THE ELEMENT OF SATIRE IN FICTION WRITTEN BY ENGLISHWOMEN FROM MISS BURNEY TO GEORGE ELIOT

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Wherever there exists a high degree of civilisation, with its complexity of social and political organisations and its necessary concomitant, freedom of speech, we find the literature developing in the direction of satire, and the literature of satire occupies a very interesting chapter in the intellectual and literary history of every nation. After the long tyranny of literary censorship in England, when the nation found itself, at length, in possession of free speech, satire flourished, and Swift, Pope and Addison headed a long list of able writers who wielded the satirical pen. Most of the satire written during the last three centuries was ephemeral, but Swift's "Gulliver's Travels", Pope's "Rape of the Lock", and Addison's "Sir Roger de Coverley" have survived; they live because of their universal, human interest. The abuses which Swift denounced were not merely the institutions of his day, but the faults and vanities of mankind at large; but it is not even this which has saved "Gulliver's Travels" from comparative oblivion,- it is read today, chiefly as a tale of adventure, apart entirely from its political and satirical interest. Satire adds flavour and

piquancy to what already possesses interest and literary excellence, but it cannot survive long, solely upon its own merits.

In the case of " Gulliver's Travels ", "The Rape of the Lock", and " Sir Roger de Coverley", the satire is their very life and breath, yet it is the fictional and romantic elements which make them readable to-day.

The particular type of vice and folly against which satire is powerful and ridicule the only effective weapon, is only to be reached through popular light literature. Treatises on ethics and moral reforms may be written, and invective hurled against the vanities and follies of society, but they will be unread and, therefore, ineffective. The aim of the satirist is, first of all, to gain an audience and then to drive home his lesson; and as the best way to reach the novel-reading public is, obviously through the novel, this became the recognised and favourite vehicle for satire as soon as its popularity was thoroughly established.

Writers like Richardson, Johnson and Godwin, with far-reaching purposes in view, realised the immense possibilities of fiction as a means of expressing their opinions and influencing the public mind; instead of embodying their political and socialistic views in dry pamphlets, they found here, a means of advocating reforms in a way that was sure to reach the public ear. By means of the novel, Richardson strove to bring about moral and ethical reforms; Johnson, in"Rasselas", exposed the vanities of life; God-

win gave expression to his socialistic, political and economic ideas in "Caleb Williams", and " St. Leon"; questions of far-reaching importance and wide range, embracing the various aspects of social and political life are brought forward for discussion and solution. Here the evils to be satirised are of immense and immediate social and political significance and accordingly, a ~~lof~~ lofty, "strenuous" tone characterises the satire; the satirist is fired with indignation against the wrongs and injustice involved; but where mens financial and political wellbeing is not threatened, when the evils are subtle and insidious, affecting merely the character, the feeling is more subdued and the satire less violent. To some, however,the correction of the minor faults of temper and manners,the ridicule of the petty ills of domestic and social life, have appeared to be matters of importance to the world at large and to offer a fit field for the satirist.

It remained for the women-writers of fiction to strike this new note in satire, to create a field of their own in which they have always held and still hold supremacy; that of light, domes-satire, the harmless, kindly satire of manners, mildly rebuking and patiently correcting the minor faults of society, the unrefine ments, the small vulgarities, selfishnesses and littlenesses of everyday life which cause friction inthe narrow home and social

world, just as political questions, moral and economic problems and ideals form matters of contention in the political world in which men move, and in which they would permit no feminine hand to meddle. Even in this, their own particular domain, they are not left in undisputed possession of their right to a place among English satirists. Because their aims are modest, because their tools, though keener are more minute, because, in short, their humour and satire, their whole work, is different and more subtle, they are denied recognition and summarily dismissed with the hackneyed verdict, that "women have no real sense of humour". This is an important point in the discussion of the satire of women novelists, because a sense of humour is the first great essential to satire, and if we admit that humour is a trait not compatible with the feminine mind, we must abandon at once all consideration of the subject of women satirists.

"A sense of the comic", says Lowell, " seems to be implanted to keep man sane, and preserve balance between body and soul". It is this saving sense of humour which is the greatest factor in the preservation of social sanity and order, and the greatest preventative of moral tragedies such as form the theme of many of the novels of George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell. Not that Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot are in any way deficient in humour, but ~~they~~

they frequently chose for their heroes and heroines, characters who were, in themselves unhumourous, and upon whom, in consequence the serious aspect of life bore with crushing weight.

Imagine a Desdemona, an Ophelia or a Cordelia, with the gift of Rosamond's humour - the tragedy, so far as they are concerned, is banished immediately. " As You Like It " and " The Merchant of Venice" might have been as tragic as " Hamlet" or " Macbeth", were it not for the exquisite humour and consequently well-balanced minds and sane judgment of their heroines.

We have nothing in the fiction of women writers to match the broad farce of Goldsmith and Sheridan, the buffoonery of Dickens or the coarse ribaldry of Swift, but who can deny to the creator of the immortal Mr. Collins a sense ofthe comic, or to the portrayer of Elizabeth Bennet, the delightful, vivacious humour with which she has endowed her heroine? And could any but the keenest, the most refined sense of humour, have delineated with so much truth and sublety, the situation and relation of Dorothea Brooke and Mr. Casaubon in " Middlemarch "? It is gravely carried out from beginning to end, but it is absurd to suppose that the mind which has given us such delineations as Celia Brooke and Mrs. Poyser and a dozen other masterly, humourous characterisations could have failed to perceive the

underlying humour of the situations in which she deliberately places the over-serious Dorothea.

The writer who prepared the way for the particular type of satirical fiction which Miss Burney introduced, was Addison. It had been his aim, not only to improve English manners and morals, but to educate the society of the day and to refine public taste; and by his character-sketches and essays he had shown the charm of simplicity and naturalness and demonstrated that fiction could be rendered interesting without intricacy of plot, violence of passion or accumulation of melodramatic incidents, mysteries and horrors which were so popular at the time.

The great difference between the work of Addison and Jane Austen and such novelists as Dickens and Thackeray, is that their work is on a smaller canvas; indeed, Jane Austen, herself, compares her work to miniature-painting on a piece of ivory two-inches square,"on which I work with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labour." Dickens is fond of broad, Turneresque effects, Jane Austen and Addison carefully avoid all such; it is their delight to paint still-life, which they do with infinite minuteness and precision, reminding us of the work of the Dutch realistic school. The theme of Dickens and Thackeray is human life, that of Jane Austen and Addison, the domestic life of a small circle. The two types of art cannot be judged by the same principles.

Goldsmith, also, employed this simplicity of manner and gently ironical tone and adapted it to the demands of the novel. "The Vicar of Wakefield" can scarcely be classedas a satirical novel, yet, inasmuch as it is a faithful representation of real life , with its contrasts and incongruities; inasmuch as it is a criticism of life as distinct from the fiction of romance or adventure, it isessentially satirical. For all history, (and fictitious histories must be included) giving an impartial view of the progress and development of the human race; placing in ~~juxt~~ juxtaposition, contrasting types, ideals and accomplishments, and allowing the conscience to draw its own conclusions, performs all the functions of satire.

Miss Burney's work, however, resembles that of Goldsmith, mainly in its simplicity of plot and treatment and its narrowness of sphere. Her satire, also, shows the same general direction but it is characterised by an acerbity of which there is no trace in the pages of Goldsmith. Human nature is his theme and it is the faults arising out of character and personality, the wrong side, as it were, of people's good qualities, which he satirises, never forgetting for a moment, that the right side is there. Miss Burney, sees and satirises merely social manners ~~a~~ and customs. If a young and beautiful girl conducts herself in society with grace, modesty and dignity, Miss Burney assumes thatshe is the type of perfection throughout; her ideal of human nature appearing to be that which could go through the forms

and requirements of good society, with propriety and credit. To her, as to the world which was her study, manners and "gentility" ~~were~~ *are* all-important; she merely differs from the world as to what constitutes good manners and "gentility".

Miss Burney's great talent is observation, but she is deficient in sentiment and also in that kind of sympathetic humour which not only perceives and appreciates the absurd but derives genuine amusement from it. Keen observation, however, is a powerful and necessary quality in a satirist, and it is with Miss Burney as a satirist that we are concerned.

She takes no account of the greater issues of life; none of her characters are accomplishing, or even aiming at the accomplishment of, anything worth while; she does not concern herself with the passion and the tragedy of life; her sphere is circumscribed and confined almost exclusively to the theatre and the drawing-room, beyond which she seldom ventures. But her extraordinary powers of observation supply her with unlimited material and opportunity for the exercise of her satire even within this narrow circle.

Undoubtedly, the primary aim of her novels is diversion, yet the didactic element is prominent; she considers society sadly in need of reformation and, forthwith, she makes war upon the social manners of her time with keen-edged satire as her weapon. And everything was ready to her hand; she possessed keen observation, wit and a peculiarly caustic humour; she had also the touch of personal

antagonism and dissatisfaction which render satire poignant; but more than this, the time was ripe for just that kind of satire in which she excelled, to be most effective. Although the follies, vulgarities and all the minor ills of social manners were at thier height, they were felt to be defects; there was a growing dissatisfaction among the more refined and sensible portion of society; the reaction had already set in and Miss Burney did not start it, but merely accelerated its development. Her work came at the right moment, and it is to this seasonableness, combined with her strong sense of the existing evils and the skill of her satirical treatment, rather than to the literary merit of her work, that her enormous and immediate popularity was due.

Miss Burney did not possess creative genius, but imitative talent she possessed in a very high degree. She was unable to create a living character, but she could portray with infinite minuteness, outward characteristics, humours and types. She had not Addison's power of delineating with subtle irony and exquisite sympathy of touch the heart and soul; her talent was of a more superficial order and dealt with the grosser material of the external manifestations of character; manners, affectations, humours and eccentricities.

Her extraordinarily keen observation of the little ridiculosities and peculiarities of certain types, frequently betrays her into a broad farcical kind of humour which reminds one not a little of Dickens in general manner, though lacking Dicken's

genuine mirth and sympathy of treatment. The whole group comprising Evelina's grandmother, the Branghtons and their associates are quite Dickensonian. She, too, indulges sometimes in melodrama,- as for instance, in the scene where Mr. Harrel escapes from his creditors and shoots himself; but, fortunately, these excursions into the melodramatic are rare with Miss Burney for they are foreign to the general character of her talent, which was calculated rather to exaggerate the insignificant than to portray forcibly a dramatic situation. Her attempts at the dramatic leave us unmoved, while she has the power of creating our liveliest interest in the sensations of a young lady attending her first ball. Like Dickens, too, she allows her satirical vein to carry her into the field of caricature. The Captain in "Cecilia" is merely a puppet with a generous sprinkling of French words in his vocabulary, and this affectation seems to be the only excuse for his appearance on the stage at all; Miss Larolles chatters always in the superlative, Miss Leeson is consistently "supercilious", and both exist only as butts for the sarcasms of Mr. Gosport who is equally guiltless of any essential participation in the movement of the plot.

