CHAPTER V

SOCIAL PANORAMA

CHAUCER, COBBETT, DICKENS, AND SHAW

Chesterton's works on Chaucer, Cobbett, Dickens and Shaw belong to a distinct category of literary criticism. Chesterton tends to value the social implications of their work in the light of his own social philosophy. What may be termed as literary criticism in these works takes a second place to the evaluation of their sociological implications. The works are an essential part of Chesterton's mental make-up and illuminate his mode of thinking.

Chaucer was a social critic. He represented everyone, right from the prince to the miller. He introduced various types of people, religious preachers, workers and men from different walks of life.

Dickens represented the lower classes and the upper classes. Shaw was really modern. He was a social commentator. He was a Fabian Socialist.

Cobbett was liberal in his approach. For the first time criticism of several compromises came into existence. Dickens' characters are from every stratum of society.
Shaw was quite modern in his thought. He believed in modern movement on Marxist lines. His thought was based in a theory of class struggle in contrast to Cobett's theory of class co-operation. Shaw discussed the problems of lower classes versus the upper classes.

Shaw was an intellectual who was beyond Cobbett's narrow national considerations. Cobbett was a nationalist. Shaw was beyond nations, and thought of liberty of the working classes and thought of their welfare in terms of the socialistic pattern. His occasional criticism of English life was based on that principle. Chesterton stood for the harmony of the classes, and not for class conflict. He was all in favour of Cobbett, not Shaw. Shaw believed in a class-oriented utilitarian conflict. In all these four books Chesterton's intention is self-evident regarding social harmony as necessary for happy life. His full answers are best revealed in these books. Chesterton as a social critic predominates in those works and his role as a pure critic takes a secondary place.

**CHANCER:**

Chaucer is one of the greatest poets of English language. He is known as the inventor of form and language in English poetry. G.K.Chesterton says:
"... Men say the obvious things about him; they call him the Father of English Poetry, but only in the sense in which the same title has been given to an obscure Anglo-Saxon like Caedmon."

Chesterton is more deeply interested in Chaucer's ability to describe the English social panorama. Chaucer is a keen and impassioned observer of life and nature. His experiences were vast and show a mixture of the sad and the gay.

He is a master of the tragic spirit as well as the comic. In his works we find varieties of characters, worlds and moods. We find courtiers, lawyers, poets, pilgrims, merchants, workers, and peasants, each with his own personal story of reveal.

Chesterton compares Chaucer with Shakespeare and Milton. Perhaps the greatness of Chaucer is more evident than that of Shakespeare and Milton. Shakespeare and Milton were great creators, but Chaucer was an inventor. He laid the foundations of English poetry as well as novel.

Before Chaucer English language had hardly any position of importance. French language was the lingua franca of England. It was to the credit of Chaucer that for the first time English became a vehicle of literary expression.

"There was never a man who was more of a Maker than Chaucer. He made a national language; he came very near to making a nation. At least without him it would probably never have been either so fine a language or so great a nation. Shakespeare and Milton were the greatest sons of their country; but Chaucer was the Father of his country, rather in the style of George Washington. And apart from that, he made something that has altered all Europe more than the Newspaper: the Novel." 2

Further Chesterton says that critics have lost their sense of proportion in evaluating Chaucer. He is not unhappy that Shakespeare has been praised greatly, but he is pained at the injustice done to Chaucer.

"But it is certain that, while some of them have (if it were possible) overrated the greatness of Shakespeare, most of them have unaccountably underrated the greatness of Chaucer." 3

Chesterton further feels that Chaucer's work is marked by the agility of mind, the lightness of heart, and above all seriousness of purpose.

"Chaucer was great in the sense in which Matthew Arnold connected greatness with what he called 'high seriousness' and the grand style." 4

Critics have frowned upon Chaucer for having borrowed his sources from the French and Latin writers. But according to Chesterton, great writers like Shakespeare

2. Chesterton, G.K., Chaucer, p.15.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p.15.
have also borrowed. In fact, there is nothing like 'newness' in the subject matter; but the art of handling a theme matters most.

"If Chaucer borrowed from Boccaccio and other writers, Shakespeare borrowed from anybody or anything, and often from the same French or Italian sources as his forerunner." 5

Chaucer has dealt with universal themes which are true for all times and in all countries. He has given a realistic panorama of England in his poetry. In dealing with truth, Chaucer is second to none. He has expressed truth with clear vision and impassioned tone.

Chesterton has paid glorious tribute to Chaucer for his art and artifice and delineation of beauty in his poetry. And above all, his inclusion of morality in his works is a thing of the greatest interest to G.K.Chesterton.

"...A great poet as such, deals with eternal things; and it would indeed be a filthy notion to suppose that the present industrial and economic system is an eternal thing. Nor, on the other hand, should the idea of the poet dealing with things more permanent than politics be confounded with the dirty talk of the nineties, about the poet being indifferent to morals. Morals are eternal things, though the particular political immorality of the moment is not eternal." 6

5. Ibid., P.18.
6. Ibid., pp.35-36.
G.K. Chesterton finds four qualities in Chaucer. The first is his being an Englishman. Perhaps for the first time Englishmen thought of their own glory after the victory of Edward III. And it is to the credit of Chaucer that he brought French vigour and beauty to English poetry.

The next phase of his character is that he was a staunch Catholic when the very Catholic creed was on its last legs.

There is a seed of chivalry in his poetry, the most popular concept of his time. And perhaps he belonged to the family of businessmen which is known as bourgeois. Whatever the case, Chaucer has not depicted the labouring classes with respect and chivalry.

"Finally, Chaucer was nonetheless bourgeois, as our dear comrades say, in the sense that he himself was born and bred of burghers, of tradesmen working under the old Guild system, also already rather too grand for its own good, but fresher and stronger than the fading feudal system. His figure bestrides the gap between these two last systems. It is as if he had the Trade Guild for a mother and the Order of Knighthood for a father." 7

By reading his works, one gets a feeling that he was a fat man and a good sleeper. It is not right to think that he could not mix with his neighbours (That

7. Ibid., p.39.
is rather true because he had a great passion for books). But he could understand human beings. According to G.K. Chesterton, Chaucer was very secretive and confidential too about his public service. He was a great diplomat but it was not an open diplomacy. He is known as a great philosopher, a moralist and great humorist, but nowhere there is a mention about the manner in which he carried out his work with the prince of France and the businessmen of Italy. Though he was gay and frank, nowhere is mentioned the secret service that he was entrusted with. Chaucer was not a simple man, rather a complex person, which fact makes him difficult to understand.

"...Chaucer has told us that he was fat, that he was reluctant to get out of bed, that he was content on occasion to look very much of a fool, that he was thought to neglect his neighbours for his craze for books; and many other things that are quite private and confidential as far as they go. But he has told us nothing of what was really private and confidential; and that was his work in the public service. He was practically by profession a diplomatist; and his diplomacy was a very secret diplomacy. In all his maze of multitudinous words, in all his wandering paths of narrative and meditation, in all the thousand things that he touches on as a poet, a philosopher, a moralist and a humorist, he has not left one single word, I think, which throws any light on those political missions which the King his master trusted him to conduct with the princes of France or the great merchants of Italy." 8

8. Ibid., pp.94-95.
The plan of pilgrimage to weave stories seems to be a completely original idea of Chaucer. The shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury has been the most popular place of pilgrimage in England ever time immemorial. Chaucer thought of a plan. There were in all thirty travellers including Chaucer who were on a pilgrimage from the Tabard Inn in Southwark to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. Each pilgrim was supposed to tell two stories while going and two while coming back. In all 120 stories were to be narrated. But unfortunately only twenty-four stories were completed. The people included are from the different strata of society particularly from the medieval period. The group included knight, squire, lawyer, doctor, merchant, miller, cook, burgesses, ploughman, beggar, priests, parson, and clerks of Oxford.

Chaucer has depicted them with great interest and keen observation. He brings enormous fund of human feelings and varied experiences while depicting these characters. Chaucer's taste for mediaeval traditions and habits are obvious. By a careful study of his characters, it appears that he was a feudal man who could not have correct observations of labouring class. His love for romance makes his works more readable and attractive.
Chaucer has made proper use of the medieval tradition of poetry.

This love of romance and chivalry has been a perennial source of pleasure not only at the time of Chaucer but later on also. G.K. Chesterton observes that the romance of chivalry is the core of Christianity.

"The moral is obvious enough; that what we call the length and even the monotony of medieval literature is a human pleasure and a human need in certain moods and moments of mankind. It may like an infinite inviting sea in the background of the fourteenth century. It returned like a refreshing and copious flood to the dry and dusty respectability of the nineteenth century." 9

The pilgrims of Canterbury were not on just a tour; nor for just amusement. It was a pilgrimage. There was serious purpose behind it. Chaucer was as devout a Christian as Bunyan and the pilgrims of Chaucer can be compared with the pilgrim of Bunyan.

"But there is also a serious element in the idea of the Canterbury Pilgrimage which makes the Pilgrims' Way something more than merely the open road. So far as having a definite purpose is concerned, the Pilgrim of Chaucer is as genuine as the Pilgrim of Bunyan." 10

G.K. Chesterton pays compliments to Chaucer for his Canterbury Tales. Even though the book is incomplete,

9. Ibid., p.156.
10. Ibid., p.161.
it shows consummate skill and art. This is the ideal and perfect work of Chaucer. It has new style and new thought. He appears as a great architect of the Gothic Cathedral.

"Chaucer died and left his last great work unfinished; his most perfect achievement still imperfect. Though he lived a long and busy life, he, more than any other great writer, died young. He had only come to the beginning when he came to the end, ... But the Canterbury Tales, the last unfinished work of Chaucer, is in quite another sense unfinished and finished. It is not only a new scheme, but a new style. It is not only a new style, but potentially a new school. It is as if he had been an architect, who through a long and successful life had planned out the round arches of the Romanesque and the squat pillars of the Norman churches, and then, almost on his deathbed, had dreamed of and designed the first Gothic cathedral. For indeed The Canterbury Tales do remain rather like a huge, hollow, unfinished Gothic cathedral with some of the niches empty and some filled with statues, and some part of the large plan traced only in lines upon the ground." 11

The consummate art of Chaucer's narrative can be seen in The Canterbury Tales. The 'how' is better than 'what', which proved later on a great inspiration to his successors.

"Just as in such a case, the arches would stand up more strongly than the statues, or the walls be made first and more firmly than the ornament, so in Chaucer's work the frame work is finer than the stories which correspond to the statues. The prolonged comedy which we call the Prologue, though it includes many interludes and something like an epilogue, is made of much stronger material than

11. Ibid., pp.163-64.
the tales which it carries; the narrative is quite superior to the narratives."

Chesterton takes strong objection to the statement that Chaucer wrote 'broken English'. On the contrary, he was a perfect craftsman, who knew the weight of words and their appropriate places where they could be used.

In fact Chaucer was a voracious reader. The influences of Greek, Latin and French are quite conspicuous in his works. Ovid and Dante were his favourites. The aesthetic sense of French poetry is always seen in his writings. Chaucer makes his stories attractive to his readers.

"I leave it to the most modern critic to decide which sounds like English and which like Pidgin English. I have pointed out that the poet was not in fact infantile or immature in any contemptible connotation of the words; but in many ways, an experienced and even a polished person. He was an artist who picked perfect words to produce his exact effect; he was a diplomatist who was probably himself picked out for his power of picking his words tactfully and persuasively; he was a philosopher who drew theoretical distinctions, along the lines of contemporary thought, with almost the delicacy of a theologian; he was a well-read man, who could collect stories of all shapes and colours from the ends of the earth; whose fancy could follow the maze mythology of Ovid, and whose intellectual imagination could measure the starry stature of Dante."

12. Ibid., p.164.
"Most modern people cannot really do this; they have read too many novels. They have forgotten the very verbal meaning, by which novels once meant news. They have lost the positive pleasure in a double fashion; partly because they have been bewildered by too many plots; partly because they have been even more bewildered by the newer sort of novels, which have not got any plots". 13

By and large, people charge Chaucer, Shakespeare and others of having borrowed plots from different sources. But G.K.Chesterton feels that partly the age was responsible, and partly this was justifiable because Chaucer showed originality in the building up of those plots. The plots are rendered original in their mode of perception. When one reads the different Tales, one finds the perfection of Chaucer's skill as a storyteller. The art of narrative reaches its consummation in the hands of Chaucer. The age was very much for plots and the plots were limited; hence he had no other choice. Besides this, complete novelty is an impossibility in the field of literature. The genius of the author consists in creating a new what skeleton plots he received in the tradition.

