

the blood-reds and the golds, the stirring notes of trumpets, the pride and panoply of the mediaeval battles. Poems such as these have an almost universal appeal, and *Lepanto* richly deserves a place in the literary spotlight.

In his poems and in his essays, in the allegories, criticisms, and controversial articles which he wrote in such abundance, Chesterton preserves the same great theme—the realization of man's position as a creature and servant of God, and his dependence on that God. This religious thread can be traced throughout all his works, for Chesterton was a militant Catholic, a type of which we are at present in dire need. Men cannot see that our world is turned upside down. They do not see how values have been reversed, how we are forgetting the spiritual for the material. They only know that the world is in great distress, both spiritually and materially. The world needs men who are balanced by faith in God, men who can, as Chesterton did, say in no uncertain terms what is wrong with humanity. The world needs Catholics, men who are not afraid to attack openly the vices of our time, men who will stand as signposts pointing toward Heaven, guides to civilization, leading them on to their end and ultimate fulfillment.

RONAN MacDONALD, '42

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#### DICKENS AS A NOVELIST

After having read Charles Dickens's life both as a boy and as a man, one can see immediately that his position in life as a boy has been largely responsible for the beliefs and desires of his manhood. In his youth, he knew poverty and hard work, for at the early age of ten he was forced to work in a factory for the miserable sum of six shillings a week. His education, such as it was, was got in the streets of London. It was such conditions that made Dickens the man he was, a man who fully realized the need for the improvement of the conditions of men and society.

As Dickens believed in men and a better future for the great powers of the world. As a result of this new interest



society, he wished through his characters, to perform a mission, a mission which would portray the dreams of ordinary men in a real and living form, so that they might direct their lives towards higher ideals. As he also believed that all books should be uplifting and that they should teach a lesson, he always has good triumph over evil in his works, although that is quite an exaggeration. At first, he allowed his villains to triumph and his hero to suffer, but, in the end, he always had his villain unmasked and his hero rewarded. For example, in *David Copperfield*, which is largely the story of Dickens's own life, he has, in the beginning, Uriah Heep, that eternal hypocrite, deceive David by his slyness and cruelty, and by his pretension to be a humble person. For instance, when Heep entered David's house he pretended to be so pleased with the things he saw that we know he was speaking artificially. Then, in the end, Dickens has Mr. Micawber, an entirely different character from Heep, conquer and outdo Heep, by exposing all his evils. Then, again, in the beginning of *Christmas Carols*, Dickens has old Scrooge take an extremely bitter attitude towards his friends and towards the Christmas season, and in the end, after the appearance of the Scrooge's deceased partner, the Ghost, he has him turn over a new leaf and take on a new personality. It was by such stories that Dickens accomplished his mission in life. To the very end, he remained the advocate of the poor and oppressed.

Now, with regard to his novels themselves, it may be said that they possessed qualities both of strength and weakness. The most remarkable features of his novels are portrayal of character, description, and contrast; the most outstanding fault is weakness in sentence structure and in plot.

Dickens was not interested in writing novels of action; he was interested only in writing novels of character. That is one reason why he is so widely read. His greatest achievement lies in his ability to portray humorous characters, such as Aunt Betsy and Mr. Micawber in *David Copperfield*, and Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Winkle, and the fat boy in *Pickwick Papers*, who, although they are greatly exaggerated, are comic characters who become entirely credible in his works.



Another remarkable feature of Dickens's writing is his description. When he describes a scene or incident he goes into every little detail, so that the thing seems real. He is so convincing that he makes us believe that he was actually present when the happening took place. One of his most widely known methods of description is personification of inanimate objects. He describes them in such a way that they seem, if not alive, to be possessed of emotional significance.

A final favourite among Dickens's methods is contrast; so favored was it, in fact, that it becomes a mannerism with him. He contrasts scenes expressing chiefly joy and sorrow, humor and pathos, so regularly that the reader can almost foretell the tone of the passage to follow the one which he is at the moment reading.

Such are the chief remarkable characteristics of Dickens's works. However, along with these there are several faults to be found in his novels, the most outstanding of which is weakness in constructing sentences, in writing dialogue, and in constructing plot.

Dickens is very fond of the absolute construction; this makes his writing a little out of date. One can tell from his sentence structure that his novels have not been written in the present day. Also, many of his sentences are much too long, a fact which makes them a little confusing and difficult to understand. Further, when he wishes to make his characters speak, he almost always uses the unexpressive words, "said I" and "said he", instead of choosing words which would suit the purpose better. This is not a serious fault, but it does show a little carelessness on his part. The main fault of Dickens's work is to be found in his plot construction.

Dickens found it very tiresome to devise a well formed plot. He could not sit down for hours and think up what was to be the outcome of a certain incident. Thus, most of his stories are improvised, not composed, and, as a result of this improvisation, many of them are mere episodic narratives closely connected. For the conduct of his stories he depended mainly on the inspiration of the moment, with confidence that, somewhere in the chapter that he was writing, something would happen.



When we consider the purpose of Dickens's writing and his ability to portray character, to describe and contrast, and to cheer the hearts of his readers with his humor, we may justly overlook his weaknesses and give him the place in fiction which he rightly deserves.

WILLIAM MacDONALD, '47

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#### TO A SOLDIER'S MOTHER

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! Her boy is marching,  
Marching somewhere in the mud.  
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, Her boy is marching,  
Visage marred by grime and blood.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! Her boy lies wounded,  
Lying somewhere all alone.  
Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, Her boy lies dreaming  
Visions of his folks at home.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp Her boy is found there,  
Rosary in his frozen hand.  
Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! His soul is marching  
To final peace in far off land.

From that land her boy is watching  
O'er his family here below.  
Pray to God their mother's torture?  
They will never have to know.

JOHN ELDON GREEN, '47