



PUNJABI UNIVERSITY PATIALA

M.A. (ENGLISH) PART-I

COURSE-III

SEMESTER-I

BEGINNINGS OF THE NOVEL

UNIT NO. II

Department of Distance Education

Punjabi University, Patiala

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CHARLES DICKENS : HARD TIMES

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Note:- The students can download syllabus from website of department www.dccpbi.com

CHARLES DICKENS : HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Life of Charles Dickens :

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 at Landport, in Hampshire. His father, John Dickens, was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. His father got this job because of the influence of his mother who had worked as a house-keeper for John Crew. M.P. Dickens has presented his grandmother as Mrs. Rouncewell, house- keeper of Chesney Would in *Bleak House*. Though very little is recorded of Dickens's mother yet she was a petite woman who belonged to a higher strata of civil servants. She married John because she had an appeal for living as well as appetite for love.

Dickens's father, John was a lazy and an easy going person who was very careless in money matters. His extravagant habits often landed him in debt which drove the family often to "reduced conditions". When Dickens was two years old, the family moved to Chatham. Chatham was almost an Eden for the small child because he got an opportunity to get this preliminary education there. Genial and lively in disposition, but delicate in constitution, this very queer small boy preferred to curl himself in a corner with a book than to take part in mildest of the games. The realistic highway robberies and the royal pranks in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* "fascinated the imagination of this slip of a boy".

The happy days at Chatham were exchanged for a depressing existence in a dingy London suburb. The family fell into a debt trap and Dickens's father was sent to the Debtor's prison (Marshalsea). Hardly had Charles survived the shock of his father's imprisonment, when he was sent to work in a blacking factory. Though the parents were satisfied with this arrangement yet the bright and sensitive boy felt disgrace and humiliation. He felt as if he has been "thrown away" by his parents. The plight of the neglected child haunts Dickens through the figures of Jo, Charley and Esther in *Bleak House*. Numerous helpless child protagonists of his novels echo the dark days of Dickens's own childhood. Notwithstanding these painful experiences, Dickens had an abundance of animal spirit and a fund of humour that probably kept him from breaking down, but how deeply the life affected him can be seen from the various allusions to it in his novels.

At length the hateful experience came to an end and Dickens was sent to school. At fifteen, he left school and got employment with Messrs. Ellis and Blackmore, attorneys at Gray's inn. He got an opportunity to observe the legal profession from a close quarter and came to know about the absurdities and delays in the legal system. During the period of his clerkship, Dickens worked with young clerks like Guppy and Smallweed and lawyers like Kenge Vholes and Talkinghorn and his employers. A fellow clerk says: "He could imitate in a manner that I have never heard equalled the low population of the streets of London in all their varieties... and the popular singers of that day, whether comic, patriotic, as to his acting he could give us Shakespeare by the ten minutes." There was however, small prospect of Dickens distinguishing himself in legal profession, so he turned to the mysteries of shorthand and quickly gained proficiency in it. As a legal recorder he took down proceedings in Doctor's Inn, the fog bound chamber. That is the scene of Jandyce and Jandyce in *Bleak House*. Dickens's brush with the legal profession provided him enough material which he had incorporated in many of his novels especially *Bleak House*.

In 1830, Dickens became the parliamentary reporter. Many years later, in speaking on behalf of the newspaper Press Fund, he said, "I have worn my Knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery in the House of Commons; House of Lords, when we used to be huddled together like so many sheep." Despite the drudgery, the work proved rewarding as it enabled Dickens to have a closer look at the machinations of the politicians. His stay familiarised him with the miserable living conditions that prevailed in the urban atmosphere. His occasional trips to the provincial towns and countries provided him with a wide knowledge of England. His occasional trips to Journalism led him to creative writing. In 1833, Dickens made his place in authorship. One evening at twilight with fear and trembling, he stealthily dropped his first manuscript "into a dark letter box, in a Magazine, he walked down to West Minister Hall. He tells us, "because my eyes were so dim with joy and pride, and not fit to be seen in the street." He contributed similar pieces to both "Morning Chronicle" and "Evening Chronicle".

Then came 'Pickwick' and fame. Dickens married Catherine Hagarth, the daughter of a fellow worker in the "Morning Chronicle". Then followed a hectic schedule work with a sense of commitment. On an invitation from Washington Irving, Dickens paid a visit to America in 1841 and received an enthusiastic reception. But with his speeches against slavery and the publication of the American Notes and Martin Chuzzlewit, ill will sprang up across the Atlantic and the indignant actors of a New York theatre dumped the copy of the novel into witches' cauldron. But all ill will disappeared when he visited America second time in 1867-68. Thereafter, he visited

Europe, engaged himself in theatrical activities and organised many philanthropic activities. Dickens began to give public readings of his novels. The success of these public readings induced him to start on a tour of Europe and especially Italy. In France, he made the acquaintances of the elder Dumas, Victor Hugo, Scribe Lamartine and Chateaulerrand. In the year 1851, he lost both his father and his baby daughter. In 1870, he gave a final reading in London. At the end he spoke with a voice full of emotions. "From those garish lights, I vanish now for ever more with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful and affectionate farewell." And the same year while writing some chapters of his last novel *The Mystery of Edwin Wood*, Dickens fell ill and died. "No death since 1866," wrote Carlyle, "has fallen on me with such a stroke. The good, the gentle, high-spirited very friendly and noble Dickens-every inch of him an honest man." He was buried quietly in the Poets Corner, Westminster Abbey.

His Works

The immediate success of the "Immutable" Dickens was due to two reasons, one literary and the other social. He appeared on the scene at the most appropriate time in the history of English fiction. The Industrial Revolution had given a big boost to the growth of town life. The countryside had found its story-tellers in Scott, Maria Edgeworth and Jane Austen. Since the time of Henry Fielding, no English novelist of any repute had ventured to chronicle the town life. Dickens had the painful experience of the Drudgery of the workshop, the office and terrible life of the streets. He had captured the varied and dehumanising aspects of the metropolis and became its genuine story-teller. The second reason of his popularity lay in the fact that he was not only a story teller also a social reformer who had used the medium of fiction as a platform for his social appeals. He performed this odd job with a smile on his face. His genial humour and benign ridicule has disarmed his critics on the one hand, and motivated his admirers to come forward for the amelioration of the helpless, neglected and homeless sections of England.

Sketches by Boz was his maiden authorial venture which saw the light of the day in book form in 1836. All these literary pieces had already appeared in various magazines in the last four years. Dickens was praised for the "fidelity of his observations". "What Hagarth was in painting, such very nearly is Mr. Dickens in prosification." Sketches fore-shadow the future works of Dickens.

Pickwick Papers, Dickens's next literary venture, a novel remarkable for its humour and gaiety, was published serially from 1836 to 1837. This novel brought instant recognition to Dickens as a writer and story-teller. Mr. Samuel Pickwick, the chairman of the Pickwickian Club which he had

founded, Messrs. Tracy Trupman, Augustus Snodgrass and Nathaniel Winkle, members of the club, have formed a correspondence society of the club to report to it their journeys and adventures and observations of character and manner. The novel is without an elaborate plot and the club serves as a connecting link for a series of detached incidents and changing characters. The serialised novel picked up sale and soon became the hot favourite of the people of England. Though the critics have found fault with the tectonics of the tale, yet the raw comedy and humour, the grotesqueness of character and incident and the raciness of the prose caught the attention of the people.

Dickens's zeal for social reform and his bitter indictment of the cruelties and cold-bloodedness of the urban life finds full expression in his second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1837-38). Oliver Twist is an orphan child born and brought in the work house under the cruel supervision of Bumble. Exasperated with the terrible condition of his apprenticeship, Oliver runs away to London and falls into the hands of a criminal gang headed by Jew Fagin and whose other members are burglar Bill Sike, his companion Nancy and the young pick-pocket, "The Artful Dodger." The gang fails to convert him into a thief. He falls under the care of kind hearted Oliver Brownlow, but is again kidnapped at the behest of Monks who shows special interest in the helpless orphan. As a result of a gun-shot wound during a burglary, Oliver falls into the hands of Mrs. Maylie and Rose. Nancy hints at some closer relationship between Rose and Oliver and declares that Monks knows the parentage of the child and wants to destroy all the evidence. Nancy is murdered for her betrayal, but nemesis overtakes both Sikes and Fagin. Monks turns out to be the half brother of Oliver and is animated by the desire to appropriate the entire property by destroying the latter. Rose is the sister of Oliver's unfortunate mother. Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver. He also pinpoints the casual indifference of the society to its neglected children.

The next novel, *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), exposes the malpractices of the private schools. Nicholas, his mother and sister become penniless on the death of his father. Nicholas's independent nature infuriates his miser uncle Ralph Nickleby and the former is sent to Dotheboy Hall where a heartless teacher Mr. Squeers starves and humiliates forty children under the pretext of education. Nicholas takes Squeers to task and escapes with Smike. He enters the service of benevolent Cheeryble. He also rescues his sister from the prosecution of Sir Mulberry Hawk. Nicholas falls in love with Madeline Bray whom Ralph Nickleby had conspired to marry with another userer, Gride. Now Ralph Nickleby sets his eyes upon Smike and the latter succumbs to his evil designs. Newman Moggs, the clerk of Ralph, thwarts his master's design. Ralph hangs himself when he learns that Smike was his own son. Gride is murdered and Squeers is transported.

Nicholas finally marries Madeline. This melodramatic novel also rails at the greed and ill-will of the people who feel no qualms in tormenting others for their petty interests.

The next novel, ***Old Curiosity (1840-41)*** has also been written in the fictional pattern which Dickens has followed in his earlier two novels. Little Nell and her grandfather live in the old curiosity shop and the girl tends her grandfather with great affection and care. Reduced to poverty by his own son-in-law and further impoverished by Nell's brother, the grandfather borrows money from Daniel Quilp and gambles in the vain hope of regaining his fortunes. The gamble fails and Quilp takes over the shop. Both the grandfather and Nell retreat to the countryside to escape from the clutches of Quilp who pursues them with revenge. They seek refuge in a church hut. The grandfather's brother who returns from abroad, traces them with a great difficulty but both Nell and the grandfather die one after the other. Quilp is drowned. The book appears sensational, grotesque and pathetic.

His next novel ***Barnaby Rudge (1840-1841)*** has been written in the tradition of historical novel perfected by Sir Walter Scott. Rowben Haredale is murdered and the killer remains untraced. Geoffrey Haredale, his brother and Sir John Chesters are enemies. Chester's son, Edward is in love with Haredale's niece, Emma. The two enemies come together to thwart this match. Chester ferments the Cardon riots and Haredale's house is burnt and Emma is kidnapped. Edward rescues both Chester and Haredale and marries Emma. The steward Barnaby is discovered as the murderer of Haredale. Barnby enacts his death and Chester is killed by Haredale in duel. The main focus of the book is on the London riots which terrorised the city for several days. On the whole, the novel lacks coherence and social sting.

The Hope and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44). The novel primarily inspired by his trip to America, has more variety and character than any of his earlier novels. Martin, the hero of the novel and the grandson of wealthy Mr. Martin Chuzzlewit, has been dehumanised by the greed of his near and dear ones. Chuzzlewit brings up Mary Garham as his daughter. Martin loves Mary but the old man becomes suspicious and gets Martin dismissed from his position as pupil to his cousin, Mr. Pecksniff. Martin goes as an architect to America to try his fortunes, but loses his money and health in the bargain. Martin returns to England, purged of all his selfish experiences. Old Chuzzlewit discovers Pecksniff's meanness and treachery, reclaims his grandson and gives him the hand of Mary.

A second plot runs in the novel related with the doings of Jonas Chuzzlewit, the son of Anthony, Old Martin's brother, a character of confirmed villainy. After murdering his father, he marries Mercy, one of the daughters of

Pecksniff and treats her callously. He also murders the director of bogus insurance company. He poisons himself when he finds himself cornered. The novel holds the mirror to the misdeeds and brutalities of corrupt society. The book contains many memorable characters but the portrait of Pecksniff overshadows other characters and adversely affects the balance of the plot. Yet the novel can be counted among the best works of Dickens.

Dickens's next novel ***Dombey and Son (1847-48)*** is steeped in tears and sentimentality. It deals with the misfortunes of Mr. Dombey and his family. Mr. Dombey, rich, proud and stubborn, presides over the shipping house of Dombey and Sons. His wife dies after the birth of a son and Dombey's hopes are centred in his son. The thin and prematurely born child is sent to Dr. Blimber's school but the child cannot survive the harsh discipline and dies. Dombey neglects his daughter who falls in love with Walter Gay, an employee of the shipping house. Dombey resents this liaison and sends Gay to West Indies. The latter is believed to be drowned in a ship wreck. Dombey marries again a proud young widow, Edith Granger but his arrogant treatment drives her into the arms of his manager, Carker. Meanwhile Florence marries Gay. Carker is crushed under a train. Dombey thus loses his family, fortune, son and wife primarily of his own rigid and inhuman nature. In Edmund Wilson's opinion, "It (The novel) is an indictment against a specific-society, the self-important and moralising middle-class who has been making such rapid progress in England and coming down like a damper on the bright fires of English life."

David Copperfield, Dickens's veiled biography, was published in 1849-50. "Of all my books" wrote Dickens, "I like this the best". David is born after the death of his father. His gentle and weak mother marries a second time but her husband Murdstone and his sister drive her to an early grave. Young David is sent to a school where he is bullied by the tyrannical headmaster, Creakle. He develops friendship with fascinating Steerforth. Thereafter, he is sent to a menial job in London where he leads his life of poverty and misery. But his tedious existence is brightened by his acquaintance with Mr. Micawber and his family. Penniless and forsaken, he makes for Dover where he throws himself at the mercy of his aunt, Betsy Trotwood, an eccentric old lady, she treats David kindly and in due course, David is sent to school at Dr. Strong's Academy at Canterbury. Consequently, David resumes his education at Canterbury and resides with his aunt's lawyer, Mr. Wickfield, whose exceptionally sweet and intelligent daughter, Agnes, exercises a life-long influence on his career. Inadvertently, he introduces his friend, Steerforth to the family of her old nurse, Clara Peggotty. The ungrateful Steerforth elopes away with Peggotty's cousin Emily, causing immense misery and tension. Peggotty pursues him everywhere and succeeds in recovering her cousin when she was deserted

by Steerforth. The villainous creature dies in a shipwreck.

Disregarding Agnes's affection, David marries Dora Spenlow. He becomes responsive to Agnes only after the death of Dora. Agnes's father, Wakefield falls a victim to the evil but apparently humble machinations, of his own clerk, Uriah Heep and is ultimately ruined. Uriah aspires to marry Agnes, but is sentenced to life imprisonment for theft and forgery established by the tireless efforts of Micawber. Peggotty's household finds a new haven in Australia and Micawber becomes colonial magistrate. The novel highlights the exploitation of the innocent and compassionate human beings, laymen honour. But as usual, the poetic justice reigns supreme in the affairs of men and matters.