"Now when we talk of Chaucer, or for that matter of Shakespeare and many others, as borrowing plots, or copying plots, or repeating plots, we must always remember that the age was really simpler in the sense that there were fewer plots; and that a plot was a very precious thing. It was really

13. Ibid., pp.166-37.
prized, unlike many other precious things. It was really prized because it had a point, and people were normal enough in their nervous system to start at the prick of the point; instead of having their dead minds punctured all over with old pricks like the diseased arm of a drug-fiend. A mere anecdote was thought worthy of careful presentation, as a relic was worthy of a casket of jewels. The mediaeval man spent or wasted, music and ornament and developed detail upon a pointed story; just as the more subtle modern novelist wastes them upon a pointless story. The point to seize is that the people involved were really so far simple, or (as I should say) so far receptive, as to regard a mere story as something rich and rare; something that was a gift; something that was a good in itself. Most of the Canterbury Tales, and especially the first and most finished of them, are good in themselves. I mean they are good even apart from the way in which this particular man of genius presented them. We may say, if we like, that Chaucer's stories are excellent, only they are not Chaucer's. But we must realize that Chaucer thought they were excellent, and enjoyed them as much as if he had invented them. We must not leave out the love of mere naked narrative in the men of medieval times. Every one knows, for instance, the outline of the Knight's Tale; how two friends quarrelled for the same lady-love and were condemned to settle it by combat; how one Knight prayed to Mars to give him the victory, but the other Knight prayed to Venus to give him the lady. It is a good story; it would make a good play; if a play were still tilling with a plot, everybody knows, I suppose, the plot of the Pardoner's Tale, which is a plot in the precise sense; of how three thieves went to find death to slay him, and found only a heap of gold; and how one was sent to fetch food and wine, which he poisoned, while the others plotted to stab him and did so; so that they all found death on their heap of gold. That is a good story, and contains a grim crescendo of dramatic action. This element of mere pleasure in narrative must be allowed for, in all accounts of the atmosphere of the age." 14

The narrative poet has the greatest advantage of using his dramatic skill even though he borrows his fable from other resources. Chaucer is unequalled in this respect. He has a galaxy of characters with diverse designs. For each character a different type of plot has been picked up by Chaucer. But unlike Shaw, Chaucer never wrote long prefaces to justify his stand about a particular character. Chaucer and Shakespeare both have created life-like characters. They have borrowed resources from anywhere and everywhere, but the finishing touches are theirs. They do not impose their views on any character. Even the plots show the complete craftsmanship of these two authors (Shakespeare's and Chaucer's). The plots may be French or Italian but the way they have been used shows the mastery of each man's art. This point of view has been very emphatically examined by G. Chesterton about the two great authors of English language.

"Nevertheless, there is another side; and an aspect in which the pictures are extremely picturesque. It is a common place of the critics that the actual stock of stories, which fill up the framework of The Canterbury Tales, is a borrowed stock from all sorts of resources, like the plots of the plays of Shakespeare. But the narrative poet had at least one opportunity of showing dramatic talent which was denied to the dramatist. Shakespeare did not have to offer each of his comedies as the creation of one of his characters. We only know that Hamlet liked a particular play about Necuba and that Theseus could put up with a particular play about Pyramus and Thisbe. We are unilluminated touching the theatrical tastes of King Lear or Macbeth. But Chaucer had a collection of characters almost as diverse in dignity or
indignity, and had to select a story for each. The stories are chosen with admirable art; with much more aptitude than some speeches in some dramas."

The Canterbury Tales, according to G.K. Chesterton, is the first work in the history of English literature which lays the foundation of novel form. Chaucer can be called an inventor of the novel - the novel of character. The pilgrims reveal good many things about themselves. They do not simply narrate the stories. Homer also has a strong sense of characterisation. But he aims at the climax of the story. Chaucer is entirely different from both Homer and Virgil. Chaucer's pilgrims throw light on 'companionship'. Chaucer never insists on the crisis of the story.

"If, then, we regard the stories in a dramatic light, as connected with the characters and quarrels of the story tellers, we can stretch our minds to take in a general conception of the work which Chaucer was doing, whether he knew he was doing it or not. The whole work takes on the character of a Novel, the first true Novel in history! In it the fundamental logic of most previous storytelling is already reversed." 16

The genius of Chaucer for the character depiction has no precedent. There was no model before him. It was all done up by himself. The vividness of characters may be slightly different in nature because they belong

15. Ibid., p.169.
16. Ibid., p.171.
to the medieval period. But he has given finishing touches to characters which feature could be an eye-opener to his successors. While concluding remarks on *The Canterbury Tales*, G.K. Chesterton wonders how the men of varied standards, different views and tastes, could come together in the tavern. What was their common ground? He gives the answer himself. Medieval people believed in the efficacy of miracles. They had common religious beliefs, and those provided the common ground for their coming together. The security which belief in God made the pilgrims also brought them together. This may appear odd to the modern novelist and the modern reader, but to the medieval people, it was as real as life itself.

"The truth is that the broad religion creates the narrow clique. It is what is called the religion of dogmas, that is of facts (or alleged facts), that creates a broader brotherhood and brings men of all kinds together.

"...A religion of miracles turned all this crowd of incongruous people into one company. A religion of moods would never have brought them together at the tavern, far less sent them trotting laboriously to the tomb." 17

G.K. Chesterton starts thinking about the fascination modern Englishmen have with the theory of evolution. Generally, the Englishman has been a puritan in his

17. Ibid., pp.179 and 181.
religious habits. For Englishmen, Dickens was the most popular novelist and then Disraeli, a great statesman. Englishmen seem to have forgotten their ideals of the medieval Christianity which was the meeting ground for the entire Europe.

"We have heard much of late of something called Emergent Evolution; a phrase which, like many scientific phrases, we may find rather useful so long as we do not use it scientifically. Evolution as explanation, as an ultimate philosophy of the cause of living things, is still faced with the problem of producing rabbits out of an empty hat; a process commonly involving some hint of design. But evolution, and especially emergence, as a convenient and compact description of a sort of relative growth we can all see for ourselves, is very useful in many connexions, and especially in connexion with the problem of England in the later Middle Ages. The Englishman, as a national figure now fully nationalized, stands in the modern world for certain associations or impressions, true or false, but anyhow fairly familiar. We could hardly say simply that, in Chaucer's time, the Englishman was non-existent. We can say that the Englishman was emergent. But it is necessary to state more exactly the stage of his emergence, and the true proportions in which he was like and unlike ourselves." 18

Victorian critics started thinking about Chaucer's England, it was mostly in terms of the dominant influence of French over the English. French traditions and ethics, obsessed their reactions. It is true that in Chaucer's time the kings of both the nations thought of making one kingdom. But to Chesterton, the basis of unity was Christianity which was a common ground for both the nations.

18. Ibid., p.186.
But Chaucer remained an old-fashioned Englishman, with the Bible and its traditions. His mind was pre-occupied with the stupendous problems of the religious kind. The problems have now disappeared from England.

".....Geoffrey Chaucer no more regarded himself as John Bull than a prehistoric Red Indian regarded himself as a Regular Guy. He no more prided himself on being a plain blunt Englishman, with a Bible under one arm and a business ledger under the other, than a Cossack of the twelfth century prided himself on being a Communist of the twentieth. It was an utterly different world, the old world of Christendom which had once been the Christian Roman Empire; a world in which the local loyalties were still feudal; the larger loyalties still often imperial; and the ultimate loyalty entirely religious and long centred in Rome. Nine-tenths of the mind of a man like Chaucer were busy with things that have entirely vanished from the world, as seen by an English patriot to-day." 19

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer has not only depicted the image of a gentleman but an image of a lady also. Her table manners, her kind-heartedness, her feelings for animals - all these and hundreds of other things which are characteristics of a modern lady are anticipated in Chaucer's work. Due importance is given to a lady in his work. She is in no way inferior to men. The dialogues of the Princess are more logical than those of a modern liberated woman. Chaucer as a great poet, humanist and social reformer has given equal

status in his works to women. They are according to Chaucer, as important as men.

"I do not think it fanciful to find in Chaucer's work, not only the first faint outline of the English Gentleman, but also the first faint outline of the English Lady. There is no doubt that the Prioress in the Canterbury Tales is a Lady; but she seems to me to be an exceedingly English Lady. The considerable social importance of her little dogs would alone strike the special note. "She was a spinster with exactly the right amount of sentiment; as exhibited in the motto on her brooch or clasp. She was particular about manners at table. She did not like to see a mouse caught in a trap. And indeed we may once more indulge our fancy, in finding one of these ancestral adumbrations; the suggestion of the whole temperamental tendency expressed in the special kind of kindness to animals so much valued by the English gentry today." 20

Chaucer was a great poet no doubt but he was not a rebel. He never went against tradition. People may call him a common man, a courtier, a normal man, but no one can call him a 'heretic' or an iconoclast. He was very sociable and felt extremely happy in the company of his friends. He can be called a 'clubbable' man. The charge of snobbery against him is impossible. Besides this, there is the British sense of humour in his work. He becomes very satirical when he wants. But he comes very near to Dickens when he makes fun of his knaves and fools.

20. Ibid., p.199.
"...But, with this step, he is already on the road to the Dickensian lunatic-asylum of laughter; because he is valuing his fools and knaves and almost wishing (as it were) to preserve them in spirits - in his spirits. In a hundred other ways his humour is English, and not least in this, that he often uses flippancy to avoid an argument and not to provoke it." 21

G.K. Chesterton says very emphatically that Chaucer was a staunch Catholic. His catholic faith is more obvious than that of Dante. His poems are self-testimony of his innocent faith in religion.

"For the rest, he was unquestionably and even passionately devoted to the particular parts of Catholicism that have been most condemned by Protestantism. He had a devotion to Our Lady perhaps greater than that of Dante; as great as that of St. Bernard in his great oration in Dante. The poem significantly called his ABC, as if it were the first elements of his childlike faith, contains language that goes almost beyond the doctrinal limit in attributing omnipotence and supremacy to Mary. In short, there is no reason for saying that Chaucer was a Lollard; but there is overwhelming reason for saying that he was not a Protestant." 22

Some critics have mistaken Chaucer for a reformer and a rebel. They think that he criticised vehemently both the 'Monk' and the 'Friar'. But it is not so. He criticised the Monk for not being totally a Monk. Chaucer made fun of friars because they were not religious. They worked something other than what they were

22. Ibid., p.252.
meant for. This point has been very much misunderstood by modern critics.

Some people read in him a hatred of this world. But he never despised the world. Undoubtedly he was deadly set against the money-mind attitude. Those who felt that opulence was the summa bonus of life were the subject of his vehement criticism. The spirituality of Christianity has been a basis of his appeal. Time and again he has reminded that.

"Chaucer did not hate the world; he did not undervalue it or despise it; he only distrusted it, as a mellowed and matured old gentleman might distrust a bridge made by larky little boys. His sense of the vanity of earthly fortune and success was the recognition of a fact; not the insurgent rise of a feeling. His Christianity warmed and deepened whatever in this was Stoic, may, whatever in this was Epicurean; but it is the whole point that his creed and culture had digested the dead philosophies; that is, brought them to life in a living organism. But his spiritual sanity showed itself most in this variety of emphasis or pressure; in being able to take at once his heathenism so lightly and his Christianity so weightily; in treating the gods and the grim fates as trifles, and the little relics and holy tokens as if they were larger things." 23

Chaucer was the most tolerant man. He was orthodox in the real sense of the term. The qualities of head and heart are both to be seen in him. He was charitable throughout his life.

"In any case, this attitude is directly connected with the reality of his religion. Chaucer was more unmistakably orthodox than Langland; not because Chaucer was more superficial, but because he was more fundamental." 24

Throughout his life, Chaucer wanted to adopt the middle course. He did not believe in being an extremist. He built up 'equilibrium', a sort of synthesis in his art. Throughout his works we find his partiality for tradition, which he tried to establish over a lifetime. His mind moved towards civil life, towards the salvation of frail humanity which cannot boast of perfection.

24. Ibid., p.275.
WILLIAM CORBETT

Cobbett was a journalist in the real sense of the term, and was always available for the cause of the destitutes. He vehemently attacked the oppressors of the poor. He is mainly known for his Political Register and the Rural Rides. His style is vigorous, forceful, lucid and eloquent. He used his skills against the exploiters of agricultural labourers, the landless peasants and the poor men of the country-side. It was his yearning to see England with its green scenery rather than with its industrial leap forward. That is why people thought he was going backwards rather than forward.

"These gifts were used to the utmost against fund holders, money lenders, landlords and title holders; all the powerful classes to whose interests, he believed, the agricultural labourer had been sacrificed. For whatever the cause he was urging at the moment all his politics was governed ultimately by one desire. "I wish" he wrote, "to see the poor men of England, what the poor men of England were when I was a boy". Most of the radicals looked forward; he looked back. He knew more about the agricultural labourer than any one of his time. He had just the gifts, confidence, shrewdness and enterprise which made many men of his class and type successful leaders in the industrial revolution, but he used those gifts as England's last peasant leader" 25

The Rural Rides display the sufferings and miseries of the poor, landless agricultural labourers, and their oppression and humiliation by money-lenders, army officers and rich landlords.

It also displays the candid, lucid, forceful and eloquent journalistic style of Cobbett. The essays are clear and plain accounts of his observations of the poor landless agricultural labourers.

"Rural Rides certainly Cobbett's most widely read works except for the Grammar, are difficult to describe. They are, in part, a plain account of what he saw in the English countryside of good farming and of bad, of rotten boroughs and the country houses of bankers, stock jobbers and successful army contractors, and above all of the misery and starvation of the common people. But they are far more than this. They abound in digressions, in racy snatches of autobiography, in topical political tirades and everywhere in abundant outflowings of Cobbett's own forceful and appealing personality. Though they were composed in haste and sent off to the Register without chance of revision, they were astonishingly well written. Rural Rides are Cobbett at his best, showing more sides of the man than appeared in any of his other works."

Cobbett has been greatly admired for the candid and forceful style. He was quite well up in his subject. He always spoke with an air of authority, not on the basis of a figurative style, but on statement of facts.

Whenever he wrote or spoke he was full of material. His enormous fund of knowledge and impressive style stirred up opposition. G.K. Chesterton has admired him in the following lines:

"In one sense, of course, Cobbett has never been neglected. He has only been admired in the way in which he would have specially hated to be admired. He who was full of his subject has been valued only for his style. He who was so stuffed with matter has been admired for his manner; though not perhaps for his manners. He shouted to the uproarious many, and his voice in a faint whisper has reached the refined few; ....." 27

His professors admired him for his splendid passages. But the fact is that wherever he has used invective or satire, and wherever he has attacked the oppressors and exploiters, he is at his best. His style became exuberant whenever he was violent.

"But they would have been mildly surprised if any pupil had written such plain English. Yet, as I pointed out on that occasion, the strongest quality of Cobbett as a stylist is in the use he made of a certain kind of language: the sort of use commonly called abuse. It is especially his bad language that is always good. It is precisely the passages that have always been recognized as good style that would now be regarded as bad form. And it is precisely these violent passages that especially bring out not only the best capacities of Cobbett but also the best capacities of English." 23


28. Ibid., pp.6-7.
William Cobbett, the son of a small farmer, is mainly known as the leader of the masses. He has seen the agonies of the agricultural labourers. During the post-Napoleonic war period, the country was caught in a current of inflation. And at this critical juncture the labourers in the countryside were the worst sufferers. Cobbett is the real spokesman of them. In this field he is unequalled.

Cobbett's prose is spontaneous. It was lucid, plain and vigorous. His articles in the 'Political Register', even though they were written in a great hurry were commendable for their freshness. G.K. Chesterton has all praise for them.

Whenever he represented the case of the common people his language was full of invective. He did not spare any one whether his victim was landlord, money lender, title holder, fund holder or any powerful man who came in the way of the agricultural labourer. At such moment his language used to be very violent.

Cobbett was not a successful parliamentarian, but was a good writer. Then he took up the cause of the masses he used to be militantly. And at that time no decorum could be expected of him. His method could be beastly.
"Now nobody denies that Cobbett and his enemies did fight like cat and dog, but it is precisely his fighting passes that contain some of the finest examples of a style as English as the word dog or the word cat. So far as this goes the point has nothing to do, with political or moral sympathy with Cobbett's cause. The beauty of his incessant abuse is a matter of art for art's sake." 29

Cobbett was deadly set against urbanisation of the population. He saw the fields of England being converted into industries. He felt time and again that industrialisation was no progress at all: on the contrary, self-sufficiency of the country was being ruined. And under a developing economy, prices of the commodities were bound to go up. The nation can be fully independent on the basis of agriculture. And the lot of the agricultural labourer depended upon the green revolution.

"Cobbett was not merely a wrong-headed fellow with a knack of saying the right word about the wrong sort of thing. Cobbett was not merely an angry and antiquated old farmer who thought the country must be going to the dogs because the whole world was not given up to the cows. Cobbett was not merely a man with a lot of nonsensical notions that could be exploded by political economy; a man looking to turn England into an Eden that should grow nothing but Cobbett's corn. What he saw was not an Eden that can not exist but rather an Inferno that can exist, and even that does exist. What he saw was the perishing of the whole English power of self-support, the growth of cities that drain and dry cities that drain and dry.

29. Ibid., p.8.
up the countryside, the growth of dense dependent, populations incapable of finding their own food, the toppling triumph of machines over men, the sprawling omnipotence of financiers over patriots, the hardening of humanity in nomadic masses whose very homes are homeless, the terrible necessity of peace and the terrible probability of war, all the loading up of our little island like a sinking ship; the wealth that may mean famine and the culture that may mean despair." 30

Cobbett's life was marked by vicissitudes. A son of a small peasant he ran away from his home and joined the army. He was imprisoned for his rebellious attitude towards the government in favour of agricultural labourers.

Cobbett was always on the alert. He had a strict sense of duty. He was honest to the core. He was worried over the accumulation of poor men's wealth transferred to the hands of the rich. He was sensitive to the entire structure of the finance: over shares, partnership and control of prices. He always felt that the happiness of England depended on agriculture.

"In any case, against a world in which such financial mysteries were multiplying every day, in which machinery was everywhere on the march, and the new towns spreading with the swiftness of a landslide, in which England was already well on the..." 30. Ibid., pp.14-15.
the way to becoming merely the workshop of the world, against the whole great crawling labyrinth of the modern state which is almost one with the modern city, there remained in him unaltered cut deep into the solitary rock of his soul, the single clause of his single creed: that God made man to plough and reap and sow." 31

The slaves that ploughed the land, cleaned the houses and worked mechanically with no zest for life, were the subject of his writings. It is surprising that no leader of England of the time took up the cause of these slaves except Cobbett. Cobbett felt that the rich had risen at the cost of these unfortunates and destitutes. Law and order were meant for the benefit of the rich. The rich of the land, as Chesterton observes, have more questionable morals than the unlucky farmers:

"And if ever in this land of ours the poor are truly lifted up, if ever the really needy find a tongue for their own needs, if ever progressives and reactionaries alike realise upon what ruins were built both their order and their reforms, how many failures went to make their success, and what crimes have set their house in order, if they see the underside of their own history with its secrets of sealed up wrath and irrevocable injustice in a word, if a great people can ever repent, then posterity may see achieved by this agency also, by this one lonely and angry bee in whose society saw nothing but a hornet, the work of Jesus Christ." 32

Cobbett joined the army where he was happier than a clerk in a lawyer's office. And there, because of his

31. Ibid., p.32.
32. Ibid., pp.34-35.
stern discipline, regular and punctual habits, he made progress and from soldier he rose to higher cadres.

"He was much happier any how in the camp of soldiers; indeed, he was not only happy but fortunate. He was recognised as a good soldier, and rose to be corporal and sergeant and eventually a sort of secretary to the whole regiment, assisting the adjutant." 33

Such a regular and punctual man would have been prosperous and respectable, but Cobbett's life history took another course.

With his sincerity and strict honesty he could not tolerate the corruption in the army. He had enormous fund of human feelings. And it pierced his heart that officers were making money out of the diet of the poor soldiers.

"Cobbett began to note something queer and quite wrong about the regimental accounts. He soon discovered that a number of officers were simply pocketing money meant for the regimental food." 34

Cobbett wanted to expose the corruption in the army. But it proved to be a boomerang to him. His protests were easily suppressed, and he was charged with spreading tales against the army.

33. Ibid., pp. 37-38.
34. Ibid., p. 38.
Throughout his life Cobbett raised strong protests against the exploitation of the poor. Rapid industrialization had proved a curse to the poor, particularly the countryside labourers. Machines had made these poor weak and helpless. All these and many other causes of their destitution have been described by Chesterton in the following lines:

"The agony of rage in which so much of his life was passed was due to the consciousness that this popular sense of honour was everywhere being broken down by a cruel and ignoble industrialism. His whole life was a resistance to the degradation of the poor; to their degradation in the literal sense of the loss of a step, of a standing, of a status. There lay on his mind, like a nightmare of machinery crushing and crunching millions of bones, all the detailed destruction of the private property and domestic traditions of destitute families; all the selling up and breaking up of furniture, all the pawning of heirlooms and keepsakes; all that is meant by the awful sacrifice of the wedding-ring. He thought of a thousand stories like the story of the servant-girl; except that these stories did not have a happy ending." 35

Cobbett believed that Industrialism was mainly responsible for the misery of the masses. But he does not support Socialism either. Socialism threatens to destroy the home life. Capitalism destroys the home.

"Capitalism has prevented the poor man from saving more than it has prevented him from spending. It has restrained him from respectable marriage more than from casual immorality. It may be that Socialism threatens to destroy domesticity; but it is capitalism that destroys it." 36

35. Ibid., pp. 46-47.
36. Ibid., p. 51.
Gobbett fled England when his charges against militia men were denied by the government; he was given severe punishment: he fled to France and from there to America.

Cobbett was a fiery patriot. He used to write a lot about England. Chesterton feels that his vision of England was of a dreamer comparable to Wordsworth.

"The first fact about this first phase is that the patriotism of Cobbett was the passionate patriotism of the exile. He went to America while he was still quite young; so that even his memories of England were almost memories of childhood. They had not only the glamour of distance, but the glamour of which Wordsworth wrote, the glory and the freshness of a dream. ..... He remembered England as a great green nursery; and felt as homesick in America as a boy sent to a big, strange, uncomfortable boarding school." 37

Cobbett's *Political Register* was an independent Journal. He did not 'stoop to conquer'. It was the agility of his mind, and the freshness of his style in his prose writing that made this an outstanding paper. Whatevver his political views, he was very much for 'Old England'. Even though he stayed in France and America during his exile, he did not support the French Revolution.

"It may be well to remark that Cobbett's *Register* really was Cobbett's. He retained his intellectual independence; he made no party compact with

37. Ibid., p.51-61.
Windham or anybody else; nay, he flatly refused money from his friends in a way almost tartly honourable. But Windham and he were at one with the enthusiasm with which they flung their energies into the defence of Old England against the French Revolution and its American sympathisers."

Cobbett's love for England was utterly of a different kind. He looked at it as a tiller and owner of a farm. But he saw that there was something wrong. The farmer had no security. Landlords used to harass permanently for their higher profits. And because of the instability in money value, the life of the poor became miserable. People started to leave the green countryside. Cobbett was worried more than any one else and took up their cause to the Tory leaders to save the drowning peasant of the green countryside.

"For him even more than for Nelson, and in another sense, there was something united and almost interchangeable in the three terms of England, home and beauty. But his was no mere landscape-painter's but a land-owner's and a land worker's love; and he pored more and more intently over the practice and detail of the farming he had known in boyhood. As he looked at crops or barns or orchards, it seemed as if the frown on his shrewd square face became first thoughtful and then doubtful. Things were not going well; and bit by bit he began to work out in his own mind a notion of the cause. For instance, it was essential to true farming that the farmer should be secure on his farm. If he was not legally and literally a peasant proprietor, he must at least be rooted like a peasant. At the moment peasants were being rooted out like weeds instead of being

38. Ibid., pp.57-58.
mooted like trees. Landlords were refusing to grant the long leases that gave a status to a yeomanry; they were chopping them up into shorter terms, and shifting and evicting for higher rents. And when he looked for the cause of this, he thought he had found it in the new fluctuation of prices and even of the value of money; in the paper money that symbolised to him such insecurity and shuffling and sharp practice. It meant the destruction not only of the old sort of yeoman but of the old sort of squire. Stockbrokers and Jews and jobbers from the town were driving out the national gentry; he would appeal to the great leaders of the party of the gentry to save them. He turned to his own Tory leaders, to Windham and the party of Pitt; for they were the natural saviours of the green countryside from this yellow fever of finance." 39

Cobbett and Dr. Johnson would have been prejudiced against each other. Cobbett felt that Johnson was 'pedantic' whereas Cobbett, Johnson would have thought, was a 'demagogue'. But according to Chesterton both of them had similar views on certain points. Both of them liked Catholic tradition. Both of them were devout Christians.

"Cobbett had a prejudice against Johnson; which is all the more amusing because it was exactly the sort of prejudice that Johnson might have had against him. Cobbett regarded Johnson as a mere pedantic pensioner; and Johnson would very possibly have regarded Cobbett as he regarded Wilkes, more or less in the abstract as a dirty demagogue. So many things united these two great Englishmen, and not least their instinctive embodiment of England; they were alike in their benevolent bullying, in something private and practical, and very much to the point in their individual tenderness, in their surly sympathy for the Catholic tradition in their dark doubts of the coming time." 40

39. Ibid., pp. 68-70.
40. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
Cobbett's intense love for the countryside could be seen every now and then. Even though he had travelled far and wide, his love for old values of life remained unshaken. Throughout his life, he fought for the survival of the countryside. He joined the Radicals for the radical betterment in the lot of the rural people.

"He liked old customs and the continuity of family life to be found in the countryside; he loved England in a sense that was very real and unfortunately very rare. I mean that it was a positive love that looked inwards upon the beloved; and not merely a negative love that looked outwards for rivals or remote imitations. If this sort of love of what is national and normal be called conservative, certainly that character was rooted in him. But what was called his Radicalism was equally radical. He realised by the light of nature the last deductions of the democratic speculators in so far as they can fairly be deduced." 41

To Hazlitt, Cobbett looked like a farmer. It is very true that land was the heart of Cobbett's writing. Every grass that grew had a meaning for him. He did not use his imaginative powers to write poetry on nature. On the contrary, the green countryside was the real feeder of the people. The land labour was the very backbone of England. The neglect of the land was ruinous to England. This has been brought out in the following lines very vividly.

