

D I C K E N S   A N D   D E M O R G A N

A   T H E S I S

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By

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D I C K E N S      A N D      D E      M O R G A N .

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The name of William De Morgan has been linked with that of Charles Dickens ever since the publication of his first novel, "Joseph Vance".      Wilson Follett in his essay on Wm. De Morgan says:

-      "Many people must remember thinking at their first discovery of Joseph Vance - Here is a man who has said to himself, ' Go to, I will play the game as Dickens played it.' " This statement of Follett's is a rather mild expression of the general view of this novelist's relation to Dickens.

Wm. Phelps, in his essay on the same subject makes the opinion more universal in the following words:

+      "We had not read far into Joseph Vance before we shouted 'Dickens Redivivus!' or some equivalent remark in the vernacular ..... It requires little skill to observe the similarity to Dickens as was proved by the fact that everyone noticed it." Again, when speaking of the qualities of Dickens, he becomes even more emphatic.

- 3. p. 160

+ 6. p. 9

- "No voice like this had ever been heard in English literature and for thirty years after his death his silence was almost audible: until he returned to earth and dwelt among us, as Wm. De Morgan." It is because of the view of the relation of the work of De Morgan to that of Dickens, which has been expressed by these two critics, that it has been considered worth while to study the writings of the two novelists in order to come to some decision as to the truth of such an opinion.

There must be quite naturally, obvious similarities which can be seen without any close study, or "Dickens Redivivus" would not spring to the lips of any reader after the perusal of a few pages. These obvious similarities, we shall consider first. To come, however, to any real conclusion regarding this relationship, it will be necessary to analyze the work of both novelists somewhat closely, to select the outstanding qualities of Dickens, since by reason of the lapse of time, our views about him have become crystallized and to see if these same qualities are outstanding in the work of De Morgan; and, if such is the case, to contrast these characteristic qualities in order to find out any differences which may exist. Having done this,

we shall be in a position to give some decision on the point in question, which will rest upon the sure basis of truth.

In choosing the particular qualities of Dickens' work which are to form a foundation for this comparison, there is little difficulty. We find that the general consensus of opinion among the critics is similar to our own, in regard to which qualities of Dickens stand out above the others. In the first place, there is his humor. "To write of Dickens at all" says Gessing, "is to presuppose his humor". Then related to this is his power of characterization. G. K. Chesterton in his "Charles Dickens" devotes one whole chapter to what he calls "The great Dickens characters." He makes also in this connection a very significant statement. "This should be firmly grasped, that the units of Dickens, the primary elements, are not the stories but the characters who affect the stories, or more often still, do not affect the stories." Lastly, we shall take a characteristic which is harder to define, that of didacticism. We have the word of Mr. Gessing again, that Dickens held that the first duty of an author is to influence his people for

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- 2. p. 215

+ 1. p. 81

o 3. p. 215



good. These are three basic qualities which make up what Chesterton terms "The flowing and mixed substance called Dickens". If De Morgan is in reality a reincarnation of Dickens, we shall find not only that these are his outstanding qualities, but also that the nature of these qualities is akin to that of Dickens.

By means of the first chapters of Joseph Vance, to which Follett refers, or indeed by means of the first few chapters of any of De Morgan's books, except "An Affair of Dishonor" we can readily illustrate the more obvious points of relationship. To begin with the scenes are laid in London and indeed not only that, but they are so characteristic of London that they could not be anywhere else. The London - public house, where Peter Gurn "Crocks the hinseck," + Alice's "Extensive basement with cellarage," the court in \* which Dave and Dolly Wardle played, are all as unmistakably • in London as "Todgers" or "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings", or "The Chancery Courts."

Then, also, in the first few chapters of the novels, particularly "Joseph Vance", we meet the type of London character which was made familiar to us by Dickens and is known by the term "Dickensian." We find the Rev. Benaiah Capstick,

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- Joseph Vance  
+ Alice for short  
\* When ghost meets ghost

• Martin Chuzzlewit  
Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings  
Black Horse

a descendant of Mr. Stiggins<sup>†</sup>; Mrs. Packles, whose conversation with Mrs. Vance reminds us of Mrs. Bardell and Mrs. Cluppins<sup>†</sup>; and Christopher Vance himself, whose shrewd and witty speeches seem to relate him to "Old Weller."<sup>†</sup> In "Alice for Short", there is Mrs. Kavanaugh, who in her volubility sometimes makes the memory hark back to the immortal "Sairy." In "Somehow Good" there is the street brawl with its spectators, more exciting than Mrs. Sulliwins in the "Seven Deals" and also a cabby, who in the days of David Copperfield might have driven the Canterbury Coach. Aunt M'rriar in "When Ghost Meets Ghost," has quaint tricks of speech like Mrs. Lirriper, while Aunt Stingy's shrewish tongue in "It Never Can Happen Again" utters speeches very much akin to those of Mrs. Snagsby in "Bleak House", or even Mrs. McStinger in "Dombey & Son." These entertaining characters living in a London similar to that which Dickens depicts, seem to the casual reader worthy of the term "Dickensian." Only those, however, of whom we catch but a passing glimpse can lay claim to this title. The others whose characters are developed more fully have, as we shall show later, no spiritual kinship with Mrs. Gamp and her companions.