David Copperfield is followed by his most complicated and elaborated masterpiece *Bleak House* (1852-53), which moves both at the realistic and symbolic level. It is also a unique experiment in narration and plot construction. The novel deals with two stories, Esther's and Lady Dedlock's, but the artistic skill of Dickens blends both these stories into a harmonious whole. Despite suspense and romance, the novel is a bitter social document which severely indicts the excesses of the Court of Chancery, the decadence of the feudal world, the misdirected zeal of the philanthropists, the issues of morality, the poverty and misery of the homeless and helpless orphans. Dickens's next novel, *Hard Times* (1854) deals with the chaos and tragedy caused by the materialist and industrial world which discounts imaginative and spiritual aspects of human personality. Thomas Gradgrind, an industrialist and practical man of Coketown nurtures his children, Louisa and Tom, in the dry world of facts and statistics. He marries Louisa to humbug, Josiah Bounderby, thirty years her senior. Louisa succumbs to the pressure because she wants to help her brother who is an employee of Bounderby. The loveless marriage flounders and Harthouse, a young politician, who comes to Coketown takes advantage of the situation and tries to seduce Louisa. The bewildering experience shocks her out of moral slumber and she goes to her father. Gradgrind realises the folly of the system and comes to the rescue of his daughter. Now it is Tom's turn to bring shame and misery to the Gradgrind family when he robs his employer's bank. As a result he is hustled out of the country. The novel highlights moral and spiritual chaos that has set in the wake of the industrial and rational system which negates all human values. (Detailed analysis of this novel which is prescribed for you, will be taken up in the proceeding lessons).

Little Dorrit (1855-57) is one of the three great novels of Dickens's great last period, but of the three it is perhaps the least popular with the modern readers. It seems to have retired to the background. It is so because many of the particular social conditions to which it refers to have come from

history. The novel is about society in relation to the individual human will. The prison is the presiding deity of the book. Persons and classes are imprisoned by their notions of their predestined fate in their religious society, or by their occupations, their life schemes, their ideals of themselves, their very habits of language. Mr. Dorrit's younger daughter Amy, who is born in the prison and affectionately called Little Dorrit, alleviates the misery of her father. Amy has a snobbish sister, Fanny and a scapegoat brother, Pip. Little Dorrit has a deep passion for middle-aged, Clennam. A sudden windfall makes the family arrogant. Now it is the turn of Clennam to be confined to Marshalsea. The new found fortune jeopardises the close relation between him and Clennam. It is later proved that Mrs. Clennam is not Clennam's mother. Despite her religious disposition, she suppressed some clauses of the will which would have benefitted the Dorrit family.

In ***A Tale of Two Cities (1859)*** Dickens again returns of the historical novel, but as usual fails to handle the historical theme as deftly as Scott did. The novel's two cities are Paris and London. Charles Darnay, an emigrant, goes to Paris to rescue a faithful servant who was being tried for helping the emigrant nobly during the reign of terror. He is arrested and is condemned to death. But at the last moment he is saved by Sydney Carton, an Englishman, who resembles strikingly Darnay. In fact, Carton is devoted to Darnay's wife Juice and sacrifices his own life for that fascination. Though the novel has plot yet intensity of the emotion and the sentiment accentuate the theme and impart it an aesthetic unity.

Great Expectations (1860-61) compensates for the deficiency of plot in *A Tale of Two Cities*. It bears a testimony to the artistic skill of Dickens in capturing the finer nuances of the human relations. The novel deals with the great expectations of the country lad, Philip Pirrip, nicknamed Pip, who is being brought up by his sister and her gentle and humorous husband, Jo Gargery. Pip is introduced to the house of Miss Havisham, who had been jilted by her lover on her wedding night. The half crazy woman brings up Estella to use her as means of torturing men and Pip falls in love with her. An unexpected financial support sends him to London where the new mode of life prompts him even to slight Gargery. The benefactor turns out to be an escaped convict whom once Pip helped in the Marshall. In the meantime, Estella marries Pip's adversary, Bentley Drummle. New revolutions chasten Pip and he returns to Pip Gargery. Dickens has to continue a happy plot under the pressure of popular demand. Pip marries Estella and returns to the honest ways.

Dickens's last complete novel ***Our Mutual Friend (1865)*** has been based on mystery and misplaced identity. John Harmon returns from exile, to

which he has been sent by his harsh father, to claim the ancestral property. But his father has attached a condition that he would marry Bella Walfer. Harmon reveals his plan to the mate of the ship, but the latter tries to kill him, but kills himself. He survives, assumes the new name of John Rokesmith and gets employment under Mr. Boffin who inherits the property in default of Harmon. Boffin adopts Bella but the wealth turns her into an arrogant woman, Rokesmith. Harmon falls in love with him. Boffin discovers the identity of Harmon and manipulates the situation in such a fashion that both Harmon and Bella are united. The novel also has a sub-plot which revolves round the love affair of Evgene Wrayburn and Lizzy Hexan and their marriage despite the machinations of the school master, Bradley Headstone. The theme of love, death, greed and gratitude is the hall mark of this novel also.

Dickens could not complete his novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* because of his sudden death. Besides these novels, Dickens has also published a number of short stories. Over and above, Dickens also frequented the theatre and nursed a life long ambition to become an actor. Dickens's penchant for drama has come handy for him to make his narration dramatic. Dickens was the master of art of story telling, presenting striking characters, enlivening pathos with humour and writing a prose that none could emulate and imitate successfully. He was a genius, the pioneer of a great age of fiction. His stories are so amazingly rich in vitality that 'age cannot wither them nor custom stale their infinite variety.' He is the only first great chronicler of the common lives of common place people in common place surroundings. He took the trivialities in ordinary life, the little worries, the little leisures, the little hardships, the little comedies, and the little tragedies and radiated them with his glorious humour and ever flowing sympathy.

Dear student, before proceeding with the study of the text it would be fruitful to visit the following sites to get acquainted with the various introductory aspects of the novel.

Electronic Sources

1. www.enotes.com/hard-times.htm-cached-similar
2. www.online-literature.com/dickens/hardtimes/cached-similar
3. www.pillowrock.com/ronnie/hardtimes.htm.cached-similar
4. charlesdickenspace.com/hardtime.h/m/-cached-similar

**CHARLES DICKENS : HARD TIMES
Book The First**

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Dickens wrote the last words of *Bleak House* in August, 1853 and he decided to take a year's respite from the writing of fiction. The publishers of *Household Words* were, however, getting worried about the declining sale of their journal. But they were convinced that a new novel by Dickens in the issues of their journal would cure that periodical's ailing circulation. "There is such a fixed idea on the part of my partners in *Household Words*", he wrote on January 23, 1854 "that a story by me, continued from week to week, would make some un-heard of effect with it, that I am going to write one". That same day he wrote the first words of *Hard Times*. *Hard Times* appeared in *Household Words* between April and August, 1854 and it succeeded in its immediate task i.e. the circulation of *Household Words* increased a great deal.

In this novel, Dickens, always keenly aware of the social situation around him, turned his attention to the Industrial Revolution and its effect on the possibilities of human happiness. This novel is, in fact, a relentless indictment of the callous greed of Victorian industrial society and its misapplied utilitarian philosophy.

Let us now take up the chapter -wise analysis of the novel. Before going through this textual analysis, you are advised to read the novel.

BOOK ONE-SOWING

Book One consists of sixteen chapters in which are sown the seeds of the plot as well as that of the characters. As these seeds are sown, so shall they be reaped.

**CHAPTER - 1
THE ONE THING NEEDFUL**

In a schoolroom, a man is telling the schoolmaster that Facts alone are wanted in life. "You can only form the minds of reasoning animals on Facts : nothing else will ever be of any service to them." He has brought up Page numbers given in the Parenthesis refer to UBSPD edition of *Hard Times*.

his children on his principle and he wants the children of his school also to be brought up on these lines.

We are not given the name of the speaker but we are told that the emphasis that he puts on facts is helped by 'his square wall of a forehead', by his voice which is 'inflexible, dry and dictatorial' and his hair which bristle on his 'bald head'. In fact, the speaker's obstinate carriage square coat, square legs, square shoulders all help the emphasis.

The speaker, the schoolmaster and there is another grown up person standing with them (who is a visiting school inspector) in the plain bare monotonous schoolroom and the three of them look at the children who appear to be little vessels ready to have gallons of facts poured into them.

Some Comments

This short chapter of just three paragraphs, in a very compact way, gives both a description and a judgement of a concept of education. The kind of education depicted here is deeply characterised by an obsession with facts. The word occurs five times in the opening speech of the first paragraph and it is twice repeated towards the end of the second descriptive paragraph; which is followed by the speaker's assertion, "we want nothing but facts, sir; nothing but facts" and it occurs for the tenth and last time towards the end of the last paragraph. In the speech of the unnamed speaker this word is capitalised and this signifies his almost religious devotion to facts. His concept of education is authoritarian, fanatical and bullying in its application; rigid and barren in quality and materialistic in its orientation. To strengthen the atmosphere of factualism everything in this opening scene is bare, austere and square. The speaker's forefinger, forehead, coat, legs and shoulders are described as square. He appears to be the 'epitome' of squareness in sense of the square being a figure of geometric exactitude.

The speaker emphasises the planting of facts and of the very way of life they represent i.e. utilitarianism which is the theme of book one and thus the title 'sowing'.

CHAPTER 2

MURDERING THE INNOCENTS

The second chapter also takes place in the schoolroom. Now is given the name of the speaker whom we meet in the first chapter. His name is Thomas Gradgrind, "a man of facts and calculations," who proceeds on the principle of two and two are four and nothing more. The facts about him are that he is a great retired manufacturer of hardware, the Member of Parliament for Coketown, the governor of a school and the father of five children. All that he wants is to fill facts into the heads of the boys and

girls sitting in the classroom. There is a new girl in the class and Gradgrind doesn't know the girl. The girl tells that her name is Sissy Jupe and her father belongs to the horse-riding in Sleary's circus. Gradgrind tells the girl that she should not call herself Sissy, rather she should call herself Cecilia. Then to give a utilitarian respectability to the Circus job, he redefines Signor Jupe's occupation as "a veterinary surgeon, a farrier and horsebreaker" and he also gives Sissy another name "Girl number twenty" to accord with the impersonality of her new school. He then asks Sissy to define a horse. She is rather confused and the question is promptly answered by the inhuman prize-pupil Bitzer. The Boy's very name, Bitzer represents the fragmented nature of his knowledge. A horse which is too often taken by the writer to exemplify vitality and virility, is defined by Bitzer as a graminivorous quadruped shedding its coat in the spring, requiring to be shod, age known by the marks in mouth, etc. These bits of facts stuck together do not amount to any total realization of a horse. So Sissy, who belongs to a travelling circus, Sleary's horse riding, finds it difficult to talk about the animals with whom she is so familiar in terms of Gradgrind.

The third gentleman, a government officer now turns towards the students and starts teaching the students and his basic method of instructions is the question and answer approach. Following this method, he comes to the conclusion, "You are not to see anywhere, what you don't see in fact ; you are not to have anywhere what you don't have in fact. What is called Taste is only another name for Fact."

Sissy Jupe, while answering a question uses the word 'fancy' and immediately the gentleman cries, "Ay, ay, ay but you mustn't fancy... you are never to fancy," and Gradgrind asserts, "you are not, Cecillia Jupe to do anything of the kind." So both the government official and Gradgrind want nothing but facts, facts and facts.

Then Mr. M'Choakumchild, who has just qualified from the training college, is asked by the government officer to give his first lesson. M'Choakumchild and his training has been presented by Dickens entirely from a satirical point of view. "If he had only learnt a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more."

Some Comments

This chapter like the first one takes place in the schoolroom. Gradgrind's system which is based on facts, is shown here as 'murdering the innocents'. The knowledge that Sissy has about horses (being brought up among horses and among people whose livelihood depends on horses) is not considered real knowledge and so has no place in Gradgrind's system. What Bitzer, the model pupil, on the button being pressed, promptly vomits out is considered genuine as it is based on facts. Sissy is incapable of acquiring

this kind of knowledge and her incapability is presented in the novel as part and parcel of her humanity. It is a virtue that makes it impossible for her to understand the ethos in which she is just a 'girl number twenty'. Sissy plays a symbolic role in the novel. She is representative of vitality and goodness, symbol of generous impulsive life presented as a contrast to Bitzer, the thin blooded, quasi-mechanical product of Gradgrindery.

Gradgrind's very name suggests such things as grading, grinding, gradual and it expresses his chief characteristics. The twin metaphors applied to him in this chapter-the cannon and electrical galvanizing apparatus-reinforce Dickens's image of him as a mechanical man.

Mr. M'Choakumchild is shown here as a man who chokes children with facts. Dickens in his final comment on dismal schoolmaster, shows his concern for the education of children.

CHAPTER 3

A LOOPHOLE

In this chapter, we see Gradgrind walking homewards in a state of deep satisfaction. He wants every child in his school to be a model just as all his children are models. His children have never seen a face of the moon and have never learnt the silly jingles, "Twinkle, Twinkle, little star how I wonder what you are'. In fact, they have never learnt to wonder, they have been taught to keep in mind only the facts.

After the description of utilitarian schoolroom given in chapter I and II, in this chapter we are given a description of Gradgrind's utilitarian abode called Stone Lodge. It is situated on the moor within a mile or two of a great town named Coketown. It is great square house - 'calculated, cast up, balanced and proved house.' Children's rooms are combination of lecture hall and museum of natural history. Each of the little Gradgrinds has his own cabinets of Facts which he must absorb.

Gradgrind reaches the ground upon the outskirts of the town where Sleary's Horse riding circus is going on. Being a practical man he passes on without paying any attention to the trivial activities going on there. But as he passes the back of a circus booth, he spots his own 'metallurgical Louisa' and his own 'mathematical Tom' peeping through a hole at the circus people of Sleary's Horse -riding. He considers this act on the part of his children as disgrace to the whole family and he is greatly worried about one thing 'What would Mr. Bounderby say'.

Some Comments

Gradgrind who has brought up his children only on Facts cannot believe his eyes when he finds his children trying to see the activities of a circus. He has sown the seeds of Facts and seeds of not wondering. Yet there is a

Loophole - his children have shown a desire to learn more than what they have been taught in the lecturing castle of in Stone Lodge. The system of education by facts has failed. Gradgrind's own carefully lectured children yearn for fancy' i. e. the world of imagination represented by the circus.

In the description of Stone Lodge, 'squareness' is again the keyword. Children in this house are provided everything except the dreams of childhood.

CHAPTER 4

MR. BOUNDERBY

In this chapter, we are introduced to Mr. Bounderby, a close friend of Gradgrind. He is a rich man; banker, merchant, manufacturer. He is described here as a 'big, loud man made out of 'coarse material; a man with a great puffed head and fore-head; a man with an appearance of being 'inflated like a balloon'. Thus we see him described in sensational terms of a balloon puffed up and coarse material stretched tight, and therefore, the inference is "ripe to be deflated".

