

But there was something worse than this. There were reporters who could write, and newspaper managers who could publish, details of the most idiotic and disgusting character—details which we would hardly understand any rational being committing to paper, much less any rational being allowing them to be printed. We will give but one specimen. One of the papers, after describing the procession from the cell to the gallows, relates how the hangman proceeded to “pounce upon his prey,” but he was waved back by the governor or some one in authority, and the incident is related as though the executioner had been guilty of some great indecorum. Why! what on earth was the hangman there for but to do his horrible and necessary work? Whether willingly or unwillingly, whether because he took some kind of surgical interest in such work, as some men have done, or because he needed the money which was to be paid for the doing of it, he was prepared to fulfil his part of the contract.

How in the world was he to know the programme of the proceedings, unless he had been told? and he evidently had not been told. It may have been the fault of those who had charge of the execution, or of one or more of the somewhat too numerous persons who took part in the proceedings, and it is rather difficult in such circumstances to keep such persons in order; but it was not the fault of the hangman. It is ridiculous and idiotic to complain of a man doing his duty, and there is no evidence that the executioner of Neil exceeded his duty.

The moral of these facts is sufficiently obvious. The public have a right to be protected from such reports. In the interest of public morality and public decency, in the interest of common sense, we protest against them. It is of no use appealing to some reporters, or to some newspaper managers. The best of these would be glad to be protected from the necessity of publishing such reports. They cannot help themselves when other papers give them. And, unfortunately, the worse these reports are the more eagerly they are read, and therefore the more copies of the newspaper containing them are purchased by a large class in the community.

What, then, is to be done? The answer is clear, and we earnestly urge it upon the attention of those who are in authority. Reporters should be excluded from executions. The authorities, we believe, have the power to do this. At least, they have this power—and they commonly exercise it—in England. Their presence is in no way necessary to the due carrying out of the sentence. That is secured by the presence of the authorities and of the jury. If it is thought necessary, a statement of the simple facts connected with the execution could be sent to the newspapers; but at any rate, the reporters are a nuisance, they are not needed, and they should not be admitted.

T. C.

LONDON LETTER.

I HAVE a treasure by me as I write in the shape of a first edition of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which, foxed though it is, and worn with much reading, I yet love with the steady affection that comes of a life-long regard; but I am perplexed to know how large a share of the pleasure is due to *Phiz*'s curiously unequal, charmingly exaggerated illustrations of the story. From the frontispiece, in which Tom is playing the organ, and where surely there is no touch of caricature to be found, to the last scene,—the scene of Cherry Pecksniff's wedding-party, each face grotesque in its ugliness; the pictures in the room sketched in, à la Hogarth, with regard to the moral—the individuality of every figure, the lines of every queer gown or oddly-cut coat, the very look and position of each piece of scanty furniture, have all been bitten into my memory by the sharp strong acid of youthful recollection. Open the mottled covers where I may, troops of friends whom I have known for more years than I can count smile at me at the turn of every page. They have acted their play for me a score of times; if they forgot I could prompt them, so well do I know their words; yet I am never weary of the delightful comedy-drama, and accept without a protest the Montague Tigg element, limelight and all, for the sake of the truth, the human nature of the rest. One would be ungrateful indeed to tire of the charming company, headed by Bailey Junior, who gathered in Mrs. Todgers' drawing-room, under the shadow of the Monument; and lives there a man with soul so dead who, having once sailed to America in the *Screw* with Martin and Mark Tapley, has not gone the same journey with the same fellow-travellers, till by heart he knows the way to Eden, and the distinguished men and women encountered on the route are to him the most intimate of comrades? *Phiz* has drawn the plates so carefully, has put into such excellent shape what Dickens has put into such excellent words, that I think we could as ill spare his pencil as the author's pen; and I am sure I for one could never bear to read the book without these pleasant tableaux to turn to in which, were but a bird-cage or flower vase out of place, I should detect the change.

I suppose Dickens appeals infinitely more to Cockneys than he does to any of you unfortunate beings not born within sound of Bow Bells, for you see we know every street he describes, and can take you to Mr. Mould's shop within the Ward of Cheap; could show you behind St. Martins-le-Grand, the old-fashioned firm of Anthony Chuzzlewit and Son, Manchester Warehousemen, or the residence of Mrs. Gamp in Kingsgate Street, and could point out John Westlock's windows in Fumival's Inn, and the *Bull* in Holborn, where Mr. Tewsome was nursed by Betsy Prig and Mrs. Gamp, turn and turn about; and the very furniture shop at which Augustus asked the price of the eight rosewood chairs and the loo table is well known to true Dickens' lovers. And so with each of the other books, from *Pickwick* and Goswell Road down to that delightful fragment *Edwin Drood*, where Staples Inn figures so picturesquely. For this reason or that, for reasons I know not how to specify (as in the case of *Little Dorrit*), these volumes become to genuine Londoners part and

parcel of ourselves, necessary to that side of our nature which takes an interest in the everyday history of the everyday inhabitants of our beloved town; and their author, very human as he is with all his faults—faults any fool can discover, for what so easy as to blame?—understood that part of us instinctively, and gave us humorously, pathetically, perhaps extravagantly some times, but admirably always, with a touch of his own no one can hope to imitate, exactly what we require.

