

Our Monthly Letter

We Are Fun, Friendship and Learning



The Person of the House and the Bad Child, illustration by Marcus Stone (September 30, 1864), for *Our Mutual Friend*, Book II, chapter 2. Image scan and text by Philip V. Allingham, courtesy of *The Victorian Web*.

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Our November Meeting

**Saturday, November 7, 2015
1:00pm - 4:00pm
NYPL Kips Bay
446 3rd Avenue, New York, NY 10016**

**Program: *Our Mutual Friend*
Book II chapters 1-9
Theme: *From Fagin to Riah,
Charles Dickens and the Jewish People*
To be Presented by Herb Moskowitz**

Wind, rain and Hurricane Joaquin could not stop twenty-three FODNY members from attending our October 3 meeting at Kips Bay. They were **Leona Adams, James Armstrong, Marilyn Baranoski, Tamara Bedic, Danielle Cammarota, Rob Clere, Susan Detrich, Laurie Henderson, Gela Kline, Carrie Lee, Mary Jane Mallonee, Lynn Manuell, Joseph Palladino, Kevin Quinn, Mike and Su Quinn, Susan Romanoff, Mike Rosen, Adair Russell, Ellen Spears, Ken Wachtell, Heather Whittle** and **Warren Wyss**.

We received regrets for missing the meeting from **Jerry and Loretta Frohnhoefer, Jeannette Rosen, Ruthy Rosen** and **Dorothy Smith**.

We began the meeting with a round of applause for **Danielle Cammarota** and her marvelous presentation on September 12 about the development and history of dust removal in England. Danielle pointed out that by the mid-1850s the dust mounds that Dickens describes in *Our Mutual Friend* had become a thing of the past. She helped us understand the story better by setting its time period in the mid-1830s.

Moderator Mike Quinn began by presenting a brief review of *Our Mutual Friend*, Book I. Among the topics discussed was the possible significance of Mr. Boffin's first name **Nicodemus**. The name is biblical and of Greek origin, meaning *people's victory*.

In the Gospel according to John, chapter 3, Nicodemus asks Jesus "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

This reply harkens back to Genesis 1 wherein "the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light . . ."

Thus does Dickens introduce a spiritual and creational aspect into *Our Mutual Friend*. As we continue to read and discuss it over the next seven months let's tease apart this spiritual and creational aspect to see where, how and in what characters the spiritual act of creation is taking place. Let us also look to see where and in whom the spiritual act of creation being is being thwarted.

We meet again on Saturday, November 7 at the Kips Bay Library. **Herb Moskovitz** will moderate and present as his theme *From Fagin to Riah - Dickens and the Jewish People*.

Mr. Riah, a poor, elderly Jewish man who "though he looked shabby he did not look mean" is contrasted with his employer, **Fascination Fledgeby** who "though not shabby, did look mean."

We first meet Mr. Riah in chapter 5 of Book II. His is a supporting role but a very important one, for through his good offices Lizzie Hexam is able to start life anew, away from the dangers she faces in London. He is also the very good friend and moral support of **Fanny Cleaver** also known as **Jenny Wren**, a doll's dressmaker whose father is a drunkard.

Other events in the farce Dickens called *Our Mutual Friend* occur when Veneering is elected to Parliament as hangers-on **Boots, Brewer** and **Buffer** rally round; when the Lammles, hoping to acquire access to Georgiana Podsnap's fortune, try to bring her together with Fascination Fledgeby; when **Bradley Headstone**, Charley Hexam's intense, self-made schoolmaster, becomes smitten with Lizzie Hexam; when **Mr. Venus** brings **Silas Wegg's** missing leg to him at Boffin's Bower and where Wegg, sly operator that he is, enlists his aid in searching for treasure in Boffin's dust mounds; Boffin approves of John Rokesmith even as Rokesmith continues to

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avoid seeing people, especially Mortimer Lightwood; and when Rokesmith persuades Bella Wilfer to visit her family. There we meet pert sister **Lavinia Wilfer**, who is a thorn in Bella's and their mother's side; when the **Reverend Frank Milvey** and his lovely wife **Margaretta**, assist Mrs. Boffin to find an orphan named Johnny to adopt. Sadly, Johnny dies of fever, left untreated because of the fears of his stalwart grandmother, **Betty Higden**. We look forward to seeing everyone at our November 7 meeting at Kips Bay.

