case with the public of its own time, for our estimation of them is based on the stern fact that there are no more to be got of them.

With the public of Dickens's day it was altogether different. After its first natural surprise at him, that public was gradually lulled by the extraordinary fertility of the man into taking him more or less as a matter of course. In fact it was a spoilt public, regarding Dickens as an inexhaustible tap always on flow, and if the taste of a particular brew didn't seem to be quite that of his "Genuine Stunning," why, perhaps the measure of warmth with which it was greeted was not quite up to the usual mark. A public it was, with all its general faithfulness, subtly swayed by the likes and dislikes of the moment, letting itself

feel disappointments and chills, and perhaps even on occasion allowing itself the large luxury of pretending privately that Dickens had "written himself out," or that, like the drama, he was "gone, sir, perfectly gone."

A public that gave *Martin Chuzzlewit* the cold shoulder, and lost interest in *Dombey and Son* after little Paul had been killed off was certainly a skittish one, and one is inclined to fancy that it jibbed a bit at *Great Expectations*, partly because the story came out as a three volume novel instead of in regulation numbers. Certainly, it had run a course as a serial in *All the Year Round*, but neither magazine serials nor three-volume novels were quite what the public expected from Dickens; and, at any rate, for one cause or another, one suspects that its attitude towards it was just a trifle cold.



In regards publication in numbers, by the way, it is hardly realized today perhaps how this in itself made for popularity. You must have seen the familiar green covers on every hand, instead of one compact work such as we get now-a-days, you had twenty or more, that is, twenty or more books, calling themselves one book, and carrying the name of Dickens far and wide over the land. And not only that, these parts were reviewed, discussed, and criticized, one by one, as they came out. The thing was a boon in itself. Think of the positive furor there was over the *Nickleby* numbers. Mainly because they came pat after *Pickwick*. The echo of that stir may still be heard in the public mind.

(continued, pg. 4)

GRAD GRIND

By Tim Clark, Chairman



Did You Know?

(Cool *Great Expectations* tid-bits to whet the Dickensian Whistle)

The Game of Whist

Four persons play the game of Whist, with fifty two cards; the partners are settled by cutting the cards, and the two highest play against the two lowest. The person cutting the lowest (which is an ace in cutting) is entitled to deal.

Each person has the right to shuffle the cards before the deal, and the elder hand (the person to the left of the dealer) ought to shuffle them last, except the dealer. The deal is made by having the pack cut by the right-hand adversary, till he comes to the last card, which he turns up, being the trump, and leaves it on the table till the first trick is played.

No one, before his partner plays, may inform him that he has or has not won the trick; even the attempt to take up a trick, though won before the last partner has played, is deemed improper. No intimations of any kind, during the play of the cards, between, are to be admitted. The mistake of one party is the game of the adversary: however, there is one exception to this rule, which is in the case of a revoke; if a person happens not to follow suit, or trump a suit, the partner is indulged to make an inquiry of him, whether he is sure he has none of that suit in his hand: this indulgence must have arisen from the severe penalties annexed to revoking, which affect the partners equally, and it is not universally admitted.

The person on the dealer's left hand is called the elder hand, and plays first; and whoever wins the trick becomes elder hand, and plays again; and so on, till all the cards are played out. The tricks belonging to each party should be turned and collected by the respective partner of whoever wins the first trick of every hand. The ace, king, queen, and knave of trumps, are called honours; and when either of the parties has in his own hand, or between himself and

his partner, three honours, they can count two points towards the game and in case they should have the four honours, they count four points...(Points are) gained by honours and tricks – and ten (10) constitute a game.



Whist is introduced in chapter 29 of *Great Expectations*, when Miss Havisham, Jaggers, Estella, and Pip play at Satis House. According to Pip, who was partnered with Jaggers, "... (he) took our trumps into custody, and came out with mean little cards at the ends of hands, before which the glory of our Kings and Queens was utterly debased."

Contemporary Vocabulary & Definitions

Small-coal: refers to charcoal, bits of refuse coal, or slack.

Prentice to him regularly bound: An apprentice was a legal contract under which a young person would serve a master tradesman for several years (usually seven, from about the age of 14 to 21) in order to learn a trade. An apprentice was usually paid for (a sum was advanced to the tradesman to find the contract) by the apprentice's relations. After the period of apprenticeship, the apprentice became eligible to work for wages as a "journeyman," with the ultimate object of becoming a master of the trade in which he or she had been trained.

