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B.A. Part I (English Honours)

## Chaucer's Realism

Literature reflects the tendencies of the age in which it is produced and there is always a great literary artist who becomes the mouth-piece of his Age and gives expression to its hopes and aspirations, its fads and fetishes, its fears and doubts, its prosperity and enterprise in his works. Such an artist was Alexander Pope in the XVIII century, and such a poet was Alfred Tennyson in the Victorian Age. Pope faithfully represents his Age, its social and literary tendencies in the poems such as 'The Rape of the Lock', 'Dunciad', 'Essay on Man' and 'Essay on Criticism'. In 'The Rape of the Lock' the poet directs his attention to the fashions and amours of the ladies of fashion represented by Arabella Fermor, and to the foppishness and gay frivolities of the courtiers and men of social disposition. In the 'Essay on Man', Pope gives express

Tatler aimed at two purposes - (i) entertainment and (ii) improvement of morals and manners of contemporary society. The style of the writers were conversational and the women too used to read them on Sundays. They formed excellent reading in family circles. In their essays Addison and Steele dealt with "more immediate and passing scenes of life," with "temporary and local matters" even before the Tatler there were two papers or periodicals namely 'Athenian Mercury' of John Dunton and Defoe's 'Review'. Daniel Defoe has rightly been called the 'Father' of English Newspaper. He himself wrote all the things. The aim of these journals was mainly political but they also dealt with moral and social topics. Anyway, Addison and Steele became very popular through the periodicals. As a consequence

nee a host of imitations of the Tatler came up. Those imitations are no longer remembered with the exception of Swift's 'The Examiner', which was started with a purely political end in view. This periodical was a political journal. The next periodical which must find a mention is Dr. Johnson's Rambler which appeared twice a week. With the change of the man the style also underwent a change. The easy flow, the sparkle and the humour of Addison took its leave. In the hands of Johnson the essay became more serious and style heavy and periodic. At the time of the Rambler Dr. Johnson was a less known man, rather was comparatively an unknown man. Though a number of periodicals had sprung up after the Tatler, Spectator and the Guardian, the Rambler ranks first among classical periodicals after the ~~the~~ Guardian. A few years

later Johnson contributed to the Universal Chronicle, a series of papers called the Gilder. In the interval between the Rambler and the Gilder Johnson had contributed a great deal to Hawkesworth's Adventure.

The main purpose of the essay writers for the periodicals was to bring about an overall improvement in manners and morals. The trend of the essays in the Spectator can be deduced from the following statement of the author "The great and only end of these speculations is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain". In the words of A. C. Rickett :-

"It is the first attempt made by journalism to give form and consistency to public opinion the first serious effort made, in fact, to organise public opinion by clarifying and systematising the infinite discussions that went on at

Age direct their gaze and attention to only certain limited aspects of the time, for example, the unknown author of Pearl shows us the mysticism of refined minds, Wyclif, the surging wave of religious reformation, power, the fear produced in the wealthier class by the peasant rising, Barbour, the break between the literature of Scotland and of England and the advent of patriotic Scottish poetry and England the corruption in the church and the religious order. Each of these authors throws light only on one aspect of fourteenth century life. It is Chaucer's greatness that he directs his comprehensive gaze not on one aspect only of his times, but on all its wide and variegated life. He is the wide and capacious soul and he takes a fuller view of his times more than anyone else could have taken in those days. Chaucer gives us

character because some of the details of his life tally with the details of his biography written by his private secretary Florence Emily Hardy who later on became his wife. Many of the details of that book had been dictated by Hardy himself.

~~the~~ Mark Rutherford - whose real name was William Hale White, came very late in fiction. He was fifty when his first novel 'The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford' was published in 1881. It is his own story and "a poignant account of loneliness both spiritual and material. 'The Autobiography' is moving because it is a lament for an heroic tradition from which the glory has departed!"

The end.

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