We find a host of unessential caricatures in Dickens, but he treats them in a charmingly genial and humourous manner, with an air of genuine mirth and pathos which is irresistible.

In "Cecilia", the satire is strained, but "Evelina", her earlier and far superior novel, abounds in exquisitely subtle yet shrewd

satiric touches; there is a brightness, a spontaneity, about this earlier work, a sparkling vivacity which never flags, and the characters, though they show a tendency to caricature, are varied and lifelike.

The plot of "Evelina" is of the slightest, merely the, "History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World", as told by herself in a series of charming, girlish letters, chiefly to her guardian, the Reverend Mr. Villars. The simplicity of the plot lends itself itself admirably to that humourously satirical mode of treatment in which Miss Burney's peculiar power lay. With Evelina we are introduced to social London of the time; and not merely to one phase of it . Our heroine is connected by education, tastes an and friendship, with a refined social circle into which she is introduced by Mrs. Mirvan and her daughter; while on the other hand, she is brought into contact, through her relationship with Madame Duval, which she is forced to recognise, with an entirely different grade of society, represented by the Branghton family and their immediate "set". The situation is one excellently adapted for the display of the satirical power which Miss Burney exerts with extraordinary spirit, and yet, with a degree of moderation which only impresses one after reading the more unrestrained and over-drawn satire and ill-humoured caricature of " Cecilia".

The Brangton family presents a whole group of admirably drawn and carefully contrasted personages who are as entertaining as almost any similar minor group portrayed by Hogarth or Dickens himself. We feel that they are drawn from life by a master-hand;the family likeness is there, the similarities of class, concurrence of tastes,ideals and manners that are inevitable in a narrow social circle like that of the Brangtons; the members of thegroup all harmonize perfectly and yet are perfectly differentiated. Mr.Brown,Mr. Smith,Mr. Brangton and Tom satirize themselves and one another unconsciously and in good faith,at every turn in the conversation; Miss Branghton and Polly keep up a running fire of unwitting sarcasm which in the "genteel" presence of Evelina rebounds upon themselves. Let us take a glimpse of the family party at the opera:-

"Two tickets of admission were given him. Mr. Branghton,in his turn,now stared at the doorkeeper, and demanded what he meant by giving him only two tickets for a guinea?"

"Only two, Sir,"said the man;"why don't you know that the tickets are half a guinea each?"

"Half-a-guinea each,"repeated Mr.Branghton,"why I never heard of such a thing in my life. And pray,Sir,how many will they admit?"

"Just as usual,Sir,one person each."

"But one person for half-a-guinea._-Why I only want to sit in

the pit, friend." - - - - -

When the curtain dropped they all rejoiced.

"How do you like it? - and how do you like it?" passed from one to another with looks of the utmost contempt. "As for me , said Mr. Branghton, ' they've caught me once, but if ever they do again I'll give 'em leave to sing me to Bedlam for their pains: for such a heap of stuff never did I hear; there isn't one ounce of sense in the whole Opera, nothing but one continued squeaking from beginning to end."

" If I had been in the pit," said Madame Duval, ' I should have liked it vastly, for music is my passion; but sitting in such a place as this, is quite unbearable.'

Miss Branghton, looking at me, declaredm that she was not "genteel" enough to admire it. Miss Polly confessed that if they would but sing English , she would like it very well."

The brother wished he might raise a riot in the house, because then he might get his money again.

And finally, they all agreed that it was monstrous dear."

The feeling and expression of each is perfectly true to his or her personality, there is an individuality even about their vulgarisms. When we compare this lightness and sureness of touch with a characteristic satirical passage from " Cecilia", the inferiority of the latter in the method and character of the satiric treatment is only too apparent. Miss Burney is no longer content with delicately ironical touches artistically

applied, her sarcasm is vehement and direct, she can no longer employ it in moderation and keep it subordinate to plot and char acter; she creates a mouthpiece and through the character of Mr. Gosport she gives full rein to her satiric power which runs away with her, page after page, before she can control it.

Cecilia, after suffering under Miss Larolles and Miss Leeson, is next subjected to the long-winded Mr. Gosport, who, evidently rejoiced at finding so rare a listener, launches forth into bitter sarcasms on the evils of society. To Cecilia's expressed wonder at the behavior of Miss Leeson he replies; "Are you then to learn that there are certain young ladies who make it a rule never to speak except to their own cronies?" "The "ton" Misses as they are called, who now infest the town, are in two divisions, the supercilious and the voluble. The Supercilious are like Miss Leeson, silent, scornful, languid and affected, and disdain all converse but with those of their own set. The Voluble, like Miss Larolles, are flirting, communicative, restless and familiar and attack without the smallest ceremony, every one they think worthy their notice. But they have this in common, that at home they think of nothing but admiration, and that every where theyhold in supreme contempt all but themselves."

" But it is not capacity alone you are to consult when you talk to the misses of the "ton"; were their understandings only to be considered, they would be wonderfully easy of access. In

order therefore ,to render their commerce somewhat difficult they will only be pleased by an observance of their humours which are ever most various and most exuberant where the intellects are weakest and least cultivated."

The collected remarks of Mr.Gosport would form a very biting little essay on eighteenth century manners; but in a novel, and especially, in a novel of the character of "Cecilia" Mr. Gosport and his sarcasms are obviously and painfully intrusive. Macaulay attributes the change in MissBurney's style between "Evelina" and "Cecilia" to the influence of Dr. Johnson; however, this may have been, it is certain that, not merely the style but the whole spirit has altered and deteriorated; the freshness and charm are gone; the wit, like the language, is often heavy and forced. The writer of "Evelina" was inexperienced and ingenuous; every page of the book is permeated with the spirit of satire, but it is spontaneous and characteristic, the natural outcome of the story. But it seems as though, when once convinced of her power of satirical expression, she was tempted to employ it moredirectly and self-consciously. If satire consists merely in the contrast brought out between the ideal and the inferior, Miss Burney, in her second novel, goes about her self-appointed task in the mostobvious and straightforward manner possible. Cecilia represents the ideal young lady of her time, beautiful, cultured, accomplished and innocent

yet with extraordinary composure and self-possession and unerring judgment. To quote Miss Burney's own description, which applies equally well to each and every one of her heroines; "Her form was elegant, her heart was liberal, her countenance announced the intelligence of her mind, her complexion varied with every emotion of her soul, and her eyes, the heralds of her speech, now beamed with understanding and now glistened with sensibility." This rare and sensitive creature, is brought into contact with ~~with~~ the fashionable world of Londonand her excellencies put to shame the general emptiness and insincerity of "high society."

What more simple and effective method could be devised!—a method which would almost shake our faith in Miss Burney as a humourist. For, humour implies, first of all, a nice sense of proportion and revolts, at once, from such bald and almost vulgar directness of method. Miss Burney assumes the rôle of moralist and mentor, and her earnestness of purpose blinds her to the irony of fate, which contrives that "Cecilia", holding up a mirror to society, stands, ~~herself~~ a satire upon herself and her creatress. Cecilia's lack of true humour is but the reflection of Miss Burney's mind which, while, acutely conscious and appreciative of <u>absurdity</u>., seems, yetvto have no perception of <u>irony</u>. We see the curl of the lip that she relishes her own wit and satire, but when do we feel that she smiles from sheer delight at the ludicrousness of harmless oddity or lovable eccentricity? Her at-

titude is far removed from that overflowing geniality which characterizes Goldsmith and Addison; indeed ,were it not for the incongruity of comparing great with small, far-reaching purpose, with mere diversion,we would be inclined to feel that MissBurney's satire has something of the flavour of Swift's,with whom she shares that unhappy faculty of perceiving and appreciating the absurd without enjoying its absurdity.

In "Cecilia",the satire is too serious and pointed. The characters are, for the most part,not even caricatured human beings but the embodiments of Virtues and Vices,reminding one strongly of a mediaeval play. Cecilia's three guardians might be termed respectively,"Avarice","Prodigality" "and"Pride"; Miss Larolles "Volubility"; and so on through the whole list of characters, and we would not be conscious of any incongruity. Miss Burney herself,indeed, has given her personages names as suggestive as many of Dickens'. This method of satire by means of burlesque and caricature is undoubtedly an inferior form of the art and eminently unfitted for the purpose to which Miss Burney puts it,that of ridiculing the minor faults of social manners.

Into "Evelina" Miss Burney had put her best work and all the first freshness of her gifted mind, and never again did she attain to such excellence, "Cecilia" is largely repetition; it is much more ambitious and self-conscious; the freshness is gone and the sparkling satirical humour has changed into strained caricature and caustic comment.

Yet though exaggerated, there is no doubt that the picture she has given us ofthe manners and tone of London society during the years prior to the Revolution is by far the most faithful and powerfull which we have. After "Cecilia"s success, a success due more to the popularity of her earlier novel than to its own merits, Miss Burney, now Madame D'Arblay, continued to write novels, but her later works are almost unknown except to students of literature. And, although "Evelina" and "Cecilia" are still read and enjoyed by a few, it must be owned that her circle of admirers is small and that her importance in literature now rests, less upon her merits as a novelist than on her position as the introducer of that type of fiction and satire which Miss Austen brought to such perfection.

A comparison between the minds of Miss Burney and Miss Austen would yield us much the same result, on a smaller scale, as a comparison between Dickens and Thackeray, in point of satirical power, in that Dickens and Miss Burney are alike superficial in the delineation of character; they work from the exterior, whereas, Thackeray and Jane Austen, with subtler art and true psychological insight, paint from the soul outward. The manners of Miss Burney's characters are the result of social codes and customs; Miss Austen, also depicts manners, but they are the manners which have their source in the inmost soul and

character. In Miss Burney's pages we see only the social world as reflected in the smooth surface-character; Miss Austen shows us lifelike characters, more real to us than many of the persons whom we meet.

Jane Austen rather suggests comparison with the two greatest masters of character-painting in English - Shakespeare and Thackeray. All three are consummate artists, and all possess that insight and intuition peculiar to genius of the highest order. We can place, in imagination, Rosamond and Portia, Becky Sharp and Beatrix beside Emma Woodhouse and Elizabeth Bennet without detracting, in the least, from the charm of the two latter. These are creations of genius, beside which, even "Evelina", and Dicken's "Dora" and "Esther" are stiff conventional phantoms. Rosamond's satiric playfulness and Portia's playful satire, find their worthy, modern counterparts in the delightful wit and humour of Jane Austen's heroines.

There is a singular charm in the contemplation of Jane Austen's tranquil, happy life, untroubled by struggling ambition, hardship or disappointment such as usually fall to the lot of genius. In a beautiful passage Mr. W.J.Dawson says of her; [1] "There is a genuine dignity and pathos in the picture of this quiet, cheerful, clear-eyed woman, far away from the interests of life, sitting down to write books which no publisher was to

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1. W.J.Dawson: "The Makers of the English Novel"

venture on for years, yet so absolutely assured of the rightness of her method and so full of the quiet enjoyment of her own work that her patience never varied, her temper never soured her brightness never dulled. Perhaps public praise would have spoiled her; it was best that so delicate a gift should mature itself in silence and seclusion.