Journeyman: One who, having served his apprenticeship in a handicraft or trade, is qualified to work for it for...wages;...one who drudges for another; a hireling, one hired to do work for another.

(Matchett, continued from page 2)

On account of it *Nicholas Nickleby* still remains one of the best known of Dickens's works, and is probably regarded as one of the best written, yet, as good as it is, excellent in many respects, modern criticism would say that it is outclassed by at least seven of the others. Now in the case of *Great Expectations*, boom, practically speaking, there was none. The book appeals to us supported by no such extraneous aid to popularity. It stands on its merits alone.

When the present writer was a boy he was told on his introduction to this great novel that the first seven chapters were as good as anything in Dickens, but that the rest was – well, to put it mildly – “not so good.” Quite recently an elderly lady of his acquaintance made the same remark to him, from which he infers that this must have been originally the judgment passed on it by some literary authority of past time. It is scarcely a fair criticism. If the note struck in the body of the book is not quite that of the opening chapters there is a good reason for it. The story develops in the minor key, and Dickens was too true an artist to have it otherwise.

Disillusion, unsatisfied desires, character warped by circumstance give the tale a touch of bitterness. Was there in it, by any chance, some reflection caught from the author's own grey days and beaten out? Was it the inevitable undertone of hope unfulfilled, of positive non-success even, heard acutely by the soul of the man through all the load clamor of the world's applause? Who shall say? As far as Pip's yearning for Estella goes, the torn bosom of Dickens, forlorn and rebuffed in his youthful love affair, was certainly recalled, “I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be.” It is not only Pip that is speaking here.

If the book lacks the merit of Dickens's great creations of character, it has instead the merit of Dickens's of a great creation of theme. You can scarcely have both. Your Gamps and Micawbers must have elbow room; fit them too closely into plots, and their popular appeal is imperiled at once. As it is, Micawber playing detective is a gross thing. The existence of such beatific beings should

approximate to that of Sterne's Uncle Toby, who scarce does anything but smoke, talk, and play at soldiering, and makes few migrations save those betwixt his chamber and his garden.



Martita Hunt (Miss Havisham) & Jean Simmons (Estella)

In *Great Expectations* Dickens's inspiration was, before all else, the theme, and, therefore, though there is a wealth of characters in the book, they are all such as can without violence be attuned and fitted to the theme all through. To look upon the work as a minor one on that account is surely folly. It is a positive merit here that there are no leviathans to clock the perspective. That Dickens to a certain extent bent and restrained his genius to the theme is true enough, but none the less it is his whole genius that is involved, and not a portion of it.

The thing done is of his very essence, a story of supreme artistry, quite worthy in its way to be ranked alongside his best works of sheer, primitive power of character creation. Only in one thing perhaps might he have bettered the artistry. He had – partly it and partly because it was a literary fashion of the day – an undue fondness for coincidence. It was such a trim, orderly looking thing, rounded a tale off so nicely, gave it something like what Mr. Curdle is defining the unities of the drama called “a general oneness.” The beauty of the ragged and escaped our author. It certainly was an artistic idea to make Estella turn out the daughter of Magwitch, but perhaps it would have been a more artistic idea not to have made Estella turn out the daughter of Magwitch. Still that might have been too original for Dickens's public.

End of Part 1. The Dickensian, February 1913

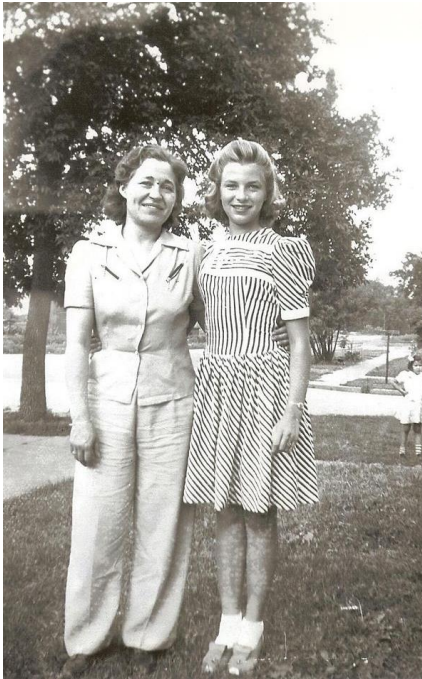
Remembering our dear friend Arlene Reese



Arlene's first year as a teacher at Rosemead H.S.

