

8'1751'82-1/-9

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN
"NICHOLAS NICKELBY" BY CHARLES DICKENS

Baxramova Zamira Rakhimovna

Assitant, Bukhara Innovational Medical Institute

Abstract: *This article, explores the life and adventures of a young man named Nicholas Nickleby, who has to support his mother and sister, due to unexpected demise of his father and opinions about the characteristic features of the main characters of the novel.*

Key words: *Bad\good characters, playfulness, crucial, opposed characteristics, stylistic devices.*

INTRODUCTION

The Life and Adventures of Nickolas Nickelby is a romantic fiction novel written by Charles Dickens, an English writer of Victorian era being accepted as the greatest novelist with his literary contributions as novels, short stories, poetry and plays. Notable works among his numerous writings include A Message from the Sea, Great Expectations, Oliver Twist, and A Tale of Two Cities.

Analysis and results. Nicholas Nickleby is loyal, honest, young, and, as a result of his youth, often hotheaded. His sister, Kate Nickleby, has many similar qualities to Nicholas, but is more demure. Their mother, Catherine Nickleby, often serves as comic relief. Ralph Nickleby, Nicholas' uncle, hates him. He is also greedy and most of the people he hangs out with share his bad qualities. One of the few exceptions is Newman Noggs, Ralph's clerk and Nicholas's friend. A few of his other associates are Sir Mulberry Hawk, Lord Verisopht, Mr. Pluck and Mr. Pyke, Arthur Gride, and Brooker.

Smike, one of the boys at Dotheboys Hall, is beaten by the Squeers more than the others. Smike is secretly Nicholas's cousin (and the son of Ralph). His parentage is the subject of a lot of scheming and blackmailing in the novel.

John Browdie (the eventual husband of Tilda Price) and Tilda Price (Fanny's best friend for part of the book) are two of the few honorable characters featured in this location.

When Mr. Nickleby dies, his wife and two children move to London to be with Mr. Nickleby's brother, Ralph. Ralph, however, hated his brother and hates his wife and children by association. He gets Nicholas an awful job working for Wackford Squeers, who is headmaster at Dotheboys Hall, a school for unwanted children in Yorkshire.

The stage management of events is pretty shameless, but it's as enjoyable as a 1930s Hollywood movie. Dickens's irresistible compulsion to create whole parades of

unforgettable grotesques and his magnificent crusading rage against injustice all keep the pages turning.⁴²

The central character has often been criticized as being merely functional, but it seems that Nicholas is very close to a portrait of the artist as a young man: his passion, impulsiveness, somewhat exaggerated notions of gallantry, occasional priggishness and big embracing spirit are so much shared with his author (who at this stage of his life frequently had to take to horseback in order to work off his undischarged surplus of *élan vital*) that reading the book puts us in very close proximity to the young Dickens. Its spirit seems to hark back, past Shakespeare, to Chaucer, enabling Dickens to embody something quintessentially and irrepressibly English. Simon Callow's *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World* will be published by Harper Press in February 2012. Chapter 13 effectively encourages the reader to resent Squeers and see him as the villain, whereas Nicholas is portrayed as the hero and Smike and the other boys are lavished with sympathetic feelings. The chapter starts with a depressing description of the boys sleeping conditions, Dickens uses words like: feeble, ragged, and dull, to describe it, this powerful description makes the reader feel-strengthening hatred toward Squeers.

In the book people who are sadist described to show how they make the life problematic and dangerous.

Squeers is a sadist:

"With hands trembling with delight, Squeers unloosened the cord" he treats the boys in an appalling manner. He deliberately overworks, underfeeds and poorly houses the boys, Squeers does this deliberately to fulfill his sadistic tendencies, and he also looks forward to beating the boys at every opportunity,: "beat him until the little urchin in his writhing's actually rolled out of his hands"

This is also indicated in the case of Smike. During the fight between Nicholas and Squeers, it becomes apparent that when Squeers is deprived of fulfilling his ambitions he becomes very enraged:

"Sit down, beggar!" screamed Squeers, almost beside himself with rage, and seizing Smike as he spoke."

This confrontation is very important, as it is the climax to the chapter and a large amount of the book so far, it also justifies any doubt the reader has in the roles the characters play, Nicolas as the hero and Squeers as the villain. Dickens used stronger descriptive language and lots of well-written dialog in this section of the chapter: screamed, miserable, daunted and helpless are all examples of this. This style of writing that Dickens has adopted or created for this piece adds emotion to the moment.

Nicholas Nickelby can be, in a certain way, considered as a moral fable. In the novel is fully revealed young Dickens' sense of moral value though it may strike the

⁴² Schlicke, Paul. *Dickens and Popular Entertainment*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1985. xiii-xxxi.

sophisticated reader as unrealistic. In it the author draws a sharp distinction between good characters and bad ones in his effort to drive home to the reader the moral point he feels so strongly. Therefore good characters come out triumphant in the end as a reward of their virtues (at least in Dickens' eye), whereas bad ones are defeated as a severe punishment for their vices. In short this novel forms a world in which everything goes in the way the author's sense of moral value dictates.⁴³ The main plot of this novel opens with the death of the hero's father, when he, left with his mother and sister to support, and nothing to rely on financially, goes out into the world. He first goes to London, seeking the help of his uncle, Ralph Nickleby, who is destined to be Nicholas' chief antagonist. In their first encounter, we are impressed with the sharp contrast between Nicholas and Ralph; it is "the contrast," to borrow Dickens' own phrase, "between the simplicity of the nephew and the worldly manner of the uncle." The difference between the two characters, as implied in this phrase, arises out of how much or how little they know of the world. Nicholas is, as Ralph despairingly says, "*wholly ignorant of the world*". So are the rest of the family. Ralph contemptuously comments on the ignorance of the world on the part of his nephew's family: "This simple family born and bred in retirement, and wholly unacquainted with what is called the world ... ". On the other hand, Ralph repeatedly boasts himself to be "*a man of the world and a man of business*" who knows the way the world works. Before going into further analysis, let us check how this phrase, "the world," is defined in the novel. Dickens clearly indicates, when he is commenting on the ignorance of the world on the part of this family fresh out of the country, that "the world ... signifies all the rascals in it". Dickens' own definition of the word implies that it has negative connotations, and that the thorough acquaintance with the world is in no way considered a virtue. On the contrary, the initiation into the world, as is implied throughout the novel, usually signals the beginning of the corruption of one's heart, whose purity Dickens values above anything else.

