


SOME OF THE DICKENS' PEOPLE.

NE must admit the word *Novel* has wonderfully expanded and variegated its meaning, since the days when it suggested simply an extraordinary hero and a still more extraordinary heroine, both blessed with an exceptional faculty of getting into difficulties, and an equally exceptional faculty of getting out of them. Not so very long ago, when our mothers and fathers were lassies and laddies, the little word *Novel*—only five letters—was the verbal lever by which the eloquent shoulder and eye-brow of the modern Pharisee were elevated to a phenomenally high point of dubious interrogation; while their owner launched out on a sea of mathematical calculation as to the number of degenerate youth who lived, thought and acted in harmony with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Tom Jones* and *Peregrine Pickle*. Now, however, whether it be because of a decrease of Pharisaical shoulders and eyebrows, or an increase of common sense, i. e. of practical experience, I know not, but certain it is, the *novel* has been given a dignified place in literature, and is universally recognized as the popular vehicle of even philosophical and theological thought, as well as the analysis of human life, under all possible conditions of time, place and rank. We have now the religious, the philosophical, the psychological, the historical, the romantic, the realistic, aye the mystic novel—refer to Marie Corelli for the latter—but seriously speaking, there's a Newman, there's Dr. Wm. F. Barry among the novelists, as well as James Lane Allen, John Oliver Hobbes,—oh! but what's the use of specifying? Still this paper is special in its purport as the heading indicates—the others may come and they may go, but Dickens is forever. No matter how Mr. Howells may scowl upon us, Dickens with all his faults, will outlive Mr. Howells, etc. It is even safe to say no novelist ever enjoyed such a wide popularity as Charles Dickens; no writer surely has ever equalled him in the power of awakening the sympathy and reaching the heart of the multitude, and of proving that the multitude has a heart.