One can fancy that such books as hers could only grow by slow processes of crystallization in the stillest of atmospheres and that any enlargement of her life which might have come from contact with a tumultuous world would also have meant the arrest of her genius and the deterioration of her style."

She was the daughter of a country clergyman and her quiet, uneventful life was passed almost entirely among the rural gentlefolk who fill her pages.

Her limitations are very great andshe respected them absolutely Sheknew nothing of politics, trade or business; passion, tragedy, and philosophy were unknown to her ; but the life that she knew, the middle-class life of rural England, she rendered with incomparable truth and delicacy.

Jane Austen is a true realist, but her realism is of a moderate and refined type, as far removed from the coarse, uncompromising realism of Zola on the one hand, as from Miss Burney's exaggerated idealization, on the other.

Her realism is of that perfect type which, while presenting character and circumstance exactly as they are, without flattery or idealization, contrives also to infuse life and interest into the picture; the characters she depicts are commonplace, the plot simple, the incidents, natural, yet she gives life and piquant interest to the commonest incidents, and by subtle suggestion and light satirical touches she enables us to penetrate beneath the surface and perceive the eternal drama of life which is enacted as completely in the little domestic circle as in the active world outside. Miss Burney may almost rival her in keenness of observation, but in the case of Miss Austen observation is merely the handmaid to that fusing power of genius which thoroughly re-creates the material gleaned by the faculty of ~~observation~~. Miss Burney's is reproductive talent; Miss Austen possesses creative genius.

To this gift of observation, is added a rare and delicate sense of humour and the two combined, result in an extraordinary keenness of perception and a satirical power which is only saved from acerbity by her generous sympathy and tender sentiment. With this wide sympathy and freedom from prejudice and her unerring sense of proportion, it seems strange to find Jane Austen confining herself, as she does, exclusively to a narrow circle and, moreover, ignoring entirely the greater issues of

human life. Her books contain no reference to the great political and social events of the time; we find no trace of philosophical questionings, analyses and doubts; or of the moral tragedy that follows in their train. She is an artist through and through, with no moral lesson to teach, no philosophy of life to offer, no ethical or psychological problems to analyse. She takes the world as she finds it , and is conscious of no duty of amending it. She is content to allow people to preserve their individualities and characters; and faulty as they all are, and shrewd as she is in detecting and satirising their foibles, it is all done in a tone of friendly raillery and never of bitter reproach. Mr. Woodhouse, she satirises unsparingly, yet taken all in all, he is a personality and not a mere butt for criticism; he is entertaining because he is so truly human, and there is no human character utterly devoid of interest if we have the power to penetrate it. When Miss Burney satirises, she places before us the type of perfection in all things, and by this standard she places one by one, all the other characters, whom, falling short in one or other particular, she dismisses with a caustic and contemptuous sarcasm. Nothing could be further removed from Jane Austen's method of treatment; her characters are all complete, well-rounded personalities and not mere impersonations of moral qualities.

Jane Austen's chief strength is in dialogue , and with this is closely associated her power of satirical comment. Her personages talk always in character, yet we do not find any of the exaggeration of mannerisms which is so wearisome in the novels of Miss Burney and Dickens; they explain themselves as people do, and every syllable they utter leaves us better acquainted with them than we were before they spoke. To Miss Burney a person represented one quality so strikingly as to obscure all other characteristics ; Jane Austen recognized fully the complex and multiform character of an individual. It is human nature that Miss Austen satirises , whereas Miss Burney criticises , merely the veneer of social manners which is superimposed on, and partially or wholly conceals, the true personality.

Miss Austen's characters are all worked out in a tone of subtle irony , shading occasionally into keen satire, and throughout all the conversations, likewise , we find ~~the same~~ an atmosphere of gently ironical comment.

In one particular , Jane Austen's character-delineation reminds us of that genial, almost femininely sympathetic depicter of family life , Oliver Goldsmith. As Goldsmith was especially happy in the portrayal of clergymen and women , so also , was that Jane Austen's particular gift. When ~~Jane Austen~~ She creates a grave , manly, dignified , man of the world

like Mr. Knightley, he is apt to be stiff and exasperating; Goldsmith's worldly villain is equally unnatural; but what absolute mastery is shown by both in their treatment of such femininely gentle, guileless and benevolent men as the Vicar and Mr. Woodhouse. More than one seene in " Emma ", reminds one of that in "The Vicar of Wakefield" where the ingenuous Vicar is so completely hoodwinked by the worldly squire. Both the Vicar and Mr. Woodhouse are pre-eminently unworldly and preoccupied, the one with his good works, the other with his fancied ill-health, and both are blind to the love-affairs going on all around them. Mr. Woodhouse's old-maidishness and querulous egotism, Miss Austen satirises unsparingly; he sees everything from one point of view only, and considers everything only in relation to himself and his own comfort, and yet he is not mean or even entirely selfish - merely a thorough egoist. Miss Austen puts her finger upon this weak spot in his character and among the many passages of shrewd satire at his expense, we may quote one , of delightfully keen and telling sarcasm which lets us into the secret of his character at once.

A party is held at Hartfield, and "as usual upon such occasions poor Mr. Woodhouse's feelings were in sad warfare. He loved to have the cloth laid, because it had been the fashion of his youth,

" Emma." vol.1. page 21.

but his conviction of suppers being very unwholesome made him rather sorryto see anything put on it; and while his hospitality would have welcomed his visitors to everything, his care for their healthmade him grieve that they would eat. Such another small basin of gruel as his own was all that he could, with thorough self approbation, recommend; though he might constrain himself, while the ladies were comfortably clearing the nicer things, to say, "Miss Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of these eggs. An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome. Serl understands the boiling of an eggbetter than anybody. I would not recommend an egg boiled by anybody else - but you need not be afraid, they are very small- one of our small eggs will not hurt you. Mrs. Bates, let Emma help you to a little bit of tart - a very little bit. Ours are all apple tarts. You need not be afraid of unwholesome preserves here. I do not advise the custard. Mrs Goddard, what say you to half a glass of wine ? A small half-glass, put into a tumbler of water? I do not think it could disagree with you!"

Mr. Woodhouse is but one of the delightful, satirical delineations which we find in "Emma". Emma herself, clever, witty and altogether charming as she is, comes in for a large share of the satire. She hasfaults, not of manners but of character, which are not obvious to her proud, indulgent father, but discernible only by the clear eyes of Miss Austen. She has humanising faults which we long for in vain in Evelina and Cecilia. She is beautiful and consequently somewhat vain; she is clever and, therefore, a little

egotistical; she is witty and occasionally her wit runs away with her judgment and good feeling. But Jane Austen has endowed her with a good heart, capable of correction, even when correction involves some injury to her self-love. She is piqued to find that she is not absolutely irresistible; she discovers with mortification that her judgment and perception are not infallible; she learns to value kindness above cleverness and we leave her far more adorable than in that state of " natural folly" in which we feel that Evelina will continue to the end.

The satirical touches which so perfectly and so minutely bring out the shades of Emma's character, are as elusive as they are exquisitely delicate; the satire nowhere occurs in passages but the whole treatment, every line, almost every word, is permeated with irony and sarcasm.

Emma is a born matchmaker; she forms elaborate schemes for arranging the love-affairs of a young and beautiful girl whom she has adopted as friend and protegé. The mistakes, into which her attempts at matchmaking lead her, form the substance of the plot and the occasion for the satire. First she persuades her young friend, Harriet, to fall in love with Mr. Elton, a conceited and vain young clergyman whose attentions to herself, she obstinately interprets as directed towards Harriet. When Mr. Elton proposes to Emma, the general misunderstanding is cleared up; all three are somewhat mortified, but no hearts are broken and Emma im-

mediately proceeds to arrange another scheme for marrying Harriet. This time she designs her friend for Mr. Churchill, but Harriet ventures upon her own account to fall in love with Mr. Knightley, who loves Emma, and with whom Emma is rather in love without knowing it. When circumstances again bring about an understanding,* "a few minutes were sufficient for making her (Emma) acquainted with her own heart". Harriet suffers another disillusionment but easily consoles herself with a young farmer with whom she was in love before Emma undertook to cultivate in her an inclination for more refined society.

Mr. Elton, is one of Miss Austen's most masterly delineations, belonging to that type of ambitious, small-minded clergymen who seem especially to have roused the contempt and anger of all women writers of fiction.

Although "Emma " is Miss Austen's longest and most elaborate work and is generally considered her masterpiece, her earlier novel, "Pride and Prejudice", written at the age of twenty-one, is perhaps better known and more popular. Even in this youthful work Miss Austen shows herself a keen and accomplished satirist.

The story opens with an introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, and before the end of the first, short chapter, we have a thor-

* " Emma." vol.1. page 177.

ough grasp of the relations existing between the two, and understand perfectly what part each is to play , and what will be the influence of each upon the characters and actions of their daughters. Mrs. Bennet is utterly vain and foolish and would succeed in making life a misery to any but a Mr. Bennet who manages toderive a good deal of diversion , both for himself and us , out of the humourous and satirical possibilities of the situation. Mr. Bennet takes life much in the spirit in which we can imagine Jane Austen herself regarding it , in the light of a comedy in which it would be absurd to take things too seriously.

Not only does Jane Austen miss the tragic side of the married life of Mr.and Mrs. Bennet, but she ignores the serious aspect of the flippant nature and unprincipledness of Lydia and her elopement with Wickham, treating the whole affair in the same light satiric vein. This too , Mr. Bennet, takes very philosophically and merely remarks sarcastically, that of all his admirable sons-in-law Wickham is his favourite.

As in "Emma", the most caustic satire isdirected towards the clergyman who is a constant quantity in MissAusten's novels. For the most part she is very moderate and restrained in the exercise of her humour and satire , but in the case of Mr. Collins she seems to have been completely carried away by the fascination of her own creation and indulged her satiric vein

to the full. Mr. Collins only just escapes being a caricature, yet how delightfully human he is . The passage, in which he proposes to Elizabeth Bennet, is a masterpiece of satirical humour.

After a third refusal on the part of Elizabeth, Mr. Collins continues: "When I next do myself the honour of speaking to you on the subject I shall hope to receive a more favourable answer than you have now given me; though I am far from accusing you of cruelty at present, because I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character."

"You must give me leavetoflatter myself, my dear cousin, that your refusal of my addresses is merely words, of course. My reasons for believing it are briefly these;- It does not appear to me that my hand is unworthy your acceptance, or that the establishment I can offer would be any other than highly desirable. My situation in life, my connections with the family of De Bourgh and my relationship to your own, are circumstances highly in my favour; and you should take it into consideration, that in spite of your manifold attractions it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage will ever be made you."

"Pride and Prejudice" page 111.

" " page 112.