41. Ibid., pp.76-77.
"Hazlitt, who liked his books, also said he looked like a farmer, Cobbett was indeed, despite his appeal to the workers of the factory districts, always at heart a countryman, with an unconquerable instinct for the land and the men of the land. He was intensely English and, in his way, intensely patriotic; it was this patriotism that roused him to the defence of his fellow countrymen, trodden under by the oppressions of war and the twin revolutions in agriculture and industry whose devastating social effects he watched from phase to phase. He was that rarest of literary phenomena an articulate peasant." 42

Time and again Cobbett has sung the glories of revolution that began in the green field. Factories and the mills were not the proper place for revolution.

"He could not see that the new industrial progress had anything to do with these principles; and he was perfectly right. He knew that the real revolutionary song had been about fields and furrows, and not about wheels and rails. He knew that the Revolution had begun with bread. He was not in the least impressed by its ending in smoke. The man who had once been a rioter waving the red flag in a revolution may now be a guard waving the red flag on a railway line. But this will not convince the realistic reformer that a railway-line is the same as a revolution." 43

Chesterton pays compliments to Cobbett for his being like a common man who is happy with his family and home. This is typical of an Englishman. And just as a virile man is always under the thumb of his wife, so was the case with Cobbett.

42. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Volume 5, p.390.
43. Chesterton, G.K., William Cobbett, p.76.
"Like most men of a very English type, he was inordinately fond of happiness and happiness to him was concrete and not abstract; it was his own farm, his own family, his own children. Like most men of a very masculine type, he was probably a good deal dominated by his wife." 44

During Napoleonic war, there was an incident in a jail. German mercenaries killed or injured British soldiers; British soldiers had to suffer physical injuries by the brutal act of the Germans. Cobbett's patriotic feelings have been depicted by G.K. Chesterton in the following lines:

"One example may illustrate what is meant by comparison. Cobbett got himself flung into a common gaol for protesting against the flogging of British soldiers in the middle of the Napoleonic war; he afterwards went to America to avoid being flung into prison again." 45

Cobbett was a pacifist. He felt that the soldiers, the peasants and the common men did not want war. War never yielded good results. But the merchants and the rich men had vested interests and only they wanted war.

"The moment he concluded that only the bankers and merchants really wanted war and the populace suffered from it without need...." 46

Time and again Cobbett has paid compliments to labourers. The stately buildings, and comforts of

44. Ibid., p.89.
45. Ibid., p.94.
46. Ibid., p.103.
life, the wealth of a nation, the defence of a country and hundreds of other things are the contributions of the labourers. Without the sincere Herculean task of the labourers no country can prosper.

And Cobbett emphasised the fact that victory over France had been possible with the active cooperation of the labourers. All military buildup were possible because of them. But the post-war period made their life miserable. Most of the labourers were out of job. And the rich people wanted to get rid of them. The 'Lady' and the 'Lord' got huge amounts of pension even without work, whereas the poor labourers with their larger families were not provided with even the basic amenities of life.

"...... What! and do they imagine, that you are thus to be extinguished, because some of you are now (without any fault of yours) unable to find work. As far as you were wanted to labour, to fight, or to pay taxes, you were welcome, and they boasted of your numbers; but now that your country has been brought into a state of misery, these corrupt and insolent men are busied with schemes for getting rid of you. Just as if you had not as good a right to live and to love and to marry as they have! They do not propose far from it, to check the breeding of sinecure Placemen and Pensioners, who are supported in part by the taxes which you help to pay. They say not a word about the whole families who are upon the pension list." 47

G.K. Chesterton has also asserted that during the Industrial Revolution, the utmost harm has been done to the poor. The green land of England has been turned into a network of the industrial world in which the labourer was rootless. Only the rich barons had benefitted.

"But it is the paradox of the whole position that the utilitarians who were always preaching prudence committed this country to one of the most really reckless revolutions in history the industrial revolution. They destroyed agriculture and turned England into a workshop; a workshop in which the workers were liable at any moment to be locked up and left to eat hammers and saws. The Radicals who did that were as picturesque as pirates, so far as pirates become specially picturesque when they burn their boats. In truth they were not so metaphorically burning their boats: they were almost literally burning their barns. But there is something fitting in the accident by which the term Free Trader used to mean a smuggler. If romantic recklessness be the test, Cobden and Bright should always have appeared brandishing cutlasses and with a belt full of pistols." 48

In his Rural Rides, Cobbett has aroused our feelings. The plight of the soldier, who does such hard work, depends on the rich for his bread. Cobbett has a style of narrative. He begins with a story - the story of a horse-rider, then his short break in an inn for breakfast, then the plight, the misery and the

agony of being turned out of it. This has been described vividly in the following lines:

"There is an excellent illustration of his quieter method in one passage in the Rural Rides. He describes, in that plain and almost naked narrative style that seems to lie like strong morning daylight upon every detail of the day, how he started out riding with his son at dawn; how some hitch occurred about the inn at which he had intended to breakfast, and he rode on hoping to reach another hostelry in reasonable time..." 49

G.K. Chesterton finds Cobbett, in his Rural Rides very humorous and with a biting satire describes that the poor have no place in the new set-up of English society. The policy makers just forgot to draw up any scheme for the uplift of the poor.

"Tyranny varies with temperament, specially national temperament. Some have taxed the poor, and some have enslaved the poor; and a few have massacred the poor; but the English rulers simply forgot the poor. They talked as if they did not exist; they generalised as if no such people need be included in the generalisation. They drew up reports of progress and prosperity in which the common people did not figure at all... It was said that the English founded an empire in a fit of absence of mind. It must be some what sadly added that they neglected a nation with the same absence of mind." 50

According to Cobbett, capitalism has done indirect harm to the weaker section of society through neglect.

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49. Ibid., pp. 216.
50. Ibid., pp. 219-20.
It has not tortured the poor directly; but the torture which is given to them by neglecting them has brought untold miseries to the poor. Even the military atrocities and the eccentricities of a dictator could not have been worse.

"Capitalism has produced a peculiar thing, which may be called oppression by oblivion." 51

The Rural Rides of Cobbett, according to G.K. Chesterton, is a portrait of landscape, of green scenery of England. The incidents are narrated in an 'episal' and 'symbolical' manner which make it poetical prose. The book is a combination of personal memoirs of Cobbett's 'soliloquies'; his philosophy of life, his wit, satire, humour, and many more.

"The Rural Rides are a landscape; but they are also a portrait. Sometimes we seem to be watching under rolling clouds the rolling country of the shires, valleys coloured like maps, or downs that seem to shoulder away the sky; and then again we are only looking at the changes on one stubborn face as it relapses into good humour or hardens into hate. That combination of the object and the subject is what makes writing into literature; and the Rural Rides are pure literature. Perhaps they are all the more literature because they might be counted loose and colloquial even for language. It would be a breathless experience even to hear a man talk in as slap-dash a style as Cobbett wrote; but the thing would be brilliant as well as breathless. Everything comes into this great soliloquy; details, dogmas, personalities, political debates..."

51. ibid., p.222.
private memories, mere exclamations such as a man utters in really riding along a road." 52

Chesterton feels that Cobbett in his *Rural Rides* has shown himself as a perfect Englishman. His home, his family, his love towards his children, the love of 'leaving', adventures, and certain eccentricities are all there. Above all, Cobbett has advised the parents and the schoolmasters to treat children more sympathetically for the development of their personality.

"Now, here again we have one of the subtleties under the superficial simplicities of *Rural Rides*. Cobbett, it has been often repeated, was as English as any Englishman who ever lived. He had all the English virtues: the love of leaving and lonely adventures; the spirit of the genial eccentric; the capacity to be a hermit without being a misanthrope; the love of landscape and of road astray; and above all, that love of the grotesque that is as brave as a broad grin. Nor, as we say, was he without that softer side, only that with him it was generally the inside." 63

From his biographies one can say that Cobbett was extremely provocative. He was always fighting.

"He had a picturesque career, if the pictures sometimes seemed to his critics to be comic pictures; he was always fighting; he was flung into gaol, he went wandering in foreign lands ...... He was extremely provocative. He was as provocative as an Irishman." 54

52. Ibid., pp.190-91.
53. Ibid., pp.222-23.
54. Ibid., pp.187 and 294.
E. L. Carlyle has also narrated some of the incidents in which Cobbett lost his temper before a large gathering while he was speaking to it. He scolded an attorney for interrupting him like a landlord with his slaves and servants. When he lost his temper, he used to appear quite beastly.

"His love of battle and his prodigious fighting power are features of his character that attract immediate attention. He himself relates how once at Winchester while addressing a meeting of the country free holders, he was interrupted by an attorney of the opposite fashion.

I fixed my eye upon him, and pointing my hand down right, and making a sort of chastising a motion, and said "Peace, babbling slave!" which produced such terror amongst others, that I met with no more interruption." 55

Pemberton has given his impression about the 'Rural Rides' very vividly. The work combines rural schemes, and their political, economic, and cultural background. Above all it is self-revelatory. It expresses Cobbett's wrath against the exploiters, his eyes are fixed on rural 'villainy'. Beautiful girls working hard in the fields in the hot sun touches the heart of every one except the 'loan-jobber'. Cobbett's assailment on the policy makers who are responsible for inflation and the debt of the poor labourers is self evident.

"Rural Rides is a combination of travelogue, agricultural manual and (most of all) William Cobbett himself. With his impotent egotism, his fierce indignations, his powerful invective and his team of hobby horses, he is for ever bursting into the text, scolding, instructing, exposing some local villainy, excoriating game-preserving landlords, tithe-gathering parsons and monopolizing country magnates." 56

With such indignant speeches of Cobbett, the reader might be misled to think that he was a great rebel. But the fact is otherwise. Neither was he a socialist, nor a communist in the modern sense of these persons. He did not believe in bloody revolution. He did not believe in radical changes in society. He did not believe in classless society nor in equality of opportunity. He believed in the British Constitution in toto. The reform was needed to root out corruption. Once it was uprooted the condition of the country would automatically improve. He was not against the princely landlords if they treated their employees sympathetically.

"...He wanted no fundamental changes. The framework of society and the constitution were for him sound enough if once the adhering crust of corruption were removed. Wholesome tradition had no stancher defender than Cobbett. Scarcely a page of the Rural Rides fails to reveal his essentially feudal conception of society: a beneficent landowner, a sturdy peasantry, a village community self-supporting and static." 57

57. Ibid., p.139.
Every one gets an opportunity to win friends. The second time when Cobbett returned from the U.S.A., he was given a warm welcome. The trade unions had shown tremendous respect for him. He was elected to parliament.

"The time of his return was largely the time of his triumph; inspite of, or rather because of, the tumultuous hour in which he returned. In this period he received all the highest compliments which he was ever likely to receive. He was hailed as a democratic deliverer, not only by his own natural following among the farm-labourers of the southern shires, but by the grim and growing power of the Trade Unions of the Midlands and the North." 58

G.K. Chesterton has given a very sympathetic description of Cobbett’s personality. According to him, Cobbett was very militant and aggressive. He was militant on behalf of the thousands of silent labourers who suffered all the agonies of life. They could never show their temper; they could never demand the basic necessities of life. Cobbett was their real man, their real representative, the representative of the rural masses; hence his anger with the government and the exploiters.

"It was not because he was blatant or inconsistent or coarse or reckless; even if he was. It was not because he raged or ranted or made a noise. It was because of those silent on whose behalf he made a noise of the dumb for whom he ranted

and the impotent for whom he raged. It was his
love of the poor that made him horrible to his
enemies; and in that hour he made them feed on
the full horrors that such love reveals." 59

G.K. Chesterton feels that Cobbett was the most
misunderstood man of his time. He was a difficult
colleague. But his death patched up the differences.

The greatest thing was that his death occurred in
his farm house amidst the hills, the trees, the twittering
of the birds he loved so dearly during his life
time.

"Therefore, it was that when he lay dying in
his farm house on the hills, those he had
loved best in his simple fashion were near
to his heart; but of all the millions of
the outer world there was none near to his
mind, and all that he meant escaped and
went its way, like a great wind that roars
over the rolling downs." 60

60. Ibid., p.274.
CHARLES DICKENS

Dickens is one of the most popular and widely read English novelists.

He spent a life of hardship and misery in blacking warehouse which left a permanent mark on his personality.

He had such an intense experience of human beings that whatever he wrote appears as if he had seen from close quarters.

"In a recent publication I have seen it summarily observed that Dickens gives us types, not individuals; types moreover, of the most abstract kind, something like the figures in the old moralities; embodied hypocrisy, selfishness, pride, and so on, masking every day....." 61

His hardships turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Because of his association with the factory he could know the miseries of labourers. Throughout his life he evinced great love and sympathy for the poor. This human understanding made him a great portrayer of human character.

During his boyhood, Dickens was a great reader. Often he used to keep late hours. There is a clear impact of the Bible, Shakespeare, Addison, Steele,

Carlyle and Rousseau on him. His reading was vast, and his memory was retentive. Whenever he started writing he had no time to open books.

According to G.K. Chesterton the greatest characteristic of Dickens was his buoyant optimism. Despite his sufferings during the boyhood, he remained a staunch optimist.

