CHARLES DICKENS'S CONCEPTIONS OF AMERICA
AS A RESULT OF HIS TWO VISITS

APPROVED:

M.P. Wells
Major Professor

Robert B. Toulouse
Minor Professor

Floyd Stovall
Director of the Department of English

Jack Johnson
Dean of the Graduate School
CHARLES DICKENS'S CONCEPTIONS OF AMERICA

AS A RESULT OF HIS TWO VISITS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Lespie Ratliff, B. A.
168594
Breckenridge, Texas
August, 1949
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>DICKENS AND HIS AMERICAN PUBLIC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>PUBLISHERS AND THE PRESS</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>GRIEVANCES AGAINST SLAVERY</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>VIEWS ON TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>COMMENTS ON MISCELLANEOUS PHASES OF AMERICAN LIFE</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>REFLECTIONS OF DICKENS’S AMERICAN VISITS IN HIS LITERARY PRODUCTIONS: AN EVALUATION</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

DICKENS AND HIS AMERICAN PUBLIC

In the nineteenth century Charles Dickens made two trips
to America, the first from January until July, 1842, as a
young and famous novelist, and the last from November, 1867,
until April, 1868, as a noted lecturer. The author's aim in
first crossing the Atlantic has been a topic of much contro-
versy. His letters do not state any main objective for making
this journey, which he knew would be tedious, uncomfortable,
and expensive. Nor do magazines and newspapers of the period
give much help in accounting for the purpose of the trip.
The Edinburgh Review, however, probably shows the trend of
thought concerning the motive of Dickens's travel in the
United States better than any other periodical of 1842.

It is further to be borne in mind, in estimating
Mr. Dickens's claims to attention, that the study of
America does not appear to have been Dickens's primary
object in going to America, nor his main business while
there. He went out, if we are rightly informed, as a
kind of missionary in the cause of the International
Copyright, with the design of persuading the American
public (for it was the public to which he addressed
himself) to abandon their present privilege of enjoying
the produce of all the literary industry of Great
Britain without paying for it,—an excellent recommen-
dation, the adoption of which would, no doubt, in the
end prove a vast national benefit.¹

¹Edinburgh Review, LXXVI (1842), 500.
A letter from Dickens to the editor of The Times, a newspaper of London, strongly denies the idea of his lobbying for an international copyright in America, but the Edinburgh Review, in all probability, had based its opinion upon the fact that Dickens, while he was in the United States, had introduced the issue of the copyright in each of his three main public addresses at Boston, Hartford, and New York. In spite of Dickens's outright denial these speeches plus the many references to the international copyright in his letters of 1842 and 1843 rather point toward his visit as really being that of a mission against book piracy in the United States.

Like his letters, the American Notes, Dickens's book of travels in the United States, names no specific reason for the author's voyage other than a general interest in a new country and its people. As intensely as biographers, both English and American, have sought the cause of Dickens's original visit, they waver among such reasons as his collecting material for his American Notes, campaigning for an international copyright law, and visiting Cairo, Illinois, wherein, according to more rumors than facts, Dickens had previously and unwisely invested and lost a great part of his slender means in a "get-rich-quick plan."

On the other hand there is ample proof of why Dickens came to America a quarter of a century later. In November,

---

2 The Times, January 16, 1843, p. 8.
1867, he again crossed the ocean for the specific reason of making money. He had become a successful and dramatic reader of excerpts from his short stories and novels in both England and on the continent. The Americans wanted the entertainment Dickens had to give, and Dickens wanted the money the Americans had to offer. On September 13, 1867, Dickens sent the following message to his daughter concerning his second trip to America:

You will have had my telegram that I go to America. After a long discussion with Forster, and consideration of what is to be said on both sides, I have decided to go through with it. I doubt the profit being as great as the calculation makes it, but the prospect is sufficiently alluring to turn the scale on the American side.3

Evidently both the country and Dickens felt well compensated in the transaction, for the novelist became the sensation of the sixties, and, according to a letter to his daughter, Dickens at each reading took in enough paper money to resemble "a family wash."4

How the American public received Charles Dickens is well told in the author's public addresses, in his many racy, spirited letters to his friends in both England and America, and by the press and diaries of each of the two periods. From these four sources daily accounts of Dickens's movements

---


and experiences may be compiled; together they form a narrative of each period, revealing in particular the rather frantic admiration which the Americans bestowed upon Dickens, both as a visitor and a lecturer. On each occasion the author copiously praised, both in speeches and in writing, the American public for the great welcome and hospitality shown him. Well he might have, for never was kith or kin more wholeheartedly or enthusiastically received. Of course, the Americans of Dickens's day knew little of the lengthy appraisals of his personal receptions that went away to England in his letters, but they were delighted with the high commendations of the Americans in his public speeches and lectures. It is interesting to note that the ideas of the press in regard to the welcome given Dickens on both tours rather parallel those of the novelist's letters, most of which were published after his death. Both the journalists and Dickens emphasize the magnificence of America's entertainment of the author.

The first definite information about Dickens's original trip came in a letter to Gaylord Clark on September 28, 1841. In this the novelist mentions his plans to set foot upon the soil he has trodden in his day-dreams many times and to visit "honest hearts in the remote wilds of America," who have sent him condolences in regard to the death of his young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth. Three months later, leaving his four

---

5Charles Dickens, The Letters of Charles Dickens, edited by His Sister-In-Law and His Eldest Daughter, p. 49.
children in the care of the Macreadys, the very special friends of the Dickenses, the novelist and his wife, Kate, sailed on the Britannia for the United States. After an eighteen days' journey at sea, the Dickenses landed in Boston on January 22, 1842. This city of culture and tradition produced such extraordinary welcome and entertainment for Dickens that even the Bostonians themselves professed astonishment. Especially did their banquet on February 1 show how honored they felt to be the first favored by the author's presence. Fifteen dollars a cover was charged, and Dickens and other guests were given a choice of more than forty dishes. The most talented young men of the nation, among whom were Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, and Nathan Hale Jr., helped to make the occasion a memorable one. Among the more prominent guests were Washington Allston, George Bancroft, Richard Henry Dana, and Josiah Quincy Sr. Both young and old at the dinner were representative of America's most eminent men in the fields of literature, art, and law; at least two hundred of them sat at the festive board with the novelist. Whatever Dickens's anticipations and imaginations were concerning his arrival in the United States in 1842, he was somewhat bewildered by the enthusiasm lavished upon him. It was, however, a bewilderment most pleasing to Dickens, as his response at the Boston banquet shows. In part, his address was an expression of appreciation of the attention and consideration given him, not only at the banquet but at all times.
But when I have the echoes of your cordial
greeting ringing in my ears; when I see your kind
faces beaming a welcome so warm and earnest as
never man had—I feel, it is my nature, so vanquished
and subdued that I hardly have fortitude to thank
you.... You give me no chance of playing at company
or holding you at a distance, but flock about me like
a host of brothers, and make this place like home.6

Dickens's letters parallel his speeches in their praise
of the kindness and generosity of the American people toward
him. Since no man ever expressed himself more in his letters
than Charles Dickens, one has only to read them to know the
author's opinions, good or bad; however, anything the novelist
wrote pertaining to his reception in the United States at the
time of either of his visits might have been published with
little or no offense to the Americans. On January 26, 1842,
less than a week after Dickens had registered at the Tremont
House in Boston, and even before the banquet, effusive and
detailed descriptions of the fervor with which the Americans
accepted him went to John Forster.

How can I give you the faintest notion of my
reception here; of the crowds that pour in and out
each day; of the people that line the streets when
I go out; of the cheering when I went to the theatre;
of the copies of verses, letters of congratulations,
welcomes of all kinds, balls, dinners, assemblies
without end? There is to be a public dinner to me
here in Boston, next Tuesday, and great dissatisfac-
tion has been given to the many by the high price
(three pounds sterling each) of the tickets....
But what can I tell you about any of these things
which will give you the slightest notion of the
enthusiastic greeting they give me, or the cry
that runs through the whole country?7

6Charles Dickens, The Speeches of Charles Dickens,
edited by R. H. Shepherd, pp. 63–64.

7John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (The Gadshill
Three days later on January 31, 1842, Dickens, in a letter to another friend, Thomas Mitton, acknowledges an inadequacy in being able to give some idea of America's response to him as a visitor.

I can give you no conception of my welcome here. There never was a King or Emperor upon the earth so cheered and followed by crowds, and entertained in public at splendid balls and dinners and waited upon by public bodies and deputations of all kinds. I have had one from the far West—a journey of two thousand miles! If I go out in a carriage, the crowds surround it and escort me home; if I go to the theatre, the whole house (crowded to the roof) rises as one man, and timbers ring again. You cannot imagine what it is. I have five public dinners on hand at this moment, and invitations from every town and village and city in the United States.8

It is odd that Dickens seemingly found it difficult to convey to the English the accuracy of his positively riotous welcome in America; perhaps the realities of the incidents themselves lay too much in his fictional field of caricatures and exaggerations to convince his friends of their truth.

Of course Dickens's popularity had been well established before his first visit to the United States. He had a reading public as wide as the States themselves. Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, Oliver Twist, Little Nell, and Nicholas Nickleby were almost as well known in America as in England. That Dickens was their creator made him a favorite, but it was his flashing vitality that all but brought his listeners to their feet. "And when Dickens stood up at last to answer

8 Charles Dickens, The Letters of Charles Dickens, edited by His Sister-In-Law and His Eldest Daughter, p. 56.
for himself," wrote Jas. T. Fields about the Boston banquet in his *Yesterdays with Authors* in 1871, "so handsome with his beautiful eyes moist with feeling and his whole frame aglow with excitement," the "Chair" begged that we moderate, if possible, the rapture of our applause. To Fields the affair was a glorious episode of American life; those not there, he felt, suffered a loss not easy to estimate.

From Boston Dickens went to Hartford, where the genial hospitality of the people so captured his heart that his warm feeling for them withstood all the later unpleasantness toward the Americans in regard to slavery and the copyright contention. At least he gave them honorable mention in the *American Notes*, from which he excluded most of the pleasantry of his reception in America. The Hartford banquet, which took place on Dickens's birthday, February 7, 1842, was a second opportunity for the novelist to acknowledge publicly his gratitude for the personal affections of the Americans. "No country", he assured his hosts, "ever smiled more pleasantly than yours has smiled on me". It was "something", he felt, to be no stranger in a strange place.

Probably the best account of how thoroughly the American public coveted the opportunity of seeing Dickens is told by

---


George W. Putman, Dickens's American secretary. In 1870, shortly after Dickens's death, Putman wrote a couple of papers which were published in the Atlantic Monthly and entitled Four Months with Charles Dickens, during his First Visit to America, by his Secretary. When he and Dickens stopped in New Haven on their way to New York, Putman evidently felt that the author was treated more like a show than a gentleman.

From Hartford Mr. Dickens went to New Haven, arriving there in the evening. The news spread rapidly that 'Dickens had come,' and at once the throng of visitors poured in. Before he had been there an hour, the hotel was crowded and the street outside filled with people. Citizens of the highest distinction hastened with their friends to pay their respects, for it was understood that his stay in the city would be very short. The Yale students were there in force, and such was the desire to see him that he was urgently requested to receive the throng assembled, and for hours the people filled the reception-room and held the halls and passages of the hotel. As the crowd increased, the landlord found it necessary to put two stout porters on the main staircase, who locked their hands across the stairs, and kept the throng at bay. As fast as those in the reception-room had their introduction, and retired by another way, the two porters on the stairs would raise their arms and suffer another installment of the crowd to pass; and thus, until nearly eleven o'clock at night, the admirers of 'Boz' pressed around him for a look and an introduction, and all this was evidently from a love and appreciation of the man. It was nearly midnight before Mr. Dickens could retire to his room.

New York's demonstrations of respect and esteem for their visitor consisted of both a ball and a dinner. The

---

12 George Putman, "Four Months with Charles Dickens, during his First Visit to America, by his Secretary," Atlantic Monthly, XXVI (1870), 479-480.
"Boz ball" occurred February 14, 1842, at the Park Theatre, and from the standpoint of the press it must have eclipsed any former entertainment in America. At least the Evening Post of February 15, 1842, gives full justice to this public festivity for Dickens.

The fête at the Park Theatre, last evening, is described as one of the most magnificent that has ever been given in this city. The gorgeousness of the decorations and the splendour of the dresses, no less than the immense throng, glittering with silks and jewels, contributed to the show and impressiveness of the occasion. It is estimated that nearly three thousand people were present, all richly dressed and sparkling with animation. The doors of the theatre were thrown open at half past seven o'clock, and such was the eagerness to get in that in less than an hour the whole area of this immense building was densely crowded. Great pains had been taken with the decoration of the theatre, and the lobbies, halls, saloons, boxes and green-rooms were each tastefully ornamented with festoons, wreaths, garlands, portraits and statues. The seats of the first tier were covered with white muslin, trimmed with gold, and the columns festooned with fine drapery. The second tier was ornamented with a series of medallions, rosettes and silver stars, representing the works of the distinguished guests of the evening; the center ornament being the head of Mr. Dickens, surmounted by an eagle holding a laurel wreath....

Mr. Dickens entered the theatre about nine o'clock, and after proceeding to the back part of the stage, was introduced by the Mayor to those who wished to speak with him.... Soon after entering, both participated in the dance in the cotillion in the center of the room. Mr. Dickens was dressed in a suit of black, with a gay vest and Mrs. Dickens in a white, figured Irish taffeta trimmed with mazarine blue flowers; a wreath of the same colour round her head, and with pearl necklace and earrings.

Between the different dances the tableaux vivant were exhibited at the back of the stage. A curtain, painted like the frontispiece of the Pickwick Papers, was drawn up at the sound of a
gong, when the artists procured for the occasion were discovered in attitudes and positions descriptive of several familiar passages from Mr. Dickens' works.... The festivities, which passed off with much good feeling, were continued to a late hour in the night. 13

Philip Hone's diary of February 15, 1842, also gives an insight into the admiration and regard lavished upon Dickens at the ball.

The agony is over; the Boz ball, the greatest affair of modern times, the tallest compliment ever paid a little man, the fullest libation ever poured upon the altar of the muses, came off last evening in fine style. Everything answered the public expectation, and no untoward circumstance occurred to make anybody sorry he went. 14

This ball with three thousand people in full dress, mingling among lights, show, cheers, and noise, is the American entertainment which Dickens contends in a letter to Forster baffled his power of description. 15 Evidently the United States was as young and boastful and glamour-loving as the author himself. Age on the part of either would have toned down the boisterousness and optimism of the other.

The dinner at the City Hotel in New York took place in the same week as the ball. An invitation with more than forty signatures had reached Dickens before he left.

13 Evening Post, February 15, 1842.


Boston. Dickens's response of January 27, 1842, was flattering enough. "I have looked at your names a hundred times," he wrote, "as if they were the faces of old friends."¹⁶ In no place was the Englishman more rapturously received or entertained; certainly in no place did Dickens make a more eloquent tribute to the Americans than at the New York dinner.

I say tonight, with a full heart, and an honest purpose and grateful feelings, that I bear, and shall ever bear a deep sense of your kind, your affectionate and your noble greetings, which is utterly impossible to convey in words. No European sky without, and no cheerful home or well-warmed room within, shall ever shut out this land from my vision. I shall often hear your words of welcome in my quiet room, and oftener when most quiet; and shall see your faces in the blazing fire. If I should live to grow old, the scenes of this and other evenings will shine as brightly to my dull eyes fifty years hence as now; and the honour you bestow upon me shall be remembered and paid back in my undying love and honest endeavors for the good of my race."¹⁷

After Dickens left the three major eastern cities, Boston, Hartford, and New York, for points south and west (he went as far south as Richmond and as far west as St. Louis), the entertainment became less elaborate and the travel more difficult. Most of the cities lacked the facilities for such royal entertainment, and Dickens's good humor began to fade for a number of reasons: the presence of slavery, travel over bad roads and in dirty

¹⁶Glyde Wilkins, Charles Dickens in America, p. 123.

canal boats, and his inability to make the people conscious of the need for an international copyright law. The latter was the pet issue which he had thrust into each banquet address. However, even after Dickens's ardor cooled toward the Americans and he began to protest against the blemishes of the nation, he continued to depict the high worth of his welcome to this side of the Atlantic. Throughout his first tour his letters radiate the enthusiasm of the people of the United States in their singleness of purpose to receive him with open arms and to entertain him as an honor guest. Even two months after Dickens's arrival on his first trip, his letter to Miss Burdett-Coutts shows the Americans still reveling in their entertainment of him. On March 26 he wrote her that he shook hands with five or six hundred each day, that he usually fainted away at the end of the day from fatigue, and that he longed for two months' rest on Putney Heath for the purpose of restoring his sense of calmness. It is a wonder that America's universal admiration did not completely turn the head of the young author. Dickens himself evidently felt that others might think such possible. "I feel in the best aspects of this welcome, something of the presence and influence of that spirit which directs my life," and "if I know my heart, not twenty times this praise

would move me to an act of folly"19 were assurances in Dickens's letters to Forster that the thirty-year-old author was not being too much dazzled by America's hero worship of him.

Between the writing of his first letters and the writing of his American Notes, a period of ten months, many of Dickens's opinions of the Americans seem to have undergone considerable change. Whether he modified his thoughts about the people of the United States in their effort to receive him as a great celebrity, one does not know by reading his American Notes, for in the book Dickens scarcely mentions the great rejoicings of the people of the United States at having him in their country. In all fairness and justness the author might have given some expression of appreciation of the people and cities that paid him so much respect and deference. As much as his letters stressed the show and festivity of the Americans in his behalf, it is odd that the novelist did not brighten his Notes with some of the gaiety at least. Yet Dickens, on the plea of modesty but doubtless through resentment over the copyright controversy, omitted from his American Notes everything pertaining to the genuine warmth of his reception in the United States. Even the introductory part of the Notes, which Dickens under the influence of Forster cut from the original printing, is not too convincing that

---

the author's omission of the entertainment phase of his earlier tour was not one of spite. However, his reason, whether it was sincere or not, partly justifies the author for excluding the subject of his social activities.

Neither does it contain, nor have I intended that it should contain, any lengthened and minute account of my personal reception in the United States; not because I am, or ever was, insensible to that spontaneous effusion of affections and generosity of heart, in a most affectionate and generous-hearted people; but because I conceive that it would ill become me to flourish matters necessarily involving so much my own praises in the eyes of my unhappy readers.20

If Dickens is suggesting here that his reception was overdone, he was not alone in the belief; a number of Americans of his first visit felt the same way. On January 26, 1842, the New York Tribune, probably moved by jealousy of Dickens's long stay in Boston, justly accused that city of "beslaving and lionizing" the novelist. The article, further commenting on the popularity of the author in Boston, said, "We hope to get a look at him, but begin to despair of it, if he is to be disgusted with such licorice doses as the Boston Transcript is giving him."21 On January 29 the Tribune replied to another comment in the Boston paper about the entertainment of Dickens.

Such compliments to the author of Pickwick!... For our country's sake, we trust these darkeyisms

20Ibid., p. 305.

will not drive Boz home again on the Britannia. Spare him till he is fairly rid of his seasickness, and let him have a chance to see us Yankees as we are—some ninnies among us, of course, for it takes all sorts of people to make a world—but the great mass of us are heartily glad to see him, are disinclined to bore him, and not all surprised to find him a gentleman.\footnote{New York Tribune, January 29, 1842.}

Hone's diary, as well as newspaper extracts, echoes the idea of the Americans giving Dickens too much attention. "Shame, Mr. Dickens!" wrote the author in regard to Martin Chuzzlewit. "As some folks say, I and others made fools of ourselves to make much of you,... If we were fools you were the cause of it, and should have stood by us."\footnote{Hone, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. II, pp. 666-667.} Conscious as some were that the sickening flattery and servile homage proffered Dickens were not good taste, they, regardless of their qualms, kept on their job of being gracious hosts, for in general they felt that there was a certain theatrical quality in Dickens to which they must respond. In turn Dickens found himself almost intoxicated with glory upon every personal appearance. Then for the sake of politeness at least he might have recognized such graciousness on the part of the people in the American Notes.

It was the American levee that disgusted Dickens during his first visit to the United States. In England these recognitions of the great were restricted to morning entertainment, but, in America, Dickens found that
they might occur at almost any hour and last any length of time. Although he revelled in his popularity, the levees, after the newness wore off, became "health breakers" for both Dickens and his wife. Of course, some allowances must be made for Dickens's proneness to exaggerate. Often the most trifling incident under Dickens's pen took on the importance of an unusual happening, or a few people turned into throngs as the occasion demanded. It was difficult for Dickens to separate the real from the unreal, if he ever tried; at least many events in his letters were seemingly enlarged beyond truth or reason. Letters to England, no doubt, overstated his boredom and weariness resulting from America's receiving lines; far too inflating were such public recognitions to his ego for Dickens to tire of them completely. That levees were wearing upon the physical strength of both Mr. and Mrs. Dickens, however, is evident in many of his letters. "I determined to give Kate a rest at Hartford," wrote the novelist to Forster; but instead, as the letter explains, they evidently spent most of their hours there in receiving lines.

We remained in this town [Hartford] until the eleventh, holding a formal levee every day for two hours, and receiving on each from two hundred to three hundred people. At five o'clock on the afternoon of the eleventh, we set off for New Haven, which we reached about eight o'clock. The moment we had tea, we were forced to open another levee for the students and professors of the college (the largest in the States), and the townspeople. I suppose we
shook hands, before going to bed, with considerably more than five hundred people; and I stood, as a matter of course, the whole time. 24

Before his six months' tour was over, the levees seemingly lessened the good will of Dickens toward the American public. His letter of March 22, 1842, to Thomas Mitton from Baltimore, as well as those sent from other places to Miss Coutts, Macready, and others shows Dickens all but irritable over the situation.

In every town where we stay, though it be only for a day, we hold a regular levee or drawing-room, where I shake hands on an average with five or six hundred people, who pass on from me to Kate, and are shaken again by her... Think of two hours of this every day, and the people coming in by hundreds, all fresh, and piping hot, and full of questions, when we are literally exhausted and can hardly stand! I really do believe that if I had not a lady with me, I should have been obliged to leave the country and go back to England. But for her they never would leave me alone by day or night, and as it is, a slave comes to me now and then in the middle of the night with a letter, and waits at the bedroom door for an answer.... Parties--parties--parties--of course, every day and night.... In a word I go everywhere, and a hard life it is. 25

One does not have to take Dickens's words alone that the Americans were inconsiderate of him in their spectacular manner of entertainment. Mariotti's article in the North American Review of 1842 in behalf of an international copyright in Italy and in other countries remarks upon the


homage paid Dickens in America, Mariotti accused the people of the United States of dining Dickens, dancing him, throwing up their caps and feting him in every way, until human nature sank under it. Then the press, which the novelist so disliked, pertly suggested some relief for Dickens in regard to the receptions. Typical is the attitude of a New York reporter, who wrote up the levee given by President Tyler for Dickens.

The City and District seemed to have turned out en masse at this last gathering at the President's house. They came literally in clouds and in all the various forms and shapes of the seven classes, now dancing in like a lock of hair, or a feather, as a cirrus cloud, worn like the cumulus in conical round heaps, and now like the seventh class spreading out and running down.

The greatest lion among the men was Boz. He made his appearance between nine and ten, and the fifteen hundred or two thousand people went in pursuit of him like hounds, horses, and riders in pursuit of a fox at the chase. It was in this trying time that brawny arms, robustous waists and good understandings accomplished valorous feats. Alas for the weak, the modest and timid! Alas, too, for laces and silks, head-dresses, satin shoes, jewellery and alabaster necks. The pillory or the stocks would have been a heaven upon earth. "Where is Boz?" says one. "He is there," responds another, and a sea of heads appearing like the waves dancing in the river at the incoming of the tide are seen, staring poor Boz out of countenance. He is encompassed and as immovable as the men, and the crowd in sort of a funeral march revolve around him, reflecting some of the brightness in a smile or a word of their adored author. This fever was kept up for some two hours. Finally Boz turned.

upon his heels to get rid of his two thousand American friends who had taken the President's house by storm. And there was no peace. Wherever he moved, it was like throwing corn among hungry chickens. They pursued him to the dressing-room, and finally to his carriage, and probably to his house and chamber.\textsuperscript{27}

Certainly neither Dickens's strength nor patience continued to go through such assembly lines unimpaired.

These levees, arranged mostly by women in their attempt to show their appreciation of Dickens, gave the author a good chance to know the then weaker sex of America. On his earlier visit women were not in general included in the most elaborate phases of entertainment, the banquets; so it was the levees and the balls that brought the female public to Dickens. Letters to Forster, wherein Dickens expressed himself more freely than in any others, contain a number of comments on American women. His first evaluations of them go from Boston.

The women are very beautiful, but they soon fade; the general breeding is neither stiff nor forward; the good nature, universal... Universal deference is paid the ladies; and they walk about at all seasons, wholly unprotected.\textsuperscript{28}

Then from New York he again wrote Forster upon the subject.

The ladies of America are decidedly and unquestionably beautiful. Their complexions are not so good as those of English women; their beauty does not last so long; and their figures are very inferior. But they are most beautiful.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{New York Express}, March 15, 1942.

\textsuperscript{28} Forster, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. I, p. 209.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 231.
Although Dickens changed some of his opinions of the nation after controversial clashes with the Americans, he held fast to his original estimation of women. Neither their annoying pleas for locks of his hair nor their carrying away pieces of his hat for a souvenir lessened his deep respect for them. Even in a letter to W. C. Macready from Baltimore on March 22, in which he scoffs at almost every phase of life in America, he rates politeness to women as one of the best characteristics of the American men. 30

Nor did a quarter of a century dampen Dickens's zeal for the American women. Letters on the subject in 1868 so much resemble his appraisals of 1842 that the span of time between the writing seems merely that of a day or week. One notes only the difference that women of the sixties are more in the public; they make up a great part of his large lecture audiences, attend the few dinners given him, and pay him more individual attention. Since the author's letters of 1868 are written in great numbers to women, his daughter and Miss Hogarth in particular, the affairs of the ladies of America are to a great extent his subject; especially does he pay tribute to their kindness and thoughtfulness. In letters to his daughter he shows how entirely the women contributed to the pleasure and comforts of his last

visit. Their concern over his ill health, which the novelist called "American Catarrh", gave a touch of home to his quiet, private life. On December 16, 1867, just after his health had suffered severely from the climate and from perpetual traveling and hard work, he wrote Miss Hogarth that a lovely Mrs. Morgan had brought him a bouquet of white camillias and yellow roses a yard and a half around.\footnote{31} A sullen remembrance of the women of another day rises in his fancy at Baltimore, however. "This is the place," he wrote Samuel Cartwright, "where the ladies used to spit when they passed a northern soldier." He adds, however, his opinions of January, 1868. "The ladies now are remarkably handsome with an Eastern look upon them, dress with a strong sense of colour, and make a brilliant audience."\footnote{32}

It was Mrs. James Fields, however, who was particularly recognized in Dickens's letters of 1868. To his children and friends the author wrote of her as "the dearest little woman in the world". She had not only supplied him with flowers, mistletoe, and books in Boston, but she had also garnished his room with holly and cooked him a plum pudding at Christmas time.\footnote{33} In one of his letters to Mamie Dickens the description of his attempt to return the graciousness and favors of Mrs. Fields shows Dickens an excellent host to a small part of his American public.

\footnote{31}Ibid., p. 243. \footnote{32}Ibid., p. 263. \footnote{33}Ibid., p. 243.
In the evening I gave a very splendid dinner, eighteen covers, most magnificent flowers, and much table decoration as was never seen in those parts. The whole thing was a great success, and everybody was delighted... As Mrs. Fields had done so much for me in the way of flowers, I thought I would show her a sight in that line at the dinner. You never saw anything like it. Two immense crowns; the base of the choicest exotics; and the loops, oval masses of violets. In the centre of the table an immense basket, overflowing with enormous bell-mouthed lilies; all round the table a bright green border of wreathed creeper, with clustering roses at intervals; a rose for every buttonhole, and a bouquet for every lady. They made an exhibition of the table before dinner to numbers of people.\(^{34}\)

A letter from aboard the Russia on his return to England designates the Fieldses as great favorites among his American public of 1868.

We have been picturing your movements, and have duly checked off your journey home, and have talked about you continually. But I have thought about you both, even much, much more. You will never know how I love you both; or what you have been to me in America, and will always be to me everywhere; or how fervently I thank you.\(^{35}\)

Dickens's tribute to the American women on April 8, 1868, was something more than an ordinary compliment. His reading stand had been decorated with flowers and palm leaves, which he acknowledged with a very graceful ovation: "I kiss the kind, fair hands unknown, which have so beautifully decorated my table this evening."\(^{36}\)

\(^{34}\)Ibid., p. 278.

\(^{35}\)Fields, op. cit., p. 186.

Through the welcoming and greeting process Dickens met almost every noted man in the United States during one visit or the other. With small dinners and large banquets men sought and favored the novelist. He in turn had small groups to dine with him. Putnam recalls that on one occasion in 1842 Dickens had to breakfast with him Irving, Bryant, and Halleck. On November 22, 1867, he dined with Longfellow, Emerson, Holmes, and Agassiz. In addition to banquets held on a large scale in Boston, Hartford, and New York in 1842 and at Delmonico's in 1862, many were the number of other small gatherings on each visit. Though Dickens saw a great many men only one time, through his unrivaled keenness in observation he formed many opinions, which usually came to rest on paper. To quote his opinions of these people today is to know them personally, for at the base of Dickens's genius lay his broad and intimate familiarity with men. Scraps of character analysis of many went into his letters. The painter, Washington Allston, was to Dickens "a fine specimen of a glorious old genius." Among the statesmen were the "perfectly enchanting and irresistible" Clay, the "fine and friendly" Calhoun, and the "thoroughly unreal" Webster. On a very short acquaintance the Englishman recognized the cheerfulness of Halleck, the sadness and dignity of Bryant, and the great sincerity of Longfellow. The latter's name, after Dickens came to America, is as familiar on the pages of Dickens's letters as are many of his English friends. The American poet seemingly exchanged visits with Dickens, for
after each of the novelist's tours in the States Longfellow visited Dickens in England. From many of the author's later letters one gathers a new slant on Longfellow in regard to his appearance and character. The older poet was to the novelist a much more handsome man than Americans seemingly thought him. Three letters on his final visit, one each to his son, his daughter, and to Macready, contain remarks about how handsome and notable-looking Longfellow was. Then it is a little difficult to think of Longfellow's reveling in the horrors of the Webster Murder Case, even at a dinner for Dickens. Wilkie Collins, to whom Dickens wrote of the incident, must have been a little astonished himself to read of the kindly Longfellow being in such a mood. 37

Dickens's favorites, however, among the literary firmament were Cornelius Felton, Greek Professor at Harvard University, and Washington Irving, two who held for Dickens a life-long friendship and whom Dickens loved best of all Americans. That Felton was most heartily loved by the author is retold many times in the novelist's own letters to the Professor. In America Dickens wrote Felton from different places after they had met each other at Boston and were separated at New York. Even from Washington Dickens found time to write Felton.

We and the oysters missed you terribly in New York. You carried away with you more than half the delight and pleasure of my New World; and I heartily wish you could bring it back again.... You are a man after my own heart, and I love you well. And for the love I bear you and the pleasure with which I shall always think of you, and the glow I shall feel when I see your handwriting in my own home, I hereby enter into a solemn league and covenant to write as many letters to you as you write to me, at least.38

Dickens did write many times, telling in one particular letter from London, and in a rather odd way, how very much Felton was a subject of conversation among his English friends.

I have quite made up my mind that Forster really believes he does know you personally, and has all his life. He talks to me about you with such gravity that I am afraid to grin, and feel it necessary to look quite serious. Some times he tells me things about you, doesn't ask me, you know, so that I am occasionally perplexed beyond all telling, and begin to think it was he, and not I, who went to America. It's the queerest thing in the world.39

When Dickens came again, Felton was gone, and America was never quite the same to the novelist.

Of all the men in America Dickens, without doubt, looked forward most to his visit with Washington Irving. In December, 1841, after Irving by note had congratulated Dickens in regard to Little Nell, the novelist wrote Irving that there was no living writer whose approbation he should feel prouder to earn. At the same time he begged Irving to visit England.40 Dickens, however, made the first call. One can imagine the sheer joy of Dickens at Irving's being asked to preside at

38 Ibid., pp. 68-70.  
39 Ibid., p. 96.  
40 Ibid., p. 70.
the New York dinner. "Two nights out of seven, I do not go to bed without taking Washington Irving under my arm," declared Dickens at the banquet. This and other kind references were made by the novelist after Irving, placing more than a dozen pages of manuscript by his platé, broke down in the fourth sentence of his introduction of the Englishman. Many recall the delight of Dickens and Irving with each other: Felton, Putman, Hone, and others; but none shows the regard that Dickens had for the American author as does Dickens's own letter to Charles Leman February 5, 1863.

Your reference to my dear friend Washington Irving renews the vivid impressions reawakened in my mind at Baltimore the other day. I saw his fine face for the last time in that city. He came there from New York to pass a day or two with me before I went westward, and they were made among the most memorable of my life by his delightful fancy and genial humour. Some unknown admirer of his books and mine sent to the hotel a most enormous mint julep, wreathed with flowers. We sat, one on either side of it, with great solemnity, but the solemnity was of very short duration. It was quite an enchanted julep, and carried us among innumerable people and places that we both knew. The julep held out far into the night, and my memory never saw him afterward otherwise than as bending over it, with his straw, with an attempted gravity (after some anecdote, involving some wonderfully droll and delicate observation of character), and then, as his eyes caught mine, melting into that captivating laugh of his which was the brightest and best I have ever heard. 42


Many other lasting friendships were made by Dickens in America, but none excelled those of Irving and Felixon in depth.

The sobriety and quietness with which the American public received Dickens on his second visit stand in wide contrast to that of the noise and excitement of 1842. This time the Americans tried just as hard to carry out the kind of welcome which they had been told their guest wanted as they did carry out that which they thought he wanted on his former trip.

A number of reasons tended to make his reception less conspicuous. Dolby, Dickens's business manager, who preceded the author to the states to arrange for lectures, let the nation know that the novelist did not wish to wrestle with mankind as he had before. Then many had not outworn the hurt caused by Dickens's wrath and satire in the American Notes and in Martin Chuzzlewit. They resolved that this time Dickens would have no just cause for writing criticisms. On the other hand many had recognized the truth and justness of some of his frank statements and held no grudges; out of respect they regarded his wishes for quietness. Dickens, too, was repentant of the harshness in some of his criticisms, as he acknowledged in the farewell address of his final visit. Perhaps it was the twenty-five years lying between the visits that made the greatest difference in the way Dickens and the public met again. A war had wrought great changes in America,
even removing slavery, which so irritated Dickens in 1842. The nervous strain of lecturing, domestic troubles, especially the divorce of his wife, and the loss of friends through death had aged Dickens more than his fifty-five years. Truly the changes that Dickens saw in the American people were partly those which had taken place in his own heart. Dickens had grown up as well as had America, and both were able to laugh at the sensitivities and arrogance of their youth.

The warmth of greeting in 1868, though it lacked the surface glitter of his first visit, was just as great. The author's letters of his last six months in America are full of allusions to the thoughtfulness of the people in allowing him to live a quiet and peaceful private life. No sooner had he landed in Boston than he wrote his daughter as well as Miss Hogarth to the effect that he was not being pursued by the public and that his hours of rest were as well observed as they were in England. From the different American cities, along almost the same route he had previously traversed, similar comments were forwarded to his homeland. A letter to Charles Fecher from Washington and one to Macready from Springfield, Massachusetts, both elaborated on his amazement at the safety of his private life from public intrusion and at his success in America as an impersonator of his own characters. Even though the country was resounding with his name, he lived almost as any unnoted citizen. Really Dickens seemingly was too happy over his unexpected privacy and too

\[45\text{Ibid.}, \text{ pp. 232-233.}\]
excited over his pecuniary success to write his family and friends on any other subjects.

Dickens's popularity in America in spite of all his contempt and ridicule in the American Notes and in Martin Chuzzlewit is a marvel to all literature. Such admiration also astonished Dickens, for anxiety and dread had overshadowed the eagerness with which he had again looked forward to the shores of America. Because the book piracy had continued over the twenty-five years of his absence, Dickens knew that the bookshelves of dealers, libraries, and homes were filled with his novels; but, because he had so urged a recognition of his rights, he had misgivings about his success as a man or lecturer. Even though Dolby's scouting of the States assured Dickens a financial success, the author, on account of his two books, felt that the Americans cherished bitter memories of him. Nor was he convinced until he saw that there could be no limit to his audiences. Dolby was the most unpopular man in America because he could not supply the demand for tickets to the lectures. Jokingly, the New York Herald spoke of Dolby's inability to meet the demands in tickets as a threat to the stability of the peace between the two kindred nations. Furthermore the paper contended that the one obstruction standing between the two countries in regard to any possible future peaceful treaty was Dolby; never would the United States government forgive one who
so needed to be banished from the pale of civilization and forever accursed. 44

Nor did the press alone write of the success of the novelist's readings. Dickens himself tells us on December 3, 1867, and many other times in the following spring that it was impossible for him to exaggerate the magnificence of the reception or the effects of the readings. 45 Then Fields in his Yesterdays with Authors reiterates the comments of both the press and Dickens.

His readings everywhere were crowned with enthusiastic success, and if his strength had been equal to his will, he could have stayed in America another year, and occupied every night of it with his wonderful impersonations. I regretted extremely that he felt obliged to give up visiting the West. Invitations which greatly pleased him came day after day from the principal cities and towns, but his friends soon discovered that his health would not allow him to extend his travels beyond Washington. 46

The vastness of his audiences held Dickens spellbound. Throughout the Union the poor and the rich knew Dickens's fictional characters; they knew that these characters had sprung from his own vital personality; and they wanted to hear the author bring them alive with his own dramatic voice. They did hear him in great crowds. Newspapers even contended that Dickens was better known in America

44*New York Herald*, January 8, 1868.


46*Fields, op. cit.*, p. 185.
than in England. Great was the applause everywhere for Dickens, but Peggotty, Little Nell, Sydney Carton, and other old and unseen friends came out of books to receive their share. Evidently it was the age of the people sentimental as well as the novel sentimental. It was an American springtime, but the pathos of Tiny Tim and the humor of Bob Cratchitt pervaded the stages, softening the hearts of the audiences and scattering the joys and warmth of a Christmas season. His lectures were scheduled to a great extent in those cities in which he had previously stayed, and his impressions this time were nowhere better stated nor his feelings more deeply and sincerely expressed than in his farewell address at the press dinner at Delmonico's previous to his departure for England.

Wherever I have been, in the smallest places equally with the largest, I have been received with unsurpassable politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, consideration, and with unsurpassable respect for the privacy daily enforced upon me by the nature of my avocation here, and the state of my health.\(^{47}\)

At a grand complimentary farewell dinner in London before Dickens last crossed the Atlantic, he told his hosts that on his desk lay an accumulation of hearty, homely, cordial, unaffected invitations from a new generation in America. Those notes, he told his hosts, seemed to express a personal

interest in him. That the personal interest had grown into personal affections both countries knew upon Dickens's departure for England, for the homage paid the English guest artist by the American public stood as an indisputable proof.
CHAPTER II

PUBLISHERS AND THE PRESS

Charles Dickens may not have made his trip to America in behalf of an international copyright law as the Edinburgh Review of January, 1842, indicates, but after he had landed in the United States on January 22, 1842, he lost no time in presenting the idea to the American public. On February 1, 1842, at Papanti's Restaurant, where the young men of Boston were giving a banquet in the style of some event of national importance, Dickens, expecting to make a hit among generous hearts, spoke in very positive terms of the need of an international copyright law in America.

But before I sit down, there is one topic on which I am desirous to lay particular stress. It has, or should have a strong interest for us all, since to its literature every country must look for one great means of refining and improving its people, and one great source of national pride and honor. You have in America great writers—great writers—who will live in all time, and are as familiar to our lips as household words. Deriving (as they all do in a greater or less degree) their inspiration from the stupendous country that gave them birth, they diffuse a better knowledge of it, and a higher love for it, all over the civilized world. I take leave to say, in the presence of some of those gentlemen, that I hope the time is not far distant when they, in America, will receive of right some substantial profit and return in England from their labors; and when, we in England, shall receive some substantial

---

1 Edinburgh Review, LXXVI (1842), 500.
profit and return in America for ours. Pray do not misunderstand me. Securing to myself from day to day the means of an honourable subsistence, I would rather have the affectionate regard of my fellowmen, than I would have heaps and mines of gold. But the two things do not seem to me incompatible. They cannot be, for nothing good is incompatible with justice. There must be an international arrangement in this respect; England has done her part, and I am confident that the time is not far distant when America will do hers.\footnote{Charles Dickens, \textit{The Speeches of Charles Dickens}, edited by R. H. Shepherd, pp. 67-68.}

Though Dickens's plea for an international copyright had no challenge at the moment, within a few days the publishers, with the intent of protecting their business, bitterly attacked the proposal in the newspapers as a threat against American rights—rights this time so besprinkled with wrong as to lose their original identity, for the existing copyright law allowed the Americans to reprint any English book without any communication whatever with the author or anybody else. Dickens's books were reprinted on these agreeable terms. For good reason, then, the English author looked with much disfavor upon both the American publishers and the press. To the novelist the publishers were book thieves and the press their accomplice.

To come to know the copyright law of the United States of 1842 is to understand a just cause for Dickens's grievances. More than any other foreign author he suffered from the book piracy because his novels were so widely read in America. Dickens himself tells us in a letter to Forster...
on February 4, 1842, that of all living men he was the greatest loser by the lack of an international copyright law. Even as far back as 1836 The Pickwick Papers were pirated in this country and sold widely with no penny profit to the author. In truth, Dickens was for the most part of his writing life at the complete mercy of marauding publishers and dramatists. They realized the value of the great popularity of the author's novels and characters. Since most of Dickens's works were published in monthly parts, publishers and hack writers for the theater abridged the selections, altered the plots, or changed endings as the occasion demanded; always the story or play came out in the fashion pleasing to the publisher or theatrical performer. Over the years Mr. Pickwick, his friends, and other noted characters of Dickens were the prey of a greedy pack of plagiarists, who sought to profit, no matter how, by Dickens's creative genius. Since the plagiarizing publishers and playwrights helped themselves, advertisers were not slow in joining the profession. Today a company that wished to use a popular copyrighted character would pay its owner a good round sum for the privileges of using a carefully protected piece of property. No such pleasant situation existed in Dickens's time. It is easy to see that the English author had the right to suggest an international copyright law even though it greatly wounded the sensibilities of the American people.
Really Dickens had a right to expect more cooperation in regard to his suggestion for an international copyright law. The Quarterly Review of December, 1841, in a lengthy discussion of the copyright codes of all nations shows that the United States lagged behind all other countries in protective laws for their authors. Tracts and pamphlets, encouraged by Webster and Clay, so the article states, were suggesting a revision of the copyright code in favor of both American and English authors. Without doubt, Dickens had read this issue of the Quarterly Review. He knew also that American authors were in favor of an international law; consequently the opposition of the newspapers to his first introduction of the issue at the Boston banquet astonished Dickens. Immediately he learned, however, that the publishers had no inclination toward international or even personal honesty and that the press, with few exceptions, dared to defend them in their dishonesty. For once, however, the American newspaper met its equal in the loquacious Charles Dickens, as his comments in a letter to Henry Austin well prove.

Is it not a horrible thing that scoundrel booksellers should grow rich here from publishing books, the authors of which do not reap one farthing from their issues by scores of thousands; and that every vile, blackguard, and detestable newspaper, so filthy that no honest man would

3"The Copyright Question", Quarterly Review, LXXIX, (December, 1841), 186-228.
admit one into his house for a scullery door-mat, should be able to publish those same writings side by side, cheek by jowl, with the coarsest and most obscene companions with which they must be connected, in course of time, in people's minds? 

Certainly there was a need for an international copyright law; in fact, the Americans without the law suffered equally as much as the English. If an American author required royalty, he had little chance of getting his writings either printed or sold because the markets were flooded with those of the non-royalty English works. The output of these works popularized the English writers, but the American authors had no way of getting through to the public. Dickens even pointed out the interest that the Americans should have in this matter; of course, his great interest was that of making money for himself. Many people in America, especially authors, favored a protective law for their writings. At the New York banquet Cornelius Matthews, more courageous than most of his countrymen, deplored the little chance of American authors to be heard against the great and free influx of European books. Furthermore, he declared that Dickens ought not to be blamed for proposing what was really "the only honest turnpike between the readers of two great countries." Some few thought book piracy the brightest sign of real American

---


5Glyde Wilkins, Charles Dickens in America, p. 147.
smartness, but Matthews knew that right-thinking men privately agreed with his views, even though they had not made a public issue of the situation. Dickens did, and was justified in doing so; only he might have made a little better approach, one probably with more tact and less garrulity.

In a way it was the loquacity of Dickens that created so much antagonism on the part of the American press. Seemingly the novelist became a victim of his own conceit. In the first place the press felt that he was too young to show good judgment about the situation. Then he lacked good taste in trying to urge a change in the domestic policy of the United States while he was being treated as an honor guest of the nation. The interference of a foreigner with the laws and institutions of any country is offensive, and at no time would an American feel that an upstart of an Englishman had the right even to lobby for a law in the United States. These factors Dickens did not consider, or, if he did, he had the self importance to dare to ignore them. Of course, Bos did not understand the American press anymore than the people of the United States understood that his attacks against the printing institutions of America were no more violent and depreciatory than those which he made against any injustice of his own country. Both the press and people did know that Dickens was in his element in any reform movement, but they knew also that he was using neither the patience nor the mildness so characteristic of his fictional reforms. This knowledge put
the Americans on the defensive; and even though they knew that the root of the whole opposition lay in the publishing houses, they allowed the cheerful robbery to go on; and no foreigner was to censure.

But Dickens did censure, using all his gifts of speech, which were many; furthermore, he had a dramatic quality which he never failed to put into effect in his references to the copyright law. At Hartford, his second social introduction on February 7, 1842, he again voiced his indignation.6 So strongly did he make accusations against America's publications of Scott's novels that he seemed to grow, as he stated in a letter to Forster, "twelve feet high."7 The Hartford Times of February 8, 1842, resented Dickens's outcry at the banquet and retaliated with the statement that Americans needed no advice on the subject and that Dickens, if he wished to be a popular visitor, should not touch upon the matter again.8 Already irritated with the newspapers because of their editors' wild rush upon him as he came into port on the Britannia and because of their descriptions of his personal appearance in regard to his fondness for gay waistcoats, massive gold watch chains, and his wavy locks, Dickens


8 Hartford Times, February 8, 1842.
needed no coaxing to express his hostilities to the press. According to Putman the copyright issue simply "gave Dickens a good opportunity to open fire upon the American newspapermen." Then when he reached New York for the greatest of all public appearances and the dinner committee, including Washington Irving, who favored the copyright law, asked that he not pursue the subject further because of the antagonism on the part of the press, Bos' wrath broke out in open fury. By letter on February 24, 1842, he informed Forster about his reply to the committee that nothing would deter him from asserting his rights in America nor would he be silenced when he got home.9 Accordingly when the night came on February 18, he again with dignity in face, manner, and words stated his right at the City Hotel, where he addressed many people, distinguished or to become distinguished in America's literary field.

By this time anonymous letters, impudent newsmen, and angry agents from the publishers began "to pour in" on Dickens.10 Naturally these annoyances increased his dislike for both the publishers and press. Since Dickens was not "one to be spoken to and not speak back," he voiced his convictions in public addresses, to editors, to authors, and, no doubt, in ordinary conventions. At odd times in

10Ibid.
1842 he wrote them in letters, placing the members of the press among the scoundrels, liars, and degenerates of the nation. In like manner they appeared in 1843 in the Notes. Rather early in their wrangle with the Englishman the editors, with some exceptions like those of the New York Tribune and the Evening Post, who favored the law because of its protection of American authors, began to hint that Dickens's mission to the United States was for the purpose of lobbying for the cause of the copyright law. Although both Dickens and Forster denied such accusations, they had great difficulty in proving they were not true, if they ever did. Really the odds lay strongly against Dickens in this argument. Upon his first appearances he had never ceased to crowd the idea into his lectures; then in the Hartford address there is this statement:

Gentlemen, as I have no secrets from you, in the spirit of confidence you have engendered between us, and as I have made a kind of compact with myself that I never will, while I remain in America, omit an opportunity of referring to a topic in which I and all others of my class on both sides of the water are equally interested—equally interested, there is no difference between us—I would beg leave to whisper in your ear two words: International Copyright.\(^{11}\)

This present-tense thinking carried with it, in the eyes of the press, a taint of past planning. Apparently these two factors gave the press obvious material on which to build its opinion about the objective of Boz's visit to America.

These misrepresentations only served as challenges to Dickens in his outcry against America's "wholesale piracy of British works." In truth he had reason at first to believe that he might be influential in provoking thought among the Americans toward the passage of the bill. He felt that the existing evil should be eliminated, and he knew that many Americans felt the same way. Irving at the New York banquet spoke in favor of the international copyright; Cornelius Matthews in his speech preceding that of Dickens made a strong plea for it; and Major Jack Downing's letter, which was read at the banquet, humorously sided with Dickens by accusing the American publishers of interpreting the word copyright to mean right to copy. The New York Tribune expressed approval of the law in its write-up of the banquet.

We have heard rumours that Mr. Dickens has ventured to allude, in his replies to complimentary addresses, to the gross injustice and spoilation to which he and foreign authors are exposed in this country, from the absence of an International Copyright or some other law protecting the rights of literary property. We trust he will not be deterred from speaking the frank, round truth by any mistaken courtesy, diffidence or misapprehension of public sentiment. He ought to speak out on this matter, for who shall protest against robbery if those who are robbed may not? Here is a man who writes for a living, and writes nobly; and we of this country greedily devour his writings, are entertained and instructed by them, yet refuse to protect his rights as an author that he may realize a single dollar from all their vast American sale and popularity.

---

12 Ibid., p. 31.
13 Clyde Wilkins, op. cit., p. 137.
Is this right? Do we look well offering him toasts, compliments, and other syllabub while we refuse him naked justice—while we say that every man may take from him the fruits of his labours without recompense or redress?¹⁴

This editorial is a lament for the personal injustice to Dickens, who had a right to expect a noble response; and when he made such little headway against this injustice of stealing, he lost respect and esteem, not only for the offenders but for the whole American nation as well; in fact, a letter to Forster almost included his American supporters.

Washington Irving, Prescott, Hoffman, Bryant, Halleck, Dana—every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them dares to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law. It is nothing that of all living men I am the greater loser by it. It is nothing that I have a claim to speak and be heard. The wonder is that a breathing man can be found with temerity enough to suggest to the Americans the possibility of having done wrong.¹⁵

It is difficult today to understand why the American spokesmen for the cause of the copyright law did not show greater enthusiasm about putting it before the public and Congress, but Dickens reached the point of the ridiculous when he accused them of being cowards. Edwin Whipple, an American critic, thinks that Dickens's friends were offering only kindly advice when they suggested to him that he drop the

issue. They knew that many Americans of the forties were capable of displaying far more contempt for the Englishman than Dickens had shown for the people of the United States over the copyright situation, and they, out of respect for him as the guest of the nation, did not want such to occur.

On March 22, 1842, Dickens's letter to W. C. Macready, who had so urged the novelist to make the American trip, reveals a thorough disgust with the Americans:

Are you quite sure, Mr. Macready—and I address myself to you with the sternness of a man in the pit—are you quite sure, sir, that you do not view America through the pleasant mirage which often surrounds a thing that has been, but is not a thing that is... I see a press more mean, and paltry, and silly, and disgraceful than any country I ever knew... Freedom of opinion! Macready, if I had been born here and had written my books in this country, producing them with no stamp of approval from any other land, it is my solemn belief that I should have lived and died poor, unnoticed, and a "black sheep" to boot. I never was more convinced of anything than I am of that.  

This letter shows that Dickens's vehemence on the subject of the copyright increased as his disappointments regarding it piled up; in fact, Dickens's opinions of America were good or bad according to the country's chances of passing the copyright bill. These facts can only be discerned by reading his letters, for the idea is left out of his American Notes. Though Whipple attributes a dullness to them because

---


of the omission, the author probably made a wise choice in doing so. The Notes made the Americans angry enough without the copyright quarrel.

Not by speeches alone did Dickens add fuel to the flame in his agitation for the copyright bill. He showed great capability of offsetting oppositions by some press work of his own. On February 24, 1842, the following suggestion went to Forster:

I will tell you what I should like, my dear friend, always supposing that your judgment concurs with mine; and that you would take the trouble to get such a document. I should like to have a letter addressed to me by the principal English authors who signed the International Copyright Petition, expressing their sense that I have done my duty in the cause. I am sure I deserve it, but I don't want it on that ground. It is because its publication in the best journals here would unquestionably do great good. As the gauntlet is down, let us go on.

Forster procured not only the joint letter addressed to Dickens but also he secured one with the same signatures addressed "To The American People." These were immediately forwarded to Dickens, who in the following manner tried to persuade some of his editor friends to publish them:

I have received some documents from the greatest writers of England, relative to the International Copyright, which they call upon me to make public immediately. They have taken fire at my being misrepresented in such a matter, and have acted as such men should.

They consist of two letters, and a memorial to the American people signed by Bulwer, Rogers, Hallam, Talfourd, Sydney Smith, and so forth. Not very well knowing, as a stranger, whether it would be best to publish them in newspapers or in a literary journal, I have sent them to some gentlemen in Boston and have begged them to decide. In the event of their recommending the first-mentioned course, I have begged them to send a manuscript copy to you immediately.

These were published as Dickens requested; at least, on May 9, 1842, they appeared in the New York Evening Post along with a letter from Thomas Carlyle, which Forster had also sent to Dickens. The same issue of the Evening Post in addition carried an editorial pleading the rights not only of English authors, but also of American authors. Notwithstanding all this agitation for the international copyright law in 1842, publishers continued their book piracy. When Dickens came to America a quarter of a century later, his reading public, because of the low cost of pirated books, spanned the United States of 1863.

Dickens's most pleasant impressions concerning the copyright law came from his contact with Henry Clay. When the novelist left New York for Washington, he took to Clay a petition for the new copyright, headed by Washington Irving and signed by all the best American writers. Clay's response and support in the legislature were most pleasing to Dickens.

---

20 Wilkins, op. cit., p. 249.
21 New York Evening Post, May 9, 1842.
In the hands of Clay and his successor, Preston, the old law had its best opportunity for revision; in fact at this time in the middle of March Dickens wrote Forster that he had begun to hope. 22 However, all progress toward the passage of the new bill was offset on April 26, 1842, at Boston by a convention of the Book Trade, wherein an adoption of a memorial against changing the law was effective enough to counterbalance the great publicity which Dickens and others had worked up for its cause and to delay the passage of the law for a period of fifty years, for it was not until 1891 that the international copyright law came into existence. "If English authors," the memorial states, "were invested with any control over the republications of their own books, it would be no longer possible for American editors to alter and adapt them to the American taste." 23 The course adopted at this meeting should be proof that Dickens was justified in everything he had said or done about the American publishers. Even the ill will which he had stirred up between the two nations was no more atrocious than that of their holding steadfast to a known evil detrimental to people in two countries. The effect upon Dickens himself was great enough to drive him into silence concerning the copyright law in America, a feat almost inconceivable, for he did not speak

---


23 Ibid., pp. 238-239.
of it publicly after the convention. Nor did he in his American Notes make any reference to the unpleasant copyright issue.

He did, on the other hand, make frequent unpleasant reference to the American press, which Dickens all but considered an accomplice of the vexatious and rascally publishers. In the American Notes the newspapers received their full share of browbeating. Typical of many paragraphs are the following charges of wrongdoing:

But the foul growth of America has a more tangled root than this; and it strikes its fibres, deep in its licentious Press.

Schools may be erected, East, West, North, and South; pupils be taught, and masters reared, by scores upon scores of thousands; colleges may thrive, churches may be crammed, temperance may be diffused, and advancing knowledge in all other forms walk through the land with giant strides; but while the newspaper press of America is in, or near, its present abject state, high moral improvement in that country is hopeless. Year by year, it must and will go back; year by year, the tone of public feeling must sink lower down; year by year, the Congress and the Senate must become of less account before all decent men; and year by year, the memory of the Great Fathers of the Revolution must be outraged more and more, in the bad life of their degenerate child.24

A few months after Dickens went home, the North American Review seemingly tried to apologize to Dickens from the standpoint of those journalists who so berated him.

All that Dickens said about the international copyright law was said with utmost delicacy and privacy. We coincide entirely with the views so

well expressed by Mr. Dickens and approve the manner in which he urged them. The attacks made upon him by a portion of the newspapers for the course he saw fit to take on the subject were unjust, false, vulgar; disgraceful to the taste and temper, and disgraceful to the character of their authors.25

First impressions with Charles Dickens evidently were not always lasting, for on his second visit to America in 1867 his attitude toward the printing organizations of the United States appeared to be mild acceptancy rather than intense dislike. It is hardly safe to say that all his antagonisms had vanished with the years, but his anger did not show so much on the surface. Certainly in the space of twenty-five years the newspapers had hardly improved their manners. Scarcely had Dickens set foot upon American soil again when the Harper's Weekly picked up the echoes of the American Notes by cartooning Dickens and Dolby in the act of almost slamming the door in the face of Martin Chuzzlewit and other characters from Dickens's book on America.26 He passed this by without any known comment; nor did he make any bitter attack on what he termed the press's "public's love of smartness." In a letter to Miss Georgina Hogarth on January 4, 1868, he did express a desire to understand such samples of journalism:


I must add, too, that although there is a conventional familiarity in the use of one's name in the newspapers as 'Dickens,' 'Charlie' and what not, I do not see in the least that familiarity in the writers themselves. An inscrutable tone obtains in journalism, which a stranger cannot understand. If I say in common courtesy to one of them, when Dolby introduces, 'I am much obliged to you for your interest in me,' or so forth, he seems quite shocked, and has a bearing of perfect modesty and propriety. I am rather inclined to think that they suppose their printed tone to be the public's love of smartness, but it is immensely difficult to make out.27

In a way this is an example of a snobbish Englishman not understanding gestures of American friendliness. In all probability the press was attempting to express a spirit of fellowship through the use of nicknames, in which case, however, the Boston Post greatly overstepped its privileges on January 4:

Dickens does not live with his wife, it is said.... (A lady well known in literary circles who suffers from an organic disappointment, on the evening of the first readings sent Mr. Dickens a bouquet. The floral offering was returned with the thanks of the recipient and the announcement that a lady of London supplied him with flowers for his button hole, not only in England but in America.) Oh, Charles, at your age and with that bald head and that gray goatee!28

Before leaving England Dickens had made a resolution that this time the Americans would have no cause for offense. His determination to keep faith is evident enough when


28Boston Post, January 4, 1868.
there was no response to the *Boston Post* either by speech or letter. Of course, the more Dickens ignored the unfavorable criticisms of him, the more the indignation of the press died away. Only once did his silent tolerance for the press waver. Because he had refused to visit Chicago, the home of his good-for-nothing brother Augustus, the local papers of that city accused Dickens of allowing his sister-in-law to live there in poverty. Then it was that Dickens issued a very short personal statement to the paper saying that he helped to support the only genuine Mrs. Augustus Dickens, who now lived in England.29

Dickens's attitude toward the publishing houses was markedly less antagonistic than on his first visit to America. On his second visit the letters to Forster were practically void of any direct mention of the publishers. By this time he had come to know without doubt just how great was his financial loss resulting from the activities of American publishers, but he made no attack against them. Dickens probably realized that the book piracy had grown up as an injustice through no one's particular contrivance. Although he had brought over his play *No Thoroughfare* with the hope of getting an American production, he found that pirates were already producing their versions in all directions. He simply wrote to his collaborator, Wilkie Collins,

that nothing was to be done about the play on this side and that his attempt to get a New York theater to do the original version had failed. In the middle of January, 1868, after he had been in New York long enough to investigate, Dickens wrote Forster that at the theaters comic operas, melodramas, and domestic dramas prevailed all over the city and that his stories played no inconsiderable part in them. If the copyright laws of today had then existed, Dickens would have realized a very large income from the royalties on the publication of his books and the productions of his play. In the nineties Harper's Magazine bought the American rights to his novel, Great Expectations, for the sum of six thousand dollars; and in 1934 when the manuscript of The Life of Christ, which was written by Dickens for his children, was offered to the public, the American publishing rights were bought by the United Features Syndicate for $200,000, fifteen dollars a word.30 It is no compliment to the American nation that Dickens did not come into his own during his lifetime.

The relative love feast between Dickens and the press on this his second journey to their shores was for the Americans a source of astonishment. On the whole, the newspaper gave him as cordial a welcome as heart could wish. They elaborated upon his generous gifts of one thousand

30. P. Strygley and O. V. Betts, High Lights in English Literature, p. 731.
dollars to the needy Mrs. Clemm, the mother-in-law of Edgar
Allen Poe, and of the seventeen hundred dollars for the
raised letter printing of Old Curiosity Shop for the blind;
upon his interviews and sympathy with children; and, of
course, upon his showmanship and humorous entertainment.
It was the consideration, enthusiasm, and respect of the
press as well as the people for Dickens that helped him to
put away the old animosities. Of course, in the case of the
Americans, anger seldom lasts. Perhaps they do forget and
forgive too easily, but in doing so in 1866, they conquered
the heart of Charles Dickens. He, in return, with his
accustomed power and charm of speech, showed such sincere
and genuine interest in the United States that he won the
admiration of all America. Of course, Dickens's second trip
to America was planned specifically for the purpose of his
making money. He did, with a final gross receipt of
$288,000, an enormous sum of money for lecturing in the
nineteenth century. No doubt this played a great part in
smoothing out his ill will. Even more than this would he
have made had not American politics during his stay in Boston
not pushed him into a week's holiday. President Johnson's
impeachment in connection with Reconstruction evidently
became, for a brief time, of more national interest than were
Dickens's lectures, entertaining though they were. Johnson
himself, however, helped to make up this loss in the capital
city. Impeachment or not, the President took a whole row
of seats for every night of Dickens’s performances. 31 Then
Dickens’s receipts were cut down by his shyness of American
money. He converted his greenbacks to sterling or gold,
sometimes at a discount of forty per cent. Neither the
impeachment nor his lack of faith in paper money, however,
interfered with his social or financial success. No one
performance brought in less than $1500, and four readings
totaled more than $2500 each. Scraps from his many letters
written during the 1867 and 1868 lecture tour show his
evident popularity.

Boston—The young undergraduates of Cambridge
have made a representation to Longfellow that they
are 500 strong and can not get one ticket. I don’t
know what is to be done for them.

New York—We are now selling the tickets for
the four readings of next week. At nine o’clock
this morning there were two thousand people in
waiting, and they had begun to assemble in the
bitter cold as early as two o’clock in the morning.

Brooklyn—The noble army of speculators are
now furnished (this is literally true, and I am
quite serious) each man with a straw mattress,
a little bag of bread and meat, two blankets,
and a bottle of whiskey. With this outfit, they
lie down in line on the pavement the whole of the
night before the tickets are sold; generally tak-
ing up their position about ten o’clock in the
evening. 32

Edwin Whipple thinks it was almost impossible for even
Dickens to exaggerate the clamor and excitement in the

31 Stephen Leacock, Charles Dickens, p. 257.

32 Charles Dickens, The Letters of Charles Dickens,
edited by His Sister-In-Law and His Eldest Daughter,
Vol. II, pp. 359, 367, and 337.
efforts of the Americans to purchase admissions to the Englishman's lectures. This critic infers that in Boy-town, a New York wit's nickname for Boston, many people dated their incurable diseases of the lungs from their waiting in freezing November weather to obtain tickets to Dickens's dramatizations.\textsuperscript{33} One man in New York sold two tickets; in exchange he got another ticket, fifty dollars, and a brandy cocktail.\textsuperscript{34} In one of his last letters from America Dickens said, "I have now read in New York City to 40,000 people, and I am quite as well known in the streets there as I am in London."\textsuperscript{35} The injustices of the publishing houses, against which Dickens had so fought on his first visit of twenty-five years removed, had placed his books in the homes of an entire country; the robbery, which had so poisoned his mind against a people, now paid off. The point is more truly stated by Horace Greeley in the \textit{New York Tribune}.

The fame as a novelist which Mr. Dickens had already created in America, and which at the best, has never yielded him anything particularly munificent or substantial, is become his capital stock in the present enterprise.\textsuperscript{36}

However, Charles Dickens, with a weary mind and a warm heart, did not fail in his lectures to return something of these values.

\textsuperscript{33}Edwin Whipple, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 311.


\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{New York Tribune}, February 26, 1869.
that had to do with good will, friendship, and laughter. Perhaps there never was a wider contrast in any two home-bound journeys than in those made by Dickens from America. On his departure in 1842 he carried away a small shaggy dog, a white Havana spaniel given to Dickens by the American actor, Mitchell,37 other small gifts made by American authors and scholars, and the good wishes of only a few personal friends. In 1868 he left with as much money as Lincoln had received in his four years as President and the friendship of almost the entire nation as well.

---

CHAPTER III

GRIEVANCES AGAINST SLAVERY

Dickens's greatest wrath fell upon the American nation not because of the copyright injustice to him and his profession but because of an injustice to humanity—slavery. Any plantation owner familiar with the life and works of Charles Dickens must have looked with many misgivings toward the Englishman's first visit. Even those who opposed slavery, as did Longfellow and Channing, were, without question, apprehensive of what his attitude might be. Evidently many Englishmen also were greatly concerned about Dickens's possible reaction to slavery. Among them was John Forster, who, no doubt, before Dickens left England, felt rather hopeless about urging him to keep quiet on the question; this very close friend of Dickens knew that it would be difficult for the novelist, even for the sake of a visitor's politeness, to remain reticent on a subject which filled him with a sense of shame and reproach. To read the advertisements in the American Notes, which Dickens, on his journey through the country, gathered from newspapers concerning runaway slaves is to feel that such horrors have never quite been a part of our American life. These disclose such abuses as one would like not to believe.
Ran away, Negress Caroline. Had on a collar with one prong turned down.

Ran away, a black woman Betsy. Had an iron bar on her right leg.

Ran away, the negro Manuel. Much marked with irons.

Ran away, a negro woman and two children. A few days before she went off, I burnt her with a hot iron on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M.

Fifty dollar reward for negro Jim Blake. Has a piece cut out of each ear, and the middle finger of the left hand cut off to the second joint.1

No wonder Dickens felt that slavery was repugnant alike to every law of God and nature.

This feeling, developed by many factors in Dickens's personal life, had reached a high intensity long before he crossed the Atlantic. The grinding poverty of his childhood, his deep sympathy for the masses, his tendency to seek out social wrongs and to defend victims of society were potentialities for a great champion of antislavery. Add to these one of the deepest secrets of Dickens's genius, his emotional nature, wherein he allowed pathos to run riot, and splice in his imagination, which was not needed in some of his observations about his travels, and one has a recipe for Dickens's violent attacks on slavery. Feeling that it was utterly and hideously wrong in itself, "he spoke his mind bluntly and

1Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, pp. 96-97.
made enemies by the thousands”. To what extent Dickens did show his anger in regard to slavery is most obvious in his letters to Forster.

I told him [an American] that I could sympathise with men who admitted slavery to be a dreadful evil, but frankly confessed their inability to devise a means of getting rid of it; but that men who spoke of it as a blessing, as a matter of course, as a state of things to be desired, were out of the pale of reason; and that for them to speak of ignorance or prejudice was an absurdity too ridiculous to be combated.3

Without stint or inhibition Dickens criticized this undesirable element of the American nation until there was almost a complete alienation of sympathy between Dickens and the country.

By the nature of what the novelist and the nation stood for, this should not have been. The author was of special appeal and interest to the Americans because he was the first English novelist of the century to preach the rights of the ordinary everyday citizen. From across the sea Dickens had felt that the Americans, like himself, were a lover of people. Since the Americans above everything else were believers in democracy, they at least expected some praiseworthy remarks from such a spokesman of the common people. Of course, the senses of many Americans had been dulled to the fact that slavery was a social wrong; they just took it as a matter of living and working; but the reformer’s eye of the visitor saw it as the saddest indication of a democracy. It "sickened

him, and he refused to think of America as a land of freedom as long as a dark curtain of slavery formed her background. And he said so, not at all politely, as a stranger should, but theatrically and vain-gloriously; especially did he excel in such dramatics in his conclusion to the American Notes.

Shall we cry shame on the brutality of those who ham-string cattle, and spare the lights of freedom upon earth, who notch the ears of men and women, cut pleasant posies in the shrinking flesh, learn to write with pens of red-hot iron on the human face, rack their poetic fancies for lividities of mutilation which their slaves shall wear for life and carry to the grave, break living limbs as did the soldier who mocked and slew the Savior of the world, and set defenseless creatures up for targets?... rather, for me, restore the forest and the Indian village; in lieu of stars and stripes, let some poor feather flutter in the breeze; replace the streets and squares by wigwams; and, though the death-song of a hundred haughty warriors fill the air, it will be music to the shriek of one unhappy slave.

Slavery was wrong; so was Charles Dickens in his insisting on thinking it only an American institution, as he seemingly did in both his personal letters and his American Notes.

If happy slaves sang at their work in Dickens's day, he did not hear them; at least he did not acknowledge such in his letters. Even before he entered the South, Dickens's antipathy to slavery had become an antipathy to that part of the country in which the slaves lived.

---

4 Andre Maurois, Dickens, translated by Hamish Miles, p. 57.

5 Dickens, op. cit., p. 100.
When we reach Baltimore, we are in the regions of slavery. It exists there, in its least shocking and most mitigated form; but there it is. They whisper, here (they dare only whisper, you know, and that below their breaths), that on that place, and all through the South, there is a dull gloomy cloud on which the very word seems written.  

His first observations and experiences in traveling in the slave districts to Richmond did nothing to erase such an image from his mind.

Richmond is a prettily situated town; but, like other towns in slave districts (as the planters themselves admit), has an aspect of decay and gloom which to an unaccustomed eye is most distressing. In the black car (for they don't let them sit with the whites), on the railroad as we went there, were a mother and family whom the steamer was conveying away, to sell; retaining the man, (the husband and father I mean) on a plantation. The children cried the whole way.

This incident, plus the fact that on the boat to which he later transferred were two slave owners and two constables in search of runaway negroes, filled Dickens with a resentment which made him all but uncivil to his hosts when he reached his destination. The people of Richmond, however, mistaking his seeming ill will for English reserve, tried their best to make him a happy guest. Nevertheless, he left the town most unhappy, for just as he passed from the city limits, he observed the following notice on a condemned bridge: "Penalty against whites for fast driving, five

---

7 Ibid., p. 249.
dollars; for slaves, fifteen stripes." From Baltimore on March 22, 1842, he wrote of his strong hatred of slavery to Miss Burdett-Coutts: "I have been at Washington and as far beyond that, again, as Richmond in Virginia. But the prematurely hot weather, and the sight of slaves, turned me back." On the same date he wrote similar opinions to Macready.

The sight of slavery in Virginia and the hatred of British feeling upon the subject, and the miserable hints of the important indignation of the South, have pained me very much... The premature heat of the weather (it was eighty yesterday in the shade) and Clay's advice have made us determine not to go to Charleston; but having got to Richmond, I think I should have turned back under any circumstances.

It was with the greatest relief that Dickens turned his back "on the detested and accursed system." So odious was slavery to Dickens that he just did not wish for any public mark of respect wherever it existed. No doubt, his opposition to it is one of the things that helped him to attain his abiding reputation of being a master of the human heart.

Forster's letters to Dickens must have been rather insistent upon the author's keeping quiet on the racial

---

8Ibid., p. 250.


question, for, although Dickens's letters contained pages and
pages on the negro, he was always offering excuses for getting
into the subject.

It is all very well to say 'be silent on the
subject',... They will ask you what you think of
it; and will expatiate on slavery as if it were
one of the greatest blessings of mankind. 'It's
not', said a hard, bad-looking fellow to me the
other day, 'it's not the interest of a man to use
his slaves ill. It's damned nonsense that you
hear in England!—I told him quietly that it was
not a man's interest to get drunk, or to steal,
or to game, or to indulge in any other vice, but
he did indulge in it for all that. That cruelty,
and the abuse of irresponsible power, were two of
the bad passions of human nature, with the gratifica-
tion of which, considerations of interest or of ruin
had nothing whatever to do; and that, while every
candid man must admit that even a slave might be
happy enough with a good master, all human beings
knew that bad masters, cruel masters, and masters
who disgraced the form they bore, were matters of
experience and history, whose existence was as
undisputed as that of the slaves themselves. He
was a little taken aback by this and asked if I
believed in the bible. Yes, I said, but if any
man could prove to me that it sanctioned slavery,
I would put no further credence in it.\footnote{Forster, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 250.}

It is hardly possible to doubt that Dickens, in telling the
man this, told him something sane and logical and unanswerable.

It is permissible, however, to doubt whether he told it to
him quietly.

Dickens was more overwrought on the subject of slavery
in St. Louis than ever because a certain judge in his presence
had unwittingly pitied England's national ignorance of the
truths of slavery. Dickens's assurance to the man that an
Englishman was more competent to judge of the atrocity and horror than those brought up in the midst of slavery was snobbery and smugness at their worst. One can imagine the thoughts that flew through the judge's mind whether he spoke them or not. More than likely though he recalled that the illustrious Hawkins had spread slavery about the world and that in conquered English colonies slavery had been accepted or introduced as a mainstay of colonial prosperity. The slave trade had been encouraged for more than two hundred years in England before an abolishing act did away with it in 1806.\textsuperscript{12} The actual abolition in some of the colonies, as in Mauritius and the West Indies, did not take place until 1833, only eight years before Dickens's first visit; then it just provided for a gradual emancipation.\textsuperscript{13} The truth of the matter was that slavery all but still existed in these two places. These facts gave Dickens little right to deplore the sins of another country. Neither did Dickens stop to consider whether the plantation slave was happier than the factory hand at Lancashire: He just had no eye for a happy slave nor a kind master even though they existed and were the rule rather than the exceptions. Cheerful "darkeys" did work happily on the large plantations of the sunny South. That

\textsuperscript{12}Edward P. Cheyney, \textit{Reading in English History}, p. 650.

\textsuperscript{13}Arthur L. Cross, \textit{A Shorter History of England and Greater Britain}, p. 657.
days of twelve or fourteen hours in length in an English factory would have made their lives less livable was a matter of no consequence to Dickens; to be free at any cost was the sincere belief of the novelist.

Since Dickens was always drawn to anything connected with a sensation, his investigation of the burning of a live negro in St. Louis caused his wrath to break out in open fury.

It is not six years ago, since a slave in this very same St. Louis, being arrested (I forgot for what), and knowing he had no chance of a fair trial, be his offense what it might, drew his bowie knife and ripped the constable across the body. A scuffle ensuing, the desperate negro stabbed two others with the same weapon. The mob who gathered overwhelmed him by numbers; carried him away to a piece of open ground beyond the city; and burned him alive. This, I say, was done within six years in broad day; in a city with its courts, lawyers, tipstaffs, judges, jails, and hangman; and not a hair on the head of one of those men has been hurt to this day.\*\*\*

This was done by a mob of men of wealth and mark, and the act justified Dickens in everything he had ever said or thought about slavery. It probably outweighed in his eyes any crime ever committed by an Englishman. His ridicule now fell upon the whole nation as his same letter from St. Louis proved.

And it is, believe me, the miserable, wretched, independence in small things, the paltry republicanism which recoils from honest service to an honest man, but does not shrink from every trick, artifice, and knavery in business, that makes these slaves necessary,

and will render them so, until the indignation of other countries sets them free.\footnote{15}

These opinions, written or spoken, did little or nothing toward the uprooting of slavery; it took a sectional jealousy plus a civil war to make the slave a helpless, free individual. But the Americans themselves settled for individual freedom. If Dickens could know today that the struggle of retaining this freedom and making it possible for other countries, even his own England, has been a task consuming the time, energy, and life of our nation, he would find the statement made so often in his letters that nothing lasts long in America an erroneous one. Individual liberty has lasted; during the eighty years since his last visit, it has almost been the nation's objective for living and dying.

As Dickens predicted in his \textit{American Notes}, the bloody chapter of slavery had a bloody end. In name the evil was swept away four years before the English novelist made his second pilgrimage to America in 1868; in fact, it remained in some phase or other as it does today. The lingering echoes of slavery still jut out in our present civilization in the forms of an indifference to the education and welfare of the colored race, and in 1868 the imprints of it lay as deep on the American soil and in American life as did the wrongs of it lie in the heart of Charles Dickens. On this

\footnote{15}{\textit{Ibid.}}
visit his spoken comments were few, but to England went letters, voluble in their sympathy for the negro. He well characterizes the "emancipated" slave in a letter to Samuel Cartwright.

The ghosts of slavery haunt the houses; and the old, untidy incapable, lounging, shambling black serves you as a free man. Free, of course, he ought to be.... I have a strong impression that the race must fade out of the States very fast. It never can hold its own against a striving, restless, shifty race.16

In the towns of the South, so he wrote Forster, he saw the shambling negro, evading and postponing his free work and going round and round it, instead of at it.17 As observing as Dickens was, he failed to note that the shiftlessness and laziness of the negro were as much due to traits of his race as they were to his having been a slave to the people of the South. The English author's powerful denunciation of slavery in an appendage to the American Notes is certainly to his credit; motion picture producers would do well to read it before they so glorify the life of the slave in the Old South. Dickens's detestation of slavery is now shared by everyone, but because he did not comprehend the negro himself, he underestimated the Southerners in their good intentions toward the negro.


But if Dickens overlooked a truth in regard to the Negro's characteristics, he, according to a letter to Forster, did not go far wrong in judging the purpose for enfranchising him.

The melancholy absurdity of giving these people votes, at any rate at present, would glare at one out of every roll of their eyes, chuckle in their mouths, and bump in their heads, if one did not see (as one cannot help seeing in this country) that their enfranchisement is a mere party trick to get votes.18

Could Dickens visit America today, great would be his astonishment to find that the political maturity of the negroes might now swing a presidential election; in fact, Walter White, secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, thought, before the election, that such might be true in 1948.19

Then, however, as now, the social superiority of the white American over the black American was everywhere in evidence.

When I read in Mr. Beecher's church at Brooklyn, we found the trustees had suppressed the fact that a certain upper gallery holding 150 was 'the Coloured Gallery'. On the first night not a soul could be induced to enter it; and it was not until it became known next day that I was certainly not going to read there more than four times, that we managed to fill it.20

18 Ibid.
Dolby in New York was all but attacked by a man to whom he unknowingly sold a seat next to two mulattresses. In the same city while Dickens waited his turn in a barber shop, four white men walked out because a colored man came in from the back and sat down, probably waiting to ask for employment. He found the dormitories of the negroes in the penitentiaries much more unsanitary and unlivable than were those of the whites.

In the Baltimore Penitentiary, the white prisoners dine on one side of the room, the coloured prisoners on the other; and no one has the slightest idea of mixing them. But it is indubitably the fact that exhalations not the most agreeable arise from a number of coloured people got together, and I was obliged to beat a quick retreat from the dormitory.21

It just was not enough to Dickens that slavery had gone and that the atonement for its sin had almost caused a young nation to destroy itself; he had to snoop for the after effects even before the flesh wounds were yet healed. The negroes needed Dickens's sympathy, no doubt, but so did their masters, whose courage and sacrifice during the destructions of slavery were the only compensation for living afterwards.

Dickens's greatest surprise, could he return after an interval of eighty years, would be that the negroes have survived at all. His contention in 1868 that they could not

21 Ibid., p. 419.
hold their own against a "restless, shifty, and striving, strange race" and that "they would die out fast" proved Dickens a poor prophet. The novelist did not foresee that, slave or no slave, the negro would thrive because the comfort and luxury of the Americans were too much dependent on him. It is just as well for the Americans that Dickens could not foresee the future of the Negro; the country, even though it needed some of the reprimanding, writhed enough under his contempt and scorn.

Those characteristics of American life which Dickens so detested have practically vanished with the years. Whatever small part Dickens played in the passing of slavery is enough for any American to acknowledge an indebtedness to him; for to have more freedom is to have more self-respect and happiness, even though the latter today is strained in the retention of freedom. Both are great assets to any nation. Present day Americans, liberty conscious as they are, can well appreciate Dickens's irritability with slavery. Perhaps above all they can appreciate his courage in striving for his honest convictions even though he was one against a nation. He knew that he would get thoroughly hated for his roughness and harshness in upholding his beliefs, but he held steadfast to what he thought was right. Both England and America could well use such a man today.
CHAPTER IV

VIEWS ON TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

American geographical features under Dickens's pen took on characteristics according to the mood which he happened to have upon reaching the different scenes. Ordinarily his rather consistent disapprovals of topography were the results of his irritation from the discomforts of traveling in the new country. Especially was this true of his dislike for the Mississippi River. About the time Dickens inspected the river, the steamboats were practical craft built for service, not beauty; their captains were almost lords of creation; and they, reveling in the dangers of sand bars and snags, rated themselves and each other by the speed which their boats could make. Nor were the captains the only picturesque people on board. There were travelers of all kinds; among them were professional gamblers and other sharpers who used their wits and dishonesties to save them the trouble of working for a living. Certainly a boat trip was not one of comfort, and for an over-particular and luxury-loving passenger, like Dickens, it offered nothing in the way of relaxation or pleasure. The Englishman probably did not exaggerate at all concerning one of his down-stream voyages.
Conceive the pleasure of rushing down this stream by night (as we did last night) at the rate of fifteen miles an hour; striking against floating blocks of timber every instant, dreading some infernal blow at every bump. The helmsman in these boats is in a little glass-house upon the roof. In the Mississippi another man stands in the very head of the vessel, listening and watching intently; listening, because they can tell in dark nights by the noise when any great obstruction is at hand. This man holds the rope of a large bell which hangs close to the wheel-house, and whenever he pulls it, the engine is to stop directly, and not to stir until he rings again. Last night, this bell rang at least once in every five minutes; and at each alarm there was a concussion which nearly flung one out of bed.\footnote{John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (The Gadshill Edition), Vol. I, p. 273.}

The lack of luxury in travel, however, was not alone the cause of Dickens's disdain for the Mississippi. Had the river not been so closely associated with the dismal Cairo, which city, no doubt, had lured him to America for the purpose of investigating his money losses there, Dickens might not have looked upon the stream with such contempt. In his American Notes just because the river flowed by his "despised spot," it apparently became "the hateful Mississippi, circling and eddying before Cairo and turning off upon its southern course, a slimy monster hideous to behold." Then after working his wrath up to fever pitch over Cairo and imposing such names upon it as "a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise, a place without one single quality in earth or air or water, to
command it, 2 he was truly in the state of mind to write off some of his ill feeling on the body of water rolling by its side; and he did so, painting an excellent picture of its kind, not with brush but with words.

But what words shall describe the Mississippi, great father of rivers, who (praise to Heaven) has no young children like him! An enormous ditch, sometimes two or three miles wide, running liquid mud, six miles an hour; its strong and frothy current choked and obstructed everywhere by huge logs and whole forest trees; now turning themselves together in great rafts, from the interstices of which a sedgy lazy foam works up, to float upon the water’s top; now rolling past, like monstrous bodies, their tangled roots showing like matted hair; now glaring singly by, like giant leeches; and now writhing round and round in the vortex of the same small whirlpool, like wounded snakes. The banks low, the trees dwarfish, the marshes swarming with frogs, the wretched cabins few and far apart, their inmates hollow-cheeked and pale, the weather very hot, mosquitoes penetrating into every crack and crevice of the boat, mud and slime on everything; nothing pleasant in its aspect, but the harmless lightning which flickers every night upon its dark horizon. 3

To Dickens the river was a breeding place of fever and ague, a rotting ground for unwholesome vegetation and half-built houses, and a dying spot for all wanderers tempted thither. Each experience on the river seemed to excite in him a new anger, which he immediately conveyed by letter to Forster. Forster was a staunch friend, indeed, if he always allowed Dickens to use him as a safety value for a release of his wrath as the novelist did on his trips to America. The

---

2 Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, p. 72.
3 Ibid.
departure from the Mississippi must have been as great a relief to Forster as it was to Dickens himself, who, according to the following comments, thought of it as an escape from great suffering.

While I have been writing this account, we have shot out of that hideous Mississippi, thanks be to God; never to see it again, I hope, but in a nightmare. We are now on the smooth Ohio, and the change is like the transition from pain to perfect ease.4

Nor did Dickens ever see the river again. On his second tour he hovered near the eastern coast line, where luxury best accommodated his fifty-six years and his illness. Though his original schedule in 1868 included lectures in cities along the Mississippi, his letters never show any enthusiasm about the trip; and on January 3 in Philadelphia he announced his cancellation of all appointments westwards. He preferred smaller places and profits to distances and the river; his one experience, Dickens felt, with the Mississippi was enough for a lifetime.

Anyone familiar with some phases of life in parts of the Delta country today can understand Dickens's attitude, for evidently life along the upper course of the river in the 1840's was similar to the more or less unstable existence along some places on its lower course today. However Dickens's visionary powers seemingly grasped none of the importance or significance that America's great central stream was to take on, even though it was powerful and ugly and destructive. He might have foreseen the respect and admiration that would

come from spanning, curbing, and conquering, or the popularity that would rise from the inability to conquer. Even with all his imaginative gifts, Dickens evidently failed to recognize to what extent the Mississippi might be woven into the fabric of American culture. While Dickens traversed or rode upon this "abhorred river," not too far away on an upper stretch of its course a seven year old Samuel Clemens was, no doubt, lolling his days away along the stream, musing over the turbulent debris moving through the forest to the distant sea, watching the river steamers passing in the night, and unconsciously gathering the vivid impressions of the great river and the picturesque life upon its waters which were one day to make the river immortal. Even though Dickens was known to his reading public as a humorist, he saw none of the humor that Twain was to weave into his river novels—Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and Life on the Mississippi; in fact, in no way could Dickens find favor with the powerful and useful middle stream of America. Nor did the young Englishman on his first visit have an eye for the tomorrow of the river; he was too annoyed with his present experiences along the stream to reckon about its future. One thinks of the great value of the river today and wonders at Dickens's lack of vision.

Less harsh was Dickens in his comments on the cowboy lands than he was in his criticisms of the Mississippi, but in a way he considered that day wasted which he spent in
seeking out the beauties of the prairies. Before turning
back from St. Louis, the furtherest point of his wanderings
in America in 1842, Dickens so desired to see a prairie sun-
set that a special party was arranged for a thirty-mile trip
out on the plains. In picnic fashion a group left his hotel
at five punctually. The fatiguing trip evidently destroyed
his zeal for a prairie sunset because it was with indifference
that he looked upon the scene. At least his recordings in the
American Notes, which were slight revisions of his opinions
in his letters to Macready and Forster, indicate as much.

It would be difficult to say why or how—
though it was possibly from having heard and
read so much about it—but the effect on me was
a disappointment. Looking toward the setting
sun, there lay, stretched out before my view, a
vast expanse of level ground; unbroken, save by
one thin line of trees, which scarcely amounted
to a scratch upon the great blank, until it met
the glowing day, wherein it seemed to dip, mingling
with its rich colors, and mellowing in its distant
blue. There it lay, a tranquil sea or lake with-
out water, with the day going down upon it; a few
birds wheeling here and there; and solitude and
silence reigning paramount around.... Great as
the picture was, its very flatness and extent,
which left nothing to the imagination, tamed it
down and cramped its interests.... It was lonely
and wild, but oppressive in its barren monotony....
It is not a scene to be forgotten, but it is
scarcely one, I think (at all events, as I saw
it) to remember with much pleasure or to covet
the looking on again in after life.  

Naturally Dickens did not feel the exhilaration inspired by
his Scottish heaths nor English downs, for he was of those

---

5Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circula-
tion, p. 76.
places by birth. Neither could sage grass nor a receding horizon mean what heather or a near-by coastline did to the Englishman, but he was able to comprehend the vastness and loneliness that have often supplied American writers like Hamlin Garland and Willa Cather with subject matter. On the other hand, the plains held no lure for him as they did for those who rode the ranges, nor did he think in terms of its value as a range.

The one phase of American topography that measured up to Dickens's expectations was Niagara Falls. During his stay of more than a week at Niagara in 1842 Dickens did nothing but walk to and fro all day viewing the falls from different angles. He climbed the neighboring heights or lingered in the shadows below to watch the waters make their fearful plunge. A letter written to Henry Austin from his hotel chamber overlooking the falls could be accredited to Dickens under any name.

From the three chambers, or any part of them, you can see the falls rolling and tumbling and leaping, all day long, with bright rainbows making fiery arches down a hundred feet below us. When the sun is on them, they shine and glow like molten gold... When the day is gloomy, the water falls like snow, or sometimes it seems to crumble away like the face of a great chalk cliff, or sometimes again to roll along the front of the rock like white smoke. But it all seems gay or gloomy, dark or light, by sun or moon.6

Dickens was both enchanted and awe-stricken from the time he saw "two great white clouds rising up slowly and majestically from the depths of the earth" until the roar died away as he left. His praise of the Falls in his *American Notes* should gratify the heart of any American.

I was in a manner stunned, and unable to comprehend the vastness of the scene. It was not until I came on Table Rock and looked--Great Heaven, on the fall of bright-green water--that it came upon me in its full might and majesty.

Then, when I felt how near to my Creator I was standing, the first effect, and the enduring one--instant and lasting--of the tremendous spectacle, was Peace. Peace of mind, tranquility, calm recollections of the Dead, great thoughts of Eternal Rest and Happiness; nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart, an Image of Beauty; to remain there, changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat, for ever.

Oh, how the strife and trouble of our daily life receded from my view, and lessened in the distance, during the ten memorable days we passed on that Enchanted Ground! What voices spoke from out the thundering waters; what faces, faded from the earth, looked out upon me from its gleaming depths; what heavenly promise glistened in these angels' tears, the drops of many hues, that showered around, and twined themselves about gorgeous arches which the changing rainbows made!7

The years between Dickens's visits did not dampen his enthusiasm for Niagara. Comments in many letters from America in 1868 bring out his intention and desire to show the Falls to all his retinue. Finally on March 13 he wrote Forster that as a treat to all the men he was taking them.

---

on a pleasure trip to the most interesting and beautiful place in America. Then from Rochester on March 18 his delight was passed on to Forster.

After two most brilliant days at the Falls of Niagara, we got back here last night.... I shall never forget the last aspect in which we saw Niagara yesterday. We had been everywhere, when I thought of struggling (in an open carriage) up some very difficult ground for a good distance, and getting where we could stand above the river, and see it, as it rushes forward to its tremendous leap, coming for miles and miles. All away to the horizon on our right was a wonderful confusion of bright green and white water. As we stood watching it with our faces to the top of the Falls, our backs were towards the sun. The majestic valley below the Falls, so seen through the vast cloud of spray, was made of rainbow. The high banks, the river rocks, the forests, the bridge, the buildings, the air, the sky, were all made of rainbow.... I seemed to be lifted from the earth and to be looking into Heaven. What I once said to you, as I witnessed the scene five-and-twenty years ago, all came back at this most affecting and sublime sight. The 'muddy vesture of our clay' falls from us as we look.... I chartered a separate carriage for our men, so that they might see all in their own way, and at their own time.8

In both 1842 and 1868 Dickens was loath to leave the beauty and wonder of the Falls, nor did he do so until he had absorbed their splendor on each occasion. They were a picture of majesty and marvel that he hoped to carry with him in all his after hours.

Dickens did not restrict his grumblings to the topography in the United States, for climatic conditions pleased him

---

little. In truth North American weather proved his worst enemy. Neither young nor old could he live comfortably in any section of the country. In his letters of each tour he complained constantly of the "billious and trying climate." "One day," he wrote from Washington in 1842, "it is hot summer, without a breath of air; the next, twenty degrees below freezing, with the wind blowing that cuts your skin like steel."9 After the author reached Baltimore on March 22, 1842, from his trip to the South, he sent Thomas Mitton the following weather report.

It was so hot at Richmond that we could scarcely breathe, and the peach and other fruit trees were in full blossom; it was so cold at Washington the next day that we were shivering; but even in the same town you might often wear nothing but a shirt and trousers in the morning, and two great coats at night, the thermometer very frequently taking a little dip of thirty degrees between sunrise and sunset.10

The winter and spring climate of 1868 all but thwarted Dickens's every desire to be happy in America. In his letters to his family and different friends in England he consistently complained in some manner about the weather: in Boston it took a turn of unusual severity; in New York in its suddenness of change his cold was excessively trying; and in Washington the wide leaps of the weather from pleasantness

---

10 Ibid., p. 77.
to extreme cold kept him ever conscious of his inability to breathe normally. A letter, however, to his sister-in-law in the middle of January, 1869, from New York, contains a rather favorable weather comment: "We have now cold, bright, frosty weather, without snow—the best weather for me." In the same letter, however, he complains about the ill effects of the weather upon the personal appearance of all his retinue.

Did I tell you that the severity of the weather, and the heat of the intolerable furnaces, dry the hair and break the nails of strangers? There is not a complete nail in the whole British suite, and my hair cracks again when I brush it. (I am losing my hair with great rapidity and what I don't lose is getting very gray.)

The next day his movement to Philadelphia and his sojourn there, as described in a letter to his daughter, also show his struggle against an American mid-winter.

The town is very clean and the day is as blue and bright as a fine Italian day. But it freezes very, very hard.... My cold is no better, for the cars are so intolerably hot that I was often obliged to go and stand upon the brake outside, and then the frosty air was biting indeed.

In connection with the undesirable climate was his every day struggle with America's heating systems. Insupportable to Dickens were the heat and stuffiness of all American houses, public institutions, chapels, and theaters as well as

---


12 Ibid., p. 256.
of cars and cabins in train and boat traveling. Being rich in youth and health in 1842, he took to the open air with little injury to himself; but, in 1868, although Dickens's letters show the opinion that the heating systems agitated his cold more than did the frosty air, the Englishman was not in any condition to cope with the north winds and snows. Even though the aging man was afraid that the freezing weather was doing his lungs a permanent injury on account of his catarrh, he felt that he had to have the fresh air. "I keep my rooms well ventilated by opening all windows," he wrote his daughter in 1868, "but no window is ever opened in the hall or passages, and they are so overheated by a great furnace that they make me faint and sick. The air is like that of a pre-Adamite ironing-day in full blast."13

It was the overheated rooms of his lodgings and cabins that led Dickens to rise so early during his American life. Before he ate breakfast on the boats, he always rose, appeared on deck, and paced up and down breathing in the fresh air. On land he rose equally as early to take a walk. Since walking was a hobby with Dickens, he needed only a small excuse to take to the open pathways and roads. He thought nothing of hiking ten or more miles daily; and in 1868 at the age of fifty-five and with a rheumatic foot he kept pace with the best of the Americans in a walking match.

13 Ibid., p. 238.
Resting or traveling, Dickens spent as much time outside as possible on each of his tours; he disliked the climate in the raw, but he seemingly preferred it to the artificial warmth inside.

Evidently American climate and topography made a strong impression upon Dickens. At least he carried away with him the pleasantries of Niagara and many of his irritations with weather, rivers, and unimproved lands, for they appear in the American Notes or Martin Chuzzlewit, all intermingled with the many other faults accredited to America and the Americans. Dickens did not, however, misjudge the severe winters of 1842 and 1863; he simply loved warm sun and green summers too much to be appreciative of very cold weather. If he descriptively over drew the ugliness of the Mississippi, he did as much for the beauty of Niagara. That he was somewhat overcome by the power of each is evident, not only in his letters but in both of his books dealing with conditions in the United States. The forces of nature were, without doubt, among the major interests of Dickens on his two visits to America.
CHAPTER V

COMMENTS ON MISCELLANEOUS PHASES OF AMERICAN LIFE

To compile some of Dickens's most vivid pictures of his observation on his travels through the United States other than those touching upon his favorite subjects—his receptions, book piracy, and slavery—is to find the author in favor with few and out of sympathy with many of the general opinions and habits of the Americans then and now. With all Dickens's tendency toward faultfinding, however, his letters and American Notes contain little but praise for American hotels. With few exceptions in both the forties and sixties he boasts of their protection of him from the public and of their excellent services and courtesies given him as a traveler. According to what they had to offer the hotels put on their best manners. Most efficient and generous were their preparations for Dickens, and he was most appreciative of their efforts. Extracts from the American Notes concerning his first visit show how very favorably he was impressed, for they were written or revised after he had time to think through the pleasantries of each place and make a comparison. Of the Richmond Hotel he wrote, "We found it a very large and elegant establishment, and we were as well entertained as travellers need
desire to be";\(^1\) of the Harrisburg Hotel in Harrisburg, New York, he said, "we were soon established in a very snug hotel, which, though smaller and far less splendid than many we put up at, is raised above them all, in my remembrance, by having for its landlord the most obliging, considerate, and gentlemanly person I have ever had to deal with";\(^2\) and of the hotel at Louisville his praise was most flattering to the Americans: "We slept at the Galt House, a splendid hotel, and were as handsomely lodged as though we had been in Paris, rather than hundreds of miles beyond the Alleghanies."\(^3\)

In like manner compliments on hotel accommodations pervaded Dickens's daily correspondence to England. Typical of most of his amiable comments is this excerpt from a letter posted at Hartford in 1842.

After two hours and a half of this queer traveling, we got to Hartford. There, there was quite an English inn, and the best committee of management that has yet presented itself. They kept us more quiet, and were more considerate and thoughtful, even to their own exclusion, than any I have yet to deal with.\(^4\)

Life in the hotels in 1867 and 1868 gave Dickens even more delight. Each of his letters to England conveys to

\(^1\)Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, p. 58.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 61.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 70.

his family or friends some pleasant allusion concerning the thoughtfulness of hotel keepers in providing him a quiet and peaceful private life. The gist of many references to his living quarters was that proprietors everywhere took the greatest care of him, that no place could be more satisfactory to him, or that the luxuries of his rooms were far beyond his expectations. After his arrival in Boston on November 21, 1867, he immediately wrote his daughter, Mamie, who had been so concerned about his inability to take the trip, that his surroundings were most comfortable.

This is an immense hotel with all manner of white marble public passages and public rooms, I live in a corner high up, and have a hot and cold bath in my bedroom and comforts not in existence when I was here before.5

How well the hotel proprietors cared for the novelist may best be noted by the way those at Westminster Hotel, Irving Place, in New York City, provided for Dickens in the matter of transportation. In writing to Miss Dickens on December 11, 1867, the author rather visualized his own appearance as he rode in the streets of the American metropolis.

This hotel is quite as quiet as Meyart's in Brook Street. It is not very much larger. There are American hotels close by, with five hundred bedrooms, and I don't know how many boarders; but this is conducted on what is called 'the European principle' and is an admirable mixture of a first class French and English house. I keep a very smart carriage and pair; and if you were to behold

---

me driving out, furred up to the moustache, with furs on the coach-boy and on the driver, and with an immense white, red, and yellow, striped rug for a covering, you would suppose me to be of Hungarian or Polish nationality. 6

That Dickens was conscious of his indebtedness to hotel managements is apparent in any number of letters. One in particular to Charles Fechter on February 24, 1868, from Washington acknowledges his appreciation of those in his hotel who shielded him from the public and helped, by means of a brandy cocktail, to allay his constant catarrh.

Among the many changes that I find here is the comfortable change that the people are in general extremely considerate, and very observant of my privacy.... My New York landlord made me a 'Rocky Mountain sneezer', which appeared to me to be compounded of all the spirits ever heard of in the world, with bitters, lemon, sugar, and snow. You can only make a true 'sneezor' when the snow is lying on the ground. 7

In regard to hotels no one was born more out of time than Dickens; he was built by the nature of his sensitiveness to weather and his love of comfort for the air conditioned modern skyscrapers.

Lying at the base of Dickens's one general criticism of his living quarters in 1842 was tobacco spit. Moderns with their tendencies toward cleanliness and sanitation can well sympathize with Dickens's disgust. On the other

6Ibid., pp. 241-242.

hand Dickens was too severe on the Americans when he condemned
the whole nation as tobacco spitters. It is a little sad
that tobacco chewing could not have been the butt of Dickens's
humor. How comical the results might have been! But the
indulgence in chewing and spitting tobacco was not funny to
Dickens; it was an unforgivable habit. Dickens, being a
social drinker, might have looked with leniency upon chews
of tobacco, the Americans' mediums of exchange in friend-
ship. Evidently the habits of chewing and drinking in
Dickens's mind were not at all akin. His fictional hero,
as did Sydney Carton in *The Tale of Two Cities*, might get
drunk as the occasion demanded; but no characters in his
novels got their share of tobacco, unless, of course, a
villain indulged in a foul pipe. On their way to New York
it was perfectly right for Dickens and Cornelius Felton to
drink all the porter on board. Dickens's favorite American
landlord was one who left his hotel to burn while he helped
to seek a drink of brandy for Dickens; yet the drinking
Englishmen considered the chewing of tobacco the evil of a
nation. He certainly had many occasions to think the worst
of the habit. As plentifully as the air is stifled with
cigarette smoke today so was the soil besmeared by "sobs"
of tobacco in Dickens's time. Only it was not always the
soil; the carpets, floors, and lower walls came in for
their per cent of spittle. From Washington Dickens wrote
Felton, a new American acquaintance, that if spittle could
wait at the table, he should be most nobly attended. 3
Stephen Leacock says that the nation swam in tobacco juice
ninety years ago. 9 To read the following paragraph from
the American Notes is to know that Leacock's statement is
only a thumb-nail precis of Dickens's impressions on
arriving at the American capital.

As Washington may be called the head-quarters of
tobacco-tintured saliva, the time is come when I must
confess, without any disguise, that the prevalence of
those two odious practices of chewing and expectorating
began about this time to be anything but agreeable, and
soon became most offensive and sickening. In all the
public places of America, this filthy custom is recog-
nized. In the court of law, the judge has his spittoon,
the crier his, the witness his, and the prisoner his;
while the jurymen and spectators are provided for, as
so many men who in the course of nature must desire to
spit incessantly. In the hospitals, the students of
medicine are requested, by notices upon wall, to eject
their tobacco juice into the boxes provided for that
purpose, and not to discolor the stairs. In public
buildings, visitors are implored, through the same
agency, to squirt the essence of their quids, or
'plugs', as I have heard them called by gentlemen
learned in this kind of sweetmeat, into the national
spittens, and not about the bases of marble columns.
But in some parts, this custom is inseparably mixed
up with every meal and morning call, and with all the
transactions of social life. The stranger, who follows
in the track I took myself will find it in its full
bloom and glory, luxuriant in all its alarming
recklessness, at Washington. And let him not persuade
himself (as I once did, to my shame) that previous
tourists exaggerated its extent. The thing itself is an
exaggeration of nastiness, which cannot be overcome.
As Dickens traveled westward, he probably moved the Washington Congress spitters into a circle of culture and refinement, for as the Westerners were somewhat cruder in their manners so were they with their spitting. At least his several letters on his journey westward emphasize the art of spattering. At Harrisburg, New York, the process was completely unrebuked; at a levee there Charles Dickens and his lady saw nearly every man spit upon the carpet. As they rode a canal boat to Pittsburgh, they sat down to breakfast with twenty-seven men in foul linen with yellow streams from half-chewed tobacco trickling down their chins. On the same boat they saw seventeen men spitting at one stove. Soon the Dickenses' wearing apparel began to show the stains of American spit; its rebound spattered the chewer and non-chewer alike. How Dickens and his wife managed to be civil at all is a wonder.

Even the preference of Dickens for exterior riding overland in carriages in 1842 was the result of the tobacco juice and the foul air within the cab. And this outside traveling always brought Dickens in contact with other sources of irritation: he had to sit by the down-trodden darkey driver, for whom the novelist's sympathy overflowed until he was completely depressed; the mud or dust from the bad and unkept roads made him fretful; and he was ever conscious of his wife inside the carriage undergoing the impurities he had escaped. Dickens's conclusion in his Notes in regard to the unsanitary
conditions of all transportation vehicles in 1842 is in all probability a truth.

In all modes of travelling the American customs, with reference to the means of personal cleanliness and wholesome ablution, are extremely negligent and filthy; and I strongly incline to the belief that a considerable amount of illness is referable to this course.11

If the use of tobacco annoyed Dickens in 1868, he did not find time to say so. The financial returns from his lectures so absorbed him that he used his spare moments only to write of the scramble and speculation over ticket sales. From Philadelphia he did, nevertheless, make short statements to both his daughter and Forster that from the social standpoint he had seen everywhere great changes for the better. This opinion probably included a reference to a saner use of tobacco, and there is no doubt about the following comment pointing toward the indulgers in the West, "I think it reasonable to expect that as I go westward, I shall find the old manners going on before me, and may tread upon their skirts perhaps."12

The use of tobacco was not Dickens's only complaint about the American ways of travel. No means of transportation pleased him in 1842. Certainly the corduroy roads offered nothing in

11Ibid., p. 67.

the way of comfort, or even safety, if one accepts the English-
man's opinions. These roads were made by throwing trunks of
trees into a swamp and leaving them to settle there. Dickens
declares that over such a road from Columbus to Sandusky at no
time was the coach in any position, attitude, or kind of motion
to which he had been accustomed in coaches. Such spoken or
written comments, as far as humor is concerned, were a total
loss on the Americans of the 1840's. Wry remarks about
traveling were not at all laughable to a people in a new
country who were happy over any road at all.

Rail transportation, according to Dickens's letter from
Philadelphia in the early forties, was of the same savage
nature.

I wish you could see what an American railroad is,
in some parts where I have seen them. I won't say I
wish you could feel what it is, because that would be
unchristian. It is never inclosed, or warded off.
You walk down the street of a large town; and slap-
dash, headlong, pell-mell, down the middle of the
street; with pigs burrowing, and boys flying kites
and playing marbles, and men smoking, and women
talking, and children, crawling, close to the very
rails; there comes tearing along a mad locomotive
with its sparks (from its wood fire) flying in all
directions; screeching, hissing, yelling, and panting;
and nobody one atom more concerned than if he were one
hundred miles away. I

He continues the letter with complaints in general about rail
travel. Moreover, at the end of his six-months' stay he

13Ibid., Part I, p. 296.

14Charles Dickens, Letters, Book IV of Beacon Lights of
Literature, Rudolph Chamberlain, p. 8.
reiterated all the punishments of his hard traveling in America in a letter to Henry Austin, saying that it was impossible to picture even by the utmost stretch of imagination just what incessant persecutions he and Kate had endured on both land and water.

The places we have lodged in, the roads we have gone over, the company we have been among, the tobacco-spittle we have wallowed in, the strange customs we have complied with, the packing-cases in which we have travelled, the woods, swamps, rivers, prairies, lakes, and mountains we have crossed, are all subjects for legends; quires, reams, wouldn't hold them.15

Then, of course, in 1868, it was the unendurable heat in the cars, Dickens complained, that so agitated his catarrh. The railways, Dickens contended in several of his hasty messages to his family, were far more alarming than those of his former tour. He presumed that the bumping and banging on trains were the results of worn-out roads. Twenty-five years, however, had greatly changed the manner of traveling in the United States. The improvements were all to Dickens's liking. He was most impressed with the princely streets, the smoother roads, and the courtesies of authorities and travelers in all public conveyances. Thoroughly the lecturer seemed to enjoy the pamperings of each city in its elaborate mode of conveying him to and from his work. New York is as good an example as any city.

Each evening an enormous ferryboat will convey me and my state carriage (not to mention half a dozen wagons and any number of people and a few score of horses) across the river to Brooklyn, and will bring me back again.  

In regard to the language in the forties Dickens kept faith with his usual disapprovals of America. Outside of Boston and New York, the universal nasal drawl annoyed him. He thought the prevailing grammar more than doubtful; even congressmen were guilty of a great deal of bad speaking. He felt that "Where do you hail from?" was a vulgarity too odd for an accepted idiom; yet he failed to find the American who was genteel enough to ask him where he was born. The idea that the Americans had refined the English language was most amusing to Dickens, nor was he exactly pleased when a St. Louis lady told his wife that she resembled the Americans in her manner of speaking.

A St. Louis lady complimented Kate upon her voice and manner of speaking, assuring her that she should never have suspected her of being Scotch, or even English. She was so obliging as to add that she would have taken her for an American, anywhere; which she (Kate) was no doubt aware was a very great compliment, as the Americans were admitted on all hands to have greatly refined upon the English language! I need not tell you that out of Boston and New York a nasal drawl is universal, but I may as well hint that the prevailing grammar is also more than doubtful; that the oddest vulgarisms are received idioms; that all women who have been bred in slave-states speak more or less like negroes.  

---


The prevalence of the tone and accent of the darkey among people bred in the slave-states was, of course, the result of having been constantly in their childhood with black nurses. Nor did Dickens find the speech of this part of the country otherwise in 1842. As a matter of fact this darkey accent among the whites is still noticeable in the deep South today.

Even the capital city of 1842 fell under Dickens's dislike. According to him it was a ghastly failure—no trade, no commerce, and no health. It had avenues that began in nothing and led nowhere. Of course Washington, in Dickens's thoughts, stood between him and copyright justice and between the Negro and his freedom, for the city was the seat of the American government. Nor was it only to Englishmen that he expressed his disapprovals. On March 14, 1842, he wrote Felton, one of his favored Americans who had made the trip to New York with him: "We are rather lonely and orphan-like in respect of being looked after."18 He described Congress as a pack of rascals; in his American Notes he literally took the hide off the lawmakers, if such can be done with written accusations. To the admirers of the city of Washington Dickens claimed that it was a pleasant field for the imagination to rove in, or a monument raised to a deceased project, with not even a legible description to record its departed

---

greatness. Such, he thought, it was likely to remain forever. But to Dickens the city did improve by 1868, even though the tone of party politics impressed him too unfavorably for him to be very enthusiastic about Washington. That he was unfortunate in the time of his visit to Washington as far as its politics was concerned is evident in the impeachment of President Johnson over the problem of Reconstruction. However, the novelist's letters to England on his final visit testified as to the improved social habits of the citizens of Washington and as to his appreciation of the city for giving him such full audiences. The ticket sales for his farewell night in Washington amounted to $2,610, and no night there did he receive less than $2,500.19 But this was not enough to make Dickens forget that the city was, to some extent, the symbol of the faults in American democracy.

Apparently Dickens just never ceased to pick out flaws in all phases of life in the United States. And he was far more critical and complaining on his first visit of those things that Americans had to endure everyday than on his last. The thirty-year old Dickens in 1842 sounded in his lamentations like a seventy-year old man. Whether it was temperament, bigotry, or true dislike, the true American grows tired of the monotonous grumbling and faultfinding running through all the

pages of his observations. Certainly approvals overbalance disapprovals. Perhaps if one allows for Dickens's rights and America's faults, a balance might be struck. On the other hand, if one measures in terms of what Dickens expected and received in the way of praise, hospitality, and national publicity and his refusal to pay a price of reticence concerning any fault of his "dreamed up" America, unfairness lies on the part of Dickens. He could have responded with more diplomacy toward the overdoses of royal receptions. What Americans would think or what they would tolerate seemingly had been given no consideration by the English author. Anyway, upon a "close up" of the people of the United States, Dickens's romantic imagination of the country's being an ideal faded by the day and hour; he found offenses of such a nature that he desired to rend his hosts apart, and did so. Then, of course, the rending act became a word battle of America versus Dickens, or in some instances, America versus England.

The pathos or humor of it all today is the fact that neither Dickens nor the nation exactly knew the truth of the misunderstanding. The author, adjusted to the trim countryside of England, the neat village commons, the winding roads lined with thorn hedges—all a thousand years in the making—had no patience at all with ugly canal boats, log shanties, jolting stages, nor villages half sunk in swamplands. The Americans, too busy with the progress of their civilization
down rivers, through forests, and on prairies had no time to
cater to the whims and dainties of a famous Englishman,
even though they all but left off their great epic of the
advancement of American mankind to do so. Evidently Dickens
did expect to find the ideal in America on his first American
journey, and so many faults did the young nation have that
he was not able to cope with his disillusionments. No one
gives a better epitome of this situation than does Stephen
Leacock.

Here landed the youthful Dickens with eyes trained
to different things: expecting something else; an
enthusiastic radical soaked in English conservatism,
depising forms and ceremonies and good manners until
he came to a country that hadn't got them; a spokesman
for the common people, but now in a land where they
spoke for themselves. The first of Dickens's
"American Notes" should have been a note upon himself.
It would have saved much disillusionment. 20

It is well for Dickens and the Americans that they met
personally for a second time. The generosity of the Americans
in 1868 astounded Dickens and immediately cleared off the
author's shade of misgiving that some of the old grudges might
make themselves felt. In a way Dickens, already more tolerant
of the American ways and regretful of some of his unnecessary
criticisms of the years gone by, saw more plainly his own
shortcomings, and he truly tried in word and deed to eradicate
any ill feelings caused by the rashness of many statements in
the Notes and in Martin Chuzzlewit. The sincerity and earnest-
ness flowing out of the very heart of Dickens at every lecture

20 Leacock, op. cit., p. 65.
and the response and enthusiasm of the forgiving Americans made all adverse criticisms on the part of any Englishman or American of no avail. Dickens through his dramatic lectures had established himself as a friend, and the homage paid him on his passage out was no less than the Americans would have given one of fame in their own country.
CHAPTER VI

REFLECTIONS OF DICKENS'S AMERICAN VISITS IN HIS LITERARY PRODUCTIONS: AN EVALUATION

A literary result of Dickens's first visit to America was the American Notes, his more frank than flattering opinions of the serious side of his journey. Lacking the vibrancy and radiant warmth of the letters received by his relatives and friends while he was on his tour and from which they were partly "written up" after he reached his homeland, the American Notes are rather dull reading today. At the time of their publication in 1843, however, they caused thousands of Americans to feel that Dickens, like Aesop's serpent, "had stung the breast that warmed him." Many who had shown him so much hospitality were well provoked by his sardonic comments and insolent tones in discussing the defects of the American nation. Prominently he bluntly outlined the imperfections which he deemed fraudulent and dishonest in the conclusive chapter of the American Notes. Number one among these was the tendency of the American people to carry jealousy and distrust into every transaction of public life.

One great blemish in the popular minds of America, and the prolific parent of an innumerable brood of evils, is Universal Distrust. Yet the American citizen plumes himself upon this spirit,
even when he is sufficiently dispassionate to perceive the ruin it works, and will often adduce it, in spite of his own reason, as an instance of the great sagacity and acuteness of the people and their superior shrewdness and independence.1

In spite of Dickens's strong emphasis upon the flaws of our nation, Emerson and Longfellow, who at this time were in England and for a short while in Dickens's home, praised the honesty and candidness of the Notes. Later Americans, too, have felt that some of the harsh remarks were deserved, but in general they censure Dickens for allowing his wrath to fall upon a whole people when it should have been directed against a few. For example, his loss in the alleged Eldorado, or Cairo, episode resulted in the following outburst.

Another prominent feature of the Americans is the love of 'smart' dealing, which gilds over many a swindle and gross breach of trust, many a defalcation, public and private, and enables many a knave to hold his head up with the best, who well deserves a halter.----I recollect, on both occasions of our passing that ill fated Cairo on the Mississippi, remarking on the bad effects such gross deceits must have when they exploded, in generating a want of confidence abroad, and discouraging foreign investment: but I was given to understand that this was a very smart scheme, by which a deal of money had been made, and that its smartest feature was that they forget these things abroad in a very short time, and speculated again, as freely as ever.2

This smartness, without question, did impair public credit and cripple public resources, but it was not a general

1Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, pp. 100-101.
2Ibid., p. 101.
characteristic of the American people as Dickens terms it in his Notes.

Neither was book piracy practiced by very many Americans, though the novelist had every right to protest against the guilty publishers. Dickens did not directly mention the offense in the American Notes, but he shifted the blame for his loss of royalty on books to the love of trade by the whole nation.

In like manner all kinds of deficient and impolitic usages are referred to the national love of trade; though, oddly enough, it would be a weighty charge against a foreigner that he regarded the Americans as trading people.——The love of trade is a reason why the literature of America is to remain for ever unprotected: 'For we are a trading people, and don't care for poetry;' though we do, by the way, profess to be very proud of our poets; while healthful amusements, cheerful means of recreation, and wholesome fancies, must fade before the stern utilitarian joys of trade. 3

Even though a modern reader is a Dickens enthusiast and attempts to read the American Notes with the fairest mind, he finds the author's reproaches of the Americans are simply his reactions to those phases of American life that in some way interfered with his social and financial successes, or his personal comfort. The fact that he did not use tobacco set him as a person apart in America. A large part of Dickens's slender means before he crossed the Atlantic, no doubt, had been lost to the shrewd Boston Yankee, Darius Halbrook, with his illusive Cairo City and

3Ibid.
Because the people in small towns, especially in the West, were not situated to receive and to entertain him so royally as in the cities, they were a dull, gloomy, and not at all humorous people. Their rejection of the graces of life as undeserving of attention was a defect undermining the nation. Naturally the rude accommodations and rough company on his travels did not offer the opportunities for such merry-making as did his cross-country jaunts with friends in England. Of course, the new country was far from being a model to copy, but it was not wholly bad because it had not been molded to fit the tastes and whims of an Englishman.

The American Notes is the culmination of Dickens's serious thrusts at America's selfconscious republicanism. Items from different letters show that the novelist very early adopted a contemptuous opinion of American politics and indicate that any book or novel written by Dickens would in all probability be directed against the government of the United States.

I believe there is no country, on the face of the earth where there is less freedom of opinion on any subject in reference to which there is a broad difference of opinion, than is this.

4 Clyde Wilkins, Charles Dickens in America, p. 2.
5 Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, p. 102.
The scenes that are passing in Congress now, all tending to the separation of the states, fill one with such a deep disgust that I dislike the very name of Washington, and am repelled by the mere thought of approaching it.  

It is the miserable, wretched independence in small things; the paltry republicanism which recoils from honest service to an honest man, but does not shrink from every trick, artifice, and knavery in business; that makes these slaves necessary, and will render them so, until the indignation of other countries set them free.  

In his first book these grumblings over the lack of individual liberty in America are greatly amplified. One can well imagine the wrathful defenses that went across the water in reply to the following arrogance and animosity.

Did I recognise in this assembly, a body of men, who applying themselves in a new world to correct some of the falsehoods and vices of the old, purified the avenues to Public Life, paved the dirty ways to Place and Power, debated and made laws for the Common Good, and had no party, but their Country?

I saw in them the wheels that move the meanest perversion of Virtuous Political Machinery that the worst tools every wrought. Despicable trickery at elections; underhanded tamperings with public officers; cowardly attacks upon opponents, with scurrilous newspapers for shields, and hired pens for daggers; shameful trucklings to mercenary knaves, whose claim to be considered is, that every day and week they sow crops of ruin with their venal types, which are the dragon's teeth of yore, in everything but sharpness; aidings and abettings of every bad inclination in the popular mind, and artful suppressions of

\[7\text{Ibid., pp. 231-232.}\]

all its good influences; such things as these, and in a word, Dishonest Faction in its most depraved and most unblushing form, stared out from every corner of the crowded hall.

Did I see among them the intelligence and refinement, the true, honest, patriotic heart, of America? Here and there were drops of its blood and life, but they scarcely colored the stream of desperate adventurers which sets that way for profit and for pay. It is the game of these men, and of their profligate organs, to make the strife of politics so fierce and brutal, and so destructive of all self-respect in worthy men, that sensitive and delicate-minded persons shall be kept aloof, and they, and such as they, be left to battle out their selfish views, unchecked. And thus this lowest of all scrambling fights goes on, and they who in other countries would, from their intelligence and station, most aspire to make the laws, do here recoil the farthest from that degradation.9

Naturally, after the publication of these hostile judgments, the Americans began, by press and letter, a defense of their way of life, though wrong it was in places. Many admitted the evils as they existed, but they were in no mood to hear the truth about themselves from an Englishman. Leacock attributes Dickens’s queer, imperfect judgment of democracy to his equally imperfect judgment of aristocracy in England.10 Less strife would there have been, no doubt, if Dickens could have understood American politics, or if he, in his attempt to stir up the people of the United States toward furthering democracy, could have concealed his attitude of thinking of America in terms of a colony.

9Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, p. 52.

10Stephen Leacock, Charles Dickens, p. 65.
Even his commendations in the American Notes, impersonal as they are, echo a similar father-to-child tone. Dickens seems to praise with more of a hope of inspiring rather than with the intention of evaluating. Perhaps his comments on the people of the United States are dull in the sense only that they are notes, but Dickens's heart, so obvious in his letters, appears all squeezed out of his favorable opinions in the American Notes. However, as boring as are his many pages lauding the philanthropic institutions of America, they portray Dickens's strong and deep interest in the common welfare of the less fortunate. Unstintedly does he praise the aid given Laura Bridgman, who fared so well in the Perkins's Institute at Boston.

Above all I sincerely believe that the public institutions and charities of this capital of Massachusetts are as nearly perfect, as the most considerate wisdom, benevolence, and humanity, can make them.11

Then the attempt of the employers to improve the Lowell factory girls both educationally and socially greatly pleased Dickens. To his liking also were asylums and penitentiaries, except a solitary prison in Philadelphia to which he devoted a good part of an entire chapter. According to different reflections in various parts of the Notes, Dickens found the Americans affectionate,

11 Charles Dickens, American Notes for General Circulation, p. 15.
generous, open-hearted, good humoured, polite to women, anxious to oblige, and considerate of strangers, but these did not overbalance those things he said to the contrary. Nor did Dickens mean for them to do so. If modern Americans believe his letters and Notes, upon which they look as a matter of ancient history and of little interest, they know that, at the end of his first journey, Dickens just did not like the Americans.

A still greater proof of Dickens's dislike of the American nation lies in Martin Chuzzlewit. To read the novel is to know how it served to widen the breach between Dickens and his many admirers in the United States. Forster, who was all but Dickens's agent and certainly his chief adviser at the time of the writing of Martin Chuzzlewit, contends that Dickens in using the Americans in his English novel was attempting to redeem the work from failure. Purchasers of the weekly installments of the novel had fallen off some 20,000 copies in comparison with those of Pickwick and Old Curiosity Shop. This worried Dickens no little. Haunted by the fear that not only was his novel failing but that his popularity was waning, Dickens, with the hope of increasing his weekly sales, suddenly and unexpectedly to the readers, sent Martin off to America in the fourth episode of Martin Chuzzlewit.12 By this means he did drag the novel out of

failure in England only to build up, by his satirical pictures of the Westerners, a greater prejudice against him in America. The fact that Dickens satirized his own countrymen in the same novel did not suffice for the overdrawing of the good-for-nothing and mannerless Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Just the creation of these obnoxious western types was, in all probability, Dickens's major reason for the American portion of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. It was an opportunity for him to make a direct gesture against those who, he felt, had been too complacent about the lack of an international copyright. Then in 1843 Dickens was irritable over angry letters and "yellow journalism" reaching him daily from the United States in regard to his *American Notes*. From both sources, Ralph Straus points out, Dickens was accused of everything from ingratitude and grossest discourtesy to deliberate falsehood.\(^{13}\) Naturally the depreciatory tones of the *Notes* provoked severe and uncivil retorts from patriotic Americans. These weighed, of course, in the matter of Dickens's shifting some of his observations into another literary production in order to place a double emphasis upon his unflattering opinions, and certainly the novel repeated the offense in an aggravated form. The American scenes in *Chuzzlewit* gave him an opportunity for exercising his brilliant gifts of ridicule and satire, peculiar powers in which he probably excelled all

---

\(^{13}\) Ralph Straus, *Charles Dickens*, p. 194.
of his time. No reader of the novel could doubt Dickens's true objective in writing it if he recalled Mark Tapley's ideas about how he would paint the American eagle.

I would draw it like a Bat, for its shortsightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like an Ostrich, for its putting his head in the mud, and thinking nobody sees it.\textsuperscript{14}

Martin's further suggestion that it might also be drawn "like a Phoenix, for its power of springing from the ashes of its faults and vices and soaring up anew into the sky"\textsuperscript{15} is not only filled with gleeeful malice but with personal animosity. Strictly clever is such controversial satire, even though it is merciless and hostile. The truth of it in many instances made for good wit. For example, a republican gentleman who receives Martin on landing is horrified when he hears an English servant mention his employer as "the master." "There are no masters in America," says the gentleman. "All 'owners' are they?" asks Martin.\textsuperscript{16} And the American gentleman stands reproved on the slave question. Even though Dickens did have some foundation of truth on which to base his droll characterizations, it seems a little odd that he selected representatives only from the rascality of the country. No one had a better opportunity than he to know honorable American

\textsuperscript{14}Charles Dickens, \textit{Martin Chuzzlewit}, p. 522.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 257.
gentlemen, and he did know them: scholars, men of letters, statesmen, and other professional and cultured types. Of course, the very refined could not have well been a product of his swampy Eden in Martin Chuzzlewit.

This dismal Eden was just Cairo with all her imperfections lifted out of the American Notes. "A detestable morass," where Martin and Tapley reaped no harvest for their labor but malaria was a becoming name for Dickens's Cairo or alleged Eldorado. Certainly this setting was most appropriate for that part of the novel in which he wished to restate his hostility toward the Americans; in the Notes no other place was so reviled in regard to its location and civilization. Better still did the author secure his desired effect by moving the serious accusations in his American Notes, especially in regard to politics, into the jesting dialogue of his fictional characters. By thus borrowing from his first book on America and by adding more jeers and sneers of contempt, Dickens had the inhabitants of Eden lacking in both manners and morals, and through their behavior and conversation the British author fastened attention on whatever was most hateful, depraved, and despicable in the nation. Wright's statement that "if Dickens had in the American Notes chastized the Americans with whips, in Martin Chuzzlewit he chastized them with scorpions"\(^\text{17}\) does not lack pertinency. The Americans

---

\(^{17}\) Thomas Wright, The Life of Charles Dickens, p. 161.
had cause to writhe under such scorn, and they did. At least Carlyle says that when Dickens sent his hero to Eden, "all Yankee-doodle-dum" blazed up "like one universal soda bottle."18

Regardless of the satire in Martin Chuzzlewit, English biographers argue that in the novel Dickens was not severe in his criticisms of the Americans. Among them is Chesterton, who contends that the famous quarrel between Dickens and America was fundamentally friendly. The contention on the part of Dickens found its most brilliant expression in Martin Chuzzlewit, reflects Chesterton, but it was in Dickens's day that each nation understood the other enough to argue wherein now neither nation understand itself enough to quarrel.19 It is Chesterton's opinion also that America under all her swagger did believe that Europe was more fully civilized and that Dickens with all his fuming did feel that America was in advance of Europe because the new country was more democratic. Dickens, Chesterton argues, did pay America the compliment of looking at her as the future of democracy.20 One is likely to agree with Chesterton if he notes that Dickens, through Lucy Manette's defense of Charles Darnay

18Straus, op. cit., p. 193.
19G. W. Chesterton, Criticism and Appreciation of the Works of Charles Dickens, p. 77.
20Ibid.
in the novelist's one reference to America in *A Tale of Two Cities*, puts his approval upon the new republic of George Washington's day. If all the shrieking satire in *Martin Chuzzlewit* was an expression of a grave and reasonable fear Dickens had touching the future outcome of democracy and if any of his thrusts challenged the United States toward a better form of government in anyway, then the American episode of the novel did not fail its destiny.

Regardless of the spirit in which *Martin Chuzzlewit* was written, the caricatures of the people of the United States were a sore point with the Americans. Only Forster knew how much, for wherever Dickens was in 1843, the year of the monthly publications of the novel, he kept his best friend well informed about its reception in the United States. On August 15, 1843, Forster, through Dickens, who was in Italy at the time, received the latest tidings from America.

I gather from a letter I have had this morning that Martin has made them all stock staring raving mad across the water. I wish you would consider this. Don't you think the time has come when I ought to state that such public entertainments as I received in the States were either accepted before I went out, or in the first week after my arrival there, and that as soon as I began to have any acquaintance with the country, I set my face against any public recognition whatever but that which was forced upon me to the destruction of my peace and comfort—and made no secret of my real sentiments.22

21 Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, p. 49.

However violent the outbreak in the United States was against the novel, it soon subsided. So placable are the Americans that time needed to move on just a little for them to laugh at the astonishing fun and comicality of the scenes. Then, too, with some reflection the Americans realized that the laughter was not wholly against them.

So indifferent were they in regard to his past political opinions that Dickens on his second visit must have been a little chagrinned. Neither did the novelist’s new contempt for the American government make much impression. On January 14, 1868, from Philadelphia he wrote Forster that he saw great social improvements but none political. Knowing by this time that Dickens was more disposed to satirize than to praise his own government, the Americans to a great extent either ignored or laughed at his opinion of their government. Nothing speaks more plainly for the ultimate good disposition of the American people than that they, within a quarter of a century, forgave and forgot Dickens’s scoffings. When he reached America a second time, it was almost as if the *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* did not lie on the American bookshelves as a vilification of a great part of the civilization of the United States. Finding this was true, Dickens’s response was all that any American could ask. At a farewell press dinner at Delmonico’s in New York on April 18, 1868, before more than two hundred of the most distinguished people of the United States, he made amends for
his unjustness by repudiating the unflattering criticisms of this country expressed in each of his two books dealing with the Americans. He pledged himself to preface all future editions of these books with that repudiation. The great stress which he placed upon the friendship of England and America at the time of the dinner, though wholly in the Dickens strain, is always timely.

Finally, gentlemen, and I say this subject to your correction, I do believe that from the great majority of honest minds on both sides, there cannot be absent the conviction that it would be better for the globe to be ruined by an earthquake, fired by a comet, overrun by an iceberg and abandoned to the Arctic fox and bear than that it should present the spectacle of those two great nations, each of whom has, in its own way and hour striven so hard and so successfully for freedom, ever again being arrayed the one against the other. 23

This stirring plea for an ever-closer alliance of the two English speaking nations brought Dickens's audience to its feet "with tumultuous applause and cheering." 24 His hint at things to come may well be appreciated by living Englishmen and Americans, for the friendship of the two nations has been, since Dickens's day, most important to the existence of national liberty and personal freedom, not only in America and England but in other countries as well. It was a very fitting comment for the novelist to make on the eve of his return to England.


24 News of the Nation, May 23, 1866, p. 2.
This press dinner brought Dickens's lecture tour, unprecedented in popularity and general excitement, to an end. "My future lies over the sea,"25 he said, and the truth of the statement carried with it much sadness because Dickens and the Americans knew that in all probability he would not come again. So feelingly and sincerely did Dickens speak of his regard for the people of the United States that his closing remarks have become treasured quotations for all Americans. No one asked for a greater token of friendship than Dickens's promise to recall by his winter fireside and in the green English summer the great hosts of Americans who had shown him such tenderness, consideration, and gratitude on his lecture tour.

Short were the years to remember, for the strenuous American lectures had taken their toll of Dickens. Two years later he died in his English homeland. Grief in America was more universal and profound than that for any other man of the century except Abraham Lincoln. All ranks of American society mourned for the man who had brought them both in fiction and in person gospels and cheery messages by which they could hardly help being bettered. Every state in the nation as well as his friends in the literary ranks paid high public tributes to Charles Dickens. His impressions of

America, whatever they had been, had not marred the love and affections of the many who had come to know him so well through books.

In all probability if Dickens could have given his opinions of the American tributes to him, he would have most treasured Bret Harte's poem, Dickens in Camp. Among the novelist's last letters is an invitation to the young American author, who had at least written his stories in the borderland of Dickens's methods and devices, to make a contribution to All the Year Round.\textsuperscript{26} Harte's poem emphasizes the idea that Dickens's novels reached into all parts, even into the dim Sierras, where the narrative of Little Nell was of such interest that the miners were lifted from their mountain solitudes to the English meadows. Humble and tender is the poet's wish that at Dickens's final resting place some token represent the love of the miners grouped about a western camp-fire.

\begin{quote}
And on that grave where English oak and holly
And laurel wreaths entwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly,
This spray of Western pine \textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

Important in the evaluation of Charles Dickens's impressions of America is the illuminating comment he offered, through his speeches and letters, \textit{American Notes}, Martin

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 23.
\end{footnotes}
Chuzzlewit, and even his dramatic lectures, on the America of 1842 and 1868. Probably from no other source may we, eliminating certain exaggerations, gain so compact a knowledge of the periods of his two residences in the United States. Very few phases of life escaped his notice; he observed manners, methods, customs, and wrote them down in one way or another. From his spoken or written comments on America there are pictures for the biographer, facts for the historian, wrongs for the philanthropists, wit for the humorist, and drama and glamor for the playwright and story teller. In the American Notes lies the barbarity of the old slave system; in Martin Chuzzlewit, the objectionable side of American democracy; in his long and many letters, the perverseness of America on the copyright question and all the pleasantness and unpleasantness resulting from his contact with people and things. He delineates the drollness, the cleverness, the happiness, the goodness, and the badness of the American people as he observed them.

Then, in estimating the Americans as he saw them, both in person and in writing, Dickens gave to the nation the full value of himself. The people of the United States came to know the geniality of his sympathy, his vindictiveness against wrongs, his richness of humor, and the broadness of his love for humanity. Furthermore, through his lectures the Americans met many characters as the author meant them to live in books. Certainly then they knew Dickens, not from
afar but personally. All these were, indeed, great gifts to a young nation from the most popular of the great Victorian novelists, Charles Dickens.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Buck, P. S., "Debt to Dickens," Saturday Review of Literature, XIII (April, 1936), 114.


"Copyrights," Quarterly Review, LXXIX (December, 1841), 185-228.


Dickens, Charles, American Notes and Pictures from Italy, New York, Macmillan and Company, 1893.

Dickens, Charles, Dickens to His Oldest Friend, New York, Putnam, 1932.


Harte, Bret, *Dickens in Camp*, of Poems and Stories (The Riverside Literature Series), Boston, Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1912.


"Real Little Journeys with Dickens," *Literary Digest*, CVII (December 5, 1925), 56-64.


"Writings of Charles Dickens," *North British Review*, III (May-August, 1845), 65-87.