"Northanger Abbey" is, perhaps, the most thoroughly satirical of all Jane Austen's novels and the only one in which her satire seems to take on a tinge of personal antagonism. The whole scheme and plot of the book is satirical. It is a burlesque of the novel of mystery and horror in vogue at the time and of which she takes Mrs, Radcliffe's "Mysteries of Udolpho" as the particular object of her attack.

Parody, as it is an inferior form of satire, is likewise one in which it is most difficult to attain to a high degree of literary excellence. Yet though the scope of "Northanger Abbey " is narrow it is so exquisitely rounded and finished that it is a complete work of art and the delightful freshness of its humour, the keenness of the satire more than atone for the narrowness of its limits. The whole book bristles with satirical passages, most of them proceeding from the lips of Mr. Tilney whose attitude is sarcastic throughout. Indeed, Mr. Tilney is slightly, very slightly, reminiscent of Mr. Gosport, whose bitter satire occupies so many pages of Miss Burney's "Cecilia" . Mr. Tilney, also , seldom speaks but ironically, and his most frequent theme is the frivolity and empty-mindedness of young ladies whose ideas of life are distorted by reading mysterious and "horrid" romances.

For Catherine's amusement he invents a romance connected with the "Abbey" , containing all the stock elements of the "horror

novel" . Catherine, who has just finished the perusal of "The Mysteries of Udolpho", is worked up to such a pitch of excitement that she expects every moment, to become the heroine of some thril ling adventure, and looks for mysteries in the most commonplace circumstances.

Catherine Morland herself, is a satire on the "elegant" heroine of Miss Burney and Mrs. Radcliffe; she is described as a child, as having " a thin awkward figure, a sallow skin without colour, dark lank hair and strong features. So much for her person, and not less unpropitious for heroism seemed her mind. She was fond of all boys' plays, and greatly preferred cricket, not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird or watering a rose-bush." During her first visit to Bath, Catherine shows her ignorance at every turn and is Miss Austen takes the opportunity of delivering a thrust at Miss Burney. "She (Catherine) was heartily ashamed of her ignorance- a misplaced shame, where people wish to attach, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman, especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can." The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful

"Northanger Abbey" p. 1

" " p. 103.

girl, have been already set forth by the capital pen of a sister author; and to her treatment I will only add in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of them too reasonable and too well-informed themselves, to desire anything more in woman than ignorance."

The weakly sentimental heroine, so popular in the fiction of her time, seems to have thoroughly aroused Jane Austen's disgust. In " Sense and Sensibility" she depicts in Marianne an improved specimen of this type, whom she places side by side with her own ideal heroine in the person of Marianne's sister, Elinor, with evident satiric intent of which she gives us a hint at the outset. "Marianne," she says, " was born to an extraordinary fate, she wasborn to discover the falsehood of her own opinions."

The different effects of similar disappointments upon the minds of the two sisters is cleverly brought out. Marianne, deserted by her lover, gives herself over to grief and bewails her lot to the great discomfort of herself and her friends. Her sister under still more trying circumstances, bears her disappointment with pride, fortitude and common-sense, and unselfishly forgets her own grief in the attempt to console Marianne. At last, Mari-

"Sense and Sensibility" p. 53.

anne comes to realise and acknowledge the mistakenness of her views and attitude and to emulate Elinor's strength and steadiness of mind.

In " Persuasion ", critics are in the habit of detecting signs of the decline of Miss Austen's powers, but the signs are not easy to find. True, it is more subdued than the earlier novels in tone and colouring, the plot is of the thinnest and the wit and humour less striking ; but in subtle analysis of character, in keen penetration of complex motives, in perfection of finish and delicacy of satiric humour, it is at least the equal of her more lively and popular works.

We have already suggested a certain affinity between Jane Austen and Thackeray in the spirit and quality of their satiric treatment. Both seem to have perfect control of their characters and to know, not merely the motives, but the very motive of motives that prompt the thoughts and actions of each individual.

Take, for instance, Thackeray's treatment of the incident of Mrs. Osborne's parting from her son. To the ordinary observer her grief seems the perfectly natural outcome of disinterested, maternal affection, the anguish of parting from her only son who is going to encounter untold dangers. But how does Thackeray regard her excessive grief? He penetrates beneath the surface and with peculiarly keen and characteristic

irony, he exposes the selfish motives which are mingled with her affectionate reluctance to part with her son. So ,also, Jane Austen unravells and exposes to our gaze the network of conflicting motives which prompt the words and actions of her characters. Mrs. Musgrove in " Persuasion " is an admirable instance of her power in this kind of subtle motive-probing. Mrs Musgrove's rapid alternations of feeling,, partly sincere, partly affected, upon learning that Mr. Musgrove is to go to a dinner party while she remains at home with her sick child, are very skilfully brought out. She wishes to go and yet she wishes not to seem to want to go ;she wishes it to appear that her husband ought not to go , but that if he does go ,he ought not not to go without her: she tries to make it appear that the child's illness is the reason why he should not go , and yet,is the reason why she should; she says to Anne, " So you and I are to be left to shift by ourselves with this poor , sick child; and not a creature coming near us all the evening. I knew how it would be . This is always my luck. If there is anything disagreeable going on, men are always sure to get out of it, and Charles is as bad as any of them. Very unfeeling ! I must say it is very unfeeling of him to be running away from his little boy. Talks of him going on well ; how does he know that he is going on well, that there may not be a sudden change half a

"Persuasion" p.55

an hour hence? I did not think Charles would have been so unfeeling. So here he is to go away and enjoy himself, and because I am the poor mother I am not to be allowed to stir; and yet, I am sure, I am more unfit than anybody else, to be about the child; my being the mother is the very reason why my feelings ought not to be tried. I am not at all equal to it, you saw how hysterical I was yesterday." When, finally, she gains her point through Anne's good-natured unselfishness, her anxiety about the child vanishes instantly, and she feels no compunction about going to the party, which she does with a perfectly serene conscience. What a bewilderment of motives, and how true it is to life. Miss Burney would be powerless to deal with such subtle shades of character and motive, but Jane Austen has her finger upon the very mainspring of action of the human heart; and it is for this reason that to-day, although a century has elapsed; although the manners, customs and ideals of the times of which she wrote so well have passed away, she has still a large and ever-increasibg circle of admirers, and that among the more cultured class of readers. We might say of her, as Macaulay says of Addison, that to her "we are bound by a sentiment as much like affection as any sentiment can be which is inspired by one who has been sleeping" for nearly a century.

" Persuasion " p. 55
" Macaulay's Essays " p.

Jane Austen stands with Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Addison among those writers who really touch the heart. In this peculiarly sympathetic quality , she stands alone among women novelists ; Charlotte Bronte comes near it ; George Eliot, far her superior in many respects, ought to attain to it ; the one is too high-strung ,too idealistic, the other too rational, we do not feel quite the same personal charm as breathes from Jane Austen's pages. She is to us ,as a living friend ,and yet, Shakespeare, himself, is not more thoroughly impersonal than she. Miss Burney has left us a whole gallery of caricatures,she has given form and substance to innumerable humours; but Jane Austen's contribution is a far more valuable one;she has given us a multitude of living characters, all, in a sense, commonplace,all within the same small circle of society, yet all perfectly differentiated. What a number of vivacious, charming girls she has added to our acquaintance! And , better still what a study of clergymen! Mr. Collins, Mr. Ferrars, Mr.Elton, Mr. Bertram, Mr. Tilney,---all perfectly discriminated, each with his own, distinct and peculiar individuality. They are similar only in so far as those of the same calling, bred in the same customs and living in the same country are bound to be-- there is some slight community of interests, ideals and pursuits among some members of the group, but every word, every thought,

every action is prompted and coloured by the personality of each The satire is equally discriminating in its direction and application. All are not satirised upon the same plan because all are of the same calling;Miss Austen does not satirise them because they are clergymen,-far from it, she satirises them as men, and as men in relation to their neighbours as well as to their clerical calling. She casts no open reflection upon Mr. Elton's religious convictions, or Mr. Collins's Christian sincerity,- it is their natural impulses, their inner motives, their littlenesses in the relations of daily life, with which she concerns herself and us,;,,by these they must stand or fall.

Miss Burney's tone tended to become louder, her effects more glaring, her satire more direct and ruthless as time went on; It was not so with Jane Austen. In her many novels , among which is counted not a single failure, we can discern a growing refinement in the quality of her satire, humour and literary style. In her earliest work, "Pride and Prejudice", we find open comedy, broad satirical effects as in the case of Mr. Bennet's sarcasms; characters lacking in refinement, like Mrs. Bennet and Lydia; and, in one of the characters, at least, (Mr. Collins) a touch of the comic and of caricature. All this serves, perhaps, to intensify the interest and adds to the dramatic power, but the refinement which is Jane Austen's hall-

mark

mark, is less than in some of her other novels. Possibly, this would appear even more strikingly if we had "Pride and Prejudice" direct from the pen of the girl-author; but the book was not published until fifteen years after it was written and was worked over by the refining hand of her more mature genius. Perhaps it is to this combination of youthful vigor and freshness with the refining tendency of maturity, that "Pride and Prejudice" owes its recognised superiority over her other works. Even "Emma" has not quite the same liveliness and gaiety. But to some readers, the minuteness, the delicate shading, the fainter tone and more exquisite refinement of " Persuasion "are equally fascinating in their own way. In order to realise fully the entire alteration of tone which has come about so gradually ,we have only to take the character of Mr. Collins and try to naturalise him in the climate of " Persuasion,"—the very thought of the thing is absurd. There are no highly-coloured characters in " " Persuasion ", it is all exquisitely harmonised - a monotone study, as charming in its harmony and in the delicacy and subtlety of its satire, as " Pride and Prejudice " in its strong contrasts, vivacity and sparkling wit and humour.

In Maria Edgeworth we have a novelist of an entirely different character from that of Jane Austen; but although considered, in her own time, a far more important author, her novels have not stood the test of time and seem to modern readers dry and wearisome. Unlike Jane Austen, she had a deep sense of her duty towards the world, and her forty-seven volumes of published works were all written with a distinct moral purpose in view: in fact, it would appear that ~~her~~ in her novels the story is woven out of the moral rather than the moral the outcome of the story. We can find a moral in every page of Jane Austen's novels, also, if we look for it, as we can in those of Thackeray or any other satirist, but it is conveyed by suggestion and never forced upon the reader. Jane Austen is content to be an artist; Miss Edgeworth is an earnest moralist. Of humour and satire for their own sake, she has no sense of enjoyment; they are always made to serve a purpose, and it is this tendency to didacticism and moralising which spoils most of her work from an artistic standpoint, however useful and moral her design may be.

At the age of fifteen, Miss Edgeworth accompanied her father to Ireland, where most of the rest of her life was spent, and the novel with which she opened her career as a novelist was " Castle Rackrent," a tale of Irish life and character. In this novel Miss Edgeworth shows herself mistress of her subject and materials, and

it was, perhaps, in this field, the portrayal and satirising of l
Irish character and manners in all their varieties, that her best work was done. The predominating tone of the story is pathos rather than irony, and the satire is confined to the character-portraiture which, though sometimes overwrought, is spirited and entertaining.

