



Next Meeting
Saturday, September 12,
2015
1:00pm-4:00pm
Kips Bay Library,
446 Third Avenue
SW Cor E 31 Street
New York, NY 10016

Program
Our Mutual Friend

Book I
Chapters 1 thru 9



Danielle Cammarota
Our Moderator

Our Monthly Letter

We Are Fun, Friendship and Learning



'Keep her out, Lizzie. The tide runs strong here. Keep her well ahead of the sweep of it.'
The Bird of Prey by Marcus Stone. Wood engraving by Dalziel. Illustration for *Our Mutual Friend*, Chapter One, "On The Look-Out," Authentic edition, facing p. 2. Periodical publication: *Our Mutual Friend*, May 1864. Image scan and text by Philip V. Allingham, Courtesy of *The Victorian Web*. Continued on Page 2

Our Mutual Friend, our project for this coming season, will provide us with much reading enjoyment and, we hope, with challenging opportunities for learning, discussion and enjoyment.

Dust and Water

The great creation myths tell us that from the dust of the earth we were formed (Gn: 2:7) and that from the waters swarms of living creatures came forth (Gn 1:20).

Dust, or garbage, as exemplified by the dust heaps on Mr. Boffin's property and Water, exemplified by the River Thames, are powerful symbols that dominate *Our Mutual Friend*.

Some merchants in Victorian England made fortunes by contracting to sell or otherwise dispose of the dust or garbage heaps that accumulated everywhere. The less well-to-do often resorted to dust heaps in hopes of retrieving something useful.

Water! We drink it, clean with it, play in it, sail upon it and complain about it.

We find our origins and our destiny in Water and Dust.

On September 12 Danielle Cammarota will give a slide lecture about the problems of Dust (Garbage) in Victorian England and the various economic implications arising from it. She will also discuss the character in *Our Mutual Friend* that Dickens calls "The Golden Dustman" and about an actual person upon whom Dickens may have based this character.

Yet, as we continue to read and learn we encounter over and over again *the Inimitable Boz*, whose humor and sarcasm, whose flashing wit and whose marvelous stories we love.

We love his uncanny ability to endow inanimate objects with a vitality and life of their own as seen in his description of the pub called The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters in chapter six.

Don't lose heart!

Our Mutual Friend is a sophisticated, complicated and thought provoking novel. If we have difficulty as we follow its trajectory, let's remember that Dickens is doing his job and doing it well. Stick with it! Gold awaits us at the end.

A précis of Book I

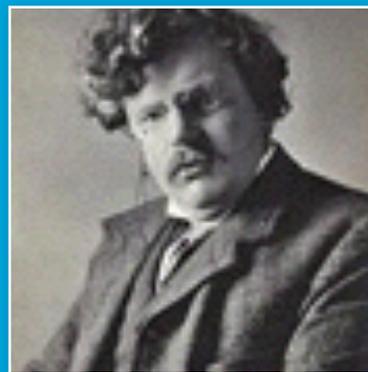
Chapters 1 and 2: Here, on the River Thames, we meet **Jesse "Gaffer" Hexam**, a scavenger, who finds a dead body with money in its pockets. His daughter, **Lizzie Hexam** rows the boat. Meanwhile, **the Veneerings**, "bran-new people in a bran new house in a bran new quarter of London" entertain **Mortimer Lightwood, Eugene Wrayburn, Lady Tippins** and **Melvin Twemlow**, the cousin of a Lord.

Continued on page 3

Our Monthly Quote

G.K. Chesterton

29 May 1874– 14 June 1936



There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.

Charles Dickens (1906)

Chapter 3: The body pulled from the river bears the papers of **John Harmon**, son of a wealthy Dust magnate (now deceased), who is recently returned from abroad. When a stranger, **Julius Handford**, looks at the body he cannot identify it. Lawyer Lightwood is called in to give any legal advice that may be required. His friend, Wrayburn, accompanies him.

Chapters 4 and 5: Here we meet pretty **Bella Wilfer** who despises poverty and longs for wealth. She is the daughter of **Reginald (Rumty) Wilfer** an impoverished Clerk and his wife. When her parents decide to take in **John Rokesmith** as a lodger, Bella instinctively mistrusts him.

The Harmon legacy, in the absence of any other claimant, is awarded to **Nicodemus "Noddy" Boffin**, a loyal but illiterate employee of the Harmon family. Feeling a need to be educated, Boffin, hires crafty **Silas Wegg**, a wooden-legged street vendor to read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* to him.

Chapter 6: Rogue Riderhood, Gaffer Hexam's former partner, casts suspicion for the Harmon death upon Hexam. Meanwhile, his daughter **Lizzie Hexam**, acting against her father's wishes, uses her savings to send her younger brother, **Charley Hexam** to school.

Chapters 7, 8 and 9: In search of his missing leg, Silas Wegg visits **Mr. Venus**, an articulator of skeletons. The Boffins hire John Rokesmith to be their personal secretary. They plan to invite Bella Wilfer to live with them and also express a wish to adopt an orphan.

Chapters 10 and 11: The Lammles, Sophronia and Alfred, are a pair of schemers who met at the Veneerings, each thinking the other to be wealthy when neither has any money. They see the possibility of making money by buttering up **Georgiana Podsnap**, the vulnerable teen-aged daughter of wealthy and jingoistic **Mr. Podsnap**.

