BOSTON.

MR. FIELDS'S REMINISCENCES OF DICKENS—MR. CRANCH'S MARGARET FULLER ODE.

BOSTON, July 15.—The August number of *The Atlantic Monthly* will not be ready for the public until the middle of next week; but your correspondent has tempted the publishers to permit him to filch from the advance sheets for the benefit of TRIBUNE readers some of the most interesting paragraphs of Mr. James T. Fields's fascinating paper on Dickens, and a part of Mr. C. P. Cranch's ode, which was a prominent feature of the recent birthday commemoration of Margaret Fuller Ossoli.

Mr. Fields calls his article "Some Memories of Charles Dickens," and it gives glimpses of many phases of the great humorist's personal character which have not been touched upon by any other writer. Beginning with a reference to Gad's Hill and Mr. Dickens's life there, Mr. Fields continues with this pleasant gallery of cabinet pictures:

"In his own inimitable manner he would frequently relate to a friend, if prompted, stories of his youthful days, when he was toiling on *The London Morning Chronicle*, passing sleepless hours as a reporter on the road in a post-chaise, driving day and night from point to point to take down the speeches of Shiel or O'Connell. He liked to describe the post-boys, who were accustomed to hurry him over the road that he might reach London in advance of his rival reporters, while, by the aid of a lantern, he was writing out for the press, as he flew over the ground, the words he had taken down in short-hand. Those were his days of severe training, when in rain and sleet and cold he dashed along, scarcely able to keep the blinding mud out of his tired eyes; and he imputed much of his ability for steady hard work to his practice as a reporter, kept at his grinding business, and determined if possible to earn seven guineas a week. A large sheet was started at this period of his life, in which all the important speeches of Parliament were to be reported *verbatim* for future reference. Dickens was engaged on this gigantic journal. Mr. Stanley had spoken at great length on the condition of Ireland. It was a very long and eloquent speech, occupying many hours in the delivery. Eight reporters were sent in to do the work. Each one was required to report three-quarters of an hour, then to retire, write out his portion, and to be succeeded by the next. Young Dickens was detailed to lead off with the first part. It also fell to his lot, when the time came round, to report the closing portions of the speech. On Saturday the whole was given to the press, and Dickens ran down to the country for a Sunday's rest. Sunday morning had scarcely dawned, when his father, who was a man of immense energy, made his appearance in his son's sleeping-room. Mr. Stanley was so dissatisfied with what he found in print, except the beginning and ending of his speech (just what Dickens had reported) that he sent immediately to the office and obtained the sheets of these parts of the report. He there found the name of the reporter, which, according to custom, was written on the margin. Then he requested that the young man bearing the name of Dickens should be immediately sent for. Dickens's father, all aglow with the prospect of probable promotion in the office, went immediately to his son's stopping-place in the country and brought him back to London. In telling the story, Dickens said; "I remember perfectly to this day the aspect of the room I was shown into, and the two gentlemen in it, Mr. Stanley and his father. Both gentlemen were extremely courteous to me, but I noted their evident surprise at the appearance of so young a man. While we spoke together, I had taken a seat extended to me in the middle of the room. Mr. Stanley told me he wished to go over the whole speech and have it written out by me, and if I were ready he would begin now. Where would I like to sit? I told him I was very well where I was, and we could begin immediately. He tried to induce me to sit at a desk, but at that time in the House of Commons there was nothing but one's knees to write upon, and I had formed the habit of doing my work in that way. Without further pause he began and went rapidly on, hour after hour, to the end, often becoming very much excited and frequently bringing down his hand with great violence upon the desk near which he stood."

"No writer ever lived whose method was more exact, whose industry was more constant, and whose punctuality was more marked, than those of Charles Dickens. He never shirked labor, mental or bodily. He rarely declined, if the object were a good one, taking the chair at a public meeting, or accepting a charitable trust. Many widows and orphans of deceased literary men have for years been benefited by his wise trusteeship or counsel, and he spent a great portion of his time personally looking after the property of the poor whose interests were under his control. He was, as has been intimated, one of the most industrious of men, and marvelous stories are told (not by himself) of what he has accomplished in a given time in literary and social matters. His studies were all from nature and life, and his habits of observation were untiring. If he contemplated writing 'Hard Times,' he arranged with the master of Astley's circus to spend many hours behind the scenes with the riders and among the horses; and if the composition of the 'Tale of Two Cities' were occupying his thoughts, he could banish himself to France for two years to prepare for that great work. Hogarth penciled on his thumb-nail a striking face in a crowd that he wished to preserve; Dickens with his transcendent memory chronicled in his mind whatever of interest met his eye or reached his ear, any time or anywhere. Speaking of memory one day, he said the memory of children was prodigious; it was a mistake to fancy children ever forgot anything. When he was delineating the character of Mrs. Pipchin, he had in his mind an old lodging-house keeper in an English watering-place where he was living with his father and mother when he was but two years old. After the book was written he sent it to his sister, who wrote back at once: 'Good heavens! what does this mean? you have painted our lodging-house keeper, and you were but two years old at that time!' Characters and incidents crowded the chambers of his brain, all ready for use when occasion required. No subject of human interest was ever indifferent to him, and never a day went by that did not afford him some suggestion to be utilized in the future."