In the " Tales of Fashionable Life" she ridicules fashionable society which she brands as frivolous, coarse and sentimental, an contrives, by skilful use of "social slang" to make the manners and affectations of that class appear supremely absurd.

Ambition also, she decries, and in "Patronage" she satirises the system by which people seek to advance themselves by dependen upon wealthy patrons; - the plot and characters are manufactured to fit the moral and the lesson becomes wearisome with much repetition. The satirical method is simple and direct. We have two families; the Percies, who maintain their independence, are uniformly wise, virtuous and charming and are rewarded by success and prosperity; the Falconers, on the other hand, stoop to "patronage" and suffer misfortunes which Miss Edgeworth contrives to make appear the direct result of their dependent position. The moral is painfully obvious and painfully inadequate; - we have two volumes devoted to teaching that if you are independent you will succeed, which turns out in this case, to be so, owing to

Miss Edgeworth's careful manipulation of events; but the general principle is worth absolutely nothing, and life, plot and character have been sacrificed to this flimsy moral.

Miss Edgeworth is at her best in her shorter stories and it is among these that the most characteristic examples of her satirical power are to be found. In one of these shorter tales entitled, " Angelina or L'Amie Inconnue " she directs her satire against that same romantic sentimentalism which Jane Austen ridicules in "Northanger Abbey ;" Angelina, a silly, sentimental girl, addicted to the public habit, obtains from that source a novel, "The Woman of Genius", the heroine of which so captivates her that, learning that her history is based upon the life of the authoress, she writes a letter to the"Woman of Genius" through her publisher. 'The letter", Miss Edgeworth keenly remarks, " was answered in a highly flattering, and consequently very agreeable style," and the friends carry on a correspondence for a space of two years up to the time when the story opens with a letter from the unknown "Araminta, begging Angelina to come and live with her in her"sylvan bower." Araminta's letter is no less entertaining than Mr. Tilney's travesty of the "horror novel" and the parody is perfectly sustained throughout.

"Yes, my Angelina. our hearts are formed for that higher species

" Angelina." page 225.

of friendship of which common souls are inadequate to form an idea however their fashionable, puerile lips may in the intellectual inanity of their conversation, profane the term. Yes,my Angelina, you are right,- every fibre of my frame, every energy of my intellect tells me so. I read your letter by moonlight. The air balmy and pure as my Angelina's thoughts! The river silently meandering. The rocks! - the woods,--Nature in all her majesty! Sublime Confidante! sympathising with my supreme felicity." Throughout the letter the satire is skilfully handled; but then the authoress obtrudes her own moralising personality and spoils the whole effect by a didactic page or two of explanation and application of the moral. "What effect," says the moralist, " this letter may have on sober-minded readers in general, can easily be guessed; but Miss Warwick, who was little deserving of this epithet, was so charmed with the sound of it that it made her totally forget to judge of her Araminta's mode of reasoning. ------ Yet, though she judged so like a simpleton, Miss Warwick was a young woman of considerable abilities; her want of what the world calls common-sense arose from certain mistakes in her education." Miss Edgeworth proceeds to point out what these mistakes were; the keen satirist relapses into the moralist and we find that we have stumbled upon an educational treatise by mistake.

"Angelina." page 226.

The thread of the story is taken up again; the heroine resolves to visit her unknown friend at " Angelina Bower " and, leaving a characteristic letter for her guardian, Lady Diana Chillingworth, she sets out alone to find Araminta. After various adventures she discovers "Angelina Bower" in a wretched hovel, and Araminta in the person of Miss Hodges, a coarse ,vulgar young woman who addresses her in the most approved language of the ~~senti~~ sentimental novel; "Turn Angelina, ever dear! thus let us meet ,to part no more!"

The disillusioned Angelina is rescued from her horrible position and gladly returns to her old friends and in the interests of the moral she prettily acknowledges, "I am fully sensible of my folly." And Miss Edgeworth concludes with prim gravity ,-"We have now, in the name of Angelina Warwick, the pleasure to assure all those whom it may concern, that it is possible for a young lady of sixteen to cure herself of the affectation of sensibility and the folly of romance.

As is usually the case with Miss Edgeworth's morals, we are apt to feel that the cure is out of all proportion to the malady, and that a good story has been sacrificed to Miss Edgeworth's sense of duty. There is much of her work which shows remarkable power , especially in satiric character-portraiture and in the keen wit and animation of the dialogues; but the whole is too interwoven and weighted down with educational theories and moral applications to be buoyed up by any genius however great,and this

tendency to didacticism ,greatly as it was commended during her own time, has been the stumbling-block to her popularity.

Another novelist who brought keen wit and an inexhaustible fund of satiric humour to bear upon domestic life, was Miss Ferrier. What Jane Austen did for England, what Miss Edgeworth did for Ireland, Miss Ferrier, to a certain extent, accomplished for Scotland and to the "Scotch Austen", as she has been called, we are indebted for the most vivacious and realistic pictures of Scottish life on its domestic side as we are to Scott for its romantic and heroic aspect. Like Jane Austen she did not look to any by-gone age for her inspiration; she wrote only of the time and country and characters with which she was familiar; she excelled in representing the life of Scottish lairds and their families at a time when Scotland was in a state of transition from a period of chivalry and warfare to one of settled peace and squiredom; lairds descended from a long line of high-spirited warriors had been obliged to become peaceable land-owner but had not yet learned the arts and refinements of peace. The satiric element of Miss Ferrier's work rests mainly upon her delineations of Scotch character and bringing together these rough Scottish Highlanders and the refined and fashionable society of England for the purpose of ridiculing both.

Her characters do not show that minuteness and delicacy of

penetration and the fine finish that we admire in those of Jane Austen; they are all in broad outline, sketched with a bold, free hand, just as the wild rugged scenery of the Highlands differs from the quiet , prosperous country, green fields and trim gardens of the English writer.

Miss Ferrier's father was a writer to the "Signet" and among his patrons was the Duke of Argyll, at whose estate at Inverary he and his daughter were frequent visitors and it was chiefly here that Miss Ferrier had the opportunity of observing and studying character and gathering that rich store of material which was afterwards converted into three excellent novels, "Marriage", "Inheritance", and "Destiny". Here too, she formed her life-long friendship with Miss Clavering who encouraged her literary ventures and collaborated with her in her first novel, "Marriage", the plan and purpose of which is stated in a letter to Miss Clavering. "As the only good purpose of a book is to inculcate morality, and convey some lesson of instruction as well as delight, I do not see that what is called a good moral can be dispensed with in a work of fiction. I do not recollect ever to have seen the sudden transition of a high-bred English beauty, who thinks she can sacrifice all for love, to an uncomfortable, solitary Highland dwelling, among tall red-haired sisters and grim-faced aunts. Don't you think this would make a good opening of the piece?"

This plan was carried out in a tone of satire and the moral purpose, though ever present, is not obtrusive and is completely overshadowed by the interest of the numerous, humourously caricatured personages which crowd the pages of the novel.

Lady Juliana Lindore a fashionable young English beauty, with her head full of romantic notions, defies her father who has arranged her marriage with an old and ugly duke, and elopes with her handsome lover, Harry Douglas, who, in consequence, is renounced by his patron General Cameron and thrown upon his own resources. His commission in the army is withdrawn, and nothing remains but for the young couple to seek a home with his father, the Laird of Glenfern. Lady Juliana's ideas of love in a cottage receive a shock when she and her cherished pugs are introduced to the ancestral home of the Douglasses and she makes the acquaintance of the rough laird and his three sisters and five daughters, "tall frightened girls with sandy hair and great purple arms." Her [illegible] caprice and folly, the absurdities of the aunts and sisters and the domestic life of these Scotch Highlanders are all described with extraordinary vivacity and shrewdness.

There is a long gap in the story and when it is resumed we find that the main interest no longer centres round Lady Juliana but has changed to her twin daughters Adelaid and Mary, the latter of whom has been brought up by her paternal aunt in Scotland. When

the sisters are grown up, Mary's health makes it necessary that she should spend some months in the south of England and accordingly she is sent to visit her mother and sister who are living with Lady Juliana's brother and his daughter, Lady Emily.

The characters of Mary and Adelaide are placed in the usual contrast to fulfil the moral and satirical purpose of ridiculing the heartlessness and vanity of fashionable life and Lady Emily assumes the role of mentor, much after the style of Mr Gosport, and her caustic sallies and lively caricatures of her fashionable acquaintance are very entertaining. Lady Juliana and Adelaide, living on the bounty of Lady Emily's father, are absolutely defenceless against her biting sarcasms and she ridicules them unmercifully. There is an acerbity, a bluntness amounting almost to coarseness, aboutsher satirical thrusts that savour more of the brusque Scotchwoman behind the pen, than of a young lady of fashion.

The plot of the novel is rambling and disconnected and its chief merit lies in the wit and sarcasm of the dialogues, and especially in the satirical portraiture of a whole collection of odd characters,which, though for the most part they have little to do with the story, form the most interesting element of the book. In the early part of the book we are introduced to Lady Maclaughlan,the pattern and oracle of the Glenfern aunts, rough, and domineering yet thoroughly kind and benevolent at heart. It is characteristic of Miss Ferrier's characters, that the rough and uncompromising

exteriors always conceal the kindest hearts and that beauty is never more than skin-deep.

On her way to England, Mary meets with another of Miss Ferrier's excentric personages, who though only sketched in outline, is one of the most original of her gallery of oddities, Mrs MacShake.

This ancient lady whose memory extends overthe greater part of a century gives a very sarcastic description from her own point of view, of so-called modern improvements.

"Impruvements! a bonny impruvement or else no, to see tyleyors and sclaters leaving, whar I mind dukes an' yearls. An' that gra great glowrin' new toon there", pointing out of her windows , "whar I used to sit an' look out at bonny green parks, an' see the cows milket, an' the bits o' bairnes rowin' an' tummlin' an' the lasses tramping in their tubs, - what see I noo, but stane an' lime, an' stoor and dirt, an' idle cheils, an' dinket-oot madams prancin'. Impruvements indeed!"

In England, Lady Emily introduces Mary to Lady Matilda Sufton the Duke of Altamont and the Downe Wrights, but these English caricatures are clumsily handled in comparison with the Scottish delineations which are the best feature of Miss Ferrier's work.

" Marriage " vol. 1 page 226.