Chapters 12, 13 and 14: Rogue Riderhood, hoping to claim a reward in the Harmon death, leads Lightwood, Wrayburn and a police officer to the Hexam home. While the police wait for Gaffer Hexam to return Wrayburn spies Lizzie through the window and approves of what he sees. Gaffer Hexam, however, is found dead having been dragged under by his own boat.

Chapters 15, 16 and 17: The Boffins purchase the fashionable house near the corner where Silas Wegg formerly kept his stand. Bella Wilfer comes to live with them while their secretary, John Rokesmith deals with the mountains of begging letters addressed to them.



Mr. Venus surrounded by the Trophies of his Art by Marcus Stone. Wood engraving by Dalziel. Illustration for *Our Mutual Friend*, Chapter Seven, "Mr. Wegg looks after himself,"

Scanned image and text by Philip V. Allingham, Courtesy: The Victorian Web

Report on the 2015 Dickens Fellowship Conference, July 23-28, Bristol, England - by Mary Jane Mallonee

The 2015 Conference truly upheld the primary goal of the Bristol and Clifton Dickens Society: “To form a bond of union among lovers of Dickens and to hold meetings of a literary, dramatic and social character.” From the lively reception where we were welcomed by the Lord Mayor, to the lectures about Dickens and his works, to the many musicals and plays during the conference, the Society fulfilled that goal.

120 members of the worldwide Fellowship attended, enjoying historic Bristol, renewing the friendships of old and making new ones. There were six of us from the USA: **Mary Jane Mallonee** (FODNY), **Mark Halperin** (DFNY), **Charla Coatoam** (Cleveland), **Gary Strange** (Chicago), **Lynn Bartlett** (California) and **Jessica Terekhov**, a student from Maryland. Lectures explored various interpretations of the conference theme, “Charles Dickens, the Travelling Man.”

One of our own FODNY members from Freiburg, Germany, **Helmut Stibal**, was true to the conference theme, *Charles Dickens Traveling Man*, becoming a Traveling Man in his own way, riding his bicycle from Scotland in the north to Lands End at the very southwestern tip of England and from there on to Bristol.

There were nine lectures on various aspects of Dickens’s career and writings, three outings to local places of interest and seven different dramatic and musical presentations. At the Annual General Meeting **Dr. Tony Williams** was elected President of the International Fellowship for the next two years. With him, we are all looking forward to meeting again in Aberdeen, Scotland in 2016 and Carrara, Italy, in 2017.



MaryJane with the
Portsmouth Library Bust
of the Inimitable



Dr Tony Williams
New President of
The Dickens Fellowship



Bicycle Man
Helmut Stibal

The Friends of Dickens Bulletin Board ***Our September Birthdays***

We wish another year of *Fun, Friendship and Learning* to **Mary Jane Mallonee** (September 8), **Elizabeth Hall** (September 17) and **Marguerite (Maggie) Maranto** (September 20).

NB: If you want to see your own Happy Birthday notice printed in *Our Monthly Letter* please notify Mike Quinn at curiousmike@me.com

Congratulations Jeannette Rosen! On August 20 you celebrated your ninety-fifth birthday with your daughter, Cynthia Altman and friends. You are also once again back at your own home after a short hospital and rehab stay. We are happy to know that you're doing well. We look forward to your joining us again soon at FODNY meetings. Thank you, Jeannette.

In a recent conversation with Dr. Fred Schwarzbach and other members of The American Friends of the Dickens Museum we were happy to learn about the sizable bequest in the will of our friend and Chicago Dickensian, **Bernard Rost** to the Dickens Museum. Those who had the pleasure of ever meeting Bernie knew him as friendly, open and happy.

Please note that we still have 10 additional copies of *Our Mutual Friend*. They will be available at the September 12 meeting for \$10.00 each.

The Dickens Circle

George Henry Lewes

April 18, 1817–November 30, 1878

Lewes was a versatile philosopher, author, scientist, sometime actor and critic of literature and theatre. In 1841 he married Agnes Jervis with whom he had an open marriage that produced several children, some of whom were his own and others not. From 1854 until his death was the long-time consort of **George Eliot**, the pen name of writer Mary Ann Evans. He was the friends with **Thomas Carlyle**, **John Stuart Mill** and **Charles Dickens** among many others. In 1847, in Liverpool, he joined Dickens's troupe in a benefit performance of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* in aid of **Leigh Hunt**. In 1852-1853 he and Dickens's engaged in a sometimes public controversy over the episode of Krook's spontaneous combustion in *Bleak House*. Lewes attacked it as unscientific and Dickens defended it. In February, 1872 Lewes reviewed the first volume of John Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens* for the *Fortnightly*



Review wherein he critiqued Dickens's intellectual limitations as "an almost unique example of a mind of singular force in which, so to speak, sensations never passed into ideas . . ." In his second volume Forster criticized this as "odious."

Lewes' published works include studies on *Aristotle*, *Auguste Comte*, *Goethe*, *the Spanish Drama*, *Actors and Acting* and others.

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We Are Fun, Friendship and Learning!

I/we are happy to support The Friends of Dickens New York in its 2015-2016 season of *Fun, Friendship and Learning.*

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Please find my /our check for \$20.00 (single) \$25.00 (couple/family) for the 2015-2016 season.

Please apply my/our added gift of \$ _____ to be used for

- Printing and Mailing Entertainment and or Speakers Holiday Party
 Annual Dickens Birthday Luncheon Charitable Donation
 Other, Please Specify _____

Please remit to
The Friends of Dickens New York, P.O. Box 630074, Riverdale, NY 10463
or at the September, 2015 meeting see
Su Quinn, Treasurer