"This dawn, against which the gibbet and all the old cruelties stood out so black and clear, was the developing idea of liberalism, the French Revolution. It was a clear and a happy philosophy. And only against such philosophies do evils appear evident at all. The optimist is a better reformer than the pessimist; and the man who believes life to be excellent is the man who alters it most. It seems a paradox yet the reason of it is very plain. The pessimist can be enraged at evil. But only the optimist can be surprised at it. From the reformer is required a simplicity of surprise. He must have the faculty of a violent and virgin astonishment. It is not enough that he should think injustice distressing; he must think injustice absurd, an anomaly in existence, a matter less for tears than for a shattering laughter....." 62

Dickens was a devout Christian. That is why he had great love for ordinary men. Only in religion there is a sense of equality; every one is equal irrespective of his class, creed and birth. This has been very vividly described by G.K. Chesterton in the following lines:

And almost without exception all the great men have come out of this atmosphere of equality. Great men may make despotisms; but democracies make great men. The other main factory of heroes besides a revolution is a religion. And a religion again, is a thing which, by its nature, does not think of men as more or less valuable, but of men as all intensely and painfully valuable, a democracy of eternal danger. For religion all men are equal, as all pennies are equal, because the only value in any of them is that they bear the image of the king........ It is an equally important truth that religion is the thing that makes the extraordinary can feel ordinary." 63

Dickens' literary career was a tremendous success. He produced book after book. He worked for some time as a journalist. His original ambition was to be an actor. He was a great publicist. He gave public-reading sessions where he was a great success. Above all, he was jolly and cheerful like a child. He continued to be so all along. That is why nowhere is the pessimistic tone noticeable in his works.

"Like the over wrought child in society, he was splendidly sociable, and yet suddenly quarrelsome. ... In all the practical relations of his life he was what the child is in the last hours of an evening party, genuinely delighted, genuinely delightful, genuinely affectionate and happy, and yet in some strange way fundamentally exasperated and dangerously close to tears." 64

The humour of Dickens is like that of Falstaff, the typical English Character with his gluttony wine and wild laughter.

63. Ibid., p.7.
64. Ibid., p.19.
"....From the height of Cadshill at which he stared unceasingly there looked down upon him the monstrous ghost of Falstaff, Falstaff who might well have been the spiritual father of all Dickens's adorable knaves, Falstaff the great mountain of English laughter and English sentimentalism, the great, healthy, human English humbug, not to be matched among the nations." 65

It is obvious that Dickens worked hard in a factory during his boyhood for a meagre income. His health was not good. The sufferings of his boyhood in the factory, perhaps, made him a great supporter of the poor. Here is an example of his suffering. How he collapsed for body pain, how he was helped by his colleagues, how one of them volunteered to take him to his house and how the pride of Dickens prevented him from being taken to his friends house are described in the following lines:

"All day he worked on insufficient food at a factory. It is sufficient to say that it afterwards appeared in his works as Hardstone and Crinby's. At night he returned disconsolately to a lodging-house for such lads, kept by an old lady. It is sufficient to say that she appeared afterwards as Mrs. Pipchin. Once a week only he saw anybody for whom he cared; a straw; that was when he went to the marshalsea prison, and that gave his juvenile pride, half manly and half snobbish, bitter annoyance of another kind. Add to this, finally, that physically he was always very weak and never very well. Once he was struck down in the middle of his work with sudden bodily pain. The boy who worked next to him, a coarse an5
heavy lad named Bob Fagin, who had often attack-
ed Dickens on the not unreasonable ground of
his being a "gentleman", suddenly showed that
enduring sanity of compassion which Dickens had
destined to show so often in the characters of
the common and unclean."

They manufactured a number of bottles of Warren's
Blacking, and in the course of the process they
manufactured also the greatest optimist, of the
nineteenth century." 66

By reading, the records available about his life,
one can easily make out that he was a self-educated
and self-made man. He did not get an opportunity for
education because of the miserable condition of his
father.

"...Somebody once asked old John Dickens where
his son Charles was educated. "Well, really",
said the great creature, in his spacious way,
"he may be said -ah- to have educated himself.
He might indeed." 67

Dickens travelled far and wide, but his heart
remained in England. He was so fond of London that the
description of each and every street became a narrative.
As a true Christian he had great love for his home
country, even though he was very busy with his tour
abroad.

"Dickens abroad, then, was for all serious purpo-
ses simply the English man abroad; the English-
man abroad is for all serious purpose simply the
English at home." 68

66. Ibid., pp. 26, 27, 28.
67. Ibid., pp. 41-42.
68. Ibid., p. 112.
Like any true Christian, Dickens was fond of traditional values. His boyish stories have medieval touches. The love of wine and old tales are to be found in his works because he had a great love for Christians and Christianity.

"It would be hard to find a better example of this than Dickens's great defence of Christmas. In fighting for Christmas, he was fighting for the old European festival. Pagan and Christian, for that trinity of eating, drinking, and praying which to moderns appears irrelevant for the holiday which is really a holiday. 69

Dickens was very fond of old "Merry England." For him charity is the essence of Christianity. Dickens was very charitable and staunch upholder of charity which is one of the greatest qualities of a true Christian.

"And (as I have said) as were his unconscious relations to our European past, so were his unconscious relations to England. He imagined himself to be, if anything, a sort of cosmopolitan; at any rate to be a champion of the charms and merits of continental lands against the arrogance of our island. But he was in truth very much more a champion of the old and genuine England against that comparatively cosmopolitan England which we have all lived to see. And here again the supreme example is Christmas." 70

In the works of Dickens Chesterton finds a great admiration for family life. Every Englishman takes his

69. Ibid., pp.115-117.
70. Ibid., pp.117-118.
home as a castle; there is some truth in it. Perhaps home is the pillar of Christianity. Family as institution has suffered a lot of stress and strain; but the family bond is so strong that it cannot be broken by the onslaught of modernity.

"This ideal of comfort belongs peculiarly to England; it belongs peculiarly to Christians; above all, it belongs preeminently to Dickene. And it is astonishingly misunderstood. It is misunderstood by the continent of Europe; it is, if possible, still more misunderstood by the English of to-day. On the continent the restaurateurs provide us with raw beef, as if we were savages; yet old English cooking takes as much care as French. And in England has arisen a parvenu patriotism which represents the English as everything but English; as a blend of Chinese-stoicism, Latin militarism, Prussian rigidity, and American bad taste. And so England, whose fault is gentility and whose virtue is geniality, England with her tradition of the great gay gentlemen of Elizabeth, is represented to the four quarters of the world (as in Mr. Kipling's religious poems) in the enormous image of a solemn sad. And because it is very difficult to be comfortable in the suburbs, the suburbs have voted that comfort is a gross and material thing. Comfort, especially this vision of Christmas comfort, is the reverse of a gross or material thing. It is far more poetical, properly speaking, than the Garden of Picture. It is far more artistic than the Palace of Art. It is (as he) more artistic because it is based upon a contrast, a contrast between the fire and wine within the house and the winter and the roaring rains without. It is far more poetical, because there is in it a note of defence, almost of war; a note of being besieged by the snow and the hail; of making merry in the halls of a fort. The man who said that an Englishman's house is his castle said much more than he meant. The Englishman thinks of his house as something fortified and provisioned, and his very surliness is at root romantic." 71

71. Ibid., pp.113-119.
Dickens, the great Christian enjoys describing small things. The small things were of great importance. That is why we find his great sympathy for the masses with their weaknesses and follies. This could not be realized by the snobs. Christianity supports the case of the humble, meek and weak. On the contrary the wealthy and aristocratic are more likely to commit sins than the poor and humble.

"This comfort, then, is an abstract thing, a principle. The English poor shut all their doors and windows till their rooms reek like the Black Hole. They are suffering for an idea. More animal hedonism would not dream, as we English do, of winter feasts and little rooms, but of eating fruit in large and idle gardens. More sensuality would desire to please all its senses. But to our good dreams this dark and dangerous background is essential; the highest pleasure we can imagine is a defiant pleasure, a happiness that stands at bay. The word "comfort" is not indeed the right word; it conveys too much of the slander of mere sense; the true word is "cosiness", a word not translatable." 72

In Dickens's Christmas books, Chesterton finds the Christian atmosphere uppermost. Christmas tales have a hazy atmosphere as if they were the stories written or uttered in a dream. The visions of the past present and future are all evoked here.

"And as with his backgrounds of gloom, so with his backgrounds of goodwill, in such tables as "The Christmas Carol". The tone of the tale is kept throughout in a happy monotony, though the tale is everywhere irregular and in some places weak. It has the same kind of artistic unity that belongs to a dream." 73

It is self-evident that Dickens was really a great sympathiser of the poor. They are reflections of his family. Perhaps his own family forms the subject matter of *The Chimes*. High people used to think that the poor are becoming reluctant to go to Church, this was not true according to Dickens. According to him what the poor people hated was not the old things but the modern things.

Society people used to accuse the working classes of being spendthrift on festive occasions like Christmas. Dickens takes strong objection to this. Perhaps, according to him, this is the time of happiness in the tired and miserable life of the poor. Thus he defends their case very strongly.

"The moral of this matter in "The Chimes" is essential. Dickens had sympathy with the poor in the Greek and literal sense; he suffered with them mentally; for the things that irritated them were the things that irritated him. He did not pity the people, or even champion the people, or even merely love the people; in this matter, he was the people. He alone in our literature is the voice not merely of the social substratum, but even of the subconsciousness of the substratum. He utters the secret anger of the humble. He says what the uneducated only think, or even only feel, about the

73. Ibid., p.123.
educated. And in nothing is he so genuinely such a voice as in this fact of his fiercest mood being reserved for methods that are counted scientific and progressive. Pure and exalted atheists talk themselves into believing that the working-classes are turning with indignant scorn from the Churches. The working-classes are not indignant against the Churches in the least. The things the working classes really are indignant against are the hospitals. The people has no definite disbelief in the temples of theology. The people has a very fiery and practical disbelief in the temples of physical science. The things the poor hate are the modern things, the rationalistic things - doctors, inspectors, poor law guardians, professional philanthropy.....Lastly, he was at one with the poor in this chief matter of Christmas, in the matter, that is, of special festivity, There is nothing on which the poor are more criticised than on the point of spending large sums on small feasts; and though there are material difficulties, there is nothing in which they are more right. It is said that a Boston paradox-monger said - "Give us the luxuries of life and we will dispense with the necessities". But it is the whole human race that says it, from the first savage wearing feathers instead of clothes to the last costermonger having a treat instead of three meals." 74

G.K. Chesterton feels that Dickens defended Christmas in terms of tradition, which is older than old, and as virile as life itself. Dickens defends Christmas as the most democratic institution older than any other.

".....It was by a great ancestral instinct that he defended Christmas; by that sacred subconsciousness which is called tradition, which

74. Ibid., pp.126-127.
some have called a dead thing, but which is really a thing far more living than the intellect." 75

Chesterton feels that there are very few in English literature who devoted their pen to the description of happiness. There is a galaxy of writers who described vividly, human suffering, its agony, its miseries, the darker side of life with all vigour and gusto. But Dickens is the author who in describing poverty left out the negative approach and described the state of human happiness also; its state of satisfaction rather than its discontent, ill will, jealousy and frustration.

"Dickens devoted his genius in a somewhat special sense to the description of happiness. No other literary man of his eminence has made this central human aim so specially his subject matter. Happiness is a mystery generally a momentary mystery - which seldom stops long enough to submit itself to artistic observation, and which, even when it is habitual, has something about it which renders artistic description almost impossible. There are twenty tiny minor poets who can describe fairly impressively an eternity of agony; there are very few even of the eternal poets who can describe ten minutes of satisfaction." 76

Almost all books of Dickens are Christmas books, because they convey the message of Christianity. But

76. Ibid., pp.105-106.
The Christmas Carol, The Chimes, The Cricket on Hearth
are surely the most popular of his Christmas books.

"All Dickens's books are Christmas books. But
this is still truest of his two or three famous
Yuletide tales - The Christmas Carol and The Chimes and The
Cricket on the Hearth." 77

Dickens was a great story-teller. And his works
were never found dull and uninteresting. The public
wanted new things from him throughout his literary
career.

Pickwick Papers brought him tremendous success.
It is very similar to Don Quixote. It brought out humour in the life of the people of England.

His work is prodigious.

Master Humphrey's Clock, The Old Curiosity Shop,
Barnaby Rudge, Martin Chuzzlewit, Hard Times, A Tale of Two Cities, Great Expectations, Dombey and Son, Edwin Drood, Bleak House, Little Dorrit, Our Mutual Friend and
David Copperfield are his major works.

Dickens became the first editor of the Daily News.
He began two magazines - Household Words and All the
Year Round. In these magazines he published his minor

77. Ibid., p.111.
works like *Christmas Stories*, *A Child's History of England. Uncommercial Traveller*. The characters of Dickens are as familiar to his readers as if they were the family friends for them.

"...And this is the first and last dignity of Dickens; that he was a creator. He did not point out things, he made them." 78

Dickens was a great walker. He was so fond of London, and its people, that in his writing, it appears as if he were closely familiar with the streets of London and he had physical contact with people.

