

“CHILDISHNESS” IN DICKENS

Chiefly through

David Copperfield and Great Expectations

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Introduction

Charles Dickens had indeed many and grave faults. Everyone must notice his unbearable mawkishness, his poorness in ideas, his inability of psychological description, his crudeness as a story-teller and so forth. There is, however, something in this imperfect writer, which is too indefinable to point out, and yet too indisputable to disregard. Apart from that unusually enthusiastic reception given by his contemporaries, he has never been utterly neglected by the world at any time. Even

in this century, many books of revaluation were written one after another, based on some newly revealed facts of his private life. Then, what is the "something" which has undoubtedly attracted these people to Dickens? Chesterton declares as follows:

"Great" is the first adjective which the most supercilious modern critic would apply to Dickens.¹

It is certain that even those who are unfavourably disposed toward Dickens admit that Dickens is a great writer, if he is not a perfect writer.

Greatness and faultiness coexisted in Dickens, and it seems that they originated in the same root. That root, I believe, was his "childishness." One who for the first time reads Dickens must be impressed by the numerous scenes of childhood, (especially in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*), before noticing many other manifestations of Dickens's genius. These scenes have a kind of appeal, which makes one ask oneself what relation they have to Dickens. Though it is often said that the writer's private life has nothing to do with his writings, this opinion is irrelevant, at least in the case of Dickens. The research made of his life, combined with the first impression of his childhood scenes, assisted greatly in my making the supposition that "childishness" was the basis of Dickens's art. Chapter I will treat these particulars. Then Chapter II and III will throw a light on whether this supposition is true, and if so, what contributions his "childishness" made on his art, studying of his humanitarianism and characterization.

Chapter I Source

I. The World of the Child

In the earlier chapters both of *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, we see the world of the child described with utmost vividness and poignancy.

¹ Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, *Charles Dickens*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1949, pp. 2-3.

At the start of *David Copperfield*, all the happiness and delights of a child who is fully satisfied with maternal love and protection are shown. There is, at first, an enchanting episode of David's caul, which bespeaks the peaceful atmosphere of David's home.¹ In the summer daylight, David's pretty young mother gathers some fruits in the garden, while David stands by, "bolting furtive gooseberries, and trying to look unmoved."² In the winter twilight they are dancing about the parlour.

When my mother is out of breath and rests herself in an elbow-chair, I watch her winding her bright curls round her fingers, and straightening her waist, and nobody knows better than I do that she likes to look so well, and is proud of being so pretty.³

Near the house there is a churchyard where his father is buried.

The sheep are feeding there, when I kneel up, early in the morning, in my little bed in a closet within my mother's room, to look out at it; and I see the red light shining on the sun-dial, and think within myself, 'Is the sun-dial glad, I wonder, that it can tell the time again?'⁴

This blissful relation between the mother and the child, however, is soon to be ruined by the dark and terrible force approaching at this time. One night David and Peggotty, the nurse, are alone, waiting for his mother to return. Being dead sleepy, David props his eyelids open with his two forefingers to keep on looking at Peggotty's wonderful workbox with its pink-domed picture of St. Paul's Cathedral on the lid. "How naturally and yet subtly out of this domestic serenity comes David's innocent question, 'Peggotty, were you ever married?'"⁵

' . . . what put marriage in your head? '

' I don't know!—You mustn't marry more than one person at a time, may you, Peggotty? '

' Certainly not,' says Peggotty, with the promptest decision.

' But if you marry a person, and the person dies, why then you may marry another person, mayn't you, Peggotty? '

¹ Dickens, Charles, *David Copperfield*, London, Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 1-2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵ Johnson, Edgar, *Charles Dickens*, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1953, p. 691.

‘You MAY,’ says Peggotty, ‘if you choose, my dear. That’s a matter of opinion.’¹

And after this mysterious crossness, Peggotty suddenly opens her arms wide, and squeezes David’s curly head within them so tightly that the buttons on the back of her gown fly off. This conversation shows the contrast between a grown-up who knows something and a child who knows nothing but feels something. The scene leads immediately to the appearance of a dark-haired man with “shallow black”² eyes, whom the child intuitively dislikes to see touching his mother’s hand, but with whom, the child feels, his mother looks “unusually pretty.”³ This is Mr. Murdstone, who becomes David’s stepfather and tyrant.

The dreamy and happy fortnight at Peggotty’s brother’s ship-cottage at Yarmouth is over, and David comes home “on a cold grey afternoon, with a dull sky, threatening rain.”⁴ “The door opened, and I looked, half laughing and half crying in my pleasant agitation, for my mother. It was not she, but a strange servant.”⁵ It cut David to the heart, and he asked Peggotty the reason. She takes him by the hand, leads him into the kitchen, and shuts the door.

‘Peggotty!’ said I, quite frightened. ‘What’s the matter?’

‘Nothing’s the matter, bless you, Master Davy dear!’ she answered, assuming an air of sprightliness.

‘Something’s the matter, I’m sure. Where’s mama?’

‘Where’s mama, Master Davy?’ repeated Peggotty.

‘Yes. Why hasn’t she come out to the gate, and what have we come in here for? Oh, Peggotty!’ My eyes were full, and I felt as if I were going to tumble down.

‘Bless the precious boy!’ cried Peggotty, taking hold of me. ‘What is it? Speak, my pet!’

‘Not dead, too! Oh, she’s not dead, Peggotty?’

Peggotty cried out No! . . .⁶

¹ Dickens, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-2.

Nowhere even in *David Copperfield* can be seen such tension and seriousness of the little child's feeling towards his mother.