Arlene left us on February 20th at the still young and vibrant age of 95. Her memorial service is scheduled for Friday, May 10th at 1:00 pm at the First United Methodist Church in Seal Beach.

We local Dickensians are deeply saddened, as Arlene served as our Treasurer for the former Greater Los Angeles Dickens Fellowship for over 30 years, and was an annual host for our DF live meetings.



Arlene at 16 with her mother Dot

Arlene's daughter Julia Strauch will join us for our Zoom meeting on Saturday to share and respond with our grieving members. If you follow Julia on Facebook, she has posted wonderful pictures and reminisces of her beloved mom (a few I have duplicated here).

Kind words from Arlene's GLAD friends:

"She was a dear friend, and I miss her so much." – Jean.

"I really do miss seeing the rest of you and still think of those who have passed. Thanks much for keeping in touch, especially with such significant news as that of Arlene." - Joan

"So many fond memories of Arlene hosting GLAD and joining us for so many years. She was the host when we did a joint meeting with a Jane Austen group." – Gloria.

"May she rest in peace." – Faye

"I am so sorry to read about Arlene's passing. She was a wonderful woman! She regularly opened her beautiful home to our GLAD meetings and did a wonderful job as treasurer. Rest in Peace." – Martha

"Arlene contributed generously to us all . May she rest in eternal peace." – Murial



Arlene in deep conversation with the Bard

Arlene was very dear to me also. When we had DF meetings in Los Angeles she occasionally took the train and subway up from Seal Beach to join us at Jack and Anna Kerr's home. I would always meet her and chauffeur her to and fro from her stop.

When Arlene hosted, it was always such a delightful spring afternoon at her beautiful home, the windows open to admit the fresh ocean breeze as we all jammed into the front living room...great memories. Arlene would also attend the Dickens Universe at U.C. Santa Cruz.

Now Arlene is at eternal rest and peace and dancing in heaven's streets with all of her family and friends who have welcomed her along with our Father.

I loved her very much.

WHO IS THIS?

1. "A widow lady of that highly sympathetic nature that she agreed with everybody, blessed everybody, and shed smiles and tears on everybody, according to circumstances."

2. "A gentleman with a rather perplexed expression of face, and with his very grey hair disordered on his head, as if he didn't quite see his way to putting anything straight."

3. "A prosperous old bachelor, and his open window looked into a prosperous little garden and orchard, and there was a prosperous iron safe let into the wall at the side of his fireplace, and I did not doubt that heaps of his prosperity were put away in it in bags."

4. "A dry man, rather short in stature, with a square wooden face, whose expression seemed to have been imperfectly chiseled out with a dull-edge chisel. There were some marks in it that might have been dimples, if the material had been softer and the instrument finer, but which, as it was, were only dints. The chisel had made three or four of these attempts at embellishment over his nose, but had given them up without an effort to smooth them off...He had glittering eyes – small, keen, and black – and thin wide mottled lips. He had them, to the best of my belief, from forty to fifty years."

5. "The only daughter of a certain accidental deceased Knight, who had invented for himself a conviction that his deceased father would have been a Baronet but for somebody's determined opposition arising out of entirely personal motives...He had directed his daughter to be brought up from her cradle as one who in the nature of things must carry a title, and who was to be guarded from the acquisition of plebian domestic knowledge.

So successful a watch and ward had been established over the young lady by this judicious

parent, that she had grown up highly ornamental, but perfectly helpless and useless."

6. "...had been spoiled by a weak mother, and kept at home when he ought to have been in school, but he was devotedly attached to her, and admired her beyond measure. He had a woman's delicacy of feature, and was...exactly like his mother."

7. "...who was so sulky a fellow that he even took up a book as if its writer had done him an injury, did not take up an acquaintance in a more agreeable spirit. Heavy in figure, movement and comprehension – in the sluggish complexion of his face, and in the large awkward tongue that seemed to loll about in his mouth as he himself lolled about in a room – he was idle, proud, niggardly, reserved, and suspicious. He came of rich people down in Somersetshire, who had nursed this combination of qualities until they made the discovery that it was just of age and a blockhead."