The element of satire in the work of Charlotte Brontë is very slight, and although she has introduced, here and there, satirical passages into her novels they are always more or less detached, and entirely different in style and character from the other portions of her work. Miss Burney, Miss Austen, and Miss Ferrier are all distinctly satirical in their spirit and attitude; even Miss Edgeworth's satire, though turned out of its proper channel for instructive purposes, gives, when it is at its best, an impression of spontaneity and naturalness, but to Charlotte Brontë life seemed too serious a thing to be treated lightly even in fiction and in the presence of strong passions and moral conflicts mere foibles and eccentricities appeared too trivial for more than a passing glance. Her somewhat harsh and unsympathetic criticism of Jane Austen is significant of the wide gulf that divides the two. "Anything like warmth or enthusiasm," she writes, " anything energetic, poignant, heart-felt, is entirely out of place in commending these works; all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, she would have scorned as <u>outré</u> and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly un-

known to her; sherejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition - too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heartt as with the human eyes, mouth, hands and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her purpose to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seal of life and the sentient target of death - this Miss Austen ignores."

Jane Austen's tranquil life among the simple rural gentlefolk with their narrowness of range and poverty of ideas, made it possible for her to focus her mind upon what Charlotte Brontë impatiently discards as superficialities. To Jane Austen life was a comedy; to Charlotte Brontë living a life of lonely struggle in a wild and lonely part of Yorkshire, surrounded by a people of a character as rugged and uncompromising as the hills and moorlands around Haworth, the easy assurance and quiet good-nature of her sister-author was a mockery. Her work is passionate, poetic, romantic, the lyrical expression of her own vehement personality; the aloofness of the satirist critically observing humanity and mocking its vain struggles, was an attitude impossible to her.

The true spirit of satire is foreign to the whole tone of Charlotte Brontë's genius and the few scornfully humourous passages which we do find in her novels differ widely in method from Jane Austen's natural irony and witty sarcasm. Satire may take the form of an all-pervading irony, or it may be employed in dialogue as wit and sarcasm; but in its more direct an intentional application there is inevitably a certain tinge of personal feeling, and then the satirist must choose between obtruding his own personality and creating a mouthpiece for his satiric observations.

Miss Austen, the most impersonal of satirists, prefers the latter method; ironical humour is the distinctly predominating note of all her work, her dialogues sparkle with wit and sarcasm, and when a more direct force is required, she puts her own keenly satirical comments into the mouth of Mr Tilney, Mr. Bennet or Mr Knightley; it is but rarely that she gives a personal expression to her satire. In " Northanger Abbey " for instance, when she was writing a satire upon the works of particular authors, it was almost inevitable that the personal element should show itself, and two or three times she does remind us that there is an author behind the scenes. BUt upon the whole she is the most impersonal of satirists, and even Shakespeare introduces comments upon contemporary drama into " Hamlet" which are personal expressions in about the same degree as Jane Austen's thrusts at her sister

novelists.

But this personal mode of satire, in which Jane Austen indulges so rarely, is the only one open to Charlotte Brontë; she lacks the dramatist's power of throwing herself completely into an imaginary character; we recognise her voice always, whether it is Jane Eyre, Shirley or Lucy Snowe who utters the words. And when she wishes to satirise, she drops all pretense at disguise and speaks in her own character as author. It is this that makes her satirical passages seem something detached from the story and irrelevant; they do not appear to grow naturally out of the story but seem to be fragments of independent reflection which she has made a point of inserting. An instance of this is her scornful chapter on fictitious heroines as portrayed by men. And again, in such a passage as the following: "Note well! wherever you present the actual, simple truth, it is somehow always denounced as a lie: they disown it, cast it off, throw it on the parish; whereas the product of your imagination, the mere figment, the sheer fiction is adopted, petted, termed pretty, proper, sweetly natural."

This reflective element in the novel is a new departure in the work of women novelists; we find a slight trace of it also in the work of Mrs. Gaskell and it is developed into extraordinary prominence in the novels of George Eliot.

In " Jane Eyre " one of the most passionately lyrical of prose writings, we find several passages of bitter, almost fierce satire against the persons ~~and conditions~~ whom she regards as personal enemies and oppressors,- the cruel aunt with whom Jane Eyre passes a part of her childhood, a period which left an ineradicable tinge of morbidity upon her nature; the Lowood Academy, which has been aptly termed a sort of "Dothegirls' Hall",- against these the author-heroine is bitter. And there is more of bitterness than humour, too, in the satirical portrait of Mr. Brocklehurst, a Chadband type of hypocrite, whom she treats with a contemptuous sarcasm amounting almost to a sneer. She perceives the absurdity of the man, but it excites in her no mirth, only intense abhorrence;- We are amused by Chadband; Miss Austen would have made us laugh at Mr. Brocklehurst, but then, Jane Austen had not suffered through him, whereas, to Jane Eyre he represented one of those crushing forces which had helped to grind down her indomitable spirit. Mr.Brocklehurst's visit of inspection to Lowood is described in no very charitable terms.

" Mr. Brocklehurst standing on the hearth with his hands behind his back, majestically surveyed the whole school. Suddenly his eye gave a blink, as if it had met something that either dazzled or shocked its pupil; turning, he said in more rapid accents than he had hitherto used; Miss Temple, Miss Temple, what,- what, is

Jane Eyre." p. 71.

that girl with curled hair? Red hair, ma'am, curled,- curled all over?" And extending his cane he pointed to the awful object, his hand shaking as he did so.

" Julia's hair curls naturally," returned Miss Temple, still more quietly.

"Naturally. Yes but we are not to conform to nature: I wish these girls to be the children of Grace: and why that abundance? I have again and again intimated that I desire the hair to be arranged closely, modestly, plainly. Miss Temple that girl's hair must be cut off entirely: I will send a barber tomorrow, and I see others who have far too much of the excrescence - that tall girl, tell her to turn round. Tell all the first form to rise up and direct theirfaces to the wall.'""'All these top-knots must be cut off!" Miss Temple seemed to remonstrate. ' Madame! he pursued, ' I have a master to serve whose kingdom is not of this world: my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel, and each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven; these I repeat, must be cut off; think of the time wasted, of - ' Mr. Brocklehurst was here interrupted: three other visitors, ladies, now entered the room. They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, ~~for they~~

for they were splendidly attired in velvet and furs. These ladies were deferentially received by Miss Temple as Mrs. and the Misses Brocklehurst."

There is an almost school-girlish crudity of method about this satire which makes one wish to forget that it was written by the same author as such poetically beautiful passages as the description of Jane Eyre's solitary wanderings on the heaths, the passionate expression of Lucy Snowe's loneliness, or some of the imaginative and descriptive portions of " Shirley."

Towards the latter part of the book we are introduced to another self-deceived hypocrite in St. John Rivers; cold, austere , narrow and tyrannical. He has suppressed all his own natural impulses, and tries to lay a paralysing hand upon those of Jane Eyre. He thirsts with ambition for the conquest of men's souls, but there is little of the "milk of human kindness" in his attitudentowards his fellow creatures. He grows white with anger when Jane Eyre refuses to sacrifice herself to his ambition and tyranny and afterwards, "when I asked him if he forgave me, he answered that he was not in the habit of cherishing a remembrance of vexation: that he had nothing to forgive - not having been offended;"- and Jane Eyre reflects bitterly upon the charity which does not embrace forgiveness.

These two clerical figures constitute the main objects of satire

in"Jane Eyre". Living as she did, a lonely life in the wilds of Yorkshire, Charlotte Brontë's range of experience was limited, the only men of her own class, with whom she was acquainted, were clergymen and curates; of these she seems to have seen and despised many, and she takes a grim satisfaction in painting them in strong colours. She has a large variety of them, and in "Shirley" she presents a whole group: they play almost no part in the story, they are not irresistibly mirth-provoking, they are not even representative types, but they were a part of Charlotte Brontë's personal experience and as such she could not resist the temptation to portray them. Her range is very limited, but of her narrow experience she leaves little untold,- we have her life in her books,-everything that interested her or affected the development of her mind, found a place there. All her characters are from life, and the characters in her novels comprise almost all the personalities with whom she came in contact.

One would suppose from the opening chapter of "Shirley", that curates were to play an important part in the story, whereas they are merely a part of the setting. Her treatment of them is sharply satirical throughout.

" Of late years, an abundant shower of curates has fallen upon the north of England; they lie very thick on the hills; every parish has one or more of them; they are young enough to be active "Shirley." p.1.

and ought to be doing a great deal of good."

There is no pervading tone of irony in " Shirley "- Shirley, herself, is sometimes ironical, but the dialogues are not especially characterised by wit or sarcasm. The whole satiric element is comprised in a few chapters, which could be taken bodily out of the book without seriously crippling the plot.

Charlotte Brontë's satire upon 'Old Maids', to whom she devotes one of the chapters of "Shirley", is very characteristic. It is noticeable that, like most of her sister novelists, she directs her harshest satire against men; the curates are shown no mercy, but with old maids she deals indulgently and towards them she finds it hard to maintain a purely satirical attitude very long.

We are given a shrewd and sharply satirical portrait of Miss Mann upon whom Caroline Helstone calls from a sense of duty, without the anticipation of any pleasure.

Miss Mann "sat primly,- somewhat grimly-tidy in a cushioned rocking-chair, her hands busied with some knitting: this was her favourite work as it required the least exertion. She scarcely rose as Catherine entered; to avoid excitement was one of Miss Mann's aims in life: she had been composing herself ever since she came down in the morning, and had just attained a certain lethargic state of tranquillity when the visitor's knock at the door startled her and undid her day's work. She was scarcely pleased therefore to see Miss Helstone; she received her with

reserve, bade her be seated with austerity, and when she had got her placed opposite, she fixed her with her eye.

This was no ordinary doom - to be fixed with Miss Mann's eye. Robert Moore had undergone it once and had never forgotten the circumstance. He considered it quite equal to anything Medusa could do; he professed to doubt whether, since that infliction his flesh had been quite what it was before - whether there was not something stony in its texture."

This is caustic enough, but Charlotte Brontë very soon melts into pity and concludes the portrait with a pathetic account of the sufferings, self-sacrifice and heroism that have made Miss what she was. "Reader! when you behold an aspect for whose constant gloom and frown you cannot account, whose unvarying cloud exasperates you by its apparent causelessness, be sure that there is a canker somewhere, and a canker, not the less deeply corroding because concealed."

In Miss Ainley we have a contrasting picture of an old maid, who outwardly absurd and eccentric, Charlotte Brontë contends, is a subject, not for ridicule but for veneration and she severely rebukes those who would see in her only cause for satire. "She was religious - a professor of religion - what some would call a "saint," and she referred to religion often in sanctioned phrase - in phrase which those who possess a perception of the ridiculous, without

owning the power of exactly testing and truly judging character, would certainly have esteemed a proper subject for satire - a matter for mimicry and laughter. They would have been hugely mistaken for their pains. Sincerity is never ludicrous; it is always respectable."

This is not in any sense, the attitude of the genuine satirist, who holds nothing too good to be laughed at, and few things so bad that they have not their ludicrous side; not that the true satiric spirit is incompatible withsympathy, pathos or even reverence; that there is an irony which is tender, compassionate, almost reverential, Mrs. Gaskell's " Cranford " is there to prove.