We might continue to speak of obvious similarities between the work of the two novelists, such as the great length

of the stories, or the easy conversational style in which they are written. These are not characteristic only of Dickens, but also of the Victorian Novelist in general, so we shall turn to the discussion of the first great quality, that of humor.

Before doing so, however, we shall consider<sup>a)</sup> very briefly the significant facts in the lives of the two novelists which may throw considerable light on the qualities of their work. Dickens, as we all know, had a very unhappy childhood and was employed in a factory at an early age. Even when this phase of his existence was ended, he had very little opportunity to acquire an education and while still a youth became a reporter. At the age of twenty-one he started to pour out his impressions of life, and in spite of the comparative hardness of his own life up to this time, this work of his was marked with a spirit of irrepressible fun and the exuberance of youth. We see this at its best in "Pickwick Papers" and in portions of the earlier books. As he grew older it toned down to a certain extent, yet even in the unfinished "Edwin Drood" we have a final and defiant flutter of the spirit of Pickwick in the insane and utterly absurd epitaph of Mrs. Sapsea.

De Morgan, the son of a scholar and a gentleman, had the usual education of a gentleman's son. Instead of

proceeding to the University, however, he studied in the Academy Schools, with the intention of becoming an artist. At the age of twenty-five, the age at which Dickens had published "Pickwick Papers" and begun "Oliver Twist", De Morgan decided to take up the work of designing stained glass windows. Later still he became a potter and a very successful one. It was not until he was sixty-five years of age that "Joseph Vance," his first novel was published.

In the light of this knowledge, we are not surprised to find, as we do, that the quality of De Morgan's humor differs entirely from that of Dickens. We find in his work the more restrained and whimsical humor of the mature mind. He seems to play the part of an onlooker, seeing in the characters he has created, individuals at whose expense he may have a good deal of entertainment. It is never unkind and there is frequently much tenderness in it. He smiles at the idiosyncrasies of his people much as a father smiles at the absurdities of his children. His humor seldom arises out of situation. There is not a single scene in all his books comparable to Mr. Pickwick in the Boarding School. Yet his humor is quite as outstanding a quality as is that of Dickens.

- E. V. Lucas says that he is a perfect example of the humorist for he keeps us smiling. We smile before we have finished

reading the first paragraph of Joseph Vance and the smile is on our lips most of the time until we finish the book.

We smile at the quaint speeches of the children, as Lizerann's caustic comment on a lady's figure, "She aint got no wyste, she's all one piece. Yaas." We enjoy the slightly acid conversation of his elderly women, particularly the author's own gentle amusement over them, which he manifests occasionally. His description of Mrs. Heath's reception of her daughter's suitor is worth recording. "Her mother followed in a more self-contained way, like the water in a turbine tube and coupled an expression of well-controlled pleasure at seeing Dr. Johnson with an enquiry how long he was going to stay." De Morgan's girls, especially Lassie and Sally move us to frequent mirth, Lassie's letters, while she is still at the flapper age show an uncanny knowledge on the part of the author, of the female sex, for her speeches are genuinely girlish. "For no gentleman ever will propose to Alicia Pratt with that nose," she remarks about an unfortunate friend. These are just a few examples of the entertaining speeches to be found on every page of De Morgan's novels.

Dickens' humor, however, arises out of situation just as frequently as out of speech, or character. He leaned toward comedy of the slap-stick variety and loved to create roaring rollicking scenes. His was the spirit of the school-boy who enjoys a Punch and Judy show, or in modern days a

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- It Never Can Happen Again  
+ Alice for Short

Charlie Chaplin ~~film~~. The more things that were smashed, the happier he was. In the last analysis, this is the spirit of the folk. It is the same spirit which we see working through the ballads and early drama. The creator of Mak in the Second Shepherd's Play had a certain spiritual kinship with Dickens. This is one of the glories of Dickens, that he carries on the folk tradition in a way which appeals to everyone, in whom convention has not smothered the folk instinct.

