

Our Monthly Letter

March 2021

We Are Fun, Friendship and Learning

We met in February to commemorate the 209th birthday of Charles Dickens. **Kevin Quinn** greeted everyone and invited us all to take a moment of silence to remember all those we have lost in the past year. He then introduced our special guest speaker, **John Jordan** of the University of California Santa Cruz.

Prof. Jordan, who is the director of the Dickens Project and author of numerous publications, including *Supposing Bleak House*, spoke on the importance of a minor character in *David Copperfield*, Miss Mowcher. He first recalled the history of the character, who was loosely based on Jane Seymour Hill. Dickens changed the character drastically after receiving a letter from Mrs. Hill (and then another one from her attorney), but we were invited to ask how Dickens might have intended the character to appear prior to his readers' intervention.

According to Prof. Jordan, Dickens appeared to be setting up Miss Mowcher as a procuress for the two visiting bachelors, Steerforth and Copperfield. He suggested that even though it was Steerforth who was pursuing Little Em'ly, Dickens presents Miss Mowcher as perhaps having a very different idea. Could it be that Miss Mowcher believed the more experienced Steerforth was trying to provide young David with his first sexual experience, setting him up to deflower the poor girl? Prof. Jordan makes a good case for just that! Of course, the revised Miss Mowcher who returns later on in the book would never have done such a thing....

We had an unpleasant visit from some "Zoombombers" who tried to disrupt our meeting, but then **Ruthanne Ankney** lifted our spirits by singing "The Last Rose of Summer" by Thomas Moore. To toast the Immortal Memory of Charles Dickens, **James Armstrong** regaled us with a number of little-known facts about the author's life... some of them even true. After that, Kevin presented awards to **Carrie Lee** for her Dickensian Love of Humanity and to **Warren Wyss** for Excellence in Zooming. The final award, which went to **Su Quinn**, was presented by **Cindy Sughrue**, Director of the Charles Dickens Museum in London. Cindy thanked Su for her inimitable support for the museum through donations made in honor of her late husband Mike.

Next up in *David Copperfield*

We hope you can join us at **1:00** on **Saturday, March 6th** as we discuss chapters 38-43 of *David Copperfield*. Our moderator will be Kate Foster. More details on the next page on how to access the meeting through Zoom.

Branch 197 • The Friends of Dickens New York • The Dickens Fellowship

Jennifer Emerson Wins Dickens Reading Contest

After we had our own celebration of Dickens's Birthday, many of us switched over to the Zoom event held by the International Dickens Fellowship. **Ian Dickens** greeted us all from his home on the Isle of Wight and introduced his brother **Gerald Dickens**, who judged a world-wide competition of readings from the works of Dickens.

We were very proud to learn that one of the four winners was our very own **Jennifer Emerson**, who gave a reading from *A Christmas Carol*. Gerald praised the job she did presenting the lesser-known episode of Old Joe receiving Scrooge's bedclothes after his death. Viewers from around the world got to see Jennifer's reading, along with those of the other winners, **Crispin Ridge** from the Birmingham branch, and **Alan Root** and **Val Whitehouse** from Broadstairs.

After we watched the readings of the four winners, Ian gave a birthday toast to Dickens and Gerald gave a reading of the author's very first published short story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk." Congratulations to Jennifer and the other talented readers!



Please join us on **Saturday, March 6th** as we discuss chapters 38-43 of *David Copperfield*. For our virtual meeting, we will be using Zoom, which is best viewed on a computer, but can also be accessed via phone. If you have not used Zoom before and have any questions, please contact **Kevin Quinn** at loyalkent@gmail.com or **646-372-5686**.

Beginning at **1:00** on Saturday the sixth, our meeting can be accessed on the web at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82349860144?pwd=Z0xLbGZsRVNLUmFjVDZqd2F6U1FDZz09>

The meeting ID is **823 4986 0144** and the password is **1850**.

You can also dial in using the number 1-646-558-8656. You will then have to enter the meeting ID, the pound key, a one, the pound key, the password, and then the pound key again. We hope you will be able to join us.