The essay refers to Mr. Dickens's intrinsic knowledge of animals and sympathy for them; and there is nothing better in the scraps of his letters scattered through the article than the following in regard to a particular dog which he noticed in Washington during his American reading tour:

"The first night Dickens read in the Capital this dog attracted his attention. 'He came into the hall by himself,' said he, 'got a good place before the reading began, and paid strict attention throughout. He came the second night, and was ignominiously shown out by one of the check-takers. On the third night he appeared again with another dog, which he had evidently promised to pass in free; but you see,' continued Dickens, 'upon the imposition being unmasked, the other dog apologized by a howl and withdrew. His intentions, no doubt, were of the best, but he afterward rose to explain outside, with such inconvenience to the reader and his audience, that they were obliged to put him down stairs.'"

This paragraph again is exceedingly charming:

"He was passionately fond of the theater, loved the light and music and flowers, and the happy faces of the audience; he was accustomed to say that his love of the theater never failed, and, no matter how dull the play, he was always careful while he sat in the box to make no sound which could hurt the feelings of the actors, or show any lack of attention. His genuine enthusiasm for Mr. Fechter's acting was most interesting. He loved to describe seeing him first, quite by accident, in Paris, having strolled into a little theater there one night. 'He was making love to a woman,' Dickens said, 'and he so elevated her as well as himself by the sentiment in which he enveloped her, that they trod in a purer ether, and in another sphere, quite lifted out of the present. 'By heavens,' I said to myself, 'a man who can do this can do anything.' I never saw two people more purely and instantly elevated by the power of love. The manner also,' he continued, 'in which he presses the hem of the dress of Lucy in the Bride of Lammermoor is something wonderful. The man has genius in him which is inextinkable.'"

"Life behind the scenes was always a fascinating study to Dickens. 'One of the oddest sights a green-room can present,' he said one day, 'is when they are collecting children for a pantomime. For this purpose the prompter calls together all the women in the ballet, and begins giving out their names in order, while they press about him, eager for the chance of increasing their poor pay by the extra pittance their children will receive. 'Mrs. Johnson, how many?' 'Two, Sir.' 'What ages?' 'Seven and ten.' 'Mrs. B., how many?' and so on, until the required number is made up. The people who go upon the stage, however poor their pay or hard their lot, love it too well ever to adopt another vocation if their free-will. A mother will frequently be in the wardrobe, children in the pantomime, elder sisters in the ballet, etc.'"

I close my clippings with two paragraphs which more directly illustrate the humorous element of Mr. Dickens's character:

"Writing from a Western city in 1868, he says: The hotel here is a dreary institution. But I have an impression we must be in the wrong one, and buoy myself up with a devout belief in the other over the way. The awakening to consciousness this morning on a lop-sided bedstead facing nowhere, in a room holding nothing but sour dust, was more terrible than the being afraid to go to bed last night. To keep ourselves up, we played whist (double dummy) until neither of us could bear to speak to the other any more. We had previously supped on a tough old nightmare, named Buffalo. What do you think of a 'fowl de poulet?' or a 'Pacific de Shay?' or 'celery?' or 'murange with cream?' Because all these delicacies are in the printed bill of fare! We asked the Irish waiter what 'Pacific de Shay' was, and he said it was 'the Frinch name the steward giv' to oyster pattie.'"

"When in the mood for humorous characterization, Dickens's hilarity was most amazing. To hear him tell a ghost story with a very florid imitation of a very pallid ghost, or hear him sing an old-time stage song, such as he used to enjoy in his youth at a cheap London theater, to see him imitate a lion in a menagerie-cage, or the clown in a pantomime when he flops and folds himself up like a jack-knife, or to join with him in some mirthful game of his own composing, was to become acquainted with one of the most delightful and original companions in the world."

Mr. Cranch's "Ode" for the Margaret Fuller Ossoli Festival is in six strophes. The fourth embodies the main view taken of her character, and I copy it in full:

While others stood aloof and smiled in scorn
Of one to new and noble effort born;
Or, from tame rounds of fashion and of wealth,
Turned, glancing back by stealth,
And wondered,—then but slowly, faintly praised
The exuberant soul that dared to flash and soar
Beyond the petty bounds
Of their trim garden grounds,—
She with wise intuition raised
Her image of ideal womanhood,
The incarnate True and Fair and Good,
Set in a light but seldom seen before,
While, with the early watchers in the dawn
Of intellectual faith, her hopeful eyes,
Patiently waiting, from the crowd withdrawn,
She saw a newer morning rise,
And flame from cloud to cloud, and climb
Across the dreary tracts of time.
The garnered wisdom of the past she drew
Into her life, as flowers the sun and dew;
Yet valued all her varied lore
But as the avenue and door
That opened to the Primal Beam,
And sense of Truth supreme.

And so, beyond her earlier bounds she grew;
All the quaint essences from study gained,
Fused in a human fellowship anew,
While that too conscious life, in early years o'erstrained,
Of long, deep, lonely introversion born,
Distilled like dews of morn,
And dropped on high and low the blessing it contained.
Her glowing pen through many a thoughtful page,
Discoursed in subtle questions of the age,
Or glanced in lighter mood at themes less grave,—
The brilliant glitter of a summer wave.

Her sweet persuasive voice we still can hear,
Ruling her charmed circle like a queen;
While wit and fancy sparkled ever clear
Her graver moods between
The pure perennial heat
Of youth's ideal love forever glowed
Through all her thoughts and words, and overflowed
The listeners round her seat.

Some high heroic march
Beneath a Roman arch,
Some lofty strain that made
The soul flush to its sharing
The soldier's toil and daring,
Swept, like a wind-harp, to wild agony
By bitter winds of destiny,—
Then, musical no more,
Dead, mute, and shattered on the lonely shore!

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