Who does not love and sympathise with Miss Jessie Brown, who can fail to appreciate the pathetic little love-tragedy of Miss Matilda Jenkyns, or who can help respecting the brotherly tenderness and sentiment of " Peter," even while we smile at their foibles and prim eccentricities? Jane Austen has created the immortal Miss Bates, Miss Ferrier has given us a Miss Pratt, and Charlotte Brontë attempted the portraiture of Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, but it is not to any of these that we look for our ideal pictures of old-maids; Mrs. Gaskell has portrayed a whole colony of maiden-ladies and she has dared to make them her heroines instead of consigning them to their usual place in the middle-distance.

The predominating tone of"Cranford", is satire and irony, but it is an irony subtle and varied, rangeing through all shades of the humourous, sympathetic,witty,pathetic and tender; there is n not a trace of acerbity in Mrs. Gaskell's humourously satiric touches nor of dolefulness in those passages, and they are many, which verge on pathos.

In the miniature-like dantiness of the character-painting, in "Cranford", in its slenderness of plot; in her delicacy of perception,in the sublety of her humour and the narrowness of her range, Mrs. Gaskell has out-Austened Jane Austen herself. The exquisite tact with which she contrives to place herself and her reader at the point of view of the ladies of Cranford, is charm itself. Mary Smith, with whom she identifies herself in the story, is a very unobtrusive person ,but she possesses a quick sympathy and a lively sense of humour and her semi-satirical comments on the oddities of the Cranfordians , are delightful.

She humourously describes her initiation into that select sisterhood,- " Then there were rules and regulations for visiting and calls; and they were announced to any young people who might be staying in the town with all the solemnity with which the old Manx laws were read once a year on the Linwald Mount. 'It is the third day: I daresay your mamma has told you, my dear, never to let more than three days elapse between receiving a call and re-

turning it; and also, that you are never to stay longer than a quarter of an hour,'

'But am I to look at my watch? How am I to find out when a quarter of an hour has passed?'

'You must keep thinking about the time, my dear, and not allow yourself to forget it in conversation.' As everybody had this rule in their minds, whether they received or paid a call, of course, no absorbing subject was ever spoken about. We kept ourselves to short sentences of small talk, and were punctual to our time."

The Cranford ladies are rigid observers of the rules of etiquette necessary frugality is , in the Cranford dialect, "elegant economy" and ~~the~~ to pay heed to the more menial things of life would be a breach of all the fundamental laws of their existence. When Mrs. Forrester gives a tea-party and the ladies on the sofa have to be disturbed to get the tea-tray out from underneath, everyone behaves as though this were the most natural thing in the world while the hostess " sat in state, pretending not to know what cakes were sent up, though she knew and we knew, and she knew that we knew, and we knew that she knew that we knew, she had been busy all the morning, making tea-bread and sponge cakes."

"Cranford" page. 2.

" " " 3.

There is rather more sharpness in the satirical portrait of the sleepy Honourable Mrs. Jamieson and the reverence in which her title is held by the ladies of Cranford, over whom she exercises a mild social tyranny.

The ladies are invited by Mrs. Jamieson to meet her sister and as her guests are departing; "'Don't you find it very unpleasant walking?' asked Mrs. Jamieson as our respective servants were announced. It was a pretty regular question from Mrs. Jamieson who had her own carriage in the coach-house, and always went out in a sedan chair to the very shortest distances. The answers were nearly as much a matter of course. 'Oh dear no, it is so pleasant and still at night.'

In our pattens we picked our way home with extra care that night so refined and delicate were our perceptions after drinking tea with "my lady."

"Mary Barton" is a novel dealing with the labour question and has no general satiric scheme except as regards the contrast of the condition of rich and poor. But the book abounds in minor touches of irony, and here, as always, Mrs Gaskell's satire goes hand in hand with pathos which sweetens, not embitters it. She has as firm a faith as Dickens in the innate goodness and sympathy of human nature in its simpler state and she brings into strong contrast, the mutual kindness and helpfulness of the

working classes and the idleness and selfishness of the rich who are scarcely acquainted with the members of their own families There is a deep moral tone throughout, and along with it we have a wealth of humour, pathos and irony, all of a genuine type yet so blended as to be inseparable.

It is on this reflective side of her work that we can link Mrs. Gaskell with Charlotte Brontë on the one hand, and George Eliot on the other.

But when we come to consider the novels of George Eliot, we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere from that of either of the former, or, indeed, any of the foregoing writers. Like Mrs. Gaskell she deals seriously with deep problems; like Charlotte Brontë there is ever present in her work a lofty moral tone, an intensity of passion and a sense of the seriousness of life, which takes it out of the region of comedy, however large a part may be played in it by humour. Like Jane Austen she shows that the drama of life is not confined to the palace and the theatre, but she penetrates still deeper and shows that there is a moral existence beneath the actual; that destiny is unavoidable, that "laughter and tears walk side by side through the world"; that "retribution is the other half of crime."

George Eliot is pre-eminently a philosopher, and there is a philosophical basis, even to her satire. Irony pervades her

pages, but it is not the cheerfully vivacious satire of Miss Austen, dealing lightly with the unessentials of life,- to these George Eliot could never confine herself; to her, life and character was a problem to be settled in connection with and in relation to the world; there is always the"Destiny", which "stands by sarcastic with dramatis personae folded in her hand."

So far as their views of life are concerned, George Eliot and Jane Austen are divided by the "gulf which separates tragedy from comedy." Both possess true humour and both give us , more or less playfully, their impressions of life and character; but compared with the sprightly, laughing humour of Jane Austen, George Eliot's is a grave playfulness, with a suspicion of philosophical preoccupation in the attitude of the author. Jane Austen did not concern herself with any philosophy of life; George Eliot could not conceive of, or at least, never depicted a life which did not involve the solving of some great problem of life, character or circumstance. Jane Austen's personages are such as we meet every day - for the most part, aimless drifters; Miss Burney and Miss Ferrier have portrayed types and caricatures; Miss Edgeworth's are object-lessons; but George Eliot's are representative individuals; representative in as much as their lives exemplify and illustrate some great universal truth, some fundamental law

of life, fulfil some decree of destiny. Of this element of what might almost be termed Greek feeling, we find no trace in Jane Austen; in her attitude of mind there is not the least suggestion of fatalism which is so prominent in the work of George Eliot. In " Mansfield Park " we are given, distinctly, to understand thatFanny would have married Crawford if he had been more persistent and that Edmund would probably have married Mary if she would have had him,- there is nothing in the fundamental nature of these characters that makes us feel that their lives could only work themselves out in one way: everything settles itself comfortably, and even if things had turned out differently - why! there would not be anything very tragic about that. WE can easily imagine Fanny marrying Crawford and Edmund marrying Mary,- the dénoument of the plot would be different but it would not go counter to character. The inevitableness, the awful relentlessness of destiny and nemesis does not impress Miss Austen in the least; but with George Eliot it is a very different thing. In " Middlemarch," in " Romola," in"Adam Bede," character and c circumstance, circumstance and character, act and interact according to definite laws, and the result is as inevitable as that of a chemical experiment; we do not feel that the destinies of the characters are in the author's hands, to do with as she will;

given the character and environment of a Dorothea, a Hetty, or a Tito, we feel that the result was so and that it could not have been otherwise; that George Eliot is the interpreter of their lives rather than the moulder of them.

She is the critic of the purposeless life; life without a pu purpose, she shows, ends in tragedy and the life of purpose, usually in the failure of that purpose; it is in accord with the general irony of fate that the high ideals of Romola and Dorothea, and the lofty purpose and ambition of Lydgate, should be the cause of their apparent failure, and that purposeless, shallow creatures like Rosamond and Fred Vincy and Ladislaw should attain their desires; that the more faulty natures should triumph over tha more ideally perfect. To George Eliot the tragic element in life predominates, she does not think of joy as the outcome, - the best we can hope for is spiritual compensation.

If Jane Austen ignores the tragic side of life, it is equally true that George Eliot seems to take no account of the natural buoyancy of the majority of natures; in the lives of the nobler of hercharacters the tragic element of life sinks deep and becomes a part of them; so it is with Romola and Dorothea. They have no recuperative power, no power of throwing off the tragic and the unpleasant. Tito has it , and Tito is very human, but George Eliot

has shown this very trait in his character to be the cause and means of his moral deterioration and final ruin. We have before us these two characters, Romola and Tito, - the one idealistic and deeply impressionable, the other buoyant and superficial, - the goal of both natures is tragedy; we have, in "Adam Bede", Hetty's light, selfish nature set over against the saintliness of Dinah Morris,- Hetty ends in tragedy, Dinah in mental apathy. Life, she tells us , must have a lofty, ideal purpose, but success does not lie in the accomplishment of that purpose.

Not only does George Eliot criticise the aimless life, she directs her satire most bitterly against the conditions of a world and society in which noble, generous natures are baffled and trampled under, while shallow and purposeless creatures glide through a life whose pathway is made smooth for them. There is in the tone of her satire, a reminiscence of Cervantes who also depicts a simple, noble nature at cross-purposes with this very crooked world. The satire in " Middlemarch," "Romola", and "The "Mill on the Floss" shows the same general tendency, where we have the spectacle of good, honest, noble natures frustrated in their purposes and aspirations by the fraud and trickery of a materialistic world. The pream to "Middlemarch" strikes the key-note,- "Here and there is born a Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heartbeats after an unattainable goodness tremble off and

are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognisable deed." "Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling against the conditions of an imperfect social state in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it."

This is the key to the treatment of the character of Dorothea, it is not she who is wholly wrong, but the world, in whose tainted atmosphere ideal nobility cannot flourish. This idea is exemplified also in the characters of Caleb Garth, Maggie Tulliver, and Romola. Mr. Tulliver, too, is puzzled by a world in which honest worth seems to count for nothing. "Not but what if the world had been left as God made it ,I could ha' saw my way and held my own wi' the best of 'em; but things have got so twisted round and wrapped up i' unreasonable words as are'nt a bit like 'em,as I'm clean at fault often and often. Everything winds about so, the more straightforward you are the more you're puzzled."

This is far-reaching satire,aimed at the very foundations of society, a social order which crushes out what is best in human

"Middlemarch" page 464.
"Mill on the Floss" 320.

nature.

It is interesting to find two women writers, Mrs Gaskell and George Eliot, touching upon the same theme, taking the same point of view and employing very much the same satirical method. In "Mary Barton" the murderer, not in excuse but in explanation of his crime, expresses himself in much the same spirit as Mr. Tulliver.

"You see I've so often been hankering after the right way, but it's a hard way for the poor man to find, at least it's been so to me. Noone learned me, and noone telled me. When I was a little chap they taught me to read, and then the never gave me no books, only I heard say the Bible was a good book. So when I grew thoughtful or puzzled I took to it. But you'd never believe that black was black or night was night when you saw all about you acting as if black was white and night was day. It's not much I can say for myself i' t'other world, God forgive me, but I can say this, I would fain have gone after the Bible rules if I'd seen folk credit it ; they all spoke up for it and went and did clean contrary. In those days I would ha' gone about wi' my Bible like a little child, my finger in th' place and asking the meaning of this or that text, and no one told me. Then I took

"Mary Barton" page303.

out two or three texts as clear as glass and I tried to do what they bid me do. But I don't know how it was, masters and men, all alike, cared no more for minding those texts than I did for the Lord Mayor of London; so I grew to think it must be a sham put upon poor ignorant folk, women and suchlike."