"The part of London which aroused his keenest interest was that which lay to the east of Charging Cross, and the people to whom he gave most of his affection, and of whom he wrote so perceptively, were the ordinary working-class people of his day. His very first book, the *Sketches by Boz*, has the subtitle: "Illustrative of Everyday Life and Everyday People". And even then, though he was only 23 when it was published, this book already shows a remarkable knowledge of the most varied phases of London life, ranging from the seedy purlieus of Seven Dials to the attractions of Astley's, from the horrors of Newgate Prison to the full-blooded festivities of Greenwich Fair." 79

Barker also feels that all the characters of Dickens are the old friends of the author. Such vitality and keen interest particularly in people of every

class of society is unprecedented in the history of English literature.

"Best of all are the probes into Dickens characters, all 'so to speak, designed to be old friends; in a sense, every Dickens character is an old friend, even when he first appears. Dickens had the things of Chaucer, the love of large jokes and long stories and brown ale and all the white roads of England. Like Chaucer, he loved a story within a story, everyman telling a tale. Like Chaucer he saw something openly comic in men's motley trades. Sam Sellar would have been a great gain to the Canterbury Pilgrimage and told an admirable story." 30

Dickens did not like to convert his working class nature to that of the intellectual. Perhaps he thought that the poor and working class should be depicted with an air of realism rather than with any amount of personalisation. And in doing this he was more successful than what otherwise?

"Mr. George Gissing, from the point of view of the passing intellectualism of our day, has made (among his many wise tributes to Dickens) a characteristic complaint about him. He was said that Dickens with all his undoubted sympathy for the lower classes, never made a working man, a poor man, specially and highly intellectual." 31

Dickens chose his characters generally from the poor classes. Perhaps he thought that they were more

natural than the complex, educated classes. Perhaps he did not attach much importance to education. His main job was to make people laugh and he wanted to create lively characters. His characters are types, besides being individuals. He thought, these poor people, less ambitious, with their ordinary requirements, are really great. Perhaps these 'fools', according to Dickens, are really great men. A man's character is known in his private life rather than by his external and public life. This uniform greatness is to be found amongst the poor only.

"The key of the great characters of Dickens is that they are great fools. There is the same difference between a great fool and a small fool as there is between a great poet and a small poet. The great fool is a being who is above wisdom rather than below it. That element of greatness of which I spoke at the beginning of this book is nowhere more clearly indicated than in such characters. A man can be entirely great while he is entirely foolish. We see this in the epic heroes, such as Achilles. Nay, a man can be entirely great because he is entirely foolish. We see this in all the great comic characters of all the great comic writers of whom Dickens was the last. Bottom the Weaver is great because he is foolish; Mr. Toots is great because he is foolish. The thing I mean can be observed, for instance, in innumerable actual characters. Which of us has not known, for instance, a great rustic - a character so incurably characteristic that he seemed to break through all canons about cleverness or stupidity; we do not know whether he is an enormous idiot or an enormous philosopher; we know only that he is enormous, like a hill. These great, grotesque characters are almost entirely to be found where Dickens found them among the poorer classes." 82

82. Ibid., pp.182-83.
Dickens left an enormous gift for posterity. As a writer his reputation is unquestionable. He wrote with 'vitality' and 'force'. Critic after critic paid him glorious tributes. Some equalled him to Shakespeare. Some have compared him with Tolstoy and Dostoevski. Above all he served Christianity more than a priest. His description by critics as "the Great Christian Dickens" is very apt. Dickens will be remembered by generations to come.

"The future of Dickens' fame is established. For a time, soon after his death, he was written down in comparison with such masters of the novel as Tolstoy and Dostoevski and in reaction against the spirit of his age. Ironically enough, these two writers meanwhile left no doubt that they were aware of his greatness and aims as a novelist. The first remarked that 'all his characters are my personal friends', the second referred to their author as 'the Great Christian Dickens'. His irresistible greatness has always been recognized. Dickens is still tremendously popular in the Soviet Union, but though it is sometimes thought that this is because the Russians find it particularly easy to believe in the picture he gives of life in Britain, it would be rash to assume that this is the only reason. He increasingly attracts scholarly understanding and perceptive criticism. For, though intensely committed to the life of his time, he created an imaginary world, which has a life of its own. So that whenever he finds readers there is no question of the importance of Dickens either as a writer or as a human event in history as a sort of conflagration and transfiguration in the very heart of what is called the Victorian age: a naked flame of natural genius whose best work was creative, and who has added something to life which it is hard to believe will ever entirely be taken away." 83

Chesterton has paid compliments to Dickens for his immense popularity with the masses. He led the masses more than any popular leader of his time. If people read his novels time and again, it was not because of its complexity or seriousness but because of its familiarity, and simplicity. Ambiguity and complexity were alien to him.

"There is one aspect of Charles Dickens which must be of interest even to that subterranean race which does not admire his books. Even if we are not interested in Dickens as a great event in English literature, we must still be interested in him as a great event in English history. If he had not his place with Fielding and Thackeray, he would still have his place with Wat Tyler and Wilkes for the man led a mob. He did what no English statesman, perhaps, has really done; he called out the people. He was popular in a sense of which we moderns have not even a notion." 84

Shaw may be described as one of the greatest playwrights of the modern era. He had perhaps the longest literary career. His writings are prodigious. The greatest achievement of Shaw's plays is to blend seriousness and a clear objectivity with wit and humour. Leon Hugo has very aptly described his multifarious activities in the following lines:

"Bernard Shaw's career as a writer spanned seventy years. It was a long stretch and he had a lot to say. He wrote art-criticism, music-criticism, and drama-criticism; essays on Fabian Socialism, Ibsenism, and Wagnerism; to the newspapers constantly and to people incessantly. He wrote scores of topics, a 500 page guide to Socialism and Capitalism, a 350 page analysis of the political What's what. He wrote a good deal more than is gathered into the thirty-seven volumes of the standard edition of his works, more than bibliographies have yet been able to determine. And he delivered thousands of public speeches. All this may not be a record, but it is prodigious.

Apart from the mass of his writings and in itself mass is barely a consideration there is the many-sidedness of his thought. Shaw was probably the most versatile man of ideas of his age, an encyclopaedia of opinion. Was there a matter of moment he did not express an opinion on? One doubts it. Is it possible to define him? Again one doubts it. There really does not seem to be an end to him."

There was a great impact of Marx on him. His solution to poverty was after the Fabian society ideals. Time and again he hinted that economic condition was the basis of individual as well as social life.

"But in the beginning, it was economics, and the more fully to teach this to himself Shaw lectured every Sunday. He relates.....it was not until I could deliver separate lectures, without notes, on Rent, Interest, Profits, Wages, Toryism, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, Anarchism, Trade Unionism, Cooperation, Democracy, the Division of society into classes, and the suitability of Human Nature, to System of Just distribution, that I was able to handle Social Democracy as it must be handled before it can be preached in such a way as to present it to every sort of man from his own particular point of view." 86

Shaw has clearly accepted that his economic studies have played a dominant role in all his plays.

"...Indeed", he wrote to his authorized biographer, Henderson, "in all the plays my economic studies have played as important a part as a knowledge of anatomy does in the works of Michael Angelo." 87

Encyclopaedia Britannica mentions his deep belief in socialism as a panacea for the removal of poverty. This is declared in the following lines:

"He was fond of declaring that he was a social Reformer and doctrinaire first, last and all the times." 88

86. Ibid., pp.17-18.
87. Ibid., p.12.
Shaw the great realist becomes violent in attacking his enemy. And sometimes he forgets that such violent attacks do not bring the right results.

Chesterton points out that Shaw was a victim of English prejudice against Irish men to some extent.

"The English public has commonly professed, with a kind of pride, that it cannot understand Mr. Bernard Shaw. There are many reasons for it, which ought to be adequately considered in such a book as this. But the first and most obvious reason is the mere statement that George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. At least one reason why Englishmen cannot understand Mr. Shaw is that Englishmen have never taken the trouble to understand Irishmen. They will sometimes be generous to Ireland; but never just to Ireland. They will speak to Ireland; they will speak for Ireland, but they will not hear Ireland speak." 89

Shaw reacts fiercely when he joins an issue. He is very aggressive and his criticism is always an attack. His language is very sharp. He does not bother whether he is right or not while criticising his enemy.

There must be some sense in every popular prejudice, even about foreigners. And the English people certainly have somehow got an impression and a tradition that the Irishman is genial, unreasonable, and sentimental. This legend of the tender, irresponsible Paddy has two roots; there are two elements in the Irish which made the mistake possible. First, the very logic of the Irishman makes him regard

war or revolution as extra-logical, an ultima ratio which is beyond reason. When fighting a powerful enemy, he no more worries whether all his charges are exact or all his attitudes dignified than a soldier worries whether a cannon-ball is shapely or a plan campaign picturesque. He is aggressive; he attacks. He seems merely to be rowdy in Ireland when he is really carrying the war into Africa or England......" 90

As people know, Ireland has marked patriotism or religion; but Irish people are not known for effective party system whereas England is an active nation where party system always plays a dominant role. That is why George Bernard Shaw has always had a cynical view of the general election of England.

"He came to stare at our general elections as a Red Indian might stare at the Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, blind to all its irrelevant sentimentalities and to some of its legitimate sentiments. Bernard Shaw entered England as an alien, as an invader, as a conqueror. In other words, he entered England as an Irishman." 91

Shaw is known as a great 'feminist'; this means women should be given equal powers according to him. G.K. Chesterton feels that women cannot be soldiers. But Shaw felt that they could be good soldiers and this fact could be exemplified in the French Revolution.

90. Ibid., pp.15-16.
91. Ibid., p.23.
Bernard Shaw (being honestly eager to put himself on the modern side in everything) put himself on the side of what is called the feminist movement; the proposal to give the two sexes not merely equal social privileges, but identical. To this it is often answered that women can not be soldiers; and to this again the sensible feminists answer that women run their own kind of physical risk, while the silly feminists answer that war is an outworn barbaric thing which women would abolish. But Bernard Shaw took the line of saying that women had been soldiers, in all occasions of natural and unofficial war, as in the French Revolution. 92

But, surprisingly enough G.K. Chesterton discovers that Shaw himself did not believe in the betterment of women. He did not believe in paying respect to women.

Almost all the plays of Shaw, according to Chesterton, have heated discussion between man and woman but everywhere he has shown the superiority of man over women. Men have outwitted women in his plays. Actually he did not believe in the liberation of women. On the contrary, he played a typical 'Shavian' trick in showing to the world that he believed in women's liberation. Actually, Fabianism and Feminism were both a hoax; people did not understand him rightly.

92. Ibid., pp. 56-56.
"But definition leaves the matter dark unless we give one or two examples. Thus Bernard Shaw threw himself as thoroughly as any New Woman into the cause of the emancipation of women. But while the New Woman praised woman as a prophetess, the new man took the opportunity to curse her and kick her as a comrade. For the other sex, equality meant the emancipation of women, which allowed them to be equal to men. For Shaw it mainly meant the emancipation of men, which allowed them to be rude to women. Indeed, almost every one of Bernard Shaw's earlier plays might be called an argument between a man and a woman, in which the woman is thumped and thrashed and outwitted until she admits that she is the equal of her conqueror. This is the first case of the Shavian trick of turning on the romantic rationalists with their own rationalism. He said in substance, "If we are democrats, let us have votes for women, but if we are democrats, why on earth should we have respect for women?" 93

G.K. Chesterton praises Shaw for having attacked the so-called progressive persons such as Huxley and Tyndall and others. And he declared that the scientific truth was like the miracles of religion. The findings of such scientists were as fake as the guess of a priest.

"But among those surprise attacks of G.K.C., these turnings of scepticism against the sceptics, there was one which has figured largely in his life; the most amusing and perhaps the most salutary of all these reactions. The "progressive" world being in revolt against religion had naturally felt itself allied to science; and against the authority of priests it would perpetually hurl the authority of scientific men. Shaw gazed for a few moments at this new

93. Ibid., pp.58-59.
authority, the veiled god of Huxley and Tyndall, and then with the greatest placidity and precision kicked it in the stomach. He declared to the astounded progressives around him that physical science was a mystical fake like sacramentalism; that scientists, like priests, spoke with authority because they could not speak with proof or reason; that the very wonders of science were mostly lies, like the wonders of religion. "When astronomers tell me," he says somewhere, "that a star is so far off that its light takes a thousand years to reach us, the magnitude of the lie seems to me artistic." 94

When Bernard Shaw came to London, he mixed with all kinds of persons except ordinary people. Here his concept of Fabian socialism has been shattered by G.K. Chesterton.

"I have said that Shaw was on the insurgent side in everything; but in the case of these two important convictions he exercised a solid power of choice. When he first went to London he mixed with every kind of revolutionary society, and not every kind of person except the ordinary person. He knew every body, so to speak, except every body." 95

Those who think that Shaw was on the side of labourers because he was socialist, are utterly mistaken.

"I have never had any feelings about the English working classes," he said elsewhere, "except a desire to abolish them and replace them by sensible people." 96

Chesterton feels that Shaw could have written artistic things because he had wit and humour. But it

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was very unfortunate that he spent his time and energy on useless things.

"There was a man who could have enjoyed art among the artists, who could have been the wittiest of all the flaneurs; who could have made epigrams like diamonds, and drunk music like wine. He has instead laboured in a mill of statistics and crammed his mind with all the most dreary and the most filthy details, so that he can argue on the spur of the moment about sewing-machines or sewage, about typhus fever or two penny tubers." 97

There is a sort of misunderstanding among the people that Shaw attacked Shakespeare. No, he broke their sense of complacency, and their sense of idolatry. The idea that every Englishman worships Shakespeare is wrong. Shaw found Bunyan a greater writer than Shakespeare because the former was a tough-minded optimist whereas the latter was a downright pessimist. That is why Shaw had greater admiration for John Bunyan.