Here begin David's days of fears and griefs. When "bewitching"¹ little Mrs. Copperfield is once his bride, Mr. Murdstone forces his way between her and David and becomes an incarnation of cold ferocity and formidable power for David. David describes himself overwhelmed with profound sorrow after the cold meeting with his mother and Mr. Murdstone at the best parlour,² as follows:

I thought of the oddest things. Of the shape of the room, of the cracks in the ceiling, of the paper on the wall, of the flaws in the window-glass making ripples and dimples on the prospect, of the washing-stand being rickety on its three legs, and having a discontented something about it, which reminded me of Mrs. Gummidge under the influence of the old one. I was crying all the time, but, except that I was conscious of being cold and dejected, I am sure I never thought why I cried.³

The burden of grief is too much for him to analyze and to trace the origin of.

Then follow the painful details of David's unhappiness.

'David,' he said, making his lips thin, by pressing them together, 'if I have an obstinate horse or dog to deal with, what do you think I do?'

'I don't know.'

'I beat him.'⁴

Finally, after the terrible experience of the five days imprisonment, he is sent away to Salem House in London. The incident of the "friendly"⁵ waiter and mutton chops,⁶ on the way to London, is famous for its wild burlesque. Yet all the isolation of childhood is there. David is cast off from his home and mother, made a fool of by the man he thinks friendly, and unjustly suspected of having eaten what in fact the waiter has eaten.

The miseries and fears of the child, however, are presented far more

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70.

unrelentingly in *Great Expectations* than in *David Copperfield*. Pip says, "My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things, seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening."¹ What a different atmosphere this is, compared with that of *David Copperfield*! Unlike David who is in the ecstasy of reposing safely in the assurance of maternal love, or sheds tears, when rejected and cast off, pitying himself, Pip examines his own griefs and fears dolefully but pretty objectively. On that afternoon when Pip is wandering in the churchyard where his parents are buried, he is terrified by an escaped convict starting up from among the graves. In Pip's young eyes, that man looks "as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in."² Thus the sense of crime and death is what enters into his mind at the first moment of his memory. And Dickens never wrote such a dismal Christmas Eve as that Pip spends stirring the pudding for next day, with his mind utterly disturbed and uneasy by thinking of his promise to pilfer food and a file for that terrible man in the churchyard.³ When the sounds of the great guns are heard from the prison-ship near the house, Pip cannot help questioning, in succession, about "convict," "Hulks," etc. "'I wonder who's put into prison-ships and why they're put there?'"⁴ said he, at last, "in a general way, and with quiet desperation."⁵ (How well his uneasy and forlorn state of mind is expressed in this phrase!) At this, Mrs. Joes, his rude sister, having been already irritated by his questioning, falls into a furious passion and says,

'I didn't bring you up by hand to badger people's lives out. It would be blame to me, and not praise, if I had. People are put in the Hulks because they murder, and because they rob, and forge, and do all sorts of bad; and they always begin by asking questions. Now, you get along to bed!'⁶

¹ Dickens, Charles, *Great Expectations*, London, Oxford University Press, 1953, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

Pip goes to bed, "fearfully sensible of the great convenience that the hulks were handy"¹ for him. "I was clearly on my way there. I had begun by asking questions, and I was going to rob Mrs. Joe."² Thus Pip's childhood is full of fears and griefs only. Later there is a scene in which Pip, coming from Miss Havisham's house and finding himself completely unable to describe what he has seen, takes refuge in a series of outrageous lies.³ It forms a good parallel to the scene of the "friendly" waiter, in point of its denoting, in spite of its wild burlesque, the utter isolation of a child.

These various scenes make us wonder how Dickens could know and describe the child's emotions so accurately and intensely. The answer will be found in section 3.

2. Dickens's Childhood

When we think of Dickens's literature, we must never disregard the experiences of his childhood, and especially his relation to his mother. In 1817 the Dickenses moved from London to Chatham.⁴ Charles Dickens at this time was between four and five years old. The five happy years when Charles, a sickly and delicate child, was growing up here left the most durable and important of his early impressions. Here he was at peace with his mother, enjoying a warm sense of security under her protection. As he described himself to have been a "very small and not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy,"⁵ he can not be said to have owed much to his parents. But he frequently said that "his first desire for knowledge, and his earliest passion for reading, were awakened by his mother, from whom he learnt the rudiments, not only of English, but also, a little later, of Latin."⁶ She taught him

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-4.

⁴ Forster, John, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1948, Vol. I, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*

every day for a long time, and taught him, he was convinced, thoroughly well.¹ He had an elder sister, Fanny, who was two years older than he. As he could not monopolize his mother's attention because she had many other things to do, he regarded Fanny as a mother-substitute. She often looked after him; she was his constant companion.² The significance of Fanny's part in Charles' life can be testified, if we read the stories he wrote around the time of her death in 1848, *The Haunted Man*, *The Child's Dream of a Star* and *George Silverman's Explanation*. His affection to Fanny (ultimately to his mother) was so strong that "death-wish"³ came into his mind.

But, in 1822, the family returned to London.⁴ It is believed that Charles did not go with the rest of the family to London, but was left in Chatham to finish his school term.⁵ He was parted from his mother for the first time.

After he returned to London, the financial position of his family worsened.⁶ Charles was left to do much of the housework.⁷ No one took thought for his education.⁸ Moreover, he lost the companionship of Fanny for the first time. In 1823, she was given a scholarship as a pupil-boarder at the Royal Academy of Music on Tenterden Street, and went away.⁹ At last in 1824, two events occurred within a month of each other. Charles was sent to work in Warren's Blacking Factory,¹⁰

¹ *Ibid.*

² Lindsay, Jack, *Charles Dickens*, London, Andrew Dakers Ltd., 1950, p. 30; Johnson, *op. cit.*, 13, 14, 15.

³ Lindsay originated the word. As we shall learn in this section, Fanny ceased later to be his companion. Dickens blamed in *The Child's Dream of a Star* the actual Fanny who failed to remain the pure and blessed Fanny of this child relationship. The only way to keep her in the relationship is to kill her off in the day-dream at that moment of perfect happiness. Then, he feels, life would have been happier. This is what Lindsay calls "death-wish." (Lindsay, *op. cit.*, 32.)