He is shown in this chapter standing before the fire in the formal drawing room of Stone Lodge, talking to Mrs. Gradgrind. He tells her that as a child he was abandoned by his mother and was reared by his drunken grandmother, who sold his shoes to buy liquor for her. He tells her, how abandoned by everyone, he educated himself in the streets from the age of seven. He claims to have slept in gutter, lived on rainwater and chance scraps and to have been glad of an occasional job blacking shoes at a farthing time. All this is mere bullying - he just wants to project himself as a self made man to make his remarkable success, more remarkable than it is. He has also a habit of speaking of himself, even apostrophizing himself, in the third person, "vagabond, errand boy, vagabond, labourer, porter, clerk, chief manager, small partner, Joseph Bounderby of Coketown. Those are the antecedents and the culminations" he tells Mrs. Gradgrind. Thus we see this man, a Bully of humility, always talking about his old ignorance and his old poverty and proclaiming that none can stop him from doing so - none can "force him to suppress the facts of his life."

Mrs. Gradgrind who is mentally and bodily very feeble, listens to Mr. Bounderby's description of his past. Bounderby stops when the climax comes and at that very moment Gradgrind enters followed by his two erring children. Bounderby is told about the crime committed by Louisa and Tom - the crime of peeping at the circus. They discuss the possible reasons for the vulgar curiosity shown by Louisa and Tom about the circus and Bounderby concludes that Sissy's presence in the school is the real source of trouble. So he asks Gradgrind to turn her out of the school at once. Gradgrind immediately agrees to do so and both of them decide to go walking to meet Sissy's father. Before leaving Bounderby kisses Louisa on her

cheek and the girl rubs her cheeks with her handkerchief.

Some Comments

The whole chapter is about Mr. Bounderby who is an entrepreneur incarnate. He is at once individual capitalist and capitalism itself personified. He is interested only in his ownself, and all his talk about his old poverty and life lived in wretched condition is more bullying. It appears only an attempt to subjugate the outside world to the needs of his ego. This man who is completely devoid of sentiment is an associate of Gradgrind who too is completely devoid of sentiments. Bounderby takes great interest in Louisa but the girl has no liking for him. Her reaction to Bounderby's kiss is a clue to her later attitude toward him.

CHAPTER - 5

THE KEY-NOTE

In this chapter, to begin with, we have a description of Coketown. The industrial society is here described as a town of machinery and tall chimneys. It is a town of red brick, blackened by the serpent like smoke that comes out endlessly into the air from the factory chimneys and settles in the lungs of the workers; a town with a black canal and a river that turns purple with industrial waste; a town inhabited by the people who do the same work everyday at the same time and for whom everyday is the same as yesterday or tomorrow. It is a town in which all the buildings are so much alike that one cannot distinguish the jail from the infirmary without reading the names inscribed on the doors. It is eighteen denominations housed in warehouses of red brick, but who belongs to these denomination is a mystery. The working classes do not belong even though there are always petitions to the House of Commons for acts of parliament to make labouring classes religious by force.

The principles that dominate Gradgrinds' school are the principles that dominate Coketown and its industry, "Fact, fact, fact everywhere in the material aspect of the town fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial" - that is the real character of this town.

Gradgrind and Bounderby are seen walking through Coketown. They are on their way to Pod's End, a shabby section of the town, to inform Sissy's father that he must remove her from the school before she corrupts other children. They are still on their way, when they see Sissy being chased by Bitzer. They send Bitzer on his way and ask Sissy to take them to her father. Sissy is holding something in her hands - it is a bottle of 'nine oils' for her father's hurts. "It's what our people always use, sir, when they get any hurts in the ring" says the girl and Bounderby comments "Serve'em right, for being idle". Sissy, the poor girl can only glance at him with mingled

astonishment and dread. She stops in front of a mean little public house with dim red lights in it. Sissy tells them about her dog Merrylegs and then after asking them to wait at the door runs to bring a candle. Bounderby in his usual manner, comments with a metallic laugh, "Merrylegs and nine oils, eh! Pretty well this, for a self made man."

Some Comments

The description of Coketown is that of any one of a number of actual mid nineteenth century industrial English cities. The serpents of smoke from factory chimneys and the mad elephant engines are the animal symbols used by Dickens to highlight the brutish evils of industrialised society.

In this chapter, Dickens also points out the deadening monotony of factory work. There is no healthy relaxation available even on Sundays, and so these people take to drink and drugs.

Mr. Gradgrind's character is compared to that of Bounderby. Though hard, Gradgrind is by no means "so rough a man as Mr. Bounderby". Gradgrind's character is not 'unkind' "it might have been very kind indeed if only he had made some mistake in the arithmetic that balanced it years ago".

CHAPTER 6

SLEARY'S HORSEMANSHIP

The chapter begins with the description of Pegasus' Arms, the hotel of the circus people. Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby are led by Sissy Jupe into one of its rooms. It is a mean shabbily furnished room with a bed in it. As Sissy's father is not in the room, the girl runs out in search of him. In her absence, three persons connected with the circus come to that room. These are Mr. E.W.B Childers, a young man with broad chest and too short legs dressed in newmaker coat and light fitting trousers; Mr. Kidderminster, a man of is ascible temperament, (Both Childers and Kidderminster are performers in the circus) and Mr. Sleary a stout and flabby man who is the proprietor of the circus. A conversation starts between the upholders of Facts and the upholders of Fancy and it is revealed that there is little understanding between the two. Mr. Bounderby, while talking to one of the performers, remarks that the circus people do not know the value of time and that they form a queer sort of company for man like him who has raised himself much above such people. Hearing this, Kidderminster replies that Bounderby should lower himself.

From the people connected with circus we also come to know that Sissy Jupe's father, thinking that others will take better care of his daughter than he can, has left her. Sissy cannot believe that her father has deserted her. She cries for her father, who she is sure has gone to do her 'good' and she is sure that he will feel miserable without her. Bounderby, a man

utterly devoid of sentiments and emotions cannot tolerate all this and wants the girl to understand the fact that her father has deserted her and she must not expect to see him again. At this the circus people, who care so little for the plain facts show their reaction to Bounderby's action. The men mutter 'shame' and the women call Bounderby a 'brute'. Sleary advises Bounderby to keep himself in check. Mr. Gradgrind offers to take charge of the girl and to keep her as a member of his household. Sleary encourages Sissy to accept the offer of the 'squire' Gradgrind and the chapter ends with an utterance of Sleary which expresses his philosophy. "Make the *best of life and not the worst*" (Make the best of life and not the worst).

Some Comments

The circus people introduced in this chapter are representative of the world of imagination. They belong to the world of 'fancy' in contrast to Gradgrinds and Bounderby who belong to the so called respectable world of facts. Dickens appears to be on the side of the former because of their greater humanity.

Another point that is highlighted in this chapter is that Sissy, though deserted by her father loves him dearly and is loved by him. Louisa with other members of her family, in a comfortable home enjoying all the luxuries of life, lacks this love and it is love that makes all the difference in parent child relationship.

In deciding to become Sissy's guardian Gradgrind has shown inherent goodness of man. His gesture of kindness show his first spark of humanity. He is redeemable and the course of the novel shows that he is redeemed by Sissy.

CHAPTER 7

MRS. SPARSIT

In this chapter we meet Mrs. Sparsit, an elderly lady who is looking after the housekeeping duties for Mr. Bounderby. She is a member of the Power stock and a well connected lady. A widow left penniless by her spendthrift husband, she is forced by her circumstances to serve as Bounderby's housekeeper. Being highly class conscious woman, she thinks herself to be superior to Bounderby in everyway. While in his presence she does not contradict Bounderby and really says nothing, but behind his back, she curses him. In fact, she intensely despises him. Bounderby on the other hand likes Mrs. Sparsit, and constantly elicits from her statements about her former high position and her luxurious life because she is now his servant and he can enjoy his superiority over her. He keeps on contrasting his own former poverty and hardness of life with Mrs. Sparsit's former richness and comfortable life and then says, "And yet, sir, how does it

turn out after ? Why here she is at a hundred a year keeping the house of Josiah Bounderby of Coketown”.

Sissy Jupe is in the house of Bounderby waiting to know whether she is to go straight to the school or to Stone Lodge. Bounderby tells Mrs. Sparsit that he has brought Sissy to his place so as to give her a ‘shake down’. Gradgrind comes there to take Sissy with him. The chapter concludes with Sissy being told that she is ignorant and must forget all the stories of Fairies and Fancy that she has read to her father.

Some Comments

This chapter is one of character portrayal. We know something about the character of Mrs. Sparsit who is presented as a contrast to her employer. Bounderby, who with his constant references to his low origins poses to be a humble man, actually is a snob; a bragging bounder.

Gradgrind tells Sissy that she is to be reformed but the irony is that it is he who will be eventually reformed by the ‘girl’s greater humanity’.

CHAPTER 8 NEVER WONDER

‘Never wonder’ is the Keynote of the Gradgrind educational system and herein lies “the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections”. “By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division settle everything somehow and never wonder,” that’s what Gradgrind has taught his children. But somehow Louisa and Tom appear to be dissatisfied with their education. Tom calls himself a ‘donkey’, uses the word ‘jaundiced jail’ for his parental house. Louisa also feels that there is something missing or lacking in her life. She yearns to give some comfort to her brother but she fails to do so as she has never seen amusing sight or read any amusing book about which she can talk to him. Both of them are fed up of Facts and Tom wishes that he could take gunpowder and blow up the doctrine of Facts. He thinks that when he will go to live with Bounderby, he will enjoy life and that will be his revenge. He has completed his ‘cramming’ and will soon enter Bounderby’s bank. He tells Louisa that since Bounderby is too fond of her, she can make his life easier by playing up to Bounderby. He has already made up his mind to go to Bounderby, as he can take some advantage of his sister’s influence on Bounderby.

Both Tom and Louisa look at the fire and wonder but immediately they are interrupted and scolded for their wondering by their mother, a pathetic woman who cannot understand her logical husband.

Some Comments

Dickens again highlights the drawbacks of Gradgrindism. Educational system that depends solely on facts and figures cannot satisfy human beings because in addition to their rationality they have their imagination and emotions. Both Tom and Louisa show their disgust with the kind of life they are forced to lead by their parents. Louisa's sorrow that she cannot help Tom enjoy life better is foreshadowing of things to come as she later on marries Bounderby only to please Tom.

CHAPTER 9**SISSY'S PROGRESS**

Sissy Jupe to begin with cannot feel at home in Gradgrind's house and at Mr. M'Choakumchild's school. She has a strong impulse to run away from that dry world of Facts. But one restraint makes her stick to the place - it is her hope that one day her father will come back and will be happy to see her there.

Sissy's education in the Gradgrind home and at M'Choakumchild's school does not progress as rapidly as Gradgrind would desire. M'Choakumchild reports that the girl has very dense head for figures and is very slow in acquisition of dates. Gradgrind considers all this very bad and declares that the case needs 'infinite grilling at the mill of knowledge'. Sissy herself feels bad about her mistakes but she cannot do anything. For her loving humanity, this bleak factuality is quite impossible. 'Here are stutterings' she misquotes her teacher - statistics corrects Louisa - of a town of a million inhabitants of whom only twenty five starved to death in the course of a year what does she think of that proportion ? and her answer is "it must be just as hard on those who starved whether others were a million or a million - million." In fact, reared to wonder, to think, to love and to believe in Fancy she cannot digest the volumes of facts and figures given to her. She cannot even learn the most elementary principles of political economy.

Sissy on being encouraged by Louisa, talks about her father, her mother's death and her past life among the circus people. She tells Louisa how her father, being a clown in the circus used to make people laugh and when he could not do so, he used to cry. Then she would read to him to give him comfort. While Sissy is telling all this, Tom comes there to inform them about the arrival of Bounderby. He wants Louisa to come to the drawing room as he is sure to get some benefits from Bounderby if Louisa agrees to exert her influence on the old man.

Sissy in her conversation with Louisa defends her runaway father. Daily she inquires from Mr. Gradgrind if a letter for her has arrived. She has not lost hope of hearing from or about her father.

Some Comments

In this chapter Dickens ridicules the cold inhuman statistical approach to social problems by making it the curriculum of Gradgrind's school. The pain of death by hunger is not made less for the victims by consoling them with a low percentage factor for death by starvation.

Sissy's inability to learn cold facts and figures highlights her humanity, her compassion and her deep understanding. By talking about her past life among circus people she implants seeds of doubt in the mind of Louisa about the training that she has received. We see her teaching the first lesson of love and understanding.

We also see Tom, as being built up as a self seeking egoist utilitarianism in action, the end product of the dehumanized system of education.

CHAPTER 10**STEPHEN BLACKPOOL**

In this chapter we meet another important character of the novel i.e. Stephen Blackpool. Representative of Dickens's picture of the 'Hands', Stephen is a good power loom weaver in the Bounderby Mill. A man of integrity, Stephen is forty years old. But he looks much older than his age and is usually called old Stephen. After his day's hardwork in the mill, he comes out and his eyes start searching the face of his beloved Rachael among the groups of women passing by him. Finally, he is able to find her and together they walk for some distance. In their conversation Stephen says, "Tis is a muddle" and this line sums up his philosophy of life. Rachael goes to her place and Stephen too returns to his lonely apartment. He is shocked to find a woman in his room. The woman here is described as a creature, 'so foul to look at... but so much fouler than that in her moral infamy'. When he realises that the object of his misery has come back, has reentered his life he sinks into despair. Because of the arrival of this disreputable woman, he cannot marry Rachael.

Some Comments

Stephen Blackpool represents the decent working man who is in state of mental muddle when he thinks about the victorian society and all its contradictions. "Tis a muddle", he says and this line becomes Stephen's tag line and it sums up his philosophy of life. The identity of the woman in his room will soon be revealed. The device of introducing a character whose identity is not immediately revealed is another device used by Dickens to create suspense and this device was common in the nineteenth century novel.

CHAPTER 11

NO WAY OUT

The chapter begins with the description of factories and their furnaces. Dickens here likens the roaring furnaces to Fairy palaces and the factories to elephants from which the serpents of death-giving smoke come out. The workers have already started their work. They have to struggle daily with the monstrous machines in order to earn their livelihood. When the noon bell rings, they stop their work and take rest for an hour.

Stephen during his lunch hour goes to see his employer to seek his help. Mr. Bounderby, who is Stephen's employer, listens to him patiently. Stephen tells him about his hopeless marriage and about his desire to obtain divorce and to get married to Rachael. It soon becomes clear to Stephen that if he leaves his drunken wife, or if he harms her or if he marries Rachael without getting divorce or if he just lives with Rachael without the sanction of marriage, he will be punished, for such are the laws. On the other hand, if he seeks divorce, he cannot obtain one, for as Bounderby tells him, "But it's not for you at all. It costs a mine of money". Thus it becomes clear to Stephen that laws are only for the rich. He comes to the conclusion that laws of the land are a muddle and 'the sooner I am dead, the better'. At this Bounderby tells him not to talk nonsense and not to call the institutions of their country a muddle as this will lead him into a real muddle. Bounderby terminates the interview with his favourite comment; 'I see traces of turtle soup, and venison; and gold spoon in this'. In other words he regards the workers as people who desire the best of life without working for it.

