

Romantic Prose

The first half of the nineteenth century is famous for poetry but it is none the less famous for its prose, because one of the famous poets was a great prose writer also. There have been persons other than the poets who wrote in prose with romantic fervour.

Coleridge, whom we better know as the poet of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan' has some prose writings too to his credit though they are not substantial and connected body of prose as compared to those of Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey. The prose of Coleridge is a collection of brilliant discursive fragments the reason being his "constitutional tendency to fly off at a tangent", the second reason being his many sided intellectual interests. In spite of the fragmentary character of Cole-

Coleridge's prose, it is valuable because it displays his critical faculty. We may say that his prose is critical prose. The person, who influenced Coleridge the outcome of which was a discovery of Shakespeare, was Lessing. Other persons who influenced him were Kant, Schiller and Schelling. Coleridge's prose whether they are political prose or critical prose has two qualities - (i) clarity and (ii) subtlety. Coleridge exerted profound influence in the domain of religious thought. His 'Aids to Reflection' is an attempt to harmonise reason and spiritual experience. 'On the Constitution of Church and State' is again an attempt to blend together history and spiritual experience. Sharp and pungent sayings can be found in his 'Table Talk'. Once he thought of starting his own journal 'The Watchman' but the plan could not be executed. ASC

Writer, not as a poet, his fame rests on 'Biographia Literaria' though it is a book of criticism.

Thomas De Quincey is another prose writer of the age. Two books on which his fame rests are 'The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater' and the 'Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets'. 'The Confessions' exhibit his passion and imagination. 'Dialogue of Three Tamplars' show his analytical faculty which was the result of his study of Ricardo. Three notes ~~that~~ which are always present in his writings are (i) meditative, (ii) analytical and (iii) descriptive. His critical faculty can be seen in his 'on the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth'. His descriptive and visualising power can be seen at its maturity in 'Suspiria de Profundis'. Here the prose has been described as "impa-