⁴ Forster, *op. cit.*, I, p. 11.

⁵ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁶ Forster, *op. cit.*, I, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

and his father was arrested for debt and lodged in the Marshalsea.¹

Dickens seems never to have felt it necessary to conceal the fact of his father's imprisonment, as many people would have done; but the four or five months he spent working at Warren's Blacking Factory caused him such anguish of mind that he never referred to them in conversation.² Indeed his wife knew nothing of the time in his life.³ When in his last months he was playing a Christmas game which involved remembering long strings of names contributed by each member of the company, Dickens said, in his turn, "with a curious twinkle in his eye and an odd tone of voice,"⁴ but with no attempt at explanation, "Warren's Blacking 30 Strand."⁵ That was his nearest approach to revealing the episode to any members of his family.

In his writings, however, he laid bare the episode, and the anguish of his mind. In the fragment of his autobiography he wrote as follows:

It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me—a child of singular abilities: quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally—to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so, if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar-school, and going to Cambridge.⁶

He did not complain of ill-treatment at the Factory, but wrote of his own "secret agony of soul"⁷ at being taken from school and sent to work with such ragged boys as Bob Fagin.⁸ "That I suffered in secret, and that I suffered exquisitely, no one ever knew but I. How much I suffered, it is, as I have said already, utterly beyond my power to tell."⁹ Though he wrote that "I have no idea how long it lasted;

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1058.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Forster, *op. cit.*, I, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 22.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 25.

whether for a year, or much more, or less,"¹ at the end of five months (at most), in fact, he retired from the warehouse at his father's discretion.² His mother was appalled at the resultant financial prospect and wanted eagerly to send him back to the warehouse again, but his father's determination was already fixed, and Charles returned home.³

So far we have seen the depth and intensity with which the experiences of the warehouse ate into his childish soul. There may be those who explain of the depth and intensity that they arise from great Charles Dickens with all his claims on special treatment, or from his snobbish sense of shame of admitting the lapse from middle-class gentility. These explanations are true to some extent. But when we see the incident itself and the anguish he undoubtedly experienced, we cannot but be struck by the disproportion between the two, or by the extreme over-valuation of his misfortune. Then, there is an interpretation which seems to enter into Charles' emotions far more deeply than those mentioned before. It is that his suffering had a deep psychic cause connected with his relation to his mother.⁴ It is noteworthy that, though Dickens took a pretty lenient view in his judgement of his father, his works show an enduring resentment against his mother.⁵ In Chatham days he was at peace with his mother. His strong love to her was shown through his relation to Fanny, a mother-substitute. But, after these happy years, his mother, though it was pretty excusable for her to have done so, took a series of measures which cut him to the heart. She left him alone in Chatham. She neglected his education. She took Fanny from him and seemed to cherish her only by sending her to the Royal Academy. She sent him to the contemptible drudgery. Lastly, she wanted eagerly to send him back to the warehouse when his father rescued him from it. Dickens wrote of this as follows: " . . . I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can

¹ *Ibid.*, I, p. 32.

² Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

³ Forster, *op. cit.*, I, p. 32.

⁴ Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4.

⁵ The good examples are Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield* and Mrs. Nickleby in *Nicholas Nickleby*.

forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back.”¹ In fact, of all these measures except the last one, his father was far more blamable than his mother. But his whole sense of worth, his whole claim to security, had been staked on his ability to command his mother’s attention and love. Consequently these measures, as his mother’s doings, almost crushed him, and he could never forgive his mother for life. The security of the happy time in Chatham was gone forever for Dickens even after he was freed from the bondage of the warehouse and sent back to school again. His relation to his mother was completely ruined; his dear mother in Chatham died for him beyond all hope of recovery.

3. “Childishness”

Dickens was, throughout his life, completely dominated by these intense childhood emotions, delights or griefs, which, as section 2 has shown, can be supposed to originate in his relation to his mother. This is understood if we examine his works. Throughout his life he consciously and unconsciously continued to move over the narrow ground of these key experiences of his childhood.² *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* are good examples, because in these novels Dickens tried to explore his formative years and the bent they had given them. In *David Copperfield* he followed out on the whole a fairly direct autobiographical line of narrative. All the things have their roots in Dickens’s personal experiences.³ Its earlier parts, as we have seen in section 1, are steeped in his childhood unhappiness and sense of rejection.

The elements in his own past that Dickens uses and those he does not tell at all, the way he weaves them in with imagined episodes, and the nature of the invented material, are all deeply revealing. Both the suppressions and the fantasy are profoundly indicative of the wounds that were still unhealed after a quarter of a century. In addition to its delight as a story, *David Copperfield* is thus of

¹ Forster, *op. cit.*, I, p. 32.

² Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 677.

cardinal significance to the psychologist and the biographer.¹

In *Great Expectations*, Pip is much less literally a portrayal of Dickens than David was, and the outward events of his life have no resemblance to those in Dickens's career. But Dickens shaped the events so that he might plumb those childhood humiliations and griefs.²

To point out the various instances which reveal the relation between the things written in these two novels and his actual experiences would be interesting. Here, however, we confine ourselves to understanding that this obsession, in his novels, to his childhood experiences shows that he was completely dominated by his childhood emotions throughout his life. Then we can see why he could describe the child's emotions so vividly and intensely in the earlier parts both of *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*.

Now, a man so strongly dominated by his childhood emotions as Dickens is usually "childish." Dickens was no exception. Next two chapters will tell what "childishness" means in Dickens's literature, and how it contributed to his literature.