The Friends Bulletin Board

Rosa Smith-Biking for Bees!

Well done Rosa! On September 1 you and three companions biked more than 1000 miles from Seattle to San Francisco as a fundraiser for *Friends of the Earth*, a nonprofit that researches, educates and lobbies to protect our pollinators. Rosa cares deeply about this project for, in her words, we (humans) have had a mutually beneficial relationship with the bees for millennia." In today's world they continue to provide us with honey even as we expose them to dangerous chemicals.

Many people donated financially to Rosa's campaign for our pollinators. Good aerobic exercise and sore muscles made the endeavor worth while.

Rosa will be happy to provide anyone interested in making a donation to *Friends of the Earth* with the necessary information to do so.

Our November Birthdays

Here's wishing another year of *Fun, Friendship and Learning* to our November Birthday celebrant, **Philomena Forde** whose happy birthday falls on the 11th.

Please Note: If you wish to see your birthday acknowledgement here please email the editor at curiousmike@me.com.

DEAR MEMBERS, THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!

Your renewals and new memberships continue to come in. Several of you have made generous donations above and beyond the \$20.00 for singles and \$30.00 for couples that we request for membership. Many of you have also purchased the Barnes and Noble Classics edition of *Our Mutual Friend* and others have subscribed to *The Dickensian*.

With all this in mind we give you all our heartfelt thanks and good wishes. You are: **Leona Adams, James Armstrong, Marilyn and Tony Baranoski, Pam Bauder, Tamara Bedic, Ed and Janet Bowers, Rob Clere, Elizabeth DeGroot, Kristin and Michael Dennehy, Elizabeth Hall, Gela Kline, Carrie Lee, Russ LaValla and Nancy Lind, Mary Jane Mallonee, Elizabeth and Joseph Palladino Kevin Quinn, Mike and Su Quinn, Susan Romanoff, Mike and Ruthy Rosen, Adair Russell, Thérèse Saxton, William Schroeder, Herbert "Jimmy" Schwarz, Dorothy Smith, Ellen Spears, Helmut Stibal, Ken Wachtell, Heather Whittle and Warren Wyss.**

Our Monthly Quote***William Makepeace Thackeray***

18 July 18, 1811 – December 24, 1863
English Novelist and Poet



A clever, ugly man every now and then is successful with the ladies, but a handsome fool is irresistible.

The History of Henry Esmond, Esq. (1852)

The Dickens Circle**Marcus Stone**

July 4, 1840–March 24, 1921

Artist and illustrator Marcus Stone was the son and pupil of artist **Frank Stone** (1800-1859), a friend of **Charles Dickens** who executed three illustrations for *The Haunted Man* and who was a member of Dickens's amateur theatrical troupe. The younger Stone was trained in art by his father and succeeded **Phiz (Hablot Knight Browne)** as Dickens's illustrator for *Our Mutual Friend*. He also illustrated several volumes in the 1862 Library Edition. It was he who pointed out to Dickens the little shop in St Giles on which is based Mr Venus's shop in *Our Mutual Friend*. Stone also illustrated works by **Anthony Trollope** and other novelists of the period. He was elected an Associate of The Royal Academy (ARA) in 1877 and elected to full membership in 1887. In his earlier pictures he mainly dealt with historical incidents but occupied himself chiefly with a particular type of dainty sentiment, treated with much charm, refinement and executive skill in his later work. One of his canvases, *Il y en a toujours un autre* (There is always another) is in the Tate Collection, though not on display. Most of his works have been engraved, and medals awarded to him at exhibitions in all parts of the world. Along with fellow painter, **Luke Fildes**, who illustrated *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* for Dickens, he lived on Melbury Road in the Holland Park section of London where a Blue Plaque commemorates him at his house. He was married to **Laura Brown**, daughter of **William Brown**, a wealthy New Zealand merchant.