Delightful examples of Dickens' humor are the scenes - between Mrs. Nickleby and her lunatic. The lady is her~~self~~ one of the joys of Dickens, but when the lunatic is added to the scene one wonders whether there is anything really funnier in fiction. One of Dickens' critics has remarked that the novelist himself, if allowed to choose, would rather have been the lunatic than any one of his characters and the principal reason for his choice would be, the joy of hurling those cucumbers.

+ Another characteristic situation is Mr. Pickwick in the wrong bedroom. The poor man's efforts to get that night-cap string untied is the crowning touch to the whole situation. His experiences in the Boarding School are of the same type. These things are not described by one who plays the part of an onlooker. Dickens was living these scenes himself as he wrote them and laughing with, not at, his characters.

There is, however, a more subtle difference

between the humor of these two men than this of the onlooker  
 - and the participator. Mr. Lucas says, in discussing De Morgan's  
 humor, that it is logical, "You can check it and find it accurate."  
 This is just the thing we cannot do in regard to the humor of Dickens.  
 + It defies analysis. Just why Mrs. Micawber's constant "I will  
 never desert Mr. Micawber" moves us to laughter at every fresh  
 \* repetition, we cannot tell. The humorous element in Mr.  
 Mantalini's speeches would be hard to define, but it is there. We  
 • cannot explain the reason why every sentence Mrs. Gamp utters  
 reduces us to instant mirth, but it does. Dickens' humor like  
 his genius is an impalpable thing: we cannot lay our hand on one speech  
 or another and explain wherein its humor lies; any more than we can  
 take "Pickwick Papers" and explain by means of it, the genius of  
 Dickens. The explanation might suffice for one who had not read  
 the book, but it assuredly would not be satisfactory to one of its  
 admirers. His humor, like the charm of the folk tales, must  
 be experienced to be appreciated, but at no time does it lend itself  
 to analysis.

This humor of Dickens depends to a great extent  
 on the so-called humorous characters with the study of which we  
 shall commence the discussion of characterization. These are  
 the best known and best loved characters of Dickens and on them  
 rests one of his chief claims to genius.

These humorous creations or eccentrics, as they are sometimes called, form a large group which includes many of the most familiar Dickens' characters, such as "Sairy Gamp," "The Wellers", "Quilp", "Mrs. Nickleby," "Mr. Mantalini" and a hundred others. Their chief characteristic is their faculty of producing laughter every time they speak. Even under stress of emotion, they retain their own peculiarities. Chesterton - says of them "When a Dickens' character becomes excited, he becomes more and more himself. He does not turn more and more into man. As he rises he grows more and more into a gargoyle or grotesque." He then cites the famous instance when Susan Nipper speaks her mind to Mr. Dombey, in order to prove his point. Mr. Bumble is + quite as good an illustration. Even when he is frightened half to death by Moncks he talks in his accustomed fashion. Mr. Pecksniff \* also remains in character and is more "Pecksniffian" than ever in the final scene with old Martin. Mrs. Micawber throughout all the • vicissitudes of fortune, never deserts Mr. Micawber; we should be greatly disappointed if she did; and if Sairy Gamp were suddenly to manifest her relation to the rest of humanity and talk like a rational human being, it would be a still greater shock. We love these people just as they are and in spite of one critic's

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+ Oliver Twist

x Martin Chuzzlewit

• David Copperfield



- claim that they show false psychology in that they never lapse out of character, we would not have them changed.

In the novels of De Morgan, we find only one figure who  
+ really corresponds to these and that is Christopher Vance. There  
+ are a number of people like Mrs. Packles of whom we only get a passing glimpse, who only serve for purposes of amusement, but the others who play a definite part in the story are not like Sairy and her companions at all. These people under stress of emotion, become "more and more man". Take for instance the case of  
\* Mrs. Kavanaugh. In Dickens' hands this sodden talkative woman, might have become a second Mrs. Gamp. At first, indeed, the humorous element predominates; then comes the tragedy of the drunken quarrel. The former element disappears and by means of the quiet despairing story, told by the woman herself, De Morgan makes her one of the great tragic figures in his books; one who has seen down the years what might happen, yet is unable to make any active resistance and goes down to destruction.

Aunt M'riar also promises to be one of the most entertaining of people in "When Ghost Meets Ghost". Her run to-gether speeches always produce a smile. But suddenly we are brought face to face with her tragedy. In the scene with her husband, the amusing trick of speech disappears; no one could speak more simply, more intensely. The innate fineness of the

- 1. p. 250  
+ Joseph Vance  
x Alice for short  
o When ghost meets ghost

woman as she refuses to call for help because she has given her word, is well depicted, and as the days pass by and she, keeping faith with herself, will not betray him, our amusement gives way to admiration. She commands our respect; so it is with all of them. One is conscious above everything that they are struggling human beings like ourselves. They may be more entertaining to read about than the rest of us and they may have humorous tricks of speech or action, but when they meet their great moments all these peculiarities drop away from them and they stand before us as very human men and women.