Barton's plea is an echo of Tulliver's -"This world's been too many for me;" both George Eliot and Mrs. Gaskell comment bitterly upon the topsy-turvyness of a world where honest worth counts for nothing.

Dickens likewise, felt this keenly, and satirised it vehemently, but he was content to deliver a blow at specific institutions and conventions which he deemed the direct cause of human misery and the degradation of human nature. George Eliot's view is less hopeful;- the state of society, institutions and conventions are what degrade humanity,- yes, but it is human nature, after all, that is responsible for these very institutions. This is a disheartening view; it was Thackeray's view, in a large measure, and it is this which has gained for both Thackeray and George Eliot a reputation among certain critics, for cynicism; an unjust charge for cynicism implies a want of faith in any good in human nature at all, and no such scepticism can be attributed to either.

"The Mill on the Floss" page 233.

No two writers have a truer appreciation of what is good and what is noble, but their intense hatred of shams and insincerity made them satirise bitterly, even fiercely, the circumstances which seemed to foster hypocrisy and stifle what is best and most sincere.

Dorothea, George Eliot maintains, is ideally right in her attitude towards life; but what does that avail her? Mr. Tulliver starts out in life with the conviction that if he is honest, thrifty and hard-working he must succeed; he finds himself out-witted by trickery and concludes that it is he who is wrong, and to insure Tom's success he wants him to be educated to "see into things quick and know what folks mean, and how to wrap things up in words as are'nt actionable." The conclusion seems to point to adaptation as the secret of worldly success, and the price of success is to be the cramping of the soul and the supression of the higher nature.

This faculty of adjustment to environment is what Dorothea lacks; she belongs to that class of persons of whom Lowell speaks when he says: "Men of one idea, that is, one idea at a time,- men who accomplish great results, men of action, reformers, saints, martyrs, are inevitably destitute of humour." We can imagine that Dorothea, under certain circumstances, might have become a

Lowell: Essay on "Satire, Wit, Humour and Fun."

saint or a martyr, - a man endowed with her temperament and moral qualities might have been a great reformer, but by no stretch of the imagination, could we picture Dorothea Brooke bringing herself into harmony with her surroundings and developing into a successful woman of the world, - she lacks a sense of humour. To assume that the satire is all on one side; that Dorothea is all right and the world all wrong, is to deny to George Eliot as well as to Dorothea, all sense of humour and proportion. As society is satirised in relation to Dorothea, so also is Dorothea satirised in her attitude towards the world and society. Nowhere does George Eliot show keener perception and deeper insight than in her subtle but penetrating satire upon Dorothea's want of commonsense and ordinary humour in her attitude towards the padantic Mr. Casaubon. It is one of the strongest proofs of the author's own humour, that, with obvious satiric intention, she places her heroine in comic situations of which she fails to see the absurdity; blundering through them with perfect gravity, whereas Celia, were it not fot the awing influence of her sister, would be convulsed with laughter. Celia, shallow and worldly as she is in comparison with Dorothea, possesses humour and a certain piquant sarcasm which she sometimes indulges at the expense of her sister whom she considers "too religious for family comfort." This

satirical attitude of Celia is brought out in the opening chapter of"Middlemarch". "Since they could remember, there had been a m mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her elder sister. The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?"

The incident of the jewels, in the same chapter, touches satirically upon certain inconsistencies in Dorothea's character. She loftily renounces the jewels as vanities and makes them all over to Celia, considering them suitable enough to the "complexion" of her soul, and but a moment later she allows herself to be fascinated by a beautiful emerald ring and bracelet which she decides to keep. Celia is surprised and vexed at Dorothea's inconsistency and air of superiority,- the more so that she thinks emeralds would be very becoming to herself, and there is a shade of malice in her question;-"Shall you wear them in company?" Dorothea perceives the sarcasm in the question and sarcastically retorts, "Perhaps, I cannot tell to what level I may sink."

Towards her sister's admiration of Mr. Casaubon, also, Celia's attitude is sarcastic. Nettled by Dorothea's lofty rebuke for observing only the little outward peculiarities of the man, instead of seeing the "great soul" behind them, Celia demurely in-

"Middlemarch" page 19.
" " " 17.

quires; "And has Mr. Casaubon a great soul?"

Dorothea endowed with Celia's humour would have been a perfect creature indeed, but then, such a thing is unimaginable; for a sense of humour means disillusionment, it plays havoc with the ideals, and without her ideals and illusions, Dorothea would not be Dorothea.

As was natural in the treatment of such a personality as that of Dorothea, in which good and noble qualities predominate, George Eliot's satire is free from harshness, and her attitude is indulgent and sympathetic; the gradual overpowering of the spiritual and ideal in her mind, by the more worldly and human element, is described in a tone of gentle irony. But the satire upon Mr. Casaubon's "great soul" which she shows to be, in reality, an infinitesimally small one, is withering and relentless.

Casaubon is one of a whole group of failures of which George Eliot has made a study in "Middlemarch". We have the same irony of situation in the treatment of Lydgate and Rosamond. Lydgate's nature is somewhat akin to that of Dorothea, he is a man of noble ideals and high aspirations; being a man, he has been able, to some extent, to force circumstances, he has not laboured under Dorothea's restrictions, and when we first meet him he seems on the way to a life of success and usefulness. With the irony characteristic of the whole book, misfortune befalls him just

where it is least looked for; he marries Rosamond, a heartless coquette in whose mind "there was not room for luxuries to look small in", his nature is clogged by hers and he finds himself a failure.

Then, we have the tragedy of Bulstrode, whose life has been spent in building up a high reputation to gain the esteem of self and others in atonement for the past,- just as he seems to have attained this, the purpose of his life, all his work is undone. George Eliot's attitude towards the various characters is always one of irony; there is always the contrast between what seems and what is. This pervading tone of irony which is so characteristic of "Middlemarch," is not by any means so marked in her other novels. In " The Mill on the Floss," for instance, the predominant note is one of pathos and passion and the satire appears here and there, in a much lighter form, to brighten the otherwise sombre tone of the book. Honest Mr. Tulliver in his blundering way , utters some shrewdly sarcastic comments upon men of the more learned professions; his "notion o' the parsons was as they'd got a sort of learning as lay mostly out o' sight and that isn't what I want for Tom. I want him to know figures and write like print and see into things quick, and know what

"The Mill on the Floss." page 28.

folks mean, and how to wrap things up in words as aren't actionable."

Mr. Riley, the lawyer, though a distinctly minor character, is the subject of one of the most subtlety satirical motive-analyses in the whole range of George Eliot's work.

Mr. Riley suggests that Tom be sent to a certain clergyman, Mr. Stelling and urges it with all the tenacity of a professional auctioneer; so persistent is he that the reader is led to question his motives and the author feels it necessary to warn the more sceptical, lest they should, too hastily attribute his enthusiasm to purely selfish motives.

"He had really given himself the trouble of recommending Mr. Stelling to his friend Tulliver without any positive expectation of a solid, definite advantage resulting to himself, notwithstanding the subtle indications to the contrary which might have misled a sagacious observer. For there is nothing more widely misleading than sagacity if it happens to get on a wrong scent; and sagacity, ~~persuaded~~ persuaded that men usually act and speak from distinct motives, with a consciously proposed end in view, is certain to waste its energies on imaginary game." - - - - - - Louisa Timson's face with its light curls had been a familiar object to

him over the pew wainscot on a Sunday for nearly fifteen years - it was natural that her husband should be a commendable tutor. Moreover Mr. Riley knew of no other schoolmaster whom he had any ground for recommending in preference; why then, should he not recommend Stelling? His friend Tulliver had asked him for an opinion: it is always chilling in friendly intercourse to say you have no opinion to give. And if you deliver an opinion at all. it is mere stupidity not to do it with an air of conviction and well-founded knowledge. You make it your own in uttering it and naturally get fond of it. - - - Besides, a man with the "milk of human kindness in him can scarcely abstain from doing a good-natured action, and one cannot be good-natured all round."

It is noticeable, that in the novels of George Eliot, as in most of those written by women, the more prominent and interesting of her characters are always women and her men are of interest only in relation to them. It is almost entirely from the point of view of Maggie that we are interested in Tom, Stephen Guest and Philip Wakem; Will Ladislaw, Casaubon and Sir James Chettam are, in themselves, commonplace and colourless until we place them in their several relations to Dorothea; Grandcourt is uninteresting, and Deronda a mere prig apart from the importance which their influence upon Gwendolen gives them; and what would

we care for Arthur Donnithorne or Adam Bede apart from Hetty and Dinah; or for Tito apart from Romola.

When we think of George Eliot's novels, we immediately associate them with a procession of noble and striking women. There is a complete comprehension and a genuine sympathy in her treatment of her women characters that we do not find in that of her men, and she is far more indulgent to the former. This is characteristic of women novelists in general. There is much more acerbity in Jane Austen's satire on Mr. Woodhouse and Mr. Elton than in that on Emma and Miss Bates and nowhere has she given us a portrait of a woman with the unsparing caricature and satire with which she has treated Mr. Collins.

Charlotte Bronte, likewise, maintains a certain sympathetic reserve in her satire on "old maids," while she shows no pity for the curates.

This essentially satirical attitude towards men is still more exaggerated in George Eliot; she gives expression to it through Mrs. Poyser, who, to Bartel Massey's accusation of the follies of women, flashes out the retort: "I am not denying the foolishness of women; God Almighty made 'em to match the men." Another of her women of notable common-sense, Dolly Winthrop, complacently regards men in the light of "creatures whom it had pleased

Heaven to make naturally troublesome;"and Mrs. Denner gives it as her opinion that she "shouldn't like to be a man - to cough so loud, and stand straddling about on a wet day and be so wasteful with the meat and drink. They're a coarse lot I think."

This partiality towards women is even more strongly expressed when George Eliot speaks in her own character as author and very often the narrative is suspended for a moment while she points an epigram at the expense of the failings of men, who always seem like Tom "to fall naturally into the man's privilege of being always in the right." Speaking sarcastically of Sir James Chettam she remarks," A man's mind - what there is of it - has always the advantage of being masculine - as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm - and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality."

But on the other hand, she says very little about the faults and foibles of women. This is not because she was blind to them, for innumerable touches show that she was conscious of the shade of malice and triviality even in Dorothea, and can we not detect certain weaknesses and inconsistencies even in the character of Dinah? But along with George Eliot's keenness of penetration, there is always a certain reserve, she has a thorough comprehension of the faults and hypocrisies of her heroines but, for the most part, she keeps it carefully to herself; in all her books

we find these flashes of unresentful but pungent sarcasm against men, and at the same time, a tendency to exalt and idealise women.