Some Comments

The very title of this chapter, "No way out" characterises Stephen's hopeless marriage. He is a poor man and money is the only key that opens the doors of the courts of justice in England. As such there is no way out for him but to suffer and wait for this end. Dickens here has attacked the unyielding rigidity of the British divorce laws. His reformer's conscience was disturbed at the injustice of the legal system under which only the rich could obtain a divorce by Special Act of Parliament.

Mrs. Sparsit who suspects Bounderby's interest in Louisa to be matrimonial, here refers to "unequal marriage in point of years" and comments that such marriages bring only unhappiness. She says all this while talking about Stephen's misfortune but indirectly she discourages Bounderby, who is more than twice Louisa's age.

CHAPTER 12

THE OLD WOMAN

As Stephen comes out of Bounderby's house he meets an old woman, 'tall and shapely still, though withered by Time'. She is very clearly and plainly dressed, her dress and her manners clearly indicate that she is from the country. She asks many questions about Bounderby. She appears very eager to know about Bounderby. She tells Stephen that she comes once a year only to have a glimpse of Bounderby. This time she has not been able to see his face. "Well I have seen you, and you have seen him and I must make that do." When she comes to know that Stephen has been working in Bounderby's factory for the last twelve years, she kisses his hand. She looks at Bounderby's house and factory with admiring eyes.

Stephen again goes to his work in the factory. At the end of his long day, he turns his feet homeward, walking slowly and dreading to re-enter the small apartment, where his wife lies in a drunken stupor.

Some Comments

The identity of the unnamed old woman introduced in this chapter remains a mystery. Her identity will not be revealed until Chapter 5 of the Book three. Dickens has succeeded to build up suspense with the appearance of this old woman who is curious about Bounderby. The explained absence of Rachael from her customary meeting place also adds to the suspense.

CHAPTER 13

RACHAEL

In this chapter we are given a portrait of Rachael. Stephen is walking towards his place. From the outside of his home, he gloomily passes to the inside with suspended breath. He is surprised to find his beloved Rachael sitting inside by the bed, watching and tending his wife. She tells him that his landlord had summoned her to take care of the sick woman. She had come to do what little she could for in the past both of them had worked together and were friends. Stephen, on hearing Rachael referring to his wife as one of the sick and lost, becomes very emotional. Both of them sit by the woman's bedside, watching over her, while Rachael treats her injuries. Rachael asks Stephen to sleep in the chair and she herself remains awake to look after the sick woman. Soon Stephen falls into troubled sleep and dreams of his own death. He is awakened just in time to see his wife reach for one of the bottles of antiseptic. She pulls out the cork of the bottle with her teeth and slowly pours out the contents of the bottle into a mug. Stephen watches everything knowing well that if she drinks the

poisonous preparation, she will die. But he sits motionless, as if he had no power to stir and had no voice. But Rachael awakens and seizes the deadly cup. She calmly pours the medicine into the basin and applies it on the sores of the woman. The few drops that are left in the basin are poured on the ashes of the fire and bottle too is broken. Then she decides to leave the place and covers herself with the shawl before going out into the wind and rain. Stephen too comes out and at the stairs he goes on his knees before her and blesses Rachael as an angel. He tells her that her act has saved him from complete destruction. She consoles him and leaves the apartment knowing that he will not weaken again. He watches her quick disappearance and to him Rachael appears to be a shining star that illuminates the night as compared to the heavy candle that dispels only a little of the darkness that shrouds the world. "As the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man to the common experiences of his life" (P-74).

Some Comments

In this chapter Rachael is presented as a ministering angel. The whole scene enacted by the bedside of Stephen's alcoholic wife is emotionally presented. Some critics are of the opinion that readers of Dickens's own time expected such scenes from him and this kind of bathos actually endeared him to his readers. But modern readers may consider all this to be overdone.

CHAPTER 14

THE GREAT MANUFACTURER

Several years have passed since the previous chapter. Louisa has almost become a young woman and Tom has gone to work in Bounderby's bank and has become an inmate of Bounderby's house. Sissy Jupe makes no progress at school and so Gradgrind tells her that her continuance at school has become useless.

She has not acquired anything under Mr. and Mrs. M'Choakumchild. All this greatly disappoints Gradgrind. But Sissy has proved useful to Mrs. Gradgrind because of her kindness and goodness and so is accepted in the family. Gradgrind, in fact, likes Sissy.

Tom comes home to meet Louisa. From their conversation, it becomes clear that Tom will use Louisa's love for him for his own benefit. He wants Louisa to keep in her mind her great love for him.

Some Comments

We see a change in the character of Gradgrind. He has no longer his old hard bitten utilitarianism. Perhaps the presence of Sissy Jupe in his household has brought a change in him.

It is now almost clear to us that Gradgrind is going to marry Louisa off to Bounderby. Tom encourages her to accept the proposal that he knows is forthcoming from Bounderby. He is revealed as a thorough going egoist, using his sister's love for him only to further his own chances of advancement in life.

CHAPTER 15

FATHER AND DAUGHTER

In this chapter, Gradgrind presents Bounderby's proposal of marriage to Louisa. Louisa listens to him silently. Her dispassionate chill is disconcerting even to the father who has consistently taught his children to treat every situation in terms of facts. With intervals of silence between them punctuated by the hollow ticking of a 'deadly statistical clock,' Louisa subjects her father to a cold-questionnaire. "Father do you think I love Mr. Bounderby". "Father, does Mr. Bounderby ask me to love him?" Gradgrind feels embarrassed and tries to escape into the realms of abstract definition. The reply, he says depends "on the sense in which we use the expression "Louisa again puts a question' what would you advise me to use in its stead? (Instead of Love). His answer in keeping with his philosophy is," to consider this question simply as one of tangible Fact." Hearing this Louisa says, "so the sole remaining question then is, Shall I marry him? (P-82). Finally Louisa accepts the proposal, she has had no experience of heart to guide her. She has never been allowed to wonder or fancy. Gradgrind is quite moved by his success and by this testimony to it. The only character who shows any emotional reaction to Gradgrind's announcement of his daughter's betrothal to Bounderby is Sissy Jupe, who looks at Louisa with pity mingled with wonder and sorrow.

Some Comments

The scene presented in this chapter is a triumph of dramatic subtlety. The conversation between the father and the daughter, in which each question is reduced to one of fact becomes empty of all meaning. No philosophic analysis could puncture the calculus of facts with more deadly effectiveness. We see Louisa yearning for sympathy and understanding but Gradgrind being conditioned by his philosophy of facts cannot see this. She even alludes to the unquenchable fires of human passion that burst out in the dark night of despair but Gradgrind cannot understand all this. The lack of love in the Gradgrind household is further revealed in the reaction of Mrs. Gradgrind to the news of Louisa's marriage. Her only concern appears to be that it might upset the routine of her life. Louisa can communicate with her no more than with her father. Only Sissy shows her pity for Louisa and Louisa unable to tolerate this turns against her.

CHAPTER 16

HUSBAND AND WIFE

This is the final chapter of Book one. Mr. Bounderby wants to give the news of his coming marriage to Mrs. Sparsit. He thinks that she may faint after listening to the news, so he goes to the shop of a chemist to buy a bottle of the very strongest smelling salt. But Mrs. Sparsit, on hearing the news reacts quite contrary to the expectations of Bounderby. She wishes him happiness, Bounderby offers her an apartment in the bank building and her regular stipend for being a keeper of the bank. Mrs. Sparsit accepts the offer. Throughout their conversation Mrs. Sparsit remains polite, cheerful, obliging and hopeful. She feels pity for Mr. Bounderby, the aging man who is foolish enough to believe that a woman as young as Louisa can make him a good wife.

Meanwhile the date of marriage is fixed. Bounderby goes to Stone Lodge every evening. The courtship is not one of love but of facts. Love takes a 'manufacturing aspect'. Dresses are made, jewellery is ordered. All preparations go on and 'the business was all facts from the first to the last.' Finally the day of marriage comes and they are married in the new church. Only once during the entire proceedings, does Louisa lose her reserved composure, that is when she parts from her brother Tom. Her brother whose sole concern is his own welfare, makes light of her fears and sends her to the waiting Mr. Bounderby.

Some Comments

Mrs. Sparsit, who really despises her employer as a vulgar upstart also feels pity for him and we shall see that pity is not misplaced.

Louisa has entered this loveless marriage only to please her selfish brother. Gradgrind is happy because he has made an alliance with the richest and most powerful man in Coketown and Bounderby is happy because he has another trophy to feed his self esteem. Nobody cares for the feelings and emotions of the girl because such a thing does not exist in their eminently practical world based on facts.

Short Answer Questions

(Some solved examples)

Q.No. 1. Comment on the system of education described in first two chapters of the novel.

Ans. First two chapters of the novel, which are schoolroom chapters describe a system of education which is characterised by an obsession with facts. Thomas Gradgrind the proprietor of the school, Mr. M'Choakumchild and the government officer all want to fill the minds of

children (who are just little vessels for them) with Facts, because they believe Facts alone are needed in life. There is no place in this system for free play of Fancy or Imagination, for children are asked to follow only cut and dried facts and never to fancy. Those who do so and can give factual definitions (for example Bitzer) are considered prize pupils and those who cannot be filled with facts (for example Sissy Jupe) are considered failures. This system of education which is based on Facts is bound to be authoritarian, fanatical and bullying in its application; rigid, and barren in its quality and materialistic in its orientation.

Q. No 2. What do the Circus people represent in the novel ?

Ans. In the novel, the circus people represent the world of imagination and fancy in contrast to the Gradgrinds and Bounderby who represent the world of facts. In the world of Circus people, great significance is attached to feelings and emotions and there is no place for facts. Here relationships are based on love and affections. Sissy although abandoned by her father loves him and is loved by him. When she accepts the invitation of Gradgrind to become a member of his household, the people of her own world, tender-hearted and simple, everyone of them embraces her and gives her a parting kiss. In fact, these people belong to the world of great humanity where one finds warmth of love and fellow feelings. These people are the vessels of such simple virtues as that of sympathy and helpfulness to others.

Q.No. 3. What do you know about Mr. Bounderby from Book one of the Novel ?

Ans. Mr. Bounderby is a rich merchant, banker and manufacturer of Coketown. He is a big man with a stark and metallic laugh. His one marked physical characteristic is an enlarged vein in his temple. He is self-made man, who is always talking about his old ignorance, poverty and wretched state of existence. He has been described by Dickens as the Bully of Humility; he is a great boast, a wind bag who fabricates stories about his deprived childhood. He is a man totally devoid of sentiment and is a friend of Gradgrind who is another man completely devoid of sentiment. Bounderby takes great interest in Gradgrind's daughter Louisa and is intent upon having her as his wife. He succeeds in marrying Louisa who does not love him. As far as his relations with the workers of his factory are concerned - he considers them only as Hands - they are not regarded as living human beings by him.

CHARLES DICKENS : HARD TIMES
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS
Book The Second : Reaping
Book The Third : Garnering Reaping

The Second book of the novel, entitled **Reaping**, consisting of twelve chapters, depicts the harvest the seeds for which are sown in book one. Each character reaps a harvest, according to seeds planted by him. Mr. Gradgrind sows the seeds of logic and fact, now he reaps the harvest of despair, disillusionment and destruction. Mr. Bounderby sows the seeds of unkindness and bullying and so he reaps an unhappy marriage and the loss of his wife. Tom, who sows the seeds of self-interest and dishonesty reaps loneliness and destruction. Louisa in whom are sown the seeds of facts, reaps the harvest of unhappiness and Stephen who plants the seeds of discontent now has the harvest of alienation and ostracism from his own class.

Let us now take the chapter-wise analysis of this book.

Chapter 1

Effects in the Bank

The chapter begins with an ironical remark, "A sunny midsummer day. There was such a thing sometimes even in Coketown." Even in Coketown, a town of soot and smoke; a town shrouded in haze of its own; a town which appears to be a dense formless jumble-sometimes the rays of sunlight of reforms penetrate the darkness of smoke and fog' i.e. the misery of the workers and their illtreatment at the hands of factory owners.

The Coketown industrialists feel threatened and consider it to be their ruin when they are required to send labouring children to school, when inspectors are appointed to look into their work or when they are told not to make so much smoke. The fact is that when workers get united for self-preservation, the factory owners feel uncomfortable.

It is a hot summer day and the whole town appears to be 'frying in oil', Mrs. Sparsit, now residing in the apartment at the bank, considers herself to be the Fairy of the bank though people call her the Dragon of the bank. Though

Bounderby has been married now for a year yet Mrs. Sparsit has not released him from her pity even for a moment. Bitzer, the prize-pupil of Gradgrind's school has grown into a cold youngman of self interest. His mind is so exactly regulated that he has no affections or passions. Both Mrs. Sparsit and Bitzer desire to undermine the position of Tom. Both of them consider Tom to be an idler and a parasite.

A Stranger comes of the bank with a letter of introduction for Bounderby. By mistake he meets Mrs. Sparsit first and inquires about Louisa. When he is told Louisa's age, he gets the shock of his life.

Some Comments

In this chapter, Dickens is referring to various reforms and factory Acts that were made to improve the conditions of the working class and to control the smoke pollution. These were resented by capitalists as undue infringements on their private property rights. Mrs. Sparsit who is a member of aristocracy is of the opinion that workers have no right to form unions. She sees no future in their forming a union to protect themselves against their exploiters.

Product of Gradgrind's utilitarian education, Tom and Bitzer are presented here as utterly selfish, calculating and ruthless in relation to others.

The handsome unnamed young stranger is another snob. His curiosity about Louisa is a hint of his future involvement with her.

Chapter 2

Mr. James Harthouse

The stranger of Chapter-1 is now introduced by name. He is James Harthouse, a young man who is bored with all his travels and education. Finally for a change, on advice of his elder brother, he comes to Coketown to work in the service of Gradgrind's political party. The letter that he shows to Mrs. Sparsit in Chapter-1 is the letter given to him by Gradgrind for Mr. Bounderby. When they meet, Bounderby tells him that the smoke of Coketown is meat and drink for them and regarding the work in their mills his comment is that it is the 'pleasantest work'. He also tells him that there is not a hand in the town who does not have one ultimate object in his life, that is to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon. It is in these terms that Bounderby describes Coketown to Harthouse.

Bounderby takes Harthouse home for dinner in order to meet Louisa. Harthouse finds Louisa "so constrained yet so careless; so reserved and yet so watchful; so cold and proud and yet so sensitively ashamed of her husband's braggart humility". Harthouse is also struck by the bareness of the room that he enters, which devoid of woman's touch, appears to be a symbol of the sterility of life that exists there. Harthouse looking at Louisa,

notices the withdrawn expression of the eyes and her impassive face. Suddenly there appears a beautiful smile on that face. This unexpected change has come as soon as Tom enters. Immediately Harthouse realises, "This whelp is the only creature she cares for." Harthouse shows unusual liking for Tom and encourages him much in the course of the evening and when he gets up to return to his hotel, Tom immediately offers his services as guide.