These figures of De Morgan's are not caricatures in any sense of the word. They have their peculiarities, but De Morgan does not insist upon them to such an extent that they lose their humanity. Dickens, on the other hand, does make caricatures of many of his humorous figures by this very insistence. It would perhaps be too strong a statement to say that in this way they lose their humanity, but we may say that as a result of it, they become beings of another world. They are not less real to the reader; probably Mr. Micawber and the rest of them are far more real to us than ever Aunt M'riar would be, but it is the reality of the fairy to the child. We know that we shall never meet Mr. Guppy, or Mr. Bumble or Dick Swiveller in this World, but we cherish the thought that there may be an ideal world where

they do exist.

When we turn to a study of their characterization of ordinary people we must acknowledge that it is of equal importance in the works of both novelists. The people whom De Morgan creates form the integral part of the story, just as truly as do those of Dickens. "De Morgan loves character", - says E. V. Lucas, "and has given himself the utmost freedom in creating pleasant people." De Morgan also resembles Dickens in the number of characters he introduces into each book. We shall find, however, that the particular types in which he excels are not those in which Dickens is very successful and also that in their characterization their point of attack occasionally is so different that the results can hardly be compared.

This is true in regard to the children whom they have created. Dickens approached the subject from the point of view of the child, De Morgan from that of the child lover. When we contrast Dickens' best known children <sup>+</sup>Pip, David Copperfield, little Nell and Paul Dombey with De Morgan's <sup>o</sup>Joe Vance, Dave and Dolly Wardle, Alice and Lizerann, the dissimilarity is evident. These children of Dickens remind us forcibly of the little boy who pasted labels in the blacking factory; whose chief misery was caused by the sense of injustice in his heart. Little Charles Dickens was a supersensitive child and the feelings which stirred within him - his longing for affection, for understanding

Needs  
directions  
whole  
transmission  
childhood  
teacher care  
in use  
of terms.

and his hatred of the life which he was forced to lead, burned themselves upon his memory. Thus the older Charles Dickens saw in every child, especially the unhappy ones, the same sensitive soul, which had been his and interpreted every unhappy child in the light of his own memories. It is significant that his outstanding child-characters are unhappy.

David Copperfield was in many respects little Charles Dickens, possessed of the characteristics which have been indicated. Little Nell was a child, only in appearance: she acts and thinks as a mature individual. The way in which she cares for her grandfather, her unchildlike caution in her relations with others and above all her thoughts about her approaching death, are utterly unchildlike. Paul Dombey is another abnormal child, a masculine Little Nell, with the same unchildlike thoughts. Even Pip, who is differentiated, in that he is at times a normal small boy in his bashfulness and awkwardness in the presence of Estella, and his delightful relations with Joe Gargery; even he gives us glimpses at times, of an intellect far beyond his years.

We do not find this true of De Morgan's children. Joe and Alice, Dave and Dolly are normal youngsters with a

love for fun. The latter pair are indeed two of the most delightful children, who ever tumbled into a grown-ups' story. Their plays in the street, their delight when allowed to go visiting "Mrs. Specture", their faithful devotion to one another, are thoroughly child-like. There is nothing abnormal about either of them.

This is the case also with Lizerann, one of the most pathetic figures in De Morgan, far more touching than Little Nell, because she remains a child throughout. There are no forebodings of death in her mind; to the very end she is sure she will be better tomorrow. Her very unconsciousness brings a lump to the throat. It is a tribute to the author's artistic skill that he can produce such pathos without endowing her with unchild-like speech and action.

In his slighter child sketches De Morgan achieves the same end. Pierre, Joey Thorpe, Gwendolyn Arkwright, Bridgetticks - all are ordinary children, whom we might meet any day playing on the street. Dickens, however, varies according to the effect he wishes to produce.

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- Alice for Short  
Joseph Vance  
Somehow Good  
Jump It Now Can Happen Again



The fat boy in Pickwick Papers for instance, plays the same part as a clown; he is simply there for the purpose of producing laughter and is not a child at all. Peepy - Jellyby, is a normal youngster in his speechless devotion to the girl, from whom for the first time in his short life, + he received love and care. The Tetterbys are a delightful x group of genuine small boys. The Marchioness is, as o Gessing says, "A good study of childhood brought to the verge of idiocy by evil treatment." Yet the child is not lost in the abused servant.

In many of the portraits of ill-treated children, however, this is not the case. Joe, in Bleak House, is an example of how Dickens took the figure of a child and invested it with only those qualities which would make it appeal to the public. Joe is not an individual, he stands as a symbol of wronged childhood of evil and oppression and sin. In Dickens' hands, such as he, became a mighty weapon to save the children of England from a like fate. They are not, however, an example of good characterization.