Chapter II Humanitarianism

A work of art is closely connected with life, because it is originally a means of dissolving an author's tensions created from his love for life, or at least, his sincere interest in life. Therefore, though it does not work upon our daily life directly, it ought to call for our grave reflection upon life and be able to destroy indirectly the evil of life, by presenting us life. In other words, it has nothing to do with, as its essential motive, money, or worldly fame, or partisanship, but it is the self-denial of art if it denies its function of contributing ultimately

to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here.³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 677-8.

² *Ibid.*, p. 983.

³ Pater, Walter, "Style," *Appreciations*, London, Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1920, p. 38.

It is only right and proper that the "great" writers such as Hugo, Balzac, Tolstoy, or Dickens should not have approved of the art-for-art school of the nineteenth century.

In his own way, Dickens fought for human welfare. Though we find many faults with his humanitarianism, yet if we disregard it in his literature, we are afraid he becomes no more than a mere comic writer.¹ What is more, it has certainly its own excellence which we should fully appreciate. First, as an expedient means for the development of our argument, we will extract his social view chiefly from his literature.

I. Criticism of Society

Throughout the whole course of his writing Dickens was apparently radical. He discredited the existing orders—the law, the parliamentary government and the educational system. He attacked the inhumanity of the Poor Law in *Oliver Twist* and *Our Mutual Friend*. He exposed the misery of the debtor-prison in *The Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*. He bitterly accused the "farming school" in Yorkshire of its cruel treatment of the pupils in *Nicholas Nickleby*. He satirized the iniquities committed by the obsolete English legal machine in *Bleak House*, and the dishonesty of the judicial officers in *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*. He pounced upon the incompetency of the governmental official in *Little Dorrit*.

He did not, however, know exactly what he demanded of these orders he attacked. Because he saw "injustice committed, laws administered harshly, and all sorts of social miseries tacitly allowed to exist,"² he was strongly and consistently opposed to the existing orders of society. That was all he thought. Nothing further. For instance, he attacked various kinds of schools, the charity schools which produced Noah Claypole and Uriah Heep, Dotheboy Hall, Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt's dame-school, and Salem House. But he did not suggest

¹ Orwell, George, "Charles Dickens," *Critical Essays*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1954, p. 55.

² Symons, Julian, *Charles Dickens*, London, Arthur Barker Ltd., 1951, p. 32.

at all what he would put in their places. Doctor Strong's is simply Salem House with the vices left out and good morale thrown in.¹ "Doctor Strong's was an excellent school, as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil."² In short that is all. He could imagine vaguely the moral atmosphere of a good school, but he utterly lacked any educational theory.³ Of all other things, also, he could not seek for the forms desirable as supplanters of the oppressive ones. He could not formulate any blueprints of systematic social reform that would destroy the social evils completely, or any constitution for the ideal political state. The recurrent appearance of "the Good Rich Man"⁴ in his novels—Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Brownlow, or, though in a little different form, Miss Betsey—indicates his view of reform. He regarded reform as something immediate and personal to himself. He himself worked piecemeal within limited areas for every particular improvement that seemed to him attainable. With a view to effecting such reforms personally he started the magazine *Household Words*.⁵ Moreover, he had, of course, no insight to see capitalism as a system moving from one stage to another by its own inner necessity.⁶ As a result of it, for instance, he could not understand the nature of working-class organization. *Barnaby Rudge* contains a savage caricature of early trade unionism. In *Hard Times* it is represented as something not much better than a racket, something that happens because employers are not sufficiently paternal. The whole moral of the novel is "that capitalists ought to be kind, but not that workers ought to be rebellious."⁷

All these attitudes were appreciated by the new reading class, the ascending bourgeoisie. These bourgeois people hated all forms of inherited rank and power and regarded the State as a curse carried on as a feudal or absolutist survival to set barriers and tolls on free enter-

¹ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

² Dickens, *David Copperfield*, p. 237.

³ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵ Symons, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁶ Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁷ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

prise. But they were, as a matter of course, perfectly contented with capitalist society and dominated it in a lordly manner. Yet, a little conscious of guilt at their rise in the society by ruthless exploitation, they wanted to salve their uneasy consciences with minor or individual measures of reform which never endangered their own situation. Dickens, who assumed such unsystematic attitudes, may be regarded as the spokesman of this class.¹ Take, for instance, his treatment of the characters in *David Copperfield*. The gentleman party are mainly typified by the Steerforths, and also by Jack Maldon. They are either sterilely aloof or heartlessly bad. Steerforth talks of the Peggotties as follows: “ ‘ . . . they may be thankful that, like their coarse tough skins, they are not easily wounded,’ ”² and he later carries out this proposition in seducing little Emily. The lower middle-class or working-class, from Micawber to the Peggotties, are the repositories of human values. When they are happy, they are comic; when they are unhappy, they are pathetic. The main characters, good or wicked, are the bourgeois people—David, Miss Betsey, and Agnes on the one hand, and on the other hand, Murdstone, Heep, and Spenlow. The same can be said of almost all of his novels. Everything outside the bourgeois world seemed to Dickens either comic or bad. We can understand easily his attitude to aristocracy and upper class in his novels, when we think of his origin and social position. But it is interesting and noteworthy that the lower class come into his books chiefly as servants who are comic or pathetic.³ Dickens knew almost nothing about the bulk of the real oppressed people who are the industrial and agricultural labourers.⁴ Therefore, he could not write of their circumstances which were not comic or pathetic, but miserable and even repulsive. Thus the central action of Dickens’s novels almost invariably takes place in the middle-class surroundings. It was the bourgeois people whose fate had to be treated seriously.⁵ “ They

¹ Symons, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

² Dickens, *David Copperfield*, p. 294.

³ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵ Symons, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

are merchants and shop-keepers, near-gentlemen and white-collar office workers, young men with a position in society rendered dubious by the source, or the lack, of their income.”¹

But if Dickens’s feeling can be considered to be at one with that of the bourgeoisie, it is also undeniable that he himself was, from the first, never contented with the existing state of things. Moreover, in his later period, his understanding of the society quite deepened. There was a decisive turn in the life of the British people which was marked by the years 1848–49. “. . . the brutal defeat of Chartism, and the beginning of organized Trade Unionism in England, and in Europe the revolutions of 1848 with their repercussions [on British politics and economy]”²—all these events contributed to enlarging his comprehension of society. The “Good Rich Man” almost faded out of his novels, and he could no longer preserve his belief in private benevolence as a cure for social evils which were the products of the social system. He felt none of the joyous belief in painless progress that the bourgeoisie felt. *Great Expectations* is regarded as a rewriting of *David Copperfield* “from the standpoint of a disillusioned instead of an optimistic radical.”³ Pip dreams of becoming a gentleman on money he has done nothing to earn. Though he recoils from the inheritance when he finds it a gift of a ferocious criminal, he has been quite content to inherit, as he thinks, from the crazed woman of curse, Miss Havisham. We may infer from this story that Dickens began to realize the deep and hopeless falsity of the Victorian world. In attacking Pip’s shameless day-dream of inheriting the wealth of Miss Havisham and getting the beautiful girl, Estella, haunting her house, Dickens attacked the day-dream of nineteenth-century capitalist society, “willing to base its hopes of comfort and ostentation on the toil of the labouring classes.”⁴ If to the end of his life, he seemed to compromise with the Victorian society, yet he had within himself deep antagonism

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 989.

to the existing society and its scale of values. The revelation made in this century of his private life is important in point of its suggesting this state of his mind.¹

2. "Sincerity"

As section 1 has shown, Dickens's social view was apparently full of limitations, contradictions and compromises. Though, in the later period, he seems to have become aware of its faults, yet after all he could not rid himself of them. Dickens's attack on the educational system, his "Good Rich Man," and his attitude to the working class organization—all these indicate well that Dickens's criticism of society was not at all intellectual or systematic. What is more, it is not only crude and immature, but also is quite opposite to what we usually call revolutionary. Orwell points out that "in every attack Dickens makes upon society he is always pointing to a change of spirit rather than a change of structure."² This remark hits the right nail on the head. As Dickens's view of society was consistently moral and emotional, based on a just discrimination of black and white, a discrimination of a simple and ordinary mind, it contained nothing immoderate or bizarre, nothing which threatened to upset or endanger the *status quo*.

Indeed, if that were all, "he might be no more than a cheer-up writer, a reactionary humbug."³ Yet a mere humbug could have had no power to take away, as Dickens did, the great and many abuses deeply rooted in society. Notice, in the following quotation from *Oliver Twist*, the note of biting satire engendered from his dark anger against the inhumane treatment of the poor.

What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England!
They let the paupers go to sleep!⁴

Or, what overwhelming and intense rapture, based on his infinite faith on humanity, he shows in *A Christmas Carol*!

¹ The revelation is of Dickens's relation with Miss Ellen Ternan.

² Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ Dickens, Charles, *Oliver Twist*, Tokyo, Kenkyusha, 1953, p. 14.

Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!¹

Though these emotions are quite simple, they have something in themselves which strongly touches our heart.

It was said, at the end of Chapter I, that there was "childishness" in Dickens. In Dickens's weakness as a thinker, mentioned a little before, it betrays itself. If his "childishness" had not prevented him from being a little more objective, his humanitarianism would have been a little more intellectual and systematic. Here his "childishness" was what bore his deficiency.

It was, however, this same "childishness" which created that strong appeal in the above two quotations. That appeal came from the expressed emotions, which he felt, not abstractly and half-heartedly, but personally and sincerely. It is noteworthy that he was moved by anything he dealt with as deeply and as strongly as if it were his own affair. He was utterly absorbed in it, and, as a child often is, was never detached from it. As a result of it, his feeling expressed was such an intensely sincere one.

One and the most important of the qualities given by Tolstoy as indispensable for a work of art is the sincerity of the artist, that is, the force with which the artist himself feels the emotion transmitted.² Indeed, how could a writer interest and move his readers unless he himself is not sincerely and strongly interested in and moved by his object? Often, because Dickens indulged himself in feeling the emotion he presented us, several unsavoury tendencies are noticed—his burlesque and sentimentality. But it is this strong sincerity based on his "childishness," which can be seen in his love of humanity and

¹ Dickens, Charles, "A Christmas Carol," *Christmas Books*, London, Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 72.

² Tolstoy, Count Leo Nikolaevich, "What Is Art?", *Essays on Art and Education*, (Translated by Hara, Kyuichiro), Tokyo, Chuokoronsha, 1926, p. 686.

his unwavering hostility to the existing order of society, that gave Dickens's humanitarianism the unique strength to turn people's inward eyes upon the social evils, and, though indirectly, could destroy them.

Chapter III Characterization

I. "Dickensian" Characters

Dickens's characterization is truly worthy of attention. It has been praised or dispraised, but it has always been a subject of discussion. E. M. Forster divides characters into flat and round.¹ "Dickensian" characters apparently belong to the former. They are those which "can be expressed in a single sentence,"² or, let us say, in a few sentences. For instance, Mrs. Gummidge can be expressed in "I am a lone lorn creetur.'" Mrs. Gargery is always banging her husband's head against the wall. "David's Dora is always pattering her childish-pathetic tinkle of keys."³ Littimer is respectability itself. They can not be imagined to do or to be other things than these. They do not change. They are static.⁴

This quality has made "Dickensian" characters the focus of criticism. Dickens seems to have failed to realize the complexities of the ordinary human mind. He seizes upon two or three facets of a man or woman, and then uses all his art to impress them indelibly upon our minds. All other qualities are disregarded. This method is attacked as "the novelist touch"⁵ which "falsifies life."⁶ "The facts may be correct as far as they go but there are too few of them: what the author says may be true and yet by no means the truth."⁷

¹ Forster, Edward Morgan, *Aspects of the Novel*, London, Edward Arnold & Co., 1953, p. 65.

