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Chaucer, The First National Poet
Chaucer was the first great national poet of England giving full expression to the new hopes and aspirations of the people of his times. He voiced through his poetry that national unity which had been brought about by the fusion of the Normans and the Anglo-Saxons. The growing influence of France was checked and for the first the poet in the natural language of England gave expression to the life, ideals, hopes and aspirations of the people of the 14th century belonging to his country. In his picture of the Canterbury Pilgrimage, with the frankness of criticism prevailing among all its members, with the strength of its public opinion with its power of regulating its own affairs we find, what as yet had nowhere also appeared in modern European literature, the image of an organized 'nation'. The foundation

of Chaucer's art lies in ~~English~~
~~the~~ English life and English
character.

Modern poetry is characteris-
ed by realism. The modern
poet is a keen, observer of
the various tendencies of his
times which are being put by
him in poetry. This modern
note of realism had been sou-
nded by Chaucer long ago in
the 14th century. He made
a thorough study of his time
in its varied aspects and
gave expression, to its hopes
and aspirations, its fears
and doubts in 'The Canterbury
Tales'. He reflected his centu-
ry not in fragments but as
a whole and was its chroni-
cler as Froissart had been of
France during the same time.
He had the innate instinct to
catch within his purview the
soul of his generation in all
its fullness and its depth.
He had the seeing eye, the
retentive memory, the jud-

any other." His 'Sartor Resartus' which is a sort of allegorical autobiography was published some time in 1833-34. His writings during the period of maturity are 'The French Revolution', 'Cromwell's Letters and Speeches', 'Frederick II' and 'The Life of John Sterling'. He has written various essays on social politics also, namely 'Chartism', 'Heroes and Hero worship', 'Past and Present', and 'Latter-Day Pamphlets'. His 'French Revolution' is his literary masterpiece. The book describes the frenzy of those terrible years. Carlyle was a versatile genius. As a critic he is none the less. He is a moralist. According to him historical dramas much teach some moral lessons. He preached for change of moral doctrine in the society. Matthew Arnold is another prose writer of the age though his prose is nothing but

his critical writings which comprise of 'Essays in criticism', 'Culture And Anarchy', 'Friendship's Garland' and 'Literary influence of Academies'. He had classical spirit in him and this had endowed him with the quality of disinterestedness, of self detachment. It is this spirit which animates all his works whether be critical or creative. Arnold knows how to hit whether in prose letters or social satire. Arnold believed in practicality and the proof lies in the sagacity of his educational proposal. Two things, very important with regard to Arnold, are his emphasis on literary interpretation of Bible and spiritual interpretation of the scriptures. In this way we find that in addition to being one of the pillars of the Victorian poetry, he occupied an important place in the domain of prose

His general attitude to life has found expression in 'The Religion of the Heart' which projects a sunny personality.

Charles Lamb is another prose writer whose fame rests on 'Essays of Elia' and 'Tales from Shakespeare'. 'The Tales' were written in collaboration with Mary. The prose rendering of the comic dramas was done by Mary and that of tragic dramas was done by Lamb. He tried his hands at every kind of writing - poetry, prose, drama, fiction, essay and criticism. His 'Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare', 'Essay on the Tragedies of Shakespeare' and 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' are critical writings. His critical essays are, according to Rickett, "autobiographical fragments from which we can reconstruct his inner and outer life".

William Hazlitt started his

life as a portrait-painter and nurtured the ambition of writing an essay on the 'Principles of Human Action'. He loved his work as portrait-painter. We can have a peep into his state of mind in his 'Essay on the Pleasure of Painting'. He wrote for the 'Morning Chronicle' and 'Examiner' also. In the evening of 1798 he heard the lecture of Coleridge and there came his literary awakening. He was a political pamphleteer also. For example we can cite his 'Free Thoughts in Public Affairs', 'Table Talk', 'The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays' and 'The Round Table' also flowed from his pen. The writings of the matured years are 'English Poets' and 'English Comic Writers'. In 1823 came 'Liber Amoris', in 1826 'The Plain Speaker' and then came the 'Spirit of the Age'. Lastly, he wrote 'Life of Napoleon' which

is dull reading.
Walter Savage Landor besides being a poet, was a great prose writer. He wrote in dialogues and hence the tone is conversational. His 'Imaginary Conversations' consists of dialogues between characters of every age. We can not say for certain that in the book he revealed the soul of his personages but ~~was~~ certainly the language is admirable and it is due to the language that the book occupies a high rank in the English prose of Romantic period.

The end.

Munir Bhushan Sinha
Deptt. of English
S.S. College, Ichhanaband