This preface—do you, with your De Gaspé, detest all prefaces?—is by way of introducing you to an old, old red-brick mansion in Austin Friars, which I discovered the other day while looking for the house of Mr. Fips (I hope you recollect Mr. Fips?) a mansion which must have charmed Dickens when he came across it on searching for a suitable abode in which to install the little gentleman who wore black shorts and powder. Black shorts and powder! What a garb. As antiquated now as the slashed doublet and starched ruff of Elizabeth's time. The ghost of Sydney Smith passed me as I went under the archway that stands in Broad Street into the quiet winding passage, and the wraiths of the authors of *The Rejected Addresses* met me at the turn by the bare melancholy great church which is wedged away in a corner. A little to your left, and, in a narrow backwater, away from the main stream of city life, there stood an ancient house, young and thoughtless when the plague-carts stopped with a rattle at the outer gates, and the roar of the flames from the Great Fire blazing in Cornhill first broke into this silent alley, middle-aged and grave when the air about was astir with the pricking of the South Sea Bubble, old and sad when paper boys cried down here news of the Indian Mutiny. The crutches used as a support to the decaying walls, the printed announcement that the present owner had taken other premises where business would be carried on, the constant influx of busy workmen with their tools showed that the Last Day had arrived for the venerable relic.

The front doors, once zealously guarded by attentive servants, opening easily to an inquisitive stranger's knock, I was taken from a narrow panelled hall into a larger one—from whence a beautiful oak staircase with carved and twisted bannisters, went winding up, past drawing-rooms and best bedrooms right to the spacious attics—and there I found I was not the only visitor; for from this point or from that sketchers were hard at work with their drawing blocks, and from that quaint sitting-room, from this fine pillared dining room came a subdued murmur of many voices belonging to numbers of idle people, who, like myself, had wandered into the City with nothing to do. So much time had we on our hands we left not a hole or corner unexplored, from the morning-room with its Purbeck mantelpiece crowned with a coat of arms on which the initials I. H. are carved, to the garrets, dim and uncanny, where were trap-doors and wide beams, and low-browed haunted little cupboards in the walls; and being fortunate enough to fall in with a companion who knew the history of the place I missed no point of interest. In one of the nine immense cellars I was shown the well, in which, on the water sinking one hot summer, Bones were discovered; in another we found a deep safe built into the stonework, and guarded with thick iron doors, where some of the great Napoleon's valuables were once deposited, this place having been then in the possession of his Huguenot banker. Outside the kitchen door hung the identical grilled wicket of the Augustine Friars, whose priory stood on this spot till Henry VIII. happened to remember its existence; and inside the kitchen, beside spit-racks, smoke-jack, and cansticks, there were to be seen edging the oven, many exquisite old Dutch tiles, on which tulips, turk's-head lilies, little gentlemen a-horseback, in trunk hose and feathered hats, were outlined in soft clear blue.

A Dutchman, Herman Olmuis, lived here once, dying the same year as Queen Anne, and he it was who brought over these tiles, and who planted, no doubt, real tulips also in the garden at the back, and decorated the broad terrace, still existing, with a row of his favourite flower. There was the archway underneath which, drawn by a Flanders mare, his clumsy coach rumbled on the way to the stables, ruinous to-day. There were the windows of his drawing-rooms, dingy and shuttered now, once opened wide, through which came laughing voices, and the tinkle of the harpsichord; and above were the line of nursery casements, from which the round heads of the little Dutch children seem only just to have vanished. As I stood under the swaying dusty sycamore and looked at the beautiful old home, the theatre of course of tragedies and comedies innumerable, a dark-eyed slatternly girl nodded from the garden door, and asked if I had been on the roof. No? Then she'd take me if I liked, and so we went together, and there, leaning on the parapet with her bare arms she pointed out with pride her various possessions, which belong to all Londoners; across the chimneys of the Bank of England there was the Mansion House; the dome of St. Paul's to the right; the Royal Exchange with its grasshopper vane to the left; Gresham Hall, where the fine Holbein is enshrined, the different spires and towers of the churches, all of which she knew by name; and, lying in the heart of the network of streets at our feet, dear Washington Irving's *Little Britain*. As she lounged she talked of all manner of things in a dull shrewd depressed way, telling me how she never left London for a day ever since she was born, how she was wanting a new situation as general, her last mistress having turned her off for nothing at all, and how her great ambition—yes, she said ambition—was to get into a place where the streets weren't so thick, and where two servants were kept, so that a person could get a little rest sometimes. A body wants a moment to herself, she went on after a pause.

How often has this foggy air heard the same cry, expressed in different words! It was no good telling Dark Eyes no one had moments to themselves in this busy world, and that it would be very bad for us if we had. It was clear she didn't believe me, and as we went down stairs and opened the front door, and passed into the still, little lane, this was her