² *Ibid.*

³ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 990.

⁴ Muir, Edwin, *The Structure of the Novel*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1954, p. 141.

⁵ Norman Douglas uses this expression. (Forster, E. M., *op. cit.*, 68.)

⁶ The same as the above.

⁷ The same as the above.

There are characters which change or develop. Think of Dostoevsky's characters, or the leading characters of *War and Peace*, or, in English literature, Eustacia Vye or Catherine Earnshaw. These characters are growing, and struggling to make their souls. We can hold an "imaginary conversation"¹ with them. But as "Dickensian" characters are always repeating only the same saying or action, we can not hold an "imaginary conversation" with them. Indeed, his is

a world (let us grant it) strangely empty of questioning ideas, subtle nuisances that haunt many thoughtful men's souls, through this pass of existence 'still clutching the inviolable shade.'²

Many points are, however, given in defense of "Dickensian" characters. First, it can be said that any literary character is a selection of representative qualities from among the infinite number that constitute the whole of any actual human being, "with omission and exaggeration a part of their very nature, and their appearance of 'reality' a victory of their art."³ Secondly, "Dickensian" characters have two advantages. One is that they are convenient and useful for the author, because "they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere."⁴ The other is that they are easily remembered by the reader afterwards because "they remain in his mind as unalterable for the reason that they were not changed by circumstances."⁵ The latter point accounts for the fact that Dickens is one of the most familiar writers in the world. Perhaps no one who has actually read Dickens can go a week without remembering him in one context or another. "As with the people one knew in childhood, one seems always to remember them (Dickens's monstrosities) in one particular thing."⁶

Yet these points of defense do not satisfy those who are deeply im-

¹ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

² Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur Thomas, *Charles Dickens and Other Victorians*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1925, p. 39.

³ Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 1138.

⁴ Forster, E. M., *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁶ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

pressed with the astounding triumphs of "Dickensian" characters. All the attacks and defenses are true; they are indisputable. But they do not touch the main point which makes "Dickensian" characters a subject of discussion. That point is the "wonderful feeling of human depth"¹ which lurks in "Dickensian" characters. There are many characters which are more subtly realized, or have more intricate psychological complexity than "Dickensian" characters. But there are few characters which have more vitality or are more true to humanity at its core. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch tells us that Tolstoy said: ". . . what a *spirit* there was in all he (Dickens) wrote!"² It is this *spirit* or the "wonderful feeling of human depth" that has made Dickens's characterization a subject of discussion. Where, then, does this "spirit" come from?

Read the following three quotations.

'I have loved you, and have shown you that I loved you, much to my regret; and yet you can come and say in that frigid way that you wish to consult with me whether it would not be better to marry Thomasin. Better—of course it would be. Marry her: she is nearer to your own position in life than I am!'³

'Why that, Master Copperfield, . . . is, in fact, the confidence that I am going to take the liberty of reposing. Umble as I am, . . . umble as my mother is, and lowly as our poor but honest roof has ever been, the image of Miss Agnes . . . has been in my breast for years. Oh, Master Copperfield, with what a pure affection do I love the ground my Agnes walks on!'⁴

'Never mind what you read just now, sir; I don't ask you what you read just now. You may read the Lord's Prayer backwards, if you like—and, perhaps, have done it before to-day. Turn to the paper. No, no, no, my friend; not to the top of the column; you know better than that; to the bottom, to the bottom. . . . Well? Have you found it?'⁵

The difference between the first quotation and the rest is apparent enough. Eustacia Vye speaks from the heart, while the other two do not.

¹ Forster, E. M., *op. cit.*, p. 68.

² Quiller-Couch, *op. cit.*, 100.

³ Hardy, Thomas, *The Return of the Native*, New York, Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 1954, p. 95.

⁴ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, p. 381.

⁵ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 127.

It has already been pointed out that "Dickensian" characters are those which can be expressed in a single sentence or in a few sentences. Uriah Heep is expressed in his favourite saying, "Oh, Master Copperfield! I'm a very umble person." Mr. Jaggers is always bullying and cross-examining any man who unfortunately has to talk with him, saying, ". . . now I'll ask you a question." Muir says as follows;

They continue to repeat things *as if* they were true. Perhaps these things were once true; but they have long since ceased to have their first fresh conviction and have become habitual. Everybody reiterates certain sentiments half mechanically in this way, just as everybody repeats certain gestures, once spontaneous and passionate. It is this accumulation of habits, dictated by their natures or imposed by convention, that makes every human being the potential object of humour.¹

"Dickensian" characters are preeminently this incarnation of habit. While Eustacia Vye speaks from the heart, and discovers the truth about herself, Heep or Jaggers speaks from his habitual self. They do not mean what they say at all. We should know well enough that Heep is a most villainous hypocrite even if Dickens did not make him commit a treacherous act. We should know well enough that Mr. Jaggers *pretends* to be unfeeling and has, in reality, a kind heart within himself. That is, "the facade suggests without further indication the real man which it appears to hide."²

The unmasking of these characters is, therefore, utterly unnecessary and quite displeasing, because they make "a public announcement of an open secret."³

'Oho! This is a conspiracy! . . . We understand each other, you (David) and me. There's no love between us. You were always a puppy with a proud stomach, from your first coming here; and you envy me my rise, do you? . . .'⁴

Mr. Jaggers nodded his head retrospectively two or three times, and actually drew a sigh. 'Pip,' said he, 'we won't talk about "poor dreams"; . . .'⁵

Dickens pulls off the masks; and after that his characters lose their *spirit*.

¹ Muir, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, pp. 747-8.

⁵ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 391.

Because the "Dickensian" character brings out, (before unmasking,) this permanent contrast between the habitual self and the real self underneath it, it acquires that "wonderful feeling of human depth," though it is so simple that it can be expressed in a few sentences. When the creator succeeds in making this contrast, "Dickensian" characters are no less remarkable as an imaginative creation than the characters which develop or change.