Some Comments

In this chapter we are introduced to another member of English aristocracy i.e. Harthouse. Dickens shows the alliance of rising capitalist middle class and the ruling upper class and he holds both these classes equally responsible for the misery of workers. The suffering and misery of the hand is 'meat and drink' for them. Louisa's training in her father's school obviously is responsible for the interior decoration of her house, as we see it now. The house too is bare like the 'bare' facts that are planted in her mind from the very childhood. From what we are told about Harthouse, it becomes clear that he is a mere opportunist, empty of all ideology.

Chapter 3

The Whelp

Tom goes to Harthouse's room where he is offered drinks and a rare tobacco. Tom starts drinking and smoking and flattered by Harthouse, he soon reveals the circumstances of Louisa's marriage to Bounderby. 'I persuaded her', he says. He rather proudly tells Harthouse that it was he who could influence her to get married to Bounderby. Harthouse very cleverly leads Tom on until he learns all that he wishes to know about Bounderby, Louisa and Mrs. Sparsit. Tom comes home and goes to bed. If he had been more of a brother and less of whelp and had any sense of what he had done that night, "he might have gone down to ill-smelling river, might have gone to bed in it for good and all. But the whelp is so ignorant that he does not realise the damage he has done."

Some Comments

In this chapter Harthouse makes Tom talk about his sister. The highly personal information which Tom gives Harthouse will be used to bring her almost to the brink of adultery. This is her selfish brother's supreme betrayal, the ultimate result of his loveless practical rational upbringing. The seeds of Facts planted by Thomas Gradgrind in his son reap the harvest of deceit and hypocrisy.

Chapter 4

Men and Brothers

In this chapter, we meet workers becoming aware of their exploitation and seeking to lessen their miseries and burdens by getting united. The labour leader Slackbridge, addressing the workers as 'Oh my friends the downtrodden operatives of Coketown! Oh my friends and fellow sufferers, and fellow workmen, and fellow men!' tells them that the time has come when they must get united to crumble their oppressors into dust. The oppressors have for long thrived on 'the plunder of our families, upon the sweat of our brows, upon the labour of our hands, upon the strength of our sinews' and now the time has come when they must be opposed. This man is supposed to be the 'saviour' of the workers but Dickens has described him as a 'not so honest.. not so manly, he substituted cunning for their simplicity and passion for their safe solid sense'. Slackbridge tells the workers that one worker i.e. Stephen has refused to join them and has thus become a 'traitor, a craven and a recreant.' The workers who have great affection for Stephen consider this too strong a condemnation and want to hear Stephen. Stephen in his low voice announces his decision not to form the union. The workers who are convinced that "private feelings must yield to public cause" criticise Stephen. Stephen is ostracized by his fellow workers-those who once had such a high opinion of him, now avoid him. Stephen becomes a stranger in the land. He falls into the loneliest of lives, 'The life of solitude among a familiar crowd'. He walks along afraid even to see his beloved Rachael. At the end of the chapter, Bitzer comes to him and tells him that Mr. Bounderby wants to speak to him and so he must go straight to his place. Hearing this, considering it to be his duty, Stephen starts walking to the red brick castle of Bounderby.

Some Comments

Dickens's account of the Union's meeting is farcical in tone. He obviously loves the workers but distrusts the labour leaders. According to him, these leaders can be as corrupt as their employers and may prove to be false prophets. Dickens's hatred of Slackbridge is obvious. Some critics point out that the description of Slackbridge is a piece of sheer ignorance. "Not because union leaders cannot be 'windbags and humbugs' as other politicians can be but because labour organizers are not like Slackbridge and do not talk like him." Actually Dickens had only superficial knowledge about the behaviour of industrial workers. (He had attended only one union meeting in his life, during the Preston strike in Jan., 1854). Moreover, it is believed that Dickens added this bit of anti-unionism to the novel to counteract the charge of being too anti-management.

Stephen's obstinate refusal to form the union appears inexplicable and poorly motivated. This independent workman is ostracised by his fellow workers. Stephen's shunning by the workers who had such a high opinion of him seems farfetched.

Chapter 5

Men and masters

In the drawing room of Mr. Bounderby, his young wife, her brother and Mr. Harthouse are sitting. Stephen, on being called by Bounderby reaches his place and is asked to come in the drawing room. Bounderby wants him to tell all about the union. Stephen refuses to say anything. Although his fellow workers shun him and distrust him, he is loyal to them. His loyalty to his fellow men arouses Bounderby's anger. Stephen tells him that he has refused to join the union not because of his loyalty to Bounderby but because he has made a promise : During his conversation with Bounderby, he says that men are not machines, they have their souls also ? Finally, Bounderby fires him because he defends the workers against Bounderby who calls them the pests of the earth. Stephen leaves Bounderby's house saying, "Heaven help us in this world".

Some Comments

The long debate between the employer and the worker i.e. between Mr. Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool is considered to be one of the least successful parts of the novel. Stephen who has already been ostracised by his fellow workers for not joining the union is now thrown out by Bounderby for having the courage to defend the workers' cause. Stephen's isolated stand cuts him off from the support of his own class and from the patronage of the factory owners.

Chapter 6

Fading Away

This chapter is significant for the reason that many threads of the plot of the novel appear here. It is already dark when Stephen comes out of the house of Bounderby. In the street he meets Rachael and the old woman he had encountered on his previous visit to Bounderby's house. He is surprised to see that woman in the company of Rachael. The old woman already knows about Bounderby's marriage. She has read this in the paper. She has come to see Mrs. Bounderby but she is unable to do so as Mrs. Bounderby has not come out of that house since noon that day. So all that the old woman can do now is to question Stephen about Mrs. Bounderby. When she hears that Mrs. Bounderby is 'young and handsome' she seems delighted and comments that as wife of Bounderby, she (Louisa) must be very happy. Again Stephen wonders about the old women's curiosity

concerning Bounderby. Stephen tells Rachael that he has been fired and his plans now are to leave Coketown to seek employment elsewhere. He thinks that his going away is good for Rachael as it would save her from the chance of being brought into question for not withdrawing from him. Of course for him, leaving Rachael would mean great torture.

Stephen, Rachael and the old woman all three of them go to Stephen's room. Stephen lights the candle and Rachael prepares tea. The old woman calls herself Mrs. Pegler and tells that she became widow at a young age. When questioned about children, she feels upset and then tells them that she has a son but she has 'lost' him.

Stephen's landlady comes to tell him that Mrs. Bounderby and her brother have come to see Stephen. For the first time in her life Louisa has come to the home of one of the workers ; for the first time in her life she is face to face with "anything like individuality in connection with them". She knows all the facts of supply and demand, the percentage of pauperism and the percentage of crime, and the result of the changes in wheat prices, but she knows nothing about the workers who make these statistics. Indeed to her they have been just so many units producing a given amount of goods in a given amount of time and space. For the first time, she realises that these people are not mere statistics.

She has come there to speak to Stephen and to be of some service to him. She feels compassion for Stephen and Rachael; and feels sorry when she comes to know that after being fired by Bounderby, Stephen's chances of getting a job in some other factory are very small. This happens when a worker gets a 'bad name' i.e. the name of being troublesome. Then Louisa offers him money to help him to find employment away from Coketown. Stephen accepts only two pounds and Louisa is impressed with his 'self command.'

Tom remains silent while Louisa converses with Stephen and Rachael. When he sees his sister getting ready to depart, he too gets up. He asks Stephen to come out on the stairs with him while Louisa remains inside the room talking to Rachael. Tom tells him that he may be able to do something for him and even hints about a job at the bank. Tom makes a strange request to Stephen-he asks Stephen to hang about at the bank for an hour or so each evening for the remaining days of Stephen's stay in Coketown. Stephen agrees to grant the request. So the next three days, in the evening Stephen waits outside the bank. On the first two days, though he overstays his hour, nothing happens. On the third day, he stays for two hours after day's hard labour, two

hours wait in the street appear tiresome. After two hours he comes home and early next morning leaves Coketown.

Some Comments

The old woman and her behaviour still remain a mystery. Her interest in Bounderby, her fear of being seen by him, her pride in his achievements, her story of having a son lost to her, all these things give us enough hints to guess her identity.

Louisa, by coming to Stephen's place to help him, is in a way expressing her revolt against her unkind calculating husband. She now learns that workers are not just automations. They are individuals who have their pride, who have the problems, who work hard to exist.

Tom's strange request creates suspense. Tom is such a self seeker that all his actions are motivated by self-interest. Surely he has some plan to use Stephen for some selfish purpose.

Chapter 7

Gunpowder

Harthouse performs his work well and comes to be considered a man of much promise. The point in his favour is that he is not troubled with 'earnestness' and this enables him to take to the hard Fact fellows 'with as good a grace as if he had been born one of the tribe'. He gains confidence of both Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby. He becomes a regular visitor to Bounderby's household. He puts his philosophy before Louisa and though it is not very unlike her father's philosophy (each chains her down to material reality), it gives her relief to think that everything being hollow and worthless, she has missed nothing and sacrificed nothing.

Bounderby has moved to a country estate situated at a distance of fifteen miles from Coketown. In the flower garden, he has planted cabbages and in the house filled with the elegant furniture and beautiful paintings, he is delighted to live barrack fashion.

Harthouse has just one objective i.e. to make Louisa love him. To achieve his object, he finding Louisa alone, talks to her. He tries to convince Louisa that he is interested in Tom's well being. The moment he starts talking about Tom, Louisa's colour brightens and Harthouse admires this expression of her sisterly concern. He also expresses his concern for Tom's wayward ways. Louisa, on being questioned by Harthouse, admits that she gives money to Tom. Harthouse says that the greatest vice of Tom is his lack of devotion to his sister. Louisa is taken in by Harthouse's concern and hopes that Tom would improve under Harthouse's influence.

Harthouse and Louisa walk back to the house and on the way they encounter Tom carving a girl's name in a tree. Tom is in bad mood and is

even rude to Louisa, who has refused him hundred pounds. Then Louisa goes into the house but Harthouse remains in the garden with Tom. Harthouse persuades Tom to discuss his problems with him. Tom tells him, "I am hard up, and bothered out of my life".

Tom says that his sister might have got him out of the horrible mess he is in, but she has refused to do it. When Harthouse asks him how much money he needs, he replies by saying that it is too late and money is of no use to him at that time. Harthouse persuades Tom to apologize to Louisa for his rudeness. Tom agrees to do so and when Tom does apologize, Louisa believes in that change in Tom's behaviour due to Harthouse's influence. There is a smile on Louisa's face - a smile for Harthouse.

Some Comments

In this chapter we see Louisa getting close to Harthouse. Bored by her loveless marriage and unconsciously revolting against it, she easily succumbs to Harthouse's advances. Harthouse very cleverly plays on her love for her brother by posing to be a true friend of Tom and by showing his great concern of his well being. He thinks that it will be a great sensation if the face (Louisa's) which changes so beautifully for the whelp, will change for him. At the end of the chapter the face does change for him. Louisa's smile is for him.

Chapter 8

Explosion

It is bright morning and Harthouse sitting in the window of his dressing room, smoking his pipe, is musing over the happenings of the previous night. He has already gained Louisa's confidence and the barrier behind which she lived has now melted away. He does not take into consideration the consequences of what could happen as a result of his intimacy with Louisa.

In the evening Bounderby gives Harthouse the news of the robbery at the bank. He also tells Harthouse that sum of a hundred and fifty pounds which young Tom had kept in safe, is missing. Bounderby further informs Harthouse that Louisa on hearing the news of robbery had fainted and it took her quite some time to recover from the shock.

Mrs. Sparsit and Bitzer are there at the house of Bounderby. Bitzer is scolded by Bounderby for sleeping so soundly while the thief ran away with the money. Mrs. Sparsit has come to stay at Bounderby's place. Her nerves are too bad for her to remain in her apartment at the bank. Bounderby immediately suspects Stephen Blackpool's hand in the crime. The old woman, whose identity is still a mystery also comes under suspicion as an accomplice in the crime. When Harthouse enquires about the whereabouts of Tom, Bounderby says that he is helping the police.

Mrs. Sparsit makes all efforts to please her employer. She consoles Bounderby, asks him not to be in low spirits and caters to his whims. She even plays 'backgammon with him and prepares his favourite drink i.e. sherry with lemon-peel and nutmeg.

Louisa is sleepless, waiting for her brother Tom's return. At an hour past midnight, she hears the bell at the gate-Tom enters. She waits for an hour and then goes to his room upstairs hoping that he will confide in her. She actually suspects that Tom- not Blackpool has forced open the safe. Again and again she asks Tom if he has anything to tell her. She tells him that if he tells her the truth, she will not reproach him, rather she will be compassionate to him and save him at all costs.

But Tom asserts that he has nothing to tell her. They also talk about their visit to Stephen Blackpool and agree that they will not talk it to anyone. Tom lies to Louisa when he tells her that he had taken Stephen Blackpool outside on the stairs that night to tell him quietly how lucky he was in getting her help. When Louisa leaves Tom's room he closes the door, and throwing himself upon his pillow starts crying, hating himself for being unable to confide in Louisa or anyone else.

Some Comments

This chapter entitled 'explosion', coming after the 'gunpowder' is set off, is aptly named. Here we come to know about the robbery at the bank and from the clues given in the chapter we can easily gather that it is Tom who is the thief. Tom has so planned the whole thing so as to give Stephen Blackpool an appearance of a suspect. The accidental involvement of old woman i.e. Mrs. Pegler as a suspect will have important consequences. The search for her eventual unmasking will effect Bounderby's relation with Mrs. Sparsit. In a way Dickens here is preparing future plot developments much in advance.

Chapter 9

Hearing The Last Of It

Mrs. Sparsit is staying at Bounderby's country house. In spite of her bad nerves, she has resumed her duties as housekeeper and hostess in Bounderby's house. She refers to Louisa as Miss Gradgrind and Bounderby takes no offence. In fact, by her constant show of her desire to lessen her employer's misery and lighten his burden she has made Bounderby 'softer than usual' towards her and 'harder than usual' to most other people from his wife downward. She is there with Bounderby at the table to pour tea for him and to make breakfast for him but the moment Louisa comes there, she gets up humbly apologising for sitting there and explains that she has done so because Bounderby's time was precious and he wanted to have

breakfast whereas Mrs. Bounderby was not there to preside at the table.

Mrs. Sparsit's behaviour increases the alienation of Louisa from her husband and brings her and Harthouse more together. Mrs. Sparsit kisses Bounderby's hand when she is in her presence but shakes her right-hand mitten at his portrait in his absence and says, "Serve you right, you Noodle, and I am glad of it."

