

me a register of their names and crafts which they sign before leaving next morning. After a line of well-written, clerkly writing, you come to the cross of the ignorant man; after the idle lad's wriggling hand is his idle elder's unreadable scrawl. Sometimes they return, but not so often as one would think. Rochester lies on the old coach road—the High Road—between London and Dover, and consequently there is an immense variety of visitors to the Hospital, which would not happen if the town were not so well-known. Tramps by-the-by have a wonderful way of communicating with each other,—in America as well as in England: *vide Rudder Grange*—and I am told that on the right hand side of the village pump you will see always the hieroglyphics which after a little practice are quite easy to make out. Did you ever hear of the man who was horrified at discovering a sketch in chalk of what resembled a bursting bomb on his front door just below the handle: how, keeping the discovery to himself so as not to alarm the family (he had Irish property, and feared foul play), he was paralyzed with fright a few days after by finding another sketch, but of a hatchet this time; and how, on a third day, a drawing of a murderous instrument with a knob at one end, to which he could not put a name, met his bewildered gaze? At this, silence was no longer possible, and when the whole household was questioned as to the probable meaning of these terrible signs, the cook's eyes fell, and the cook's cheeks reddened. At last she confessed everything. This was her only means, she said, of communicating with X 32, stationed at the corner of the square. The bursting bomb was the portrait of a harmless Christmas pudding, holly adorned, which, at a given signal at the area gate, would be delivered into his willing arms; the hatchet was a symbol of that tender pork chop, love's gift, all ready and waiting for the constable; and the murderous instrument was but the "counterfeit presentment" of a ham-bone. How needlessly in this world do we torment ourselves over matters which do not in the least concern us?

Four miles out of Rochester, up hill, and down hill, along a more or less uninteresting road, and one comes to the roadside villa, once so envied by that "not particularly well-taken-care-of small boy," and to which pilgrims wander from all parts of the world just to look at the house where that queer small boy laboured for so many years. The garden-gate clicks behind me, and as I go past the winter flowers to the Georgian porch, a paragraph, written some time ago, and which I came across the other day, recurs to my memory; "I think of these past writers [Sterne is being spoken of] and of one who lives among us now [alas no longer] and am grateful for the innocent laughter and sweet unsullied page which the author of *David Copperfield* gives to my children." Do you remember who said that, and many another appreciative word of our great English humourist? Truly as great a man, and as wise a man, as Mr. Howells, and whose critical faculty was surely as sound and trustworthy.

Gadshill contains now no relics of Dickens beyond the wooden lining to the hall and the wooden staircase which were brought from Switzerland and some book-shams in the library, of which Forster made a list in his *Life*: but the rooms are interesting in themselves, and well worth seeing. Here Dickens died: there he used to work: this was the "Bachelor's Bedroom" of the occupants of which Wilkie Collins gave such a humorous sketch in *All the Year Round*: this is the drawing-room where the ghosts of those people you and I know so well still seem to linger. Burly Mark Lemon, who played Falstaff without making up: handsome Maclise with his Irish eyes, that "arbitrary gent" Forster, contradictory Stone, gentle Egg, graceful Fechter with his foreign accent—their names are legion. And amongst them is dear Hans Andersen, who understood and spoke English so imperfectly, and was such a trial to amuse, and whom I think one would have liked to have known more than any of them. Out in the garden everything looks the same; the tunnel under the road leading to the shrubbery where the Châlet (now belonging to Lord Darnley) was set up, reminds one of the mining operations of which Dickens laughingly spoke: and the many flower-beds recall his love for the brightest of red geraniums, the most brilliant of blossoms. I have seen, for Miss Hogarth has them still, the sofa on which Dickens lay all through that dismal 9th of June (into which is let a brass plate recording the fact that on this he died) and the arm-chair which he perpetually used, and many possessions of interest, including a portrait of "Mr. F.'s aunt," and another by Hablot Browne of "Mary," whose grave, with its pathetic epitaph by Dickens, is in the old part of Kensal Green, and I wish these things had never left Gadshill, but had remained as memorials of the author in the places where he put them.

I spend an hour sometimes with the widow of one of Dickens' oldest friends, and I protest it is as interesting to hear stories of the Society that gathered round him, as to read of the friends and of the doings of Smollett or of Fielding—they seem equal now.—"All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." I am told that it is only a few years since the original of Miss Haversham died: that the lady remained in her bedroom twenty-five years without leaving it, in consequence of the misconduct of her lover, who behaved as did the faithless Mr. Moddle: that Dickens, taken by a friend to call on this lady, saw exactly what he describes—candle-light in the daytime, drawn curtains, stopped clocks—in *Great Expectations*; that "Flora" was "Dora," grown middle-aged and sentimental, and "Dora" Dickens never married, though David Copperfield did; that the little church near his home in Devonshire Terrace, which Hogarth drew in the "Rake's Progress," and Phiz for "David's Wedding" is still standing, much modernized, a chapel-of-ease to St. Marylebone that—but am I speaking to people who don't appreciate our humourist, whom we in England care so much for? Do you shut his books with a superior air, remarking?—"His pathos is forced; his wit is vulgar; he never drew a gentleman or a lady!" Are you sure you are right? Is—to take only his masterpiece—is the pathos which surrounds David's mother or little Em'ly forced; the

humour of Peggotty, of Traddles, vulgar; is David not a gentleman, or Agnes Wickfield not a lady? Memoirs of the time give some idea of the manner in which Dickens' works were received. Was the great British public wrong when it recognized the truth in Mrs. Gamp, in Sam Weller, in a dozen of other types, now household words? Surely not. We like strong colour, and we don't object to a little exaggeration in outline, in expression and so forth, but we must have truth as a foundation; without that virtue you cannot hope to touch us, for we recognize its existence at once, even if we are not able to describe accurately what we have found.

WALTER POWELL.

MONTREAL LETTER.

A VERY wise Committee has decided that there shall be no Carnival this year. However, notwithstanding the prospect of entertaining a public, seemingly rather out of sympathy with him these days, our original, indefatigable, and most gifted artist Jack Frost is far from allowing his deft fingers to remain idle. We have at present the privilege of contemplating the daintiest piece of his fantastic work that he has given us for some time.

The disastrous fire on Saturday morning which completely gutted three large buildings in a handsome business block, would have left behind an unusually gaunt spectacle had not the intense cold converted into ice the water thrown upon the walls. Now they stand glistening and glinting as if covered with the most wonderfully wrought Parian marble, or like a huge stalactite cave open to the sun. From garret to basement, the entire masonry is encased in ice and icicles. We have had many "palaces," but I question whether there has ever been a lovelier one than this. Some architects of the more severe school will doubtless point out many details that they could improve, and vow it is architecture gone mad. However it has gone mad with so happy a result, we might wish the fashion more popular. Soft white smoke pours continually from the building, and ever and anon a lurid glare fills one of the windows. The whole scene is beautiful and weird, and reminds us now of Dante's favourite haunts, now of a theatrical conflagration.

The Victoria Rink masquerade is quite an old story with us, yet we still persist in shivering as "Heathen Chinee," or "Little Bo-Peep," or some other character chosen with equal felicity when the thermometer says "Zero." The masquerade on Friday night was distinguishable in no way from countless other masquerades, except perhaps by the presence of a party of Fishery Commissioners, who with John Bull and Brother Jonathan, held several spirited debates on the ice. The final decision of the Commissioners was announced in fair characters upon a card, and was to the effect, that the price of red herrings shall remain the same.

That melancholy age when flowers were born to blush unseen has passed. He who runs may not only write but publish, and we are not ones to lose sight of such an advantage. There is another poet about to rise and shine on us. However, "these empty singers of an empty day"—no, no, that can't be it; where is the volume of "Familiar quotations"?—are sure of success, like *le vin du pays*.

Whether a salon, or as Mrs. Z. put it, perhaps more aptly, a *parlor*, is a natural consequence of poets, we Canadians, more or less ignorant of both, are unqualified to judge. Be this as it may, Montreal can boast a salon. That we have amongst us neither a Marquise de Rambouillet, a Madame de Sévigné, nor a Madame Récamier, signifies nothing to our ambitious souls. We are bold and enterprising, and boldness and enterprise should always meet with reward in a new country. If *les Précieuses* appear periodically on our stage, there is no Molière lurking near, so they have nought to fear.

"To live, signifies to unite with a party or to make one." If one would be considered intellectually alive, one must belong to a club. We have here a number and variety that a European city with four times our population might envy. If it is not the reading club, it is the Dutch, and if not the Dutch, the musical, and so on *ad infinitum*. But something quite interesting has been imagined at last; as near to a Bohemian affair as anything can be tempered by "femininity." No original articles will be tolerated, which in itself should recommend the enterprise. However, more of it anon, when in thorough working order.

We are to have beautiful new enamel street signs, so that it will be no longer necessary to trust either to "dudes" or lamps for the oft-needed information. Not satisfied with having the street name in fair white letters on a blue ground, it has been suggested that those of an enquiring mind might feel still greater satisfaction were they to find appended a short history of the street. Thus, we should discover that "Dollard Street was named after a brave warrior, who, in 1660, with sixteen companions defended the city in a fort at the foot of the Long Sault Rapids of the Ottawa, against 700 Iroquois." This is quite a unique idea, which, unfortunately for those who have neither the time nor money to spend on Parkman, must be abandoned, as it would entail an extra expense of from twenty-five to fifty cents on each plate.

LOUIS LLOYD.

WILKIE COLLINS lives in a pleasant, substantial house in Gloucester Place, Portman Square, London. He suffers much from nervous prostration and gout in the eyes; but, notwithstanding this, the commands of his physician, and the advice of his friends, he will persist in weaving the wild, weird stories so favourable to the production of goose-flesh in the British public. The great novelist admits himself that what he needs is "coolness, peace, and quiet." At the same time he cannot endure the noises of travel, and while he remains at home the temptations of his library and writing-table are too much for him.