

T H E S I S

on

Representative Writers of the Victorian Period.

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

O R E G O N A G R I C U L T U R A L C O L L E G E

for the degree of

Bachelor of Science

by

Inay Cratt

Approved *Redacted for Privacy*

R

Privacy

Department of

English

REPRESENTATIVE WRITERS OF THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.

"Some there are,
By their good works exalted, lofty minds
And meditative, authors of delight
And happiness, which to the end of time
Will live, and spread, and kindle."

Wordsworth.

CHARLES DICKENS. 1812-1870.

Of the early life of Charles Dickens not much can be told. We know, however, that he was the second of eight children, the father of whom was a clerk in the Navy Pay-office, first in Portsmouth, later in London. Adversities were common during his earlier years, one of the chief being the imprisonment of his father for debt. As a boy he worked in a blacking factory; later he became a stenographer and reporter. No doubt much of the charm of Dickens is due to the experience gained in these early struggles.

Dickens refused to make the particulars of these years of hardship public, saying he kept them to himself, *David Copperfield*, which Mr. Taine regards as his best book, seems to be a confession, but just where truth verges into Dickens' opulent imagination, no one knows.

It has been said that the man of genius is not far removed from the lunatic. "The same faculty leads us to glory or throws us into a cell of a lunatic asylum." The imagination of Dickens is similar to that of the monomaniac. His ability to handle an idea, clothe it in a hundred forms, and leave its lasting impression upon the brain of the reader, is astounding.

This faculty was indeed so active that Dickens could never quite free himself from the children of his brain. Often in walking with him, his friends were astonished and not a little amused to hear him utter such things as: "Mr. Micawber is coming, let us turn down this alley to get out of his way."

Even though Dickens is at his best as a humorist, and his world is peopled with grotesque characters for the most part, still we find many instances where he rises above the purely comic to the noble and beautiful. One very striking instance of this is the famous tempest scene in David Copperfield. Nothing could be more beautiful than Ham giving up his life in the attempt to save that of his enemy, James Steerforth. Again in the death of little Paul Dombey, while we are held by the pathos of the scene, we cannot but wonder at, and admire, the way in which the author depicts the wandering of the childish mind. Dickens was an actor of no mean ability, and traveled about giving readings from his books, even coming to America for that purpose. His ha-

bits as a speaker were different from those of most men. No matter what the nature of the speech, he never wrote it down, but would take a walk into the country. When he returned he was fully prepared for the work.

The highest aim of every writer should be to better the condition of his fellow men. Webster said that Dickens had done more in the betterment of the British poor than all the statesmen England had sent to Parliament. Many a prison, hospital and school owes its elevation to the pen of Charles Dickens. A writer has said that no matter how many biographies of his life may be written, the half can hardly be told of the good he has accomplished.

Tale of Two Cities.

Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities" is a story of the great political disturbance in France--the French Revolution. Even though the graphic descriptions of the horrible conditions seem incredible to us, by reading the history of the time we find them to be true. The "Tale of Two Cities" is utterly unlike any other production of Dickens, still we find his dominating humor and grotesqueness cropping out in such characters as Mr. Cruncher with his "flopping wife," also in Miss Fress, Mrs. Defarge, and her emotional ally "The Vengeance." Eliminating these characters which are simply introduced to fill up space or excite laughter, the

main plot is as follows: Dr. Manette, for years a prisoner at the Bastille was released and taken to England by his daughter and an old friend, an employee of an English banking concern.

A young Frenchman, Charles Darnay, who proved a friend to the girl and her father, who was somewhat deranged by his long imprisonment, was charged by the English government as being a spy. Sidney Carton, a young intemperate lawyer, brought about his acquittal.

Time passed on and Sidney and Charles who were counterparts, became rivals for the love of Lucie Manette. The latter proved the successful suitor and soon became her husband. A little girl was born to them and by the time she reached her sixth birthday, affairs had reached a crisis in France.

About this time Charles was called to France to gain the release of a friend from the Bastille--now used by the rebels. He left England, not allowing his wife to know of his intention until after his departure.

Upon reaching Paris he was at once imprisoned, it being a crime for an emigrant to return.

Dr. Manette and the wife and child were soon in Paris, where the Doctor gained great influence through his kindness, and the fact of his being an innocent prisoner in the Bastille for so many years. He gained Charles' release but no sooner was this brought about than he was again taken, this time charged with a greater crime--that

of being a nobleman.

In the old cell formerly occupied by Dr. Manette, had been found a manuscript written by him, and proving Charles Darnay to be Evermonde, the son of the man who had caused his imprisonment. The doctor was aware of the identity of Evermonde from the time of his daughter's marriage, but had promised Charles to keep it secret.

After the unavailing attempts of his friends to secure his release, Sidney Carton appeared. He gained admittance to the prisoner's cell on the night before he was to die, and after drugging him changed clothes with him and had the real prisoner removed, the guards believing him to be Carton, overcome by the last interview with his friend.

Arrangements had previously been made, and before the prisoner regained consciousness, he, with his family and Dr. Manette were on their way to England.

The next day Sidney Carton paid the penalty at the hands of that "sharp female called La Guillotine."

GEORGE ELIOT 1819-1880.

Mary Ann Evans, better known by her nom de plume, George Eliot, was born in a rural district of Warwickshire, Nov. 28, 1819.

It was probably due to this environment that

there are so many realistic scenes and characters in her books. Being a careful student of life, she drew many of her best characters from these well known friends of early youth.

She tells us that "Silas Marner" was suggested to her by seeing a weaver with a bag on his back.

The death of her mother caused her to leave school at the age of sixteen. Though strong in intellect, George Eliot was strangely susceptible to influence. It was through the power of some friends that she lost her faith in Christianity as of divine origin.

After her father's death in 1849, she traveled two years on the continent and then became assistant editor of the "Westminster Review."

While in this position she came in touch with many of the famous literary lights of the period. Among these literary people she met George Henry Lewes. They became deeply attached but as Lewes' wife was still alive marriage was impossible. This however, did not prevent the union, for which George Eliot is severely censured. It was through Lewes' influence that she changed from essayist and translator and devoted her time to that which makes her famous- the novel.

In 1873, Mr. Lewes died and two years later she married John Walter Cross, a London banker, her junior by twenty years. Two years later she died.

George Eliot is among the best of English nov-

elistic. Her distinctive power rests in her ability to look into the very souls of her characters and depict what she sees there.

Although "Middlemarch" is Eliot's greatest work, her most perfect work is "Silas Marner."

The dialogue form makes it interesting to all classes of people. The moral "a little child shall lead them" is beautifully shown in the life of little Eppie, as she slowly brings Silas back to his abandoned faith in God.

SILAS MARNER.

For fifteen years, the weaver, Silas Marner, had lived in the village^{of} Raveloe.

Their efforts at friendliness being coldly received, his neighbors soon left him to lead a quiet hermit life, weaving for the house wives of Raveloe.

Living alone and working continually, day after day, he came to love the gold that his toil won him.

This love of the golden guinea grew and Silas became a veritable miser, hiding his money away under a loose brick in the fireplace.

This avoidance of his fellow men had been due to a wrong done him before coming to Raveloe.

Two of the most influential families in the neighborhood of Raveloe were those of Squire Cass and

Mr. Lammeter. The heads of both families were desirous of the union of the Squire's eldest son, Godfrey, and Nancy Lammeter.

Godfrey had secretly married a bar-maid in a neighboring village, and was the father of a little girl. The wife, an opium fiend, had threatened to disclose the marriage to the Squire if Godfrey refused to do so. Godfrey's brother, Dunstan, a wild reckless fellow, learned the secret and used it as a means of wresting money from his brother. Thus two hundred pounds, paid to Godfrey by one of the Squire's tenants had been delivered into the hands of Dunstan.

The Squire becoming anxious about the money bade Godfrey ask for it. To get the money Godfrey was forced to allow Dunstan to sell his best horse.

Before delivering the horse into its new owner's hands Dunstan carelessly staked it. Returning home that night he robbed Silas Warrner and disappeared.

A few evenings later, on Christmas Eve, there was a ball at the Squires. While Godfrey was packing in the smiles of Nancy, his wife was making her way through the snow to him. Before reaching her destination, her old habit overcame her and she fell by the roadside where she soon froze to death. The little girl found her way to Warrner's cottage, which became her future home.

Godfrey, knowing his secret to be buried with his dead wife married Nancy.

Years passed, Silas' little ward had grown to womanhood. One day the old stone pit near the weavers cottage was drained and the bones of Dunstan Cass with the stolen gold of Silas were found.

Godfrey, desirous of making some reparation for his folly, told his wife of the marriage, and they endeavored to win Eppie, but it was too late. She refused to leave Silas and soon married her lover, a humble workman.

ALFRED TENNYSON. 1809-1892.

Alfred Tennyson was born Aug. 6, 1809, in the small village of Somersby, Lincolnshire. Somersby lies in the midst of softly sloping hills and rich valleys. Growing up amid such surroundings, and being of a shy, retiring nature, small wonder that so many of Tennyson's poems breathe forth such sweetness and simplicity. In 1838 Tennyson entered Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he came in close touch with some of the best minds in England. It was also here that the tie of friendship was formed with Arthur Hallam. The story of that friendship is a strangely beautiful one. It was the death of this companion, dearer than a brother, that caused Tennyson to write his "In Memoriam." As to the merits of this

poem, opinion is divided; some declare it incomparable while others think that the subject was not suited to the temperament of the author, and consequently that it is "cold, monotonous and too prettily arranged."

Tennyson's first publication was severely criticised. For years the public did not hear from him, but his books had been steadily gaining favor with the public, and when he made his second publication in 1832, he was at once pronounced the greatest poet of the day.

The Satanic and sentimental school had passed away and the new poet seemed exquisite. It is true that he used their ideas, but so purged and purified had they become in the mind of their new master as to be almost unrecognised. People were first attracted to Tennyson by his portraits of Keats. Keats strove for beauty only, in Tennyson we find that, but we also find something deeper, we find soul.

During the time he was giving the world his richest gems of thought, Tennyson was living a life of seclusion, away from the prying eyes of tourists, away from the cares and duties of the social world. In 1850 he was made poet Laureate. It was also during this year that he married Miss Emily Sellwood and published "In Memoriam."

From 1850 to the time of his death, Tennyson lived on the Isle of Wight. Even though quite advanced

in years, he now turned all his powers towards conquering two new fields of poetry, the Epic and The Drama. In the former we have his views of human progress in the Idylls of the King. While not strictly epic in form, it possesses at least the essentials of the epic.

LANCELOT and ELAINE.

This is the story of the love of Elaine, the fair maid of Astalot.

Arthur, before he became king had found two skeletons in a lonely glen, on the skull of one was a crown, decked with precious diamonds,

After he became king, he decreed that each year there should be a joust among his knights, the victor of which should receive one of the nine diamonds as a reward. During each of the eight years following, Lancelot had come off victorious.

The day for the last jouse came, but Lancelot, wishing to remain with the queen, excused himself by saying that an old wound kept him from entering the contest. Being urged by the queen to go, he set out, but lost his way and came to the Castle of Astolat, the home of Elaine.

He now decided ^{to} ~~in~~ fight in disguise, so exchanged his shield for that of one of the lords of the castle. He was also induced by Lady Elaine to wear her favor in the encounter, a proceeding never before tried

by this knight.

His own shield being left with Elaine, who had in short time learned to love the stranger with her whole heart, he set out fro the tilt accompanied by her brother.

He came out victorious in the contest, though wounded almost to death. Many believed him to be Lancelot, but at the close of the joust he was not present to receive the prize. He had been taken away by the young lord to the home of a hermit.

The king sent out one of his knights to carry the reward to the victor but upon reaching the castle of Astolat he left the prize with Elaine, who promised to deliver it into the hands of Lancelot.

Elaine found Lancelot and nursed him back to health. Knowing he could not return her love he spoke of the matter to her father, who advised him to depart without even bidding her adieu. The father and brothers then tried to poison her love ty telling of Lancelot's relations with the queen.

Elaine soon died, but before the end came, she bade her father prepare a barge draped in black, upon which her dead form was to be placed, that she might "go in state to court, to meet the queen."

Her desires were carried out , and Elaine beautiful even in death, floated away to meet her queen and him for love of whom her life had gone out, Lancelot.