"But Shaw's attack on Shakespeare, though exaggerated for the fun of the thing, was not by any means the mere folly or fire-work paradox that has been supposed. He meant what he said; what was called his levity was merely the laughter of a man who enjoyed saying what he meant - an occupation which is indeed one of the greatest larks in life. Moreover, it can honestly be said that Shaw did good by shaking the mere idolatry of Him of Avon. That idolatry was bad for England; it buttressed our perilous self-complacency by making us think that we alone had, not merely a great poet, but the one poet above

97. Ibid., pp.79-80.
criticism. It was bad for literature; it made a minute model out of work that was really a hasty and faulty masterpiece. And it was bad for religion and morals that there should be so huge a terrestrial idol, that we should put such utter and unfeeling trust in any child of man. It is true that it was largely through Shaw's own defects that he beheld the defects of Shakespeare. But it needed some one equally prosaic to resist what was perilous in the charm of such poetry; it may not be altogether a mistake to send a deaf man to destroy the rock of the sirens. A legend has run round the newspapers that Bernard Shaw offered himself as a better writer than Shakespeare. This is false and quite unjust; Bernard Shaw never said anything of the kind. The writer whom he did say was better than Shakespeare was not himself, but Bunyan. And he justified it by attributing to Bunyan a virile acceptance of life as a high and harsh adventure, while in Shakespeare he saw nothing but profligate pessimism, the vanitas vanitatum of a disappointed voluptuary. According to this view Shakespeare was always saying, "Out, out brief candle," because he was only a ballroom candle; while Bunyan was seeking to light such a candle as by God's grace should never be put out.  

G.K. Chesterton praises Shaw for his optimism. At the same time he does not like his admiration of Schopenhauer. The philosophy for which Shaw gives new name such as 'will to live' or 'life-force' does not hold good in the long run.

"It is odd that Bernard Shaw's chief error or insensibility should have been the instrument of his noblest affirmation. The denunciation of Shakespeare was a mere misunderstanding. But, the denunciation of Shakespeare's pessimism was the most splendidly understanding of all his utterances. This is the greatest thing in Shaw, a serious optimism - even a tragic optimism. Life
is a thing too glorious to be enjoyed. To be is an exacting and exhausting business; the trumpet though inspiring is terrible: Nothing that he ever wrote is so noble as his simple reference to the sturdy man who stepped up to the Keeper of the Book of Life and said, "Put down my name, Sir". It is true that Shaw called this heroic philosophy by wrong names and buttressed it with false metaphysics; that was the weakness of the age. The temporary decline of theology had involved the neglect of philosophy and all fine thinking; and Bernard Shaw had to find shaky justifications in Schopenhauer for the sons of God shouting for joy. He called it the "Will to Live" - a phrase invented by Prussian professors who would like to exist, but can't. Afterwards, he asked people to worship the Life-Force; as if one could worship a hyphen." 99

G.K. Chesterton defends Shakespeare from the charge of pessimism against him. He feels that Shaw misunderstood Shakespeare completely. Shakespeare was a Christian with unbending faith in the Almighty. Wherever there are the notes of pessimism, they are passing references. They are the changing moods of a great playwright. He never believed in pessimism. They are pretty jokes for a good Christian.

"His misunderstanding of Shakespeare arose largely from the fact that he is a Puritan, while Shakespeare was spiritually, a Catholic. The former is always screwing himself up to see truth; the latter is often content that truth is there. The Puritan is only strong enough to stiffen; the Catholic is strong enough to relax. Shaw, I think has entirely misunderstood the pessimistic passages of Shakespeare. They are flying moods of a good Christian." 99

99. Ibid., pp.97-98.
which a man with a fixed faith can afford to entertain. That all is vanity, that life is dust and love is ashes, these are frivolities, these are jokes that a Catholic can afford to utter. He knows well enough that there is a life that is not dust and a love that is not ashes. But just as he may let himself go more than the Puritan in the matter of enjoyment, so he may let himself go more than the Puritan in the matter of melancholy. The sad exuberances of Hamlet are merely like the glad exuberances of Falstaff. This is not conjecture; it is the text of Shakespeare. In the very act of uttering his pessimism, Hamlet admits that it is a mood and not the truth. Readers may not agree with my calling him Catholic with a big C; but they will hardly complain of my calling him Catholic with a small one. And that is here the principal point. Shakespeare was not in any sense a pessimist; he was if anything, an optimist so universal as to be able to enjoy even pessimism."

G.K. Chesterton feels that Shaw did not compare himself with Shakespeare. He compared Shakespeare with Ibsen. According to Shaw, Ibsen, was a crude optimist. Ibsen was a very desperate person. In reality, Ibsen is no match to Shakespeare. Shakespeare was an institution in himself and his works are "splendid monuments of genius."

"It need hardly be explained that Bernard Shaw added to his negative case of a dramatist to be depreciated a corresponding affirmative case of a dramatist to be exalted and advanced. And was not content with so remote a comparison as that between Shakespeare and Bunyan. In his vivacious weekly articles in the Saturday Review, the

100. Ibid., pp. 93, 99, 100.
real comparison upon which everything turned was
the comparison between Shakespeare and Ibsen. He
early threw himself with all possible eagerness
into the public disputes about the great Scandina-
vian; and though there was no doubt whatever about
which side he supported, there was much that was
individual in the line he took. It is not our
business here to explore that extinct volcano.
You may say that anti-Ibsenism is dead, or you may
say that Ibsen is dead; in any case, that contro-
versy is dead, and death, as the Roman poet says,
can alone confess of what small atoms we are made.
The opponents of Ibsen largely exhibited the
permanent qualities of the populace; that is,
their instincts were right and their reasons wrong.
They made the complete controversial mistake of
calling Ibsen a pessimist; whereas, indeed, his
chief weakness is a rather childish confidence in
mere nature and freedom, and a blindness (either
of experience or culture) in the matter of origi-
nal sin. In this sense Ibsen is not so much a
pessimist as a highly crude kind of optimist.
Nevertheless the man in the street was right in
his fundamental instinct, as he always is. Ibsen,
in his pale northern style, is an optimist; but
for all that he is a depressing person. The opti-
mism of Ibsen is less comforting than the pessi-
mism of Dante; just as a Norwegian sunrise, how-
ever splendid, is colder than a Southern night. "101

Shaw said time and again, that Ibsen taught mora-

Shaw said time and again, that Ibsen taught mora-

lity to people. His plays are 'didactic'. He did not
believe in the theory of 'Art for Art's Sake.' But he
has instructed the people, he has given a message to
the people. That is why Shaw preferred Ibsen to any one
else.

101. Ibid., pp.100-102.
"With the full Puritan combination of passion and precision he informed everybody that Ibsen was not artistic, but moral; that his dramas were didactic, that all great art was didactic, that Ibsen was strongly on the side of some of his characters and strongly against others, that there was preaching and public spirit in the work of good dramatists; and that if this were not so, dramatists and all other artists would be more plunderers of intellectual debauchery to be locked up as the Puritans locked up the stage players." 102

Shaw's Arms and the Man shows his amazing success as a vehement satirist of the romantic idea of love and war. Captain Bluntschli behaves in a real and natural manner as a soldier. He is carrying 'chocolates' instead of bullets. He knows that man is more important than weapons. And Major Sergius who glorifies the war is a real humbug who is shunned ultimately by the heroine Raina.

According to G.K.Chesterton, it was a masterpiece in its own way -

"No one who was alive at the time and interested in such matters will ever forget the first acting of Arms and the Man. It was applauded by that indescribable element in all of us which rejoices to see the genuine thing prevail against the plausible; that element which rejoices that even its enemies are alive. Apart from the problems raised in the play, the very form of it was an attractive and forcible innovation. Classic

102. Ibid., pp.102-103.
plays which were wholly heroic, comic plays which were wholly and even heartlessly ironical, were common enough. Commonest of all in this particular time was the play that began playfully, with plenty of comic business, and was gradually sobered by sentiment until it ended on a note of romance or even of pathos. A common place little officer, the butler of the mess, becomes by the last act as high and hopeless a lover as Dante. Or a vulgar and violent pork-butcher remembers his own youth before the curtain goes down. The first thing that Bernard Shaw did when he stepped before the footlights was to reverse this process. He resolved to build a play not on pathos but on bathos. The officer should be heroic first; then every one should laugh at him; the curtain should go up on a man remembering his youth, and he should only reveal himself as a violent pork-butcher when some one interrupted him with an order for pork." 103

The atmosphere created in the drama is that of an army when the noise of fire is abated and the heroine is in delightful mood. All this is in the scheme of a melodrama. Shaw attacks those who glorify wars. Here the folly of Sergius and Raina is exposed. The Captain is the real mouthpiece of Shaw.

"It is well to begin with the superficial; and this is the superficial effectiveness of Shaw; the brilliancy of bathos. But of course the vitality and value of his plays does not lie merely in this; any more than the value of Swinburne lies in alliteration or the value of Ibsen lies in puns. This is not his message; but it is his method; it is his style. The first taste we had of it was in this play of Arms and the Man; but even at the very first it was evident that there was much more in the play than that. Among other things there was one thing not unimportant; there was savage sincerity. Indeed, only a ferociously sincere person can produce such effective flippancies on a matter like war; just as only a strong

103. Ibid., pp.110-111.
man could juggle with cannon-balls. It is all very well to use the word "fool" as synonymous with "Jester", but daily experience shows that it is generally the solemn and silent man who is the fool. It is all very well to accuse Mr. Shaw of standing on his head; but if you stand on your head you must have a hard and solid head to stand on. In Arms and the Man, the ballet of form was strictly the incarnation of a strong satire in the idea.

The play opens in an atmosphere of military melodrama; the dashing officer of cavalry going off to death in an attitude, the lovely heroine left in tearful rapture; the brass band, the noise of guns and the red fire. Into all this enters Bluntschli, the little sturdy crop-haired Swiss professional soldier, a man without a country but with a trade. He tells the army adoring heroine frankly that she is a humbug, and she, after a moment’s reflection, appears to agree with him. The play is like nearly all Shaw’s plays, the dialogue of a conversion. By the end of it, the young lady has lost all her military illusions and admires this mercenary soldier not because he faces guns, but because he faces facts.” 104

There is some similarity between Shaw and Tolstoy in the views about war. For example, both are humanitarian. Both do not want war. But Tolstoy wants to abolish war completely, whatsoever may be the cause. Bernard Shaw feels that if wars are unavoidable, they can be fought, but they should not be glorified. He is deadly against the romantic idea of love and war. This has been described by G.K.Chesterton wonderfully in the following lines:

104. Ibid., pp.112-113.
"This was a fitting entrance for Shaw to his didactic drama; because the commonplace courage which he respects in Bluntschli was the one virtue which he was destined to praise throughout. We can best see how the play symbolises and summarises Bernard Shaw if we compare it with some other attack by modern humanitarians upon war. Shaw has many of the actual opinions of Tolstoy. Like Tolstoy he tells men, with coarse innocence, that romantic war is only butchery and that romantic love is only lust. But Tolstoy objects to these things because they are real; he really wishes to abolish them. Shaw only objects to them in so far as they are ideal; that is in so far as they are idealised. ..... Upon this note, both about sex and conflict, he was destined to dwell through much of his work with the most wonderful variations of witty adventure and intellectual surprise. It may be doubted perhaps whether this realism in love and war is quite so sensible as it looks. Securus Judicat orbi terrarum: the world is wiser than the moderns. The world has kept sentimentalities simply because they are the most practical things in the world. They alone make men do things. The world does not encourage a quite rational lover, simply becomes a perfectly rational lover would never get married. The world does not encourage a perfectly rational army, because a perfectly rational army would run away."

Mrs. Warren's Profession is based on a keen observation of economic causes of prostitution. Because of the untraditional plot of the play, it was banned. The moral idea put through this play is a typical Shavian device.

"The play Mrs. Warren's Profession is concerned with a coarse mother and a cold daughter; the mother drives the ordinary and dirty trade of harlotry; the daughter does not know until the

105. Ibid., pp. 113, 114, 115.
end the atrocious origin of all her own comfort and refinement. The daughter, when the discovery is made, freezes up into an iceberg of contempt; which is indeed a very womanly thing to do.

The whole dramatic art of Shaw is in the literal sense of the word, tragi-comic; I mean that the comic part comes after the tragedy. But just as *You Never Can Tell* represents the nearest approach of Shaw to the purely comic, so *Mrs. Warren's Profession* represents his only complete or nearly complete, tragedy. There is no two penny modernism in it, as in *The Philanderer*. *Mrs. Warren* is as old as *The Old Testament*; "for she hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her; her house is in the gates of hell, going down into the chamber of death. Here are no subtle ethics, as in *Windovers' Houses*; for even those moderns who think it noble that a woman should throw away her honour, surely cannot think it especially noble that she should sell it. Here is no lighting up by laughter, astonishment, and happy coincidence, as in *You Never Can Tell*. The play is a pure tragedy about a permanent and quite plain human problem; the problem is as plain and permanent, the tragedy is as proud and pure, as in *Caius* or *Macbeth*. This play was presented in the ordinary way for public performance and was suddenly stopped by the Censor of Plays." 106

Candida deals with the problem of marriage. Shaw expounds his view that a woman is practical and she likes a strong man more than a weak sentimentalist. That is why she married Morel rather than the poet. The critics of Shaw liked this play very much. They praised it as a masterpiece. G.K. Chesterton justifies their judgment.