We need, however, to think further what makes Dickens succeed in producing this contrast. No doubt, "Oh, Master Copperfield! I'm a very umble person" brings Uriah Heep before us once he is known; but that saying has no power in itself to create Uriah Heep. It is only because Heep says or does ever so many other things in character with "I'm a very umble person" that he lives for us. By making the attributes perfectly and wonderfully consonant with the character, Dickens fixes the contrast between the habitual self and the real self.

Let us see, of Heep, what Dickens does to make this contrast. Heep always sets a trap for David, worms things out of him that he has no desire to tell—his personal affairs, his feeling to Agnes, or his misgivings about Mrs. Strong's virtue, and uses them against David's interests. Or Heep tries to have Mr. Wickfield "under his thumb"¹ and to marry Agnes. But what we should notice is that Dickens makes the contrast truly wonderful only when he shows *how* Heep does these things rather than *what* he does. We know that Heep is a detestable cunning villain only when he puts his hands between his great knobs of knees, and doubles himself up with soundless laughter, rather than when he hints a disgusting doubt of Mrs. Strong's virtue;² only when "he stirred his coffee round and round, he sipped it, he felt his chin softly with his grisly hand, he looked at the fire, he looked about the room, he gasped rather than smiled at me, he writhed and undulated about, in his deferential servility . . .,"³ rather than when he declared his shameless hope of marrying Agnes. He is unbearable because his

¹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, p. 379.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 607-9.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

hands are clammy like a fish or frog,¹ and “ he frequently ground the palms against each other as if to squeeze them dry and warm, besides often wiping them, in a stealthy way, on his pocket-handkerchief,”² or because his nostrils, “ which were thin and pointed, with sharp dints in them, had a singular and most uncomfortable way of expanding and contracting themselves.”³

These are distorted and even grotesque pictures. In the world we live in, appearances and colours are altogether more commonplace than these. Indeed, “ clammy ” hand “ like a fish,” nostrils which “ twinkled,”⁴ or “ cadaverous ”⁵ face “ with that tinge of red ”⁶ in the grain, “ which is sometimes to be observed in the skins of red-haired people ”⁷ are not the pictures which an ordinary man can ever draw. Yet, what unusual intensity and freshness they have! Though they give us a quite unreal world, that unreal world has within itself something strongly appealing to us—a kind of truth. It is these intensity and freshness that make the contrast successful and make, after all, Dickens’s characterization one of the greatest achievements in the art of English literature.

Where, then, do they come from?

2. Dickens’s Observation

In *David Copperfield* Dickens says as follows:

... if it should appear from anything I may set down in this narrative that I was a child of close observation, or that as a man I have a strong memory of my childhood, I undoubtedly lay claim to both of these characteristics.⁸

From this passage Dickens may be thought to describe himself as a man consciously noting down and observing. But it is a great mistake

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

to think so. His observation was the very opposite to that of the naturalistic observer or cataloguer. In this section we will examine his observation.

At the beginning of *David Copperfield*, Miss Betsey appears. She is seen, by David's mother in the parlour, coming up the garden, on the afternoon of the memorable Friday when David is to be born. She comes and looks in at the window of the parlour, instead of ringing the bell, "pressing the end of her nose against the glass to that extent that . . . it became perfectly flat and white in a moment."¹ This quotation has the same kind of intensity or vividness as "clammy" hand "like a frog." We will study this quotation and discover what it reveals of Dickens's observation.

When one presses the end of his nose against a glass, it really becomes flat and white, seen from the opposite side of the glass. An ordinary man, however, even if he dares to look in at the window of the house which he calls at for the first time, instead of ringing the bell, never *presses* his nose against a glass, because it is a too unmannerly act to do so. He only has the end of his nose *touch* the glass. Then it becomes *a little* flat and white. Moreover, if it becomes *a little* flat and white, when an adult sees a stranger behave so, he is first of all surprised at his unusually bad manners, or absorbed in thinking what kind of man he is, and has no time to notice and wonder at the flatness and whiteness of his nose.

But if the observer is a child, that alters the case. There are three remarks Dickens made of the child's observation.

. . . I think the memory of most of us can go farther back into such times than many of us suppose; just as I believe the power of observation in numbers of very young children to be quite wonderful for its closeness and accuracy.²

In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter.³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 57.

It would be difficult to overstate the intensity and accuracy of an intelligent child's observation. At that impressible time of life it must sometimes produce a fixed impression. If the fixed impression be of an object terrible to the child, it will be (for want of reasoning upon) inseparable from great fear. Force the child at such a time, be Spartan with it, send it into the dark against its will, and you had better murder it.¹

He says in these remarks that the intense awareness by the child of its world is based on its emotional relation to that world. In a sense, the observation of the adult is also based on his emotional relation to the object. But as "the child is small," it is utterly helpless to everything which threatens its world. Its emotions roused by this threatening thing are, therefore, stronger and deeper than those of the adult. Therefore the child is always scrutinizing for any sign of discord, anything liable to upset the fine balance of its fears and desires.

In this case, the child becomes far more tense than the adult with Miss Betsey's coming. It scrutinizes for any sign of discord about this lady. It fears that she will do any harm to it. But it lacks the intellectual composure to think over the interior of the object. Just as the adult has no time to notice the flatness and whiteness of her nose, so the child has no ability to think of her bad manners or of her character, putting itself at a little distance, that is, detaching itself from the object. The only thing it can do is to observe her, to recognize the flatness and whiteness of her nose. It sees them, and then tries to see through them. It tries to understand her only through seeing her.²

Look at the scene of the King's Bench Prison, in which David was sent up to Captain Hopkins's room to borrow a knife and fork:

Captain Hopkins lent me the knife and fork, with his compliments to Mr. Micawber. There was a very dirty lady in his little room, and two wan girls, his daughters, with shock heads of hair. I thought it was better to borrow Captain Hopkins's knife and fork, than Captain Hopkins's comb. The Captain himself was in the last extremity of shabbiness, with large whiskers, and an old, old brown greatcoat with no other coat below it. I saw his bed rolled up in a corner; and what plates and dishes and pots he had, on a shelf; and I divined (God knows

¹ Lindsay gives this remark as Dickens's. (Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 27.)