This difference between Nicholas and Ralph goes beyond the ignorance of, or acquaintance with, the world. It involves their different attitudes toward the world. Their difference is made clear at the beginning of the novel when Dickens describes how differently Ralph and Nicholas's father reacted respectively to the accounts of "their father's sufferings in his days of poverty, and of their deceased uncle's importance in his days of affluence". These accounts determined Nicholas' father "to shun the world and attach himself to the quiet routine of a country life" (p. 3). On the other hand, the accounts urged Ralph to go out boldly into the world, where crafty business dealings were a way of life, and to make himself a fortune.

⁴³ Davis, Paul. *The Penguin Dickens Companion: The Essential Reference to His Life and Work*. London: Penguin, 1999.

It, then, follows that Ralph holds sacred the belief that "riches are the only true source of happiness and power, and that there was nothing like money". He, therefore, cares "for nothing in life, or beyond it, save the gratification of the two passions, avarice, the first and predominant appetite of his nature, and hatred, the second". For Ralph, money is the supreme god as is indicated in the following passage where he boasts of its power: "As a portion of the world affect to despise the power of money, I must try and show them what it is". When Ralph despises his brother's family, saying that they have "no idea what business is unacquainted with the very meaning of the word", it is clear that the usurer denounces the family for their sense of value which fails in exalting the power and importance of money.⁴⁴ This worship of money brings an undesirable effect on Ralph, absorbed in "his old pursuit of money-getting", and surrounded by a gold-induced haze as Dickens comments metaphorically upon its dehumanizing process: "... gold conjures up a mist about a man more destructive of all his senses and lulling to his feelings than the fumes of charcoal ...". In other words, this gold-induced greed causes one's heart to be rotten to the core as Dickens indicates that "the man of business had a more than commonly vicious snarl lurking at his heart". The central character has often been criticized as being merely functional, but it seems to me that Nicholas is very close to a portrait of the artist as a young man: his passion, impulsiveness, somewhat exaggerated notions of gallantry, occasional priggishness and big embracing spirit are so much shared with his author (who at this stage of his life frequently had to take to horseback in order to work off his undischarged surplus of élan vital) that reading the book puts us in very close proximity to the young Dickens. And in *Mrs Nichleby*, he has created a savage and wildly funny portrait of his own mother. Dickens's feelings about her were dark and complex: she tried to overrule John Dickens when he withdrew his son from the blacking warehouse in which the 11-year-old Charles languished, and he never forgave her for that. The young women, in the book, alas, are both inspid and lachrymose. There is in fact a pressing and permanent tension between *Nicholas Nickleby's* carnival spirit and its morbid sentimentality, a tension highly characteristic of the nascent Victorian era in which it was written, and one that was central to Dickens himself; he never quite resolved it to the end. But for the most part the book is a kind of corybantic frieze of all-too-human mankind, its characters parading unforgettably past us, insinuating themselves permanently into our imaginations, populating our mental landscapes. Its spirit seems to hark back, past Shakespeare, to Chaucer, enabling Dickens to embody something quintessentially and irrepressibly English. Simon Callow's *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World* will be published by Harper Press in February 2012.

⁴⁴ Slater, Michael. *The Composition and Monthly Publication of Nicholas Nickleby*. Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1993.

There is no doubt, however, that in spite of a few signs of the remnants of Ralph's humanity, he symbolizes the center of the evil force in the novel. This attribute of "good heart" or "corrupt heart" works as a test to judge various characters and divides them into two groups in this novel. *Nicholas Nickleby*, then, forms a bipolar world, in which good characters are morally in conflict with bad (or corrupt) ones.

Conclusion. *Nicholas Nickelby* is, as we have seen, a moral fable which expresses young Dickens' sense of moral values. It forms a bipolar world, where the young novelist draws a sharp distinction between good characters and bad ones by the 'purity of their "hearts," and where the good-hearted emerge triumphant, while the corrupt-hearted are defeated. This sentiment of Dickens' certainly strikes the sophisticated reader as a naive assumption which it is. Maybe Dickens knew it. After going through many hardships in the heartless world, where (it seemed at least to Dickens that) many people are only pursuing their own self-interests at the expense of the socially underprivileged, he was irresistibly driven to portray in this novel the world as he wished it were. In this sense *Nicholas Nickelby* is an instance of young Dickens' wish-fulfillment and his escape from reality.

REFERENCES:

1. Chesterton, G. K. *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Works of Charles Dickens*. New York: Haskell House, 1970.
2. Chittick, Kathryn. *Dickens and the 1830s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
3. Collins, Philip, ed. *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.
4. Davis, Paul. *The Penguin Dickens Companion: The Essential Reference to His Life and Work*. London: Penguin, 1999.
5. Slater, Michael. *The Composition and Monthly Publication of Nicholas Nickleby*. Menston, Yorkshire: Scholar Press, 1993.