"I fancy that the author rather dislikes Candida because it is so generally liked. I give my

own feeling for what it is worth (a foolish phrase), but I think that there were only two moments when this powerful writer was truly, in the ancient and popular sense, inspired; that is, breathing from a bigger self and telling more truth than he knew. One is that scene in a later play where after the secrets and revenges of Egypt have rioted and rotted all round him, the colossal sanity of Caesar is suddenly acclaimed with swords. The other is that great last scene in Candida where the wife, stung into final speech, declared her purpose of remaining with the strong man because he is the weak man. . . . That reversal is the whole idea of virtue; that the last shall be first, and the first last. Considered as a pure place of Shaw therefore, the thing is of the best. But it is also something much better than Shaw. The writer touches certain realities commonly outside his scope; especially the reality of the normal wife's attitude to the normal husband, an attitude which is not romantic but which is yet quite quixotic; which is insanely unselfish and yet quite cynically clear-sighted. It involves human sacrifice without in the least involving idolatry. 107

Chesterton further pays compliments to G.B. Shaw for his clear revelation of the idea of marriage. Marriage is a great event in man's life, and the husband plays an integral part in the life of his wife. This view is quite against the view of anarchists who do not believe in the institution of marriage. But Shaw believes in loyalty and sanctity of this institution.

"The truth is that in this place Bernard Shaw comes within an inch of expressing something that is not properly expressed anywhere else; the idea of marriage. "Cut out brief candle" because he...

107. Ibid., pp. 116-118.
Marriage is not a mere chain upon love as the anarchists say; nor is it a mere crown upon love as the sentimentalists say. Marriage is a fact, an actual human relation like that of motherhood, which has certain human habits and loyalties, except in a few monstrous cases where it is turned to torture by special insanity and sin. A marriage is neither an ecstasy nor a slavery; it is a commonwealth; it is a separate working and fighting thing like a nation. Kings and diplomats talk of "forming alliances" when they make weddings; but indeed every wedding is primarily an alliance. The family is a fact even when it is not an agreeable fact, and a man is part of his wife even when he wishes he wasn't. The twain are one flesh — yes even when they are not one spirit. Man is duplex. Man is a quadruped." 103

The Man of Destiny was written to depict the character of Napoleon. It is based on a fictitious His private documents were stolen by a lady. theme. He tried to get them back but in vain. C. K. Chesterton gives the following keen observation about the play:

"It is a little comedy about Napoleon, and is chiefly interesting as a foreshadowing of his after sketches of heroes and strong men; it is a kind of parody of Caesar and Cleopatra before it was written. In this connection the mere title of this Napoleonic play is of interest. All Shaw's generation and school of thought remembered Napoleon only by his late and corrupt title of The Man of Destiny, a title only given to him when he was already fat and tired and destined to exile. They forgot that through all the really thrilling and creative part of his career, he was not the man of destiny, but the man who defied destiny. Shaw's sketch is extraordinarily clever; but it is
tinged with this unmilitary notion of an inevitable conquest; and this we must remember when we come to those larger canvases on which he painted his more serious heroes. As for the play, it is packed with good things, of which the last is perhaps the best. The long dialogue between Bonaparte and the Irish lady ends with the General declaring that he will only be beaten when he meets an English army under an Irish General. It has also been one of Shaw's paradoxes that the English mind has the force to fulfil orders, while the Irish mind has the intelligence to give them, and it is among these of his paradoxes which contain a certain truth. 109

The Philanderer is a biting satire on physical science. The scientists seem to be more concerned with sickness than the sick man.

"A far more important play is The Philanderer, an ironic comedy which is full of fine strokes and real satire; it is more specially the vehicle of some of Shaw's best satire upon physical science. Nothing could be cleverer than the picture of the young strenuous doctor, in the utter innocence of his professional ambition, who has discovered a new disease, and is delighted when he finds people suffering from it and cast down to despair when he finds that it does not exist. He shows that the scientist tends to be more concerned about the sickness than about the sick man; but it was certainly in his mind to suggest here also that the idealist is more concerned about the sin than about the sinner." 110

Shaw has published his long and exhaustive work on the theory of the drama of ideas titled The Gnosis of Ibsenism. He has followed Ibsen to a

109. Ibid., pp. 122-123.
110. Ibid., pp. 124-125.
great extent. In it he has attacked all conventional
devices of drama. In other words, it can be said that
the book is the chief manifesto of Shaw.

"In 1891 had appeared the brilliant book called
The Quintessence of Ibsenism which some have
declared to be merely the quintessence of Shaw.
However, this may be, it was in fact and profe-
sion the quintessence of Shaw's theory of the
morality or propaganda of Ibsen..............
But the shortest form in which I can state the
idea of The Quintessence of Ibsenism is that
it is the idea of distrusting ideals, which are
universal, in comparison with facts, which are
miscellaneous." 111

You Never Can Tell is a play full of satire wit
and ideas. The play speaks of the craftsmanship of
Shaw.

"You Never Can Tell" (1897), another popular play,
is a good natured satire on the way progressive
ideas soon become out of date. Mrs. Gloucester, a
woman of advanced ideas in her youth, returns to
England after a long absence to find herself
shocked by the new socialist ideas. The action
is gay and farcical, and two of the minor charac-
ters, the waiter and his barrister son, are
Shaw's happiest inventions." 112

G.K. Chesterton has given his happy observation
about the play in the following lines:

"This play is the nearest approach to frank and
objectless exuberance in the whole of Shaw's
work. Punch, with wisdom as well as wit, said
that it might well be called not, You Never Can

111: Ibid., pp.104-105.
112: Fleishmann, W.B., Encyclopaedia of World Litra-
ture in the 20th Century, Vol.3, New York: Frede-
Tall, but you never can be Shaw." And yet if any one will read this blasing farce and then after it any of the romantic farces, such as Pickwick or even The Wrong Box, I do not think he will be disposed to erase or even to modify what I said at the beginning about the ingrained grimness and even in humanity of Shaw's art." 113

Widowers' Houses deals with slum property. And Shaw asserts that many so-called respectable people make property by this means. Caesar and Cleopatra is his earlier attempt to depict the superman and a case is made against romance and heroism. Caesar is a typical Shavian hero. It began a new trend of realistic handling of historical subject. G.K. Chesterton observed that the play is a meteoric failure, brilliant but wasteful.

"I should suppose that Caesar and Cleopatra marks about the turning tide of Bernard Shaw's fortune and fame. Upto this time he had known glory, but never success. He had been wondered at as something brilliant and barren like a meteor; but no one would accept him as a sun, for the test of a sun is that it can make something grow." 114

The appearance of Man and Superman proved the maturity and importance of Shaw as a playwright. He was acclaimed as a dramatist of ideas. The main idea of the play is the pursuit of Ann who is bent upon entrapping

114. Ibid., p.165.
Tanner as her husband. In other words, woman is "Pursuer" and man pursued.

Man and Superman is deeply influenced by Ibsen, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Herbert Spencer. The following lines give a detailed analysis of the play:

"The outline of the play is, I suppose, by this time sufficiently well known. It has two main philosophic motives. The first is that what he calls the life-force (the old infidels called it Nature, which seems a neater word, and nobody knows the meaning of either of them) desires above all things to make suitable marriages, to produce a purer and prouder race, or eventually to produce a Superman. The second is that in this effecting of racial marriages the woman is a more conscious agent than the man. In short, that woman disposes a long time before man proposes. In this play, therefore, woman is made the pursuer and man the pursued.

Schopenhauer said that all existence was a self-deception; and Shaw's only further comment seems to be that it is right to be deceived." 115

In Major Barbara, Shaw says that poverty is the root cause of all evil. According to him 'poverty is a crime'. The real theme of the play is based upon the philosophy of Marx.

In John Bull's Other Island, Shaw has satirised Englishmen. The Englishman becomes more sentimental and emotional when he sees an Irishman. The play is very effective, even though, there is no plot. But the dialogue, wit, satire and humour of Shaw are superb.

115. Ibid., pp. 208, 212, 213.
Saint Joan, is a masterpiece. In this play, Shaw depicts the miraculous powers and undaunting courage of a French girl who defied the army. She is captured and burnt alive. Later on her greatness was understood by the people who confer martyrdom on her.

Back to Methuselah shows the impact of Bergson on Shaw. The play deals with the theory of 'life-force'. According to this theory men can live for hundreds of years if they have a yearning for it. Chesterton is very happy to read Back to Methuselah because it speaks for a longer life for man. And he feels that if Shaw were to live longer, he would have been a staunch Catholic.

".....I am most concerned about works I have not yet mentioned, because I am interested in basic things like theology. And in practice every man is a theologian, even when he is not an atheist. The great letter work of Shaw is in Back to Methuselah; in which he says men must live three hundred years. And I say that if he did live three hundred years, he would be a Catholic." 116

The Apple-Cart is an attack on parliamentary democracy, and a plea for monarchy. The political democracy, would lead to destruction because voters have no correct method of choosing a real, sincere and conscientious candidate.

116. Ibid., p.265.
"The Apple Cart is important as showing how many million miles he is still ahead of the Progressives; how much more Modern he is than the Modernists. He has realised that the really Modern thing is Monarchy." 117

The Doctor's Dilemma is an attack on medical practitioners. Shaw had no faith in injection, vaccination and surgical operations. He is too sure of his preferences.

G.K. Chesterton gives his arguments about The Doctor's Dilemma thus:

"The two important plays that he has since given us are The Doctor's Dilemma and Getting Married. The first is as regards its most amusing and effective elements a throw-back to his old game of guying the men of science. It was a very good game, and he was an admirable player. The actual story of The Doctor's Dilemma itself seems to me less poignant and important than the things with which Shaw had lately been dealing. First of all, as has been said, Shaw has neither the kind of justice nor the kind of weakness that goes to make a true problem. He cannot feel the Doctor's Dilemma, because we cannot really fancy Bernard Shaw being in a dilemma. His mind is both fond of abruptness and fond of finality; he always makes up his mind when he knows the facts and sometimes before. . . . . . . . In short, I am sure a practical physician would drop all these visionary, unworkable modern dreams about type and criminology and go back to the plain business like facts of the French Revolution and the Rights of Man." 118

Getting Married depicts Shaw's views about marriage.

One may agree or disagree with his views but one thing

117. Ibid., pp. 362.
118. Ibid., pp. 216-218.
is certain that Shaw is a real conversationalist.

"His last play is nothing but garrulous talking, that great thing called gossip. And I am happy to say that the play has been as efficient and successful as talk and gossip have always been among the children of men." 119

Georgo Bernard Shaw has had the longest career of a writer. His work is enormous. His dramas of ideas are unparalleled. It goes without saying that Shaw is one of the greatest playwrights in English language. His dialogues are lively. But they are more argumentative, they do not develop character or plot.

"The best-known English dramatist since Shakespear, Shaw was an influential propagandist for socialism, a debunker of manifold illusions, and a superb prose stylist - eloquent, witty and lucid." 120

Whatever the case, the truth is that he was the most popular dramatist of the first quarter of the 20th century. It is very true that he treated his plays as a platform for his views and ideas. That is why he is known as 'polemist' and 'propagandist'. His dialogues are unequalled. His language is crystal clear. His sense of humour, wit and satire are noteworthy. He had firm belief that economic problem was the source of all evil.

119. Ibid., p.221.
G.K.Chesterton paid glorious tributes to Shaw's genius. But he disagrees with Shaw's theory of Superman. G.K.Chesterton believes that the glory of man is as an ordinary man with his limitations and weakness. Man is not the Superman.

"...It was religion that refused to despair of man; it is scientific progress and evolution that are already despairing of him. And it is not the Superman but very truly and actually the Son of Man, who comes in clouds of glory to judge the world." 121

With this passage, we conclude this chapter on G.K.C.'s Social Panorama. The holistic unity of man shaped G.K.C.'s concept of society. He believed in the Englishman on the principle of 'love thy neighbour'. While admiring Bernard Shaw, he points out the contradictions in his position from time to time, Shaw the Puritan, Shaw the Liberal, and Shaw the Socialist. In contrast, he sees in Chaucer, Cobbett and Dickens, the non-intellectual humanism which appealed to him as nearer Christianity with its principles of forgiveness and love. Chesterton's literary taste does not skim the surface of style. He goes deep into the entire thought process, pardons superficial weakness, and judges writers on the basis of their sound sympathies.

121. Chesterton, G.K., George Bernard Shaw, p.296.
Shaw represented entire gamut of human sympathies himself. In judging the writers, Shaw's intellectuality left little room for such human sympathies. Naturally Chesterton could only admire him. But he loves non-intellectual writers of an earlier age who could cling to their affections in the midst of economic crises, poverty and suffering.