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- Bleak House
- + The Hanted Man
- x Old Curiosity Shop
- o 2. p. 212.

Speaking in a general way, De Morgan shows the normal child happy and for the most part unconscious of evil. Dickens depicts the abnormal child, such as we do not recognize among the children we see every day. In the words of Chesterton, " One thing is evident; whatever charm these children may have they have not the charm of childhood.... The beauty and divinity of a child lie in his not being worried, not being conscientious, not being like Little Nell "

Another case in which Dickens depicts the abnormal, is in his elderly women : a fact which is true also of De Morgan. Both novelists create any number of bad-tempered and selfish women and only a very few attractive ones. Among the latter are numbered Dickens' + Mrs. Tupin , Mrs. Plornish, Mrs. Toodle, and De Morgan's \* Mrs. Vance and Mrs. Nightingale. These are all motherly souls, with a genius for making those around them happy and comfortable.

The others have as great a genius for creating unhappiness. There is Mrs. Sales-Wilson, who plays about the same part in "Somehow Good " as Mrs. Wilfer does in "Our Mutual Friend ". Goody Verreker in " Somehow Good "

- 1 . p 123

+ Martin Chuzzlewit  
Little Dorrit  
Dombey & Son  
\* Joseph Vance  
Somehow Good

seems to have strong bonds of union with Mrs. Clennam<sup>-</sup> and Mrs. Varden<sup>+</sup>: all three are religious humbugs. Aunt Isabella in " Joseph Vance " is almost another Mrs Nickleby , only she lacks the latter's amusing qualities.

There are almost any number of these women in the works of both novelists. We cannot say definitely whether De Morgan was influenced by Dickens, or whether such characterization was a result of his own experience. One of the most striking things in this connection is that almost always these women had such nice husbands, who bore themselves with a saintly resignation that does one's heart good to see; or like Mr. Nickleby and Mr. Verreker had supposedly passed on to a martyr's crown after a vain attempt to live in peace and concord with their wives.

In view of this unanimous disapproval of the female sex, it is rather surprising to find that the novelists draw sympathetic portraits of young women. We wonder whether Dickens ever followed the life of one of his gentle girls up to the time when she hardened into an • unattractive woman like Mrs. Wilfer, or if he ever traced Mrs. Wilfer back to Bella. De Morgan had evidently given



the subject some thought for he says in " Somehow Good":

- " You know how some young people would be passable enough if it were not for a lurid light thrown on their identity by other members of their family."

In spite of this statement of their creator, there does not seem to be any grave danger of Peggy or Alice or Gwen hardening into likenesses of their respective <sup>+</sup> mammas. There seems far more probability of Dickens' girls doing so because they lack the freshness and vivacity that make De Morgan's girls so charming. There is something absolutely foreign to the modern reader in the Victorian girl as portrayed by Dickens. Agnes, Ester, Kate Nickleby, and Bella Wilfer have become faded and rather uninteresting.

This fact might be explained by the difference which really exists between the girl of Dickens' day and the modern girl. Yet we never need such an explanation in regard to Shakespeare's young women. Juliet and Beatrice are as vivid and interesting to us now as they were to audiences of the dramatist's own age. He was able to see and portray the qualities which endure so that his young women were " not for an age but for all time."

- Somehow Good - p. 225

+ Alice for Short

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When ghost meets ghost

David Copperfield  
Bleak House  
Nicholas Nickleby  
Our Mutual Friend

In the character of Ruth Pinch, Dickens has succeeded in depicting a woman who has not faded. Her type will endure as long as there are homes and children to care for. She herself, a cheerful, sweet-tempered and pretty little woman, is altogether delightful and not more than a very little old-fashioned.

The rest of his girls, however, are uninteresting. They have none of the buoyant spirits of a real girl and they are too peaceful. This is true in particular of Agnes Wickfield. Absolutely nothing could shake her serenity. She is too passive for a woman of her ability. Kate Nickleby, Pet Meagles<sup>+</sup>, Ada<sup>x</sup> and many of the others are only vague figures. They have really no definite personality. They lack clear characterization.

This is an accusation which could never be made against De Morgan's young women. Each of them is a distinct personality, with nothing vague or shadowy about her. Sally Nightingale,<sup>o</sup> who seems the universal favorite, is a good example. She is a very entertaining modern girl with a passion for swimming and music. She has an intense interest in everything and everybody, particularly in regard to love affairs. She manifests an entire satisfaction in her own power of producing

- Martin Chuzzlewit

+ Little Dorrit

x Bleak House

o Somehow Good

admirers, which always provokes a smile. She has all the life, the vigor and the personality which Dickens' girls lack: and what is true of her is true of them all. Lassie, Peggy, Alice and Gwen, are almost as delightful as Sally herself.