8. "He was still a pale young gentleman, and had a certain conquered languor about him in the midst of his spirits and briskness, that did not seem indicative of natural strength. He had not a handsome face, but it was better than handsome: being extremely amiable and cheerful."

9. "A little dry brown corrugated old woman, with a small face that might have been made of walnut shells, and a large mouth like a cat's without the whiskers."

10. "A very old man in a flannel coat: clean, cheerful, comfortable, and very well cared for, but intensely deaf."

Hint: None of these GE personalities are repeat characters from our first group in the January issue

SoCal Dickens Fellowship Officers

<u>Chairman</u>	Tim Clark (909) 225-2834 poohclark@earthlink.net
<u>Corresponding Secretary</u>	Vicky Pickett (951) 805-2621 vikky.pickett@twc.com
<u>Corresponding Secretary Emerita</u>	Jean Eggen (310) 645-5554 jeggen@ca.rr.com
<u>Recording Secretary</u>	Faye Russell (323) 630-3784 flybyfrye@gmail.com
<u>Treasurer</u>	David Pickett (951) 805-6099 davidjpickett@icloud.com

Future SoCal DF Meetings

Here are our agreed upon scheduled dates for reading and discussing *Great Expectations*:

- March 9: *Great Expectations* (pt. I, Ch. 15-19, pt. II, Ch. 1-10) Penguin Ch. 15-29 (Faye)
- May 11: *Great Expectations* (pt. II, Ch. 11-20, pt. III, Ch. 1-5) Penguin Ch. 30-44 (Karen)
- July 13: *Great Expectations* (pt. III, Ch. 6-20) Penguin Ch. 45-59 (Tom)

Until further notice and resumed interest, all meetings are Zoom only. We are hoping to attempt a social gathering in the spring.

This is our monthly request for you to consider our Annual Fellowship dues. Nothing has changed, \$20 for a single, \$30 for a duo. Memberships are rolling, so once you pay, your renewal is not due until a year has elapsed. And of course, we do not discourage any donation that exceeds the renewal! Aside from our annual International Fellowship dues, we donate the balance to local charities and sponsorships. If you submit a check, please make it payable to GRAD (it's a Provident bank stipulation).

Upcoming Dickens Fellowship March-April Zoom Events

- **Tuesday, March 12th**, 3:00 pm GMT: **Canterbury** canterburydf@gmail.com
Lucinda Hawksley presents '*Charlie and Wilkie Collins and their relationship to the Dickens family.*' (registration required)
- **Wednesday, March 13th**, 7:30 pm GMT: **Aberdeen** eadsummers@me.com
Catherine Waters (DF President) presents " *Dickens and Executions.*'
- **Saturday, March 16th**, 12:30 pm EST: **Philadelphia** www.dickensphila.org
Linda Katz presents '*Dickens' sympathy for Women in David Copperfield*' & '*Martha, Little Em'ly and other Ruined Maids*'. **Leslie Limon** presents '*The Myriad names of David Copperfield.*'
- **Saturday, March 16th**, 1:00 pm EST: **Dickens Fellowship of New York (DFNY)** www.dickensnewyork.com
Mark Halperin moderates *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Ch. 44-49
- **Thursday, March 21st**, 6:30 pm GMT: **Rochester-Chatham** stevemartin54@hotmail.com
Dr. Clive Johnson presents '*Dickens and Satire*'
- **Sunday, March 24th**, 1:00 pm PST: **Santa Cruz Pickwick** <https://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/pickwick-club/index.html>
Catherine Springer presents *Great Expectations*, Book III Ch. 1-5 (registration required)
- **Tuesday, April 2nd**, 1:00 pm EST **Montreal** www.dickensmontreal.ca
Ellie Clavier moderates an Open Discussion on *A Tale of Two Cities*. (1935 film, pt. 2)
- **Saturday, April 6th**, 1:00 pm EST: **Friends of Dickens, NY (FDNY)** www.thefriendsofdickens.org
Warren Wyss presents *Little Dorrit*, Book 2, Ch. 15-22 (Hybrid)
- **Tuesday, April 9th**, 3:00 pm BMT: **Canterbury** canterburydf@gmail.com
Catherine Waters presents '*A special correspondent for Posterity: Dickens, Journalism & Executions.*' (registration required)