Louisa gets the news of her mother's illness and she goes to Stone Lodge to see her seriously ill mother. Since her marriage, she has come home very few times. Now, as she approaches home, she has no memories of the dreams of childhood to make her homecoming a happy occasion. So she enters the house with a heavy, hardened kind of sorrow upon her and then goes into her mother's room. She finds Sissy at her mother's side and Jane, her little sister is also in the room. Mrs. Gradgrind, on being told, that her eldest child has come to see her talks to her in a very feeble voice. She remarks that there is pain in the room but she is not sure whether she has got it or not. Then Mrs. Gradgrind sends Sissy away and tells Louisa that her father had made them learn so many things but somehow she thinks he has forgotten or missed something though she cannot say what it is. She wants a pen so that she can write all this to Gradgrind. But her last moment of life comes and she dies.

Some Comments

Mrs. Sparsit knows that there is a rift between Bounderby and his wife Louisa and she does all that she can do to increase this rift. She rather eagerly waits for the coming break-up of their marriage. Her attitude towards Bounderby is ambiguous. She, no doubt, wants to show him that he made a mistake in marrying Louisa, but whether she herself wanted to get married to him or not is not made clear.

At Stone Lodge, Louisa comes to know that Sissy has greatly influenced Mrs. Gradgrind and the youngest Gradgrind child Jane. It is only under the influence of Sissy that Mrs. Gradgrind has felt that Gradgrind while educating his children has forgotten something, though she can not name it.

Chapter 10

Mrs. Sparsit's Staircase

After staying for several days at Bounderby's home, Mrs. Sparsit is to return to her apartments at the bank. On the day before her departure, Mr. Bounderby invites her to be a constant weekend guest at his place. Mrs. Sparsit immediately accepts the invitation.

Mrs. Sparsit takes an idea, in the nature of allegorical fancy, into her head. She erects in her mind a mighty staircase with a dark pit of shame

and ruin at the bottom and down these stairs, from day to day and hour to hour, she sees Louisa coming. It becomes business of Mrs. Sparsit's life to look up at her staircase and to watch Louisa coming down, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly but never turning back.

After accepting Bounderby's weekly invitation, Mrs. Sparsit starts talking to Bounderby and together they discuss the bank robbery. Bounderby says that Rome was not built in a day and neither will the thief be caught in such a short period of time. He adds, "If Romulus and Remus could wait, Josiah Bounderby can wait... They had a she-wolf for a nurse; I had only a she-wolf for grandmother", He also refers to the old woman who is under suspicion.

Harthouse and Louisa sitting together in the garden discuss the robbery. Louisa cannot believe that Stephen Blackpool could rob the bank. Meanwhile Mrs. Sparsit constantly keeps watching the growing friendship between Harthouse and Louisa and does nothing to prevent the disaster which she knows is about to come. She just keeps watching Louisa gliding down and down the staircase and she is just waiting for the last fall.

Some Comments

Mrs. Sparsit suspects that Louisa has an affair with Harthouse. She spies on both of them so as to see Louisa's final descent into the pit of shame at the bottom of the moral allegorical staircase that she has erected in her mind. She is eager to see it accomplished and yet patiently waits for the last fall of Louisa.

Chapter 11

Lower and Lower

Mr. Gradgrind on hearing the news of the death of his wife comes to Coketown from London with 'promptitude' to resume his parliamentary duties there .

Though Mrs. Sparsit is not at Bounderby's country house yet she manages to keep an eye on Louisa's activities through talk with Bounderby, Tom and Harthouse. When she comes to know that Bounderby is to be away for three or four days on some business, she immediately invites Tom to dinner. She comes to know from Tom that Harthouse who has gone on a hunting trip to Yorkshire is expected back the next afternoon and he has asked Tom to meet him at the station. Mrs. Sparsit asks Tom to give her compliments to his sister and tell her that Mrs. Sparsit will not trouble her that weekend being still little nervous.

Next day, she quietly goes to the station and moves there in a secretive way. She sees Tom waiting there until the expected train arrives but Harthouse doesn't come. Mrs. Sparsit immediately decides to go to

Bounderby's country house as she is sure that Harthouse will be there with Louisa. Hiding behind a tree in the woods, she hears Harthouse declare his love for Louisa and urge her to go away with him. A storm rises and it starts raining. Afraid of being discovered by Harthouse and Louisa, Mrs. Sparsit keeps on standing there though she is drenched. She watches Louisa leave Harthouse and go into the house. Then she sees Louisa clothed in a cloak and hat, leave the house and go to the railroad station. Mrs. Sparsit follows her and gets into one railway carriage when train arrives. When the train reaches Coketown, Mrs. Sparsit realises that she has lost Louisa. At this she bursts into tears.

Some Comments

Mrs. Sparsit thinks that both Harthouse and Louisa will take advantage of the absence of Bounderby. She suspects that Harthouse will go to see Louisa and that the time for Louisa's descent into the black gulf at the bottom of moral staircase has come. So she follows Louisa in a state of great agitation thinking that she is about to witness the elopement of Louisa and Harthouse.

Chapter 12

Down

Mr. Gradgrind, back home from parliament, is sitting in the room with the deadly statistical clock, writing something. Outside it is raining heavily. The door of his room opens and Louisa, his eldest daughter enters. Mr. Gradgrind is surprised to see her there in such a weather. She stands looking at him so colourless, so dishevelled, so defiant and despairing that Gradgrind is afraid of her. She curses the day of her birth and asks her father how he could give her life and take from her all the 'graces' of her soul and the 'sentiments' of her heart. She challenges her father's philosophy to save her now when she sinks in a void. She explains to him why she married Bounderby. When Gradgrind had proposed Mr. Bounderby to her, she had married Bounderby in the hope of being pleasant and useful to Tom but after marriage she realised that it was only a wild escape. She then tells her father of Harthouse's declaration of his love for her. She assures her father that she has not disgraced the family name. Finally, she tells her father, that Harthouse, in the absence of her husband, after declaring himself to be her lover has expressed his desire that they elope. She has somehow escaped from there and has come to her father knowing fully well that Gradgrind's philosophy and his teachings will not save her. It is her father who has brought her to this and she entreats her father to save her by some other means. Gradgrind holds her in the arms but doesn't know how to comfort her and she soon falls in an insensible heap at his feet.

Some comments :-

Like the thunderbolt in the storm outside, the unleashed passion of Louisa shatters the Gradgrind world of Facts and statistics. Gradgrind who had always considered his daughter to be an empty vessel to be filled with Facts and who was sure that his educational system based only on facts and figures would protect her against all fancies, emotions and passions, now realises that his system has failed. His daughter had always been more than an empty pitcher . She had always been a girl with an ardent impulse towards some region where rules, figures and definition were not quite absolute.

So in this chapter we see Gradgrind's philosophy crumbling around him and his daughter whom he considered the pride of heart and triumph of his system lying in an insensible heap at his feet.

Book I ends with Gradgrind and Bounderby at the height of their triumph, their system' victories, but Book II ends with the bitter defeat of these men and their philosophy.

**Book : The Third
Garnering**

The third book of the novel is entitled "Garnering" -here the characters garner or gather what the reapers of experience leave behind. In Book 'The One' they sow the seeds, in Book 'The Two' they reap the harvest, and now they reassemble or pick up what is left. Gradgrind realises the failure of his system and now tries to help his children to pick up the pieces of their broken and shattered lives. Bounderby, left alone by his wife, now leads a life of loneliness.

**Chapter I
Another Thing Needful**

Louisa is back in Stone Lodge. On getting up, she feels pain and heaviness in head. She is told by her little sister that she (Louisa) has been brought there, in her old room, by Sissy. When Louisa praises the 'beaming face' of her sister Jane, she replies, "I am sure it must be Sissy's doing." Gradgrind comes there, sits at the side of the bed and tenderly asks how she is. He speaks in a subdued and troubled voice, very different from his usual dictatorial manner. He tries to talk about the shocking experience of the previous night that had shaken him badly. He admits that his system has failed but he entreats his daughter not to doubt his good intention. He holds himself responsible for the unhappiness that came to Louisa but she does not blame him. "I have never blamed you, and never shall." To give some comfort to his daughter, he holds her hand in his own hand and then moves the scattered hair from her forehead.

Such gestures on his part give much solace to Louisa. Gradgrind admits that in the past he had supposed the Head to be all sufficient but now he has come to realise that there is also the wisdom of the Heart.

When Gradgrind leaves Louisa's room, Sissy comes there. Sissy shows her great love for Louisa, and wants to stay with her. Louisa who has seen that she can get no consolation from her education of Facts, now turns to Sissy begging her help. "Forgive me, pity me, help me. Have compassion on my great need, and let me lay this head of mine upon loving heart", cries Louisa and Sissy replies, "O lay it here! Lay it here, my dear" (P.188).

Some Comments

In this chapter, Gradgrind admits the bankruptcy of his system. In chapter one of Book one, he had emphasised the need for facts-facts alone are needed in life, but now he reverses the thing needed-now the thing needed is understanding and compassion. In the first chapter of book one, the thing needed i.e. factual education is a concern of the head and now the thing needed i.e. love and affection is a concern of the heart. Louisa's younger sister Jane Gradgrind, because of her association with Sissy is a very different girl-very different from Louisa. In her case, Facts have been mixed with Fancy and Statistics with love and affection and naturally this has made all the difference. So Sissy has been presented in this chapter as the exponent of the Heart-wisdom. As such she can apply balm to the wounds of Louisa and can help her solve her problems.

Chapter-2

Very Ridiculous

Mr. Harthouse is in a state of great agitation. He spends twenty four hours in the condition of great anxiety and uneasiness after Louisa leaves him. He is anxious to know her whereabouts. He goes to Bounderby's townhouses but Louisa is not there. Then he goes to the Bank. Mr. Bounderby and Mrs. Sparsit both are away. Tom, whom he meets cannot be of any help. So he goes back to his hotel to have his dinner. Sissy comes there to meet him. He is taken aback at her appearance at his quarters. Sissy has come there to sort out with him certain matters concerning Louisa. She tells him that Louisa is at her father's place and he will never see her again. Sissy makes it clear that Louisa has not sent her, she has come there on her own and the first objective of her coming there is to assure him that there is no more hope of his ever speaking to Louisa again. The second objective of her visit is to tell him that he must leave the place i.e. Coketown forever. "I ask you to depart from this place tonight under an obligation never to return to it" (P. 194). Harthouse argues with her, but finally he bows to her

command. Had any person other than the innocent Sissy gone to him, he might have reacted differently. Harthouse again and again tells Sissy that he finds himself in a ridiculous position.

Before Sissy leaves, Harthouse asks her name and her relation to the Gradgrind family. Sissy tells him all about her family background and how out of pity Mr. Gradgrind has kept her with his family. Hearing this Harthouse sinks on his sofa feeling that he has been completely defeated - 'a poor girl-only a stroller' had made James Harthouse a Great Pyramid of failure' :

Harthouse writes three letters : one to his brother declaring his boredom with Coketown and his decision to leave the place, one to Bounderby announcing his departure, and one to Mr. Gradgrind stating that he is leaving his position. He immediately leaves Coketown. He has made this prompt retreat not because of any feeling of regret or to make amends for anything. This shallow man is concerned only with what the "fellows" will think if they learn of his great failure.

Some Comments

In this chapter we see Harthouse giving in easily to Sissy's plea to end his affair with Louisa and to leave Coketown never to return. The defeat of Harthouse by the ingenious Sissy while mentally satisfying, may appear to be not well motivated. A selfish fellow like Harthouse, accepting his defeat easily, seems overdone.

Chapter-3

Very Decided

Although Mrs. Sparsit is suffering from cold and sore throat that has reduced her voice to a whisper, she goes to London to meet Mr. Bounderby. She finds Bounderby at his hotel in St. James Street and after relating to him the news of Louisa's supposed elopement faints at the feet of the great 'self made man. When she regains her consciousness, both of them rush back to Coketown and go to Stone Lodge to inform Mr. Gradgrind of his daughter's disgrace. When Bounderby learns that Louisa is at her father's place he looks at Mrs. Sparsit angrily and the wretched woman can only take refuge in tears. Mrs. Sparsit is asked to go to her place immediately, Gradgrind expresses his desire to keep Louisa at Stone Lodge for sometime and be attended by Sissy who understands her and whom Louisa trusts. Bounderby becomes furious and gives his ultimatum : if Louisa does not return to his house by noon the next day, he will send her clothing and conclude that she prefers to stay with her family. Should she decide not to return, he will no longer be responsible for her.

Gradgrind urges Bounderby to reconsider the whole thing before committing

himself to such a decision. But Bounderby asserts that he will stick to his decision and then leaves.

When Louisa does not return to Bounderby's house the next day, he sends her clothing and personal belongings, carefully packed, to her at Stone Lodge. He, then, begins his negotiations to sell his country retreat, and himself returns to his town house in Coketown. There he reassumes his life as a bachelor.

Some comments

In this chapter we see Mrs. Sparsit, the officious meddler weeping at her defeat. She makes a fool of herself before her employer, Mr. Bounderby. Not only this, she has caused him to look foolish too and this infuriates Bounderby. She gives this news to Bounderby that Louisa has eloped with Harthouse and now when Louisa is at her father's place, she feels defeated.

Gradgrind appears to be a changed man. He admits his defeat i.e. the failure of his educational system. While talking to Bounderby, he uses the same words which Bounderby had used while talking to Stephen in discussing his responsibilities to his wife. Bounderby is annoyed by this repetition of his own words. He accepts his defeat when he realises that Louisa will not come back to him. So this self-made man, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, with his ego wounded, goes to his town house, and again starts living as a bachelor.

Chapter-4

Lost

Mr. Bounderby does not let his domestic affairs interfere with his business. To give the proof of his promptitude and activity, he rather pursues the case of Bank robbery with more vigour. He even offers twenty pounds reward for the apprehension of Stephen Blackpool who is suspected of complicity in the robbery of Coketown Bank. The boldly printed reward poster described the dress, complexion, estimated height and manners of the said Stephen Blackpool. The poster is read by those who can read and to those who can not. Each person has his own ideas concerning the innocence and guilt of Stephen.

Slackbridge capitalizes on Stephen's disgrace. He expresses his joy and triumph now when a stigma is attached to the name of Stephen. Addressing the workers as friends, he asks them to see the 'native deformity' of the traitor. But there are still many workers who believe that Stephen is innocent.

Mr. Bounderby brings Rachael and Tom to Louisa to confirm or to deny Richard's story of Louisa and Tom's visit to Stephen's house. Tom refuses to say anything regarding the visit and so Bounderby comes to Louisa.

Louisa admits that she had gone to meet Stephen because she wished to offer him assistance. Tom is upset when his sister admits all this.

Rachael tells Louisa that Stephen is now named as a thief in public print all over the town. To her Stephen is 'the honestest lad, the truest lad, the best' and so she is greatly hurt when he is referred to as thief. She admits under questioning that she has had a letter from Stephen who has taken an assumed name in order to obtain a job. She defends Stephen saying that when men and masters both are against him then the only course left for Stephen, who only wanted to work in peace, is to change his name. Bounderby, on the other hand thinks that Stephen has done this in order to prevent discovery of the robbery. Rachael sends a letter to Stephen to come to Coketown to clear his name. When Stephen does not come at the end of fourth day, Rachael tells Bounderby under what name and in which town Stephen is working. Messengers are sent to that place and the whole town is waiting for Stephen to be brought in the next day... But messengers sent to bring Stephen back cannot find him. Nobody knows anything about him. As the days pass the people of the town are divided in their attitudes and beliefs concerning Stephen and the robbery. Tom, during all his time, moves with Bounderby like his shadow. Where was the man, and why did he not come back ? This question troubles Tom at night.