² In this sense what Bernard Shaw says of Chesney Wold is true. ". . . Dickens know all that really mattered about him. Trollope and Thackeray could see Chesney Wold, but Dickens could see through it." (*Ibid.*, p. 395.)

how) that though the two girls with the shock heads of hair were Captain Hopkins's children, the dirty lady was not married to Captain Hopkins. My timid station on his threshold was not occupied more than a couple of minutes at most; but I came down again with all this in my knowledge, as surely as the knife and fork were in my hand.¹

David did not know, in fact, anything about the relationship among the members of the Hopkins's family. He saw them in not more than a couple of minutes. There is no proof showing that his conclusion was right. A cool and objective observer would never say such a thing. Yet he is insisting that he saw through the adult world and its tricks and devices. It is this attitude that the defenseless little child assumes. It tries not to be deceived and to see through the object. It is the child's act of compensation for its intellectual deficiency and necessarily produces quivering sensitiveness to the various facets of external reality which have emotionally some connection with the child.

There are two similar examples which reveal such sensitiveness of the child. In *David Copperfield*, David in Salem House had to wear on his back a placard saying, "Take care of him. He bites," and he looked at the door in the play-ground where the boys had carved their names, and from the appearance of each name he seemed to know in just what tone of voice the boy would read out the placard.

There was one boy—a certain J. Steerforth—who cut his name very deep and very often, who, I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterwards pull my hair. There was another boy, one Tommy Traddles, who I dreaded would make game of it, and pretend to be dreadfully frightened of me. There was a third, George Demple, who I fancied would sing it.²

"The reason, of course, is the sound-associations of the words (Demple—'temple'; Traddles—probably 'skedaddle')."³ But how many people before David did notice the shape of the name as revelation of character? Such sensitiveness comes only from the child who suffered exquisitely from the placard and worried about it being found out by the boys who were, then, yet strangers to him. Also, Pip in *Great Expectations* declared:

¹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 165-6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³ Orwell, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

The shape of the letters on my father's (tombstone), gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, '*Also Georgiana Wife of the Above,*' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine . . . I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.¹

Notice that this strangely deep awareness was made by a lonely and neglected boy, Pip, who keenly hungers after parental love.

Now, turn back to the scene of Miss Betsey. As a result of this excess of sensitiveness to the exterior, the child sees Miss Betsey *press* her nose against the window, and also sees the end of her nose become *perfectly* flat and white.

So far we have examined an example of Dickens's description. We now understand that it is the product of the quivering sensitiveness resulting from the child's observation, in which, again, "detachment" can not exist. Though his description is acuteness itself, it has a kind of unreasonableness in its trying to reveal the interior only from the exterior. Distortion and grotesqueness on the one hand, intensity and freshness on the other,—all these effects arise from that unreasonableness. Here we find the answer to the question put at the end of section 1. From this special quality of Dickens's description—"childishness"—come the intensity and freshness which make "Dickensian" characters one of the greatest achievements in the art of English literature.

Conclusion

In Dickens, who was deeply and strongly dominated by his childhood emotions throughout his life, there was "childishness" which means after all, incapacity for "being detached from the object." So far as we have studied his humanitarianism and characterization, we may conclude now that "childishness" was the basis of his literature.

¹ Dickens, *Great Expectations*, p. 1.

This domination of "childishness" means that Dickens as an instinctive or, let us say, unconscious artist always overcame Dickens as a rational or conscious artist. As a writer conscious of what he wrote, he was quite moderate, commonplace, or rather shallow. Speaking of his humanitarianism, it was, when viewed from the point of its ideas, full of limitations, and was platitude itself. Also of his characterization, he may be justly accused of the many and grave faults which the creators of "round characters" never allow themselves to commit.

It was the element, in his literature, of which Dickens was unconscious himself, that made his literature unique and, at any rate, gigantic. Even those who coolly criticize his view of society must certainly be overwhelmed by the intense sincerity that naturally gushed out from his humanitarianism. As to his characterization, the working of this element, that is, the special quality of his description, was still more remarkable, and created, almost alone, "the indestructible residue in Dickens's art that holds us absorbedly attentive, and makes us pull through much that in any other author would impel instant rejection."¹

It should also be added that the fields treated in this essay, his humanitarianism and characterization, were not isolated from each other. To study the relation between these two would be interesting. Here, however, suffice it to say that each unconsciously created element in the both fields, when combined together, shows one of the best aspects of Dickens's literature. When that intense sincerity in his humanitarianism drove him to his characterization, that is, when he created his characters, for instance in the case of Uriah Heep, from his vehement anger with the hypocrisy and the villainy, or, in the case of Mr. Jaggers, from his hatred toward the bourgeois world where success in business could be won only at the expense of "everything nobly generous, elevating, sympathetic and humane,"² his characters won their true profundity. Or it is more proper to say that, through those unusual yet appealing effects of his characterization, based on his special ob-

¹ Symons, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

² T. A. Jackson uses these words. (Johnson, *op. cit.*, 990.)

servation, the intense sincerity in his humanitarianism was most deeply impressed upon the readers' minds.

In the end, it must be frankly admitted that although Dickens as an unconscious artist thus acquired such brilliant achievements, yet, as a novelist, it was fatal that Dickens as a conscious artist was a failure. "Had he lived in another age, Dickens might have done much more; or he might, perhaps, not have been a novelist at all, but another kind of artist."¹

¹ Symons, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

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