It will remain for the generation of readers that follow us to give a decision in favor of De Morgan's young women, yet it seems, in as far as we can judge, that in these he has portrayed characters that will endure in English fiction, who will not become faded and uninteresting as the years go on.

These girls created by De Morgan and Dickens are all practically drawn from the same class but in the next phase of characterization that we shall study, that of the men, we shall find the most outstanding difference is, that most of De Morgan's men are of the educated classes, while Dickens' most successful and most numerous group is composed of uneducated men.

Quite naturally there are exceptions to this rule and we shall deal with these first. Dickens did not often portray a gentleman successfully, but in John Jarndyce, Eugene Wrayburn<sup>+</sup> and Mr Crisparkle<sup>o</sup> he succeeded in doing so.

- *Black House*

+ *Our Mutual Friend*

o *Edwin Drood*



No one who reads " Bleak House " can fail to be impressed by the personality of John Jarndyce. One feels that he is Dickens' ideal gentleman; and in his characterization there are no flaws. Eugene Wrayburn does not appeal to our admiration, as does the former yet he is a truthful representation of a certain type. Mr. Crisparkle of the unfinished "Edwin Drood " is a well defined portrait of an English gentleman. Gessing says of him:

" His breezy manner, his athletic habits, his pleasant speech, give no bad idea of the classical tutor, who is neither an upstart or a pedant."

De Morgan has given us three outstanding portraits of uneducated men in Christopher Vance, Uncle Mose Wardle<sup>+</sup> and Blind Jim<sup>o</sup>. Christopher Vance is the one major character in De Morgan, who seems to belong to Dickens. He is perfectly depicted - a character as vivid in his way as Tony Weller. His quaint speeches are never out of character. Like a Dickens creation he never loses his own tricks of speech under stress of emotion.

Uncle Mose in his relations with Dave and Dolly reminds us of Joe Gargery and Pip. He is an

- Joseph Wane
- + When Ghost Meets Ghost
- o It Never Can Happen Again

ordinary kind-hearted man, with no business ability whatever. One always feels that it is Aunt M'riar who keeps the wheels revolving in the Wardle household, yet out of this man De Morgan in a very Dickens-like manner fashions a hero. In Blind Jim, however, we see not so much the portrait of a common man, as a psychological study of the soul of one who, maimed and stricken with blindness still gallantly plays the game. These are well-drawn portraits of common men, just as those of Dickens are good portraits of gentlemen, yet each novelist achieved his greatest success in his own field.

For instance, De Morgan's field was that of the educated young man, the type with whom he had become acquainted in his artist days, doctors, artists, clergymen, writers, to all of whom we feel Tollett's words peculiarly applicable :

- " It is in his best in this province of characterization .....that we have the authentic measure of De Morgan and of his permanence."

In each one of the novels there is a detailed study of one or more young men. Charles Heath in " Alice for Short" is a typical example. He is a young artist with no real genius for his profession. Possessed of a wealthy father, he has

the leisure and the money to indulge his fancies. The same kindness of heart which impells him to protect the little Alice leads him into a most disastrous marriage. The child whom he had cared for becomes the means of bringing him not only happiness but success, for the second rate artist becomes a successful novelist. The author shows us quite plainly the weakness in this young man's character and he acts naturally and logically throughout the book. Or if we turn to another book " It Never Can Happen Again " we find two men who stand in absolute contrast to one another. Alfred Challis, the atheist, is depicted as a man lacking sufficient strength of will to enable him to turn his back upon temptation. He dallies with it, justifying himself at each fresh step until he nearly brings disaster upon himself. Athelstane Taylor, the clergyman, is perhaps the most perfect of all De Morgan's men, yet it is not a stilted perfection. He is a very human young man and his relations with his Bishop are among the many amusing things in the book. They send the memory back to Anthony Trollope and Barchester days.

When we contrast these men with those of their own class whom Dickens has depicted, the difference is

apparent. The only one who bears any contrast is - Pip and he stands alone in logical character development in the whole group. His reaction and subsequent conduct upon being brought face to face with his convict benefactor is well portrayed. The others, however, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Martin Chuzzlewit and Edward Chester<sup>+</sup>, are conventional figures lacking adequate characterization. Not one of them is differentiated. Martin Chuzzlewit indeed is suddenly changed from a selfish impossible youth into a paragon of virtue but that is the only attempt at development. They lack, in general, enough human failings to make them live.

It is not figures such as these who stand out among the men whom Dickens has created. It is rather the great group of common men of whom we find only one here and there in De Morgan's books, such as the "Dickensian" figures referred to earlier. These are the characters in whom Dickens reached the height of his genius. Coachmen, innkeepers, waiters, clerks, shopkeepers and their kind were more interesting and romantic in his eyes than was the educated man. They were capable of just as brave deeds and they got so

- *Great Expectations*  
+ *Barnaby Rudge*



much more joy out of life. In depicting such men as these, he does not need to lift them out of their own environment to make them happy. He could find as much - real joy in the Tetterbys' crowded room or at Bob + Cratchitt's tiny home as he could around the fireside of Bleak House.

Of all the common men, whom he portrays, Joe Gargery is perhaps the favorite, and a good example of \* the gentleman, who, as Gessing says: "derives his patent of gentility straight from Almighty God." He is an ignorant, clumsy man, yet shows infinite patience towards his shrew of a wife and a deep unselfish love for Pip. Even after the latter, in his foolish pride, has cut himself off from Joe, he finds that at his hour of need it is Joe who comes to nurse him. It is Joe who cares for him and who, when he is better, leaves secretly in order to cause him no shame among his friends. Doctor Marigold, another characteristic figure, is only a Cheap Jack, who goes about in a cart hawking his wares, yet in him Dickens shows us a brave and unselfish man, who appeals in every way to our admiration. His love for the child, his patience with his wife, his unselfish furthering of the second Sophie's happiness are virtues characteristic not only of him, but also of the great group of these men

- *The Haunted Man*

o *Doctor Marigold*

+ *The Christmas Carol* -27-

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whom Dickens holds up for our admiration, Mr. Snagsby, Tim Linkenwater, Newman Noggs, the Cheeryble brothers and Dick Swiveller all manifest the same quality of love for their fellow-men.

One other character who stalks through the pages of Dickens from Monks and Ralph Nickleby in the early books to John Jasper in the unfinished "Edwin Drood", but who never appears in De Morgan's novels, is the villain. In one form or another, he brings trouble and suffering into the lives of innocent people, in every story. The complication in the plot hinges upon his actions as it does on those of Quilp in "The Old Curiosity Shop" Ralph Nickleby in "Nicholas Nickleby" and Monks in "Oliver Twist." These people almost bring about a tragedy in the lives of those whom they touch. Sometimes, very occasionally, they succeed, as in the case of little Nell. Generally, however, good finally triumphs over evil: the innocent and virtuous people are rewarded and the evil-doer punished.

Although De Morgan also has a great love for a happy ending, there are several tragedies or near tragedies in the course of his novels, yet these are not the consequence of any external factor. His mischief-

makers are within. As in the great dramas the evil is the result of a flaw in character. In " When Ghost meets Ghost " for instance, we see the lonely old age of Maisie Pritchard. She tells the story of her life with its almost unbelievable hardships but we do not see in it the hand of fate. We hear rather a voice saying : " As a man soweth, so shall he also reap." She had deliberately chosen her way against the advice of all who loved her and her loneliness was the natural result.

In " It Never Can Happen Again " which so nearly ended disastrously we see a husband and wife gradually becoming estranged, not because they were tempted by two mischief-making women, but because of their own weakness of character, his inability to turn his back on temptation and her readiness to believe evil. Fenwick and Rosalind Nightingale might have averted the years of separation which end with the opening chapters of " Somehow Good " if she had been brave and if his love had been deeper and more unselfish.

Joseph Vance, it is true, suffered through Beppino's evil-doing, but he had Christofre. It was Lassie who would carry the scar of that separation to her grave,

because it was her love that failed at the crucial moment. Even in that sombre tale " An Affair of Dishonor." the man is not the villain; the suffering of the girl is consequent upon her desertion of her father and the surrender of herself to the man of evil reputation. Moral forces are responsible rather than any external factor.

This is the only touch of preaching in De Morgan's novels. In as far as we know and as his work reveals it, he had no didactic purpose. As - Follett says: " Aside from his impatience with the minor fads and futilities, he assumed a threatening posture toward nothing but downright wickedness." He tells his stories as stories. In "Joseph Vance " for instance, he tells the autobiography of his hero from boyhood to old age. There is no railing against existing conditions and no sign of any tendency to point a moral. In " Alice for Short " we have the history of a number of people who have been thrown together by fate, and our interest is only in the characters and in the gradual revelation of the tale of a by-gone generation. "Somehow Good " shows the reconciliation of two people and a very delightful love-affair. " When Ghost Meets

Ghost" has for its main plot the separation and reunion of twin sisters and as undercurrent, a charming love-story and the doings of Dave and Dolly Wardle. The novel, "It Never Can Happen Again." in the intervals of a psychological study of the characters of Alfred and Marianne Challis, offers an excellent opportunity in Blind Jim and Lizerann to bewail the lot of the poor, but our author does not avail himself of it. He is more interested in showing how this pair played the game in spite of adverse conditions and physical infirmity, than in revealing the wrongs of the social order.

Dickens, on the other hand, had nearly always a thesis to maintain. In "Nicholas Nickleby" it is the terrible conditions prevalent in the Yorkshire schools. In "Oliver Twist" the maladministration of the work-house; in "Bleak House" the evils of the Chancery Court; in "Little Dorritt" the unnecessary misery of a Debtors' Prison. One feels, at times, that Dickens is thinking more of his thesis than of his story, but this is the case only when his customary humor is lacking. Perhaps of all the stories "Oliver Twist" exemplifies this best, because here Dickens throws off

his usual role of jester and shows us evil and misery in the most realistic fashion. In the whole book Mr.

Bumble is practically the only figure who acts as comedy relief. There is something too sordid and grim about the others, the Claypoles, - the Sowerbys, are more apt to cause a shudder than a laugh. Yet in this tale the didactic part is so bound up with the story that none of it could be removed without leaving a blank. It forms the foreground rather than the background of the plot and because Dickens is so much in earnest that he forgets to laugh, we find it a singularly unattractive book, and point to it as an example of the evils of didacticism in fiction.

In " Nicholas Nickleby " we have what should in reality be even a better example of such a case. Here Dickens wants to show up the Yorkshire schools so he has his hero spend a short time in one of them. This portion of the story could be left out without affecting the plot, but in this we have the author at his best. He succeeds in depicting the disgraceful condition of the school but he does not forget to laugh, and we laugh with him. The end for which he sought is accomplished, but the book is not marred in the accomplishment. Whenever

he allows his humor full play in the didactic parts of his stories the stories are improved: probably some of the most delightful scenes in his novels have behind them a didactic purpose, as in the Sairy Gamp scenes.

There is one other example of Dickens' use of didacticism and this is seen in "Bleak House". Here, as in "Oliver Twist" the lesson is bound up with the story but there is an essential difference in treatment. Here the Chancery Courts form a background into which all the characters and incidents merge. But at no time do the characters lose their identity or become merely the weapons with which to drive the lesson home. The happenings in the story are not arbitrarily introduced, they develop logically one from another. Chancery is there, grey and threatening, but against it play the lights and colors of many lives, each of which has at one time or another the shadow of the grey pile behind, resting upon it. This story is a great artistic achievement which reveals in an emphatic way the genius of its creator.

The presence of this didactic quality in Dickens may be explained, aside from the fact that his theory of evil differed from that of De Morgan by the times in which he lived, and the life which he had led.

It was the time of the reformer. Lord Shaftesbury was, during Dickens' life, founding his ragged schools, and his costers' clubs, striving to get adequate factory legislation and proper poor-laws passed. The attention of the people was being turned to existing conditions. Dickens, of all men, would appreciate the need of such reform. His wanderings as a child, through the London streets, had impressed certain truths upon his mind - truths about the social order. He could not forget them and when he started to write he introduced them just as naturally as De Morgan introduced the subject of Drink; yet no one would accuse the latter of being a prohibitionist. The difference is that De Morgan shows the evil as being the result of a weakness in the individual while Dickens reveals it as a result of the conditions under which the individual lives. To the latter, most of the evil in the world was due to a wrong social system. It grew out of the crowded tenements; bad sanitation; oppression in childhood, and fifty kindred things. Thus it is only natural that he should have seized every opportunity to denounce these social evils, while De Morgan treating of the deterioration of character quite apart from environment, remained silent.

We find in this entire lack of didacticism which exists in the work of De Morgan the most outstanding way in which the author differs from Dickens. We have seen also that although the humor in his work is as important an element as is that of Dickens, it differs entirely in quality. In regard to characterization also, we have shown that here each author achieves his greatest success in a different field, that generally De Morgan depicts the normal individual best and is successful in detailed character analysis, while Dickens' crowning glory is his large group of abnormal people and his common men and women.

In conclusion we may say that although the claim that Wm. De Morgan is a reincarnation of Charles Dickens does not justify itself sufficiently in our opinion, this does not imply anything derogatory of the former's work. His genius lay in a different field and there he has proved his right to a place among the writers of English fiction. He will always be read with enjoyment and profit by the members of his own class about whom and for whom he wrote. The work of Dickens, however, will be read by members of every class for in it there is something universal, a spirit which appeals to



the common mind. "Commonness", explains Mr Chesteron,  
- "means the quality common to the saint and the sinner:  
to the philosopher and the fool!" "Dickens' power " then,  
- in the words of the same critic, " lay in the fact that  
he expressed with an energy and brilliancy quite  
uncommon, the things close to the common mind."

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