Some Comments

In this chapter Dickens denounces the hypocritical demagoguery of Slackbridge, the union leader. Bounderby the rich factory owner is callous, stupid and hypocrite but so is the labour organizer Slackbridge who exploits the situation created by the stigma attached to Stephen's name for his own advantage. Stephen's disgrace becomes the joy and triumph of Slackbridge.

Chapter-5

Found

Time passes and life goes on as usual. Stephen Blackpool does not come back. Rachael works hard during the day, and at night Sissy comes to sit with her. Both of them have become friends. There is hardly any change in Coketown - its monotony remains unbroken. Even the disappearance of Stephen has become a monotonous wonder as any piece of machinery in Coketown. But Rachael still waits for him. Sissy also gives her hope that one day Stephen will come and will be free of suspicion.

One day Mrs. Sparsit, in an ecstasy of excitement comes to Mr. Bounderby's house and with her is the old woman Mrs. Pegler. The mysterious Mrs. Pegler, is brought much against her will before Bounderby by Mrs. Sparsit. Mrs. Pegler reveals her identity-she is Bounderby's mother. Hearing this

Mr. Gradgrind scolds her for being unnatural and inhuman mother who had deserted Bounderby in his infancy and had left him to the brutality of drunken grandmother. Mrs. Pegler refutes this story of a miserable childhood. She had not abandoned her dear son, rather she had brought him up with great care and educated him. She had herself worked hard to provide a secure childhood to her son. Later when he had grown up and had become a rich man, he had abandoned her and pensioned her on thirty pounds a year on the condition that she would never come to him. Hearing her story, all who are present there show their sympathy for the poor old mother. At this Bounderby asks them to disperse.

Some Comments

Mrs. Sparsit commits another blunder. In her zeal to please her employer Mr. Bounderby, she brings the mysterious old woman before him little knowing that the old woman is Bounderby's mother. At this Bounderby roars "How dare you go and poke your officious nose into my family affairs". At this poor Mrs. Sparsit sits stiffly in a chair as if she is frozen.

We come to know the reality about the childhood and family background of Bounderby. The whole scene of unmasking of this 'bully of humility' who deliberately denigrated his own mother and his family background in order to build him up as a self-made man illustrates false pride and lack of filial affection.

Chapter-6

The Starlight

In her grief over Stephen's not returning, Rachael turns to Sissy for comfort and companionship. Both of them go for a walk in the country on bright Sunday morning. They walk across the fields and down the shady lanes. Sissy spots a hat lying in the grass and immediately Rachael recognizes it to be Stephen's hat. They look around them and soon discover that he had fallen in an abandoned mine shaft. Rachael starts crying bitterly and Sissy entreats her not to do so. Rather they must go in different directions seeking aid. When they summon help the local villagers collect windlasses, buckets, ropes, candles, lanterns etc. and come to the old Hell Shaft. Mr. Gradgrind, Louisa Bounderby and Tom also come there. With great difficulty, finally the villagers succeed in bringing Stephen out. He is alive but in a very bad shape-his bones broken and body wasted from starvation. He is quite motionless looking at the sky. He utters Rachael's name and immediately she holds his hand. He smiles and says. 'Don't let it go'. Then he makes request to Gradgrind to clear his name. When Gradgrind asks how he can do that, Stephen says, 'Sir, your son will tell you how'. Stephen dies quietly, his hand in Rachael's and his eyes gazing at the star that had

always been his source of comfort. The march back to Coketown is a funeral procession.

Some Comments

Stephen's dying statement makes it clear that it is Tom who is the thief. The death of Stephen appears to be a contrived theatrical affair with a large and complete crowd of people present and Stephen saying that all men should learn to live together with understanding.

Chapter-7

Whelp-Hunting

When Stephen, before his death, talks to Gradgrind, Sissy, goes to Tom, whispers something in his ear, immediately Tom vanishes.

When Gradgrind realises that his own son Tom is the culprit, he shuts himself in his room for twenty four hours and does not come out even to eat or to drink. Next day when he comes out of his room, he talks with Louisa and shows his eagerness to find and to help his son. He learns from Sissy that she has sent Tom to Sleary's circus for refuge. Three of them, Gradgrind, Sissy and Louisa together-go to the circus. There they see Tom masquerading as a black-faced clown. They heave a sigh of relief to see him and Louisa thanks Sleary for the help that he has given them. Both Sissy and Louisa leave the place for sometime.

After an hour Gradgrind comes there and with Sleary's assistance he plans to send Tom to Liverpool in the night and then send him abroad. Tom is not at all ashamed of his action. Rather he tortures Gradgrind by referring to his system of Facts and statistics which show that a certain percentage of people employed in position of trust are dishonest. Gradgrind hides his face in his hands but Tom keeps on standing there in his disgraceful grotesqueness chewing a straw. Tom is angry with Louisa for leaving Bounderby and for packing of Harthouse and leaving him when he needed her. When Tom is about to leave the place, Bitzer suddenly appears and interferes.

Some Comments

In this chapter, we again are in the world of circus people who are ready to help Gradgrind without asking any questions. Gradgrind who could not see his small boy peeping into the circus tent, now sees Tom as a ludicrous circus performer. We also see Gradgrind as a father-anxious to save his son; holding his son's hand and praying for him. "May God forgive you as I do".

Chapter-8

Philosophical

Bitzer is holding Tom by his collar and is determined not to let Tom escape. Gradgrind asks Bitzer, if he has a heart and Bitzer's reply is, "The circulation, sir, couldn't be carried on without one. No man, sir, acquainted with the facts established by Harvey relating to the circulation of the blood, can doubt that I have a heart" and when Gradgrind asks him if his heart is accessible to any compassionate influence, Bitzer's reply is, "It is accessible to Reason". Both of them stand looking at each other, Gradgrind's face as white as the pursuer's. Bitzer then reveals that his sole purpose for preventing the escape of Tom and taking him to Bounderby is to gain a promotion to Tom's former job. In the course of the conversation Bitzer says "... the whole social system is a question of self-interest. What you must always appeal to, is a person's self-interest". Gradgrind tries to persuade Bitzer to accept money but he refuses to accept money saying that he is only interested in improving his prospects in the Bank. Gradgrind tries to soften Bitzer by entreating him to remember the days that he had spent in Gradgrind's school and think of the pains that were taken to educate him there. At this Bitzer's reply is that his schooling was paid for. In front of Bitzer, Mr. Sleary feigns indignation that Gradgrind wants him to help his son escape but he makes use of a dancing horse and a trained dog to harass Bitzer while Mr. Childers drives Tom to safety. Gradgrind thanks Sleary and hints as delicately as he can, at handsome remuneration in money. Sleary does not want money for himself but he hints at such small gifts as collar for the dog, belts for horses and five-pounds note to Mr. Childers. Gradgrind thinks of these small tokens to be too slight for the service.

Sleary tells Gradgrind that Signor Jupe's dog Merrylegs had returned to the circus and this showed that Jupe as surely dead. But the circus people had agreed that this news about Jupe's death should not be given to Sissy. At this Mr. Gradgrind tells him that Sissy still keeps the bottle of oil and will believe in his affection to the last moment of her life. Sleary at this comments that there is something greater than self-interest, that is love. Gradgrind, much sadder and wiser because of the experience he has undergone now takes leave of the circus people and the chapter ends with Mr. Sleary's words, "People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth working, they an't made for it. You mutht have uth, Thquire, Do the withe thing and kind thing too, and make the betht of uth, not the wurtht!"

Some Comments

In this chapter Gradgrind's philosophy of self-interest receives its final blow. Bitzer confronts Gradgrind with the principles he himself had once preached, to deny Tom a chance to escape. It is non-utilitarian Sleary, grateful for Sissy's sake, who helps his son to escape. When Tom and Bitzer rebound Gradgrind's philosophy on him, his discomfiture is both satiric and pathetic.

Tom's escape is contrived successfully in every sense, by means belonging to Dickensian high-fantastic comedy. And finally the moral of the whole fable is put into Mr. Sleary's asthmatic mouth i.e. love is greater than the whole system of self-interest and secondly, people must be amused. The circus people believe in this and practise it.

Chapter-9**Final**

In this final chapter of the novel, Dickens anticipates the future of different characters of the novel. Looking into the future, he sees Mrs. Sparsit's lot with her grudging, perevish, complaining relative, Lady Scadgers, Mr. Bounderby's death caused by a fit in the street of his smoke-filled Coketown and Bitzer's rise to high position. Regarding Gradgrind he says that he sees white haired decrepit man, making his facts and figures subservient to Faith, Hope and Charity and for this highly scorned by his former associates. Dickens also pictures Louisa loved by Sissy's children and the children of others, but none of her own, seeking to understand and help others. Rachael is seen as a woman of pensive beauty, always dressed in black but sweet-tempered and serene. Once again, after a long illness, working in the Factory, Dickens foretells Tom's penitence and death thousands of miles away, in a hospital. Sissy is seen as happily married, blessed with children whom she looks after well.

Dickens concludes his novel with the hope of brighter future for the children and working classes of England.

Some Comments

From this chapter, we learn about the fate of various characters, Bounderby, without his wife, without his adoring house keeper, without his pride of a self-made man, presents pathetic sight. Gradgrind, having lost his theory, hated by his former associates is a completely shattered man. Rachael has lost Stephen Blackpool but she still has her humanity that makes her a source of comfort to others. Sissy because of capacity to love and understand, leads a happy life. Louisa has lost her future as a rich man's wife but she has gained love and affection of so many children-children of other people.

(SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS)**Q.No. 1. What is the importance of chapter 6 of Book Second ?**

Ans : The chapter 6 of Book Second is important for many significant events of the plot of the novels. When Stephen comes out of the house of Bounderby, it is already dark. When he comes out of the house, he meets Rachael and the old woman, whom he met the other day in the house of Bounderby. On seeing the woman, in the company of Rachael, he is amazed. The old woman is eager to see Mrs. Bounderby but fails as she has not come out of that house for a long time. She left with no choice but to put questions to Stephen about Mrs. Bounderby. Nobody knows about the old woman and her strange behaviour. Louisa revolts against her cruel husband. She is very well aware of the problems of the workers. The strange requests of Tom create suspense. Tom is a selfish and self-centred man. He has a plan to use Stephen of his own purpose.

Q. No. 2 Role of Mrs. Sparsit in Chapter-9 of Book Second.

Ans : Mrs. Sparsit stays in Bounderby's house, she starts resuming her duties, as the housekeeper of the house. Mrs. Sparsit behaves in such a way that increases the alienation of Louisa from her husband and brings her and Harthouse closer to each other. Mrs. Sparsit being fully aware of the gap between the two adopts all methods to increase it. Not only this, she rather waits for the dissolution of their marriage. No doubt, she is creating a rift between the two but at the same time it is not clear whether she herself is interested in Bounderby or not.

Q. No. 3. Why is Mr. Harthouse agitated in chapter-2 of Book Three ?

Ans : Mr. Harthouse is in a agitated mood. After Louisa had left him he was very much disturbed and spent the whole day in uneasiness. He goes in search of Louisa in Bounderby's town but she is not there. In her search, he also goes to the bank. Then finally, he goes for his dinner. He is informed by Sissy that Louisa is at her father's place and she will never see him again. On being inquired by Harthouse whether Sissy is sent by Louisa, the latter refuses it and makes clear that she has herself come there. She also clarifies that her purpose of coming there was to assure him that there is no hope of his ever speaking to Louisa again. On hearing this, Mr. Harthouse gets agitated.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL : HARD TIMES

Characterization

Dickens, a master in the art of characterization, presents a wide variety of characters in his novels. To think of Dickens is first of all to remember his great characters such as Pickwick, Pecksniff, Micawber, William Dorrit, Mrs. Sparsit. Even in this short list, one can see the wide range as “they vary from comic charm to monstrous hypocrisy, from adroit professionalism to selfish impotence, from fanaticism to honorable limitation.” They gain their full meaning from the structure of which they are a part : no single character exists without his counterpart of context and none fails to participate at some level in one of those unifying themes which are stated in comic, satiric or pathetic terms. In Dickens’s world, if we have selfless, self-effacing characters, we also have selfish characters whose sole principle is self interest, if we have characters, who are creatures of head, we also have characters who believe in the things concerned with heart, if we have caricatures drawn with the sole purpose of castigating a social function, there are characters who amuse and win our interest as people rather than as symbols.

Let us now look at the characters of *Hard Times*. In *Hard Times* Dickens presents a cross-section of Victorian society of mid-nineteenth century. Here we have heroes, heroines, villains, comic characters and pathetic characters. All sections of Victorian society are represented in this novel. Here we have a world peopled by representatives of fading aristocracy such as Mrs. Sparsit and Mr. Harthouse: representatives of rising middle class such as Mr. Bounderby, Mr. Gradgrind and his children; representatives of struggling working class such as Stephen Blackpool and Rachael and finally the representatives of weakest section of the society such as the circus people. Though these characters are representative of their class, yet they are more than just symbols-they are characters rather than symbols. Mrs. Sparsit is not just a representative of ‘distressed gentility’ or Mr. Bounderby is not just a symbol of the self-made merchant classes-they have their appropriate individuality given by such morally or socially neutral characteristics such as Mrs. Sparsit’s eyebrows or Bounderby’s profundity

of speech. We are to be interested in and amused by them as people rather than as representative of different classes.

Here we have not only representatives of different classes, we have representatives of different philosophies. For example, Gradgrind represents the abstract theory of utilitarianism, Bounderby, the anti-social force of capitalism and Slackbridge, the trade unionist. The characters are also arranged in symmetrical groups either to represent labour vs capital or exploited vs exploiter or to contrast those who belong to the world of hard facts with those who belong to the world of fancy. Yet all of them are living human beings who love, hate, sin and repent.

Let us now make a study of the characters of the novel.

Thomas Gradgrind

Thomas Gradgrind is a representative of the rising middle class. He is a retired manufacturer of hardware, the member of Parliament for Coketown, the Governor of a school and father of five children. When we first meet him in the novel, he is in a schoolroom telling the teacher that facts alone are wanted in life and so the teacher should plant nothing but facts in the minds of school children. This man of facts and figures, with his square forefinger, square forehead, square shoulders, square legs is described as an 'epitome of squareness' in the sense of square being figure of geometrical exactitude. Believing in the principle that facts alone are needed in life, this man has brought up his children only to learn facts and believe in statistics. In this world, there is no place for fancy, imagination and emotions-it is a world of bare, hard, cut and dried facts-a world of the utilitarian calculus.

When Gradgrind, the representative of utilitarianism applies his philosophy of facts in his private life, the results are disastrous. Through his blindness to imagination, his failure to understand the life of emotions, and the mechanical crudity of his philosophy, his favourite child suffers a dark emptiness in her heart and son becomes a selfish sneak and thief, finding consolation in compulsive gambling. His system, his gospel of facts and statistics, fails and finally he sees "the pride of his heart and the triumph of his system, lying an insensible heap, at his feet". In the moment of crisis, the father in him wakes up and he holds Louisa in his arms, he prefers love and his child to the pride of his system. Similarly when he comes to know that his son is a thief, he forgets his philosophy and out of love for his son becomes ready to help Tom flee from England. When Tom disguised as a comic servant with a black face and a ludicrous dress defends himself in his father's jargon, his system receives a hard blow. To make the defeat of his philosophy complete, Bitzer, his prize pupil, the real success of his system, comes there to drag Tom back to Coketown. Bitzer throws in

his face his old arguments, the question of self-interest and the fundamental principle of his philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Thus Gradgrind's system acts against itself because even a utilitarian sometimes in his life experiences a situation where feelings come into play.

Gradgrind proves to be a man with a heart underneath his philosophy, for he helps Sissy and is capable of recognizing the error of his ways after his children experience unhappiness and misfortune because of his utilitarian philosophy. His final acceptance of love, charity, compassion and his earlier deviation from his system that had led to his taking into his household the strolling juggler's child, make his redemption possible. The ruthless logic-grinder, after the failure of his system made apparent by the misery and mistakes of his children, loses his 'squareness' and becomes capable, reacting instinctively to human situations.

Josiah Bounderby

Another representative of the rising middle class in the novel is Josiah Bounderby, a rich middle-aged factory owner of Coketown. He is the entrepreneur incarnate : banker, manufacturer, capitalist, merchant claiming to be a self-made man. He has been described by Dickens in sensational details as a big man, made up of coarse material stretched tight, with a puffed head and forehead, and inflated like a balloon. This great boast, this 'Bully of humility is always talking about his old ignorance and poverty. In place of what in a normal human being would be an autobiographical history, Bounderby has projected a fiction which is no more than another extension of his personality. He claims to have been deserted by his mother and reared by his grandmother whom he describes as 'the wickedest and the worst old woman that ever lived', who even sold his pair of shoes to buy liquor for herself. He often narrates how as a child he slept in the gutter, lived on rain water and scraps and felt happy, when he got the job of blacking shoes. This story is proved to be false when his mother appears to tell us that she had never abandoned him but had brought him up and educated him. She had worked hard to send him to school and then into apprenticeship with a kind master. We also come to know that Bounderby has pensioned off his mother on the condition that she never comes to see him. This shows his false pride, his snobbery and his lack of filial affection.

In fact, Bounderby is a man perfectly devoid of sentiments. He knows none of the ties of human relationships which are based on love, affection, understanding and compassion. For him people exist only as butts to be bullied or as hands to be dismissed. Others exist for him only in so far as they are extensions of his own self.

In his efforts to represent himself a truly self-made man or to make his rags to riches story appear very remarkable, he cuts himself away from all personal relationships. The only connection that he recognises between himself and others is conceived in terms of power. He believes only in assertion of his will and this involves misery for someone else. Acting wholly out of self-interest which for him is not acquisition of money alone but of power, this man can refer to smoke that chokes the workers of Coketown as 'meat and drink' or 'the healthiest thing' in the world. Bounderby, the representative of utilitarianism in practice calls Stephen Blackpool to his place when he comes to know that he has refused to join the union. But when Stephen defends the workers, he dismisses him. He knows that this action on his part can bring about Stephen's starvation but he can justify it in terms of his philosophy i.e. utilitarianism.

He marries Louisa who does not love him just to tell the world that he has married the daughter of a rich and a respectable man. He considers his marriage to be another success to boast about. When Louisa gets involved with Harthouse, Bounderby, 'the blind bounder', cannot see anything. He casts her off when she asserts herself beyond the role of a chattel. He keeps Mrs. Sparsit, an aristocratic housekeeper and constantly elicits from her statements of her former high station and luxurious life, just to enjoy his superiority over her because she is now his servant. He keeps her so long as it suits him and finally chooses to cast her off into penury. This is how this swab, who poses to be a humble man, behaves. All that he cares to do is to constantly feed the feelings of self-aggrandizement.

He is a man who is motivated by nothing but greed for power and material success. With his bragging self-interest, he becomes a representative of the Victorian 'rugged individualism' in its vulgarest and ugliest form. Edger H. Johnson rightly points out that Bounderby "is nothing but the practice of that business ethos for which 'the relation between master and man were all fact, everything was fact... and what you could not state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest was not, 'never should be' (i.v.)"

Finally this unchanging man in the rapidly changing world dies of a fit in the street of his smoke-filled town.

Tom Gradgrind

Tom Gradgrind, son of Thomas Gradgrind, is a character from rising middle class of the Victorian England. He has been trained to believe only in facts and figures and never to wonder or fancy. But he soon gets sick of the facts and says, "I wish I could collect all the facts and all the figures and all the people who found them out, and I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them, and blow them all up together". He

declares that he is sick of his life at Stone Lodge, his parental home, which he describes as jolly old jaundiced jail. He also declares that he will have his revenge when he will go to work in Bounderby's bank. He tells Louisa that she can make his life easy by playing upto Bounderby.

Tom seems to be heartless self-seeking egoist when he plays upon Louisa's love for him to have her married Bounderby. Tom's is, after all, utilitarianism in action, the product of the inhuman system of education that trains only the mind and totally neglects sentiments and affection. He urges Louisa to marry Bounderby because as Bounderby's brother-in-law he will have a guarantee of a good career.

When Tom starts working for Bounderby, he is free from the stringent rule of his father. He begins to smoke, to drink and to gamble. 'The whelp', as he is called by Harthouse, soon becomes involved in gambling, debts and turns to Louisa for help. When she refuses to help him any more, he steals money from the bank in order to cover his debts. He contrives a scheme to throw the blame on Stephen, a workman in Bounderby's factory. All this shows that Tom can use others for his own advantage.

But just as he uses others, so is he used by Harthouse. Harthouse by offering him liquor and cigars, makes him talk about the circumstances in which his sister married Bounderby. The highly personal information about his sister that Tom gives to Harthouse finally lands her in trouble. But the selfish brother because of his less practical upbringing can even betray his sister if it suits his self-interest.

When he realises that his game is up and that he is about to be exposed, he runs away instead of facing the consequences of his action. When we see him masquerading as a black face clown at Sleary's circus telling his father that his action was governed by the system, "So many people are employed in position of trust : so many people, out of many, will be dishonest. I have heard your talk... of its being a law. How can I help laws ?" We feel that his degeneration is complete. His whole story appears to be "one long tragedy of going downhill". His repressive and rationalist upbringing turns him into a selfish man prepared to exploit others for his own advantage. It is his moral depravity that allows him to connive at the seduction of his own sister and implicate an innocent man in his own crime. Dickens's key word for Tom. i.e. 'whelp' is clearly designed to generate reader's contempt for Tom. Tom's actions do take him beyond our pity.

Escaping from England, he lives and dies a lonely life-an exile. In the last letter that he writes to Louisa, he asks for her forgiveness. Finally, Dickens shows him dying with Louisa's name on his lips. This love for his sister, becomes the redeeming feature of his character.

Louisa Gradgrind Bounderby

Louisa, the eldest child of Thomas Gradgrind, is a beautiful girl brought up in the tradition of facts. From the very childhood, she has been taught never to fancy and never to wonder. Her training at her father's school with its emphasis only on head, has left her heart starved. She feels that there is something missing - though she doesn't know what it is - something lacking in her life. This lack of emotional satisfaction gives her an air of jaded sullenness, "struggling through the dissatisfaction of her face there was a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved imagination keeping life in itself somehow". (P. 10).

She loves her brother dearly - she, in fact, directs all her love and affection upon him because she has no outlet for her emotional life but her brother. For his sake i.e. in the hope of being pleasant and useful to Tom, she accepts the proposal that her father brings from Bounderby and thus prostitutes herself in marriage to a man she does not love. Her love for Tom is the only emotion that fills her barren life. All the love of which she is capable, she lavishes on him.

She, after marriage, is treated by her husband as his possession and status symbol. The alienation between husband and wife proves dangerous and Harthouse taking advantage of their rift, starts an affair with Louisa. The emotional conflict with Harthouse leaves her in the dark night of despair. She comes back to her father's place to question him, "How could you give me life and take from me all the inappreciable things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart." (P. 178).

In fact, this girl's yearning for love and understanding and desire for those regions where facts, figures and definitions are not absolute is not understood by the father-rather he makes her crush and repulse such things. The father had never realised that she was more than an empty pitcher to be filled with facts. As a result of all this, she now feels the presence of 'great Wilderness' in her.

But soon, she begins to discover the warmth of feeling and compassion. Her re-education starts in the school of Sissy Jupe, when she comes back to her

father's place after her experience with Harthouse. She throws herself upon the sympathy of Sissy, who with all her wisdom of heart, tries to solve all her problems. Finally Dickens gives us a picture of Louisa, loved by Sissy's children and the children of others, but none of her own-seeking to understand, love and help others, trying hard to know her humbler fellow creatures and to beautify their hard lives of tough mechanical routine with graces and delights of imagination.

Mrs. Sparsit

A representative of the fading aristocracy, Mrs. Sparsit is an old woman who performs the housekeeping duties for Mr. Bounderby. She considers herself to be highly connected as her husband by his mother's side was a 'Powler'. When he died, he did not leave his widow in affluent circumstances and so to maintain herself, she had to take a job. With her coriolanion style of nose, and her dense eyebrows, in her elderly days, she now earns her living by pouring tea for Bounderby or catering to his whims.

She is very class conscious and because of this she considers herself to be much superior to her employer i.e. Mr. Bounderby who is a member of the rising middle class. It is true that her circumstances have made her work for him, yet she is resentful of him and all others who do not have the background that she has.

In Bounderby's presence she is very polite and obliging but behind his back, she curses him, hates him and goes to the extent of spitting at his portrait. When Bounderby gives her the news that he is going to marry Louisa, Mrs. Sparsit very courteously wishes him happiness. The great hypocrite that she is, she keeps her mark intact and does not show any sign of astonishment, anger or resentment. But from that very moment, she starts viewing Bounderby as a victim of her compassion. She feels pity for the old man who is foolish enough to believe that young Louisa can make him a satisfactory wife. Mrs. Sparsit, in fact, wants to prove that Bounderby in marrying Louisa has made a great mistake. In fact, Mrs. Sparsit's attitude towards Mr. Bounderby remains ambiguous. At times, it appears that this lady nurses an unrequited affection for Bounderby which shows itself in jealousy of the young wife he brings home. Her constant references to Mrs. Bounderby as Miss Gradgrind, show her inacceptance of Louisa as wife of Bounderby.

Influenced by Bounderby's philosophy Mrs. Sparsit always thinks of her self-interest. She is a great schemer, all the time making schemes to mould the circumstances to her own advantage. We see her enlisting the help of Bitzer to undermine the position of young Tom in Bounderby's household and spying on Louisa and Harthouse for the final evidence of Louisa's descent into the pit of shame at the bottom of allegorical staircase that she erected in her mind. She pursues Louisa believing that she is about to witness Louisa's elopement with Harthouse, and then goes to Bounderby to give this news of Louisa's disgrace. But when Louisa is found at Stone Lodge, Mrs. Sparsit feels humiliated before Bounderby and annoys him. Then in her zeal to please Bounderby, she commits a fatal blunder. She brings the mysterious Mrs. Pegler, who is Bounderby's mother before him. As a result of this, she loses her position with Bounderby and finally

she is compelled to live with her hated relative Lady Scadgers, fighting out a daily fight at the points of all the weapons in the female armoury.

James Harthouse

Like Mrs. Sparsit, James Harthouse is also a representative of the fading aristocracy. He is young man who comes to Coketown because he is bored with his life.. bored with all his travels and education. Persuaded by his elder brother to go in for statistics, make a place for himself amongst the 'hard Fact Fellows' and canvass one of the industrial seats, this man joins Gradgrind's political party and comes to Coketown. He is a man who is in search of something that can give him a bit of excitement.

At Coketown, he soon becomes a frequent visitor to the house of Bounderby. When introduced to Louisa, he gets infatuated by her and then the sole aim of his life is to arouse the feeling of love in the heart of Louisa. He meets and talks to Louisa on various pretexts, tries to impress her by showing his concern for her brother Tom and by admiring her great sisterly affection and love for her brother. When Bounderby is away from home, taking advantage of the absence of the master of house, he tries to seduce his wife. Louisa who has no inner emotional resources to resist his advances succumbs but refuses to elope with him. Through the character of this sensualist, a man without any principle, Dickens highlights the decay that comes from rank without character.

The emphasis in the novel is laid on Harthouse's function as Louisa's potential seducer i.e. on his role as the instrument of the plot rather than of the theme of the novel. Finally he is easily disposed off by the circus girl Sissy. He leaves Coketown for a foreign country after getting his ego badly hurt. Calling himself a 'Great Pyramid of Failure' he proves himself to be a very shallow man concerned only with what other fellows will think or say at his expense if they learnt of his ridiculous failure. So this man, being totally devoid of any ethical feelings, never feels ashamed of his actions, never thinks about making any amends, no pulls of the conscience ever torture him-only a secret sense of having failed and been ridiculous and dread of what others will say, oppress and haunt him.

Stephen Blackpool

A representative of the struggling working class, Stephen Blackpool is a hardworking power-loom weaver in Bounderby's factory. He is forty years old but looks much older and so is usually called old Stephen. A stooping man with a knitted brow and a pondering expression on his face, Stephen is not one of those remarkable Hands who have worked hard to master sciences, neither is he one of those hands who can make speeches and carry on debates. He is simply a man of perfect integrity - a noble and honest man.

He is a married man - married to a woman who left him many years ago. He falls in love with Rachael, a woman worker in the factory of Bounderby. He cannot marry his beloved because of his inability to obtain divorce from his wife. She comes back a disabled, drunken creature, a creature so foul to look at and so much fouler in her moral infamy and the poor man knowing not what to do, goes to Bounderby for help. He seeks to obtain a divorce from his degenerate wife but soon realises that there is no way out for him as the laws of the country are for the rich and not for a poor workman. Stephen, a victim of the broken marriage, victim of the costliness of divorce, is robbed of the little happiness that poor workers like him can find in their hard life.

Stephen's refusal to join the trade union alienates him from his co-workers. He is shunned and despised by the members of his own class. He becomes a lonely man leading a life of solitude among familiar crowd. His employer too throws him out because he has the courage to defend workers. So the poor man is sacrificed between the conflicting interests of the union and the employers. After being fired by Bounderby, he has to go to another town in search of job.

His problems do not end with his going away from Coketown. He is falsely accused of theft and when he comes to know this, to clear his name, he starts back for Coketown. But on his way, he falls into an abandoned mine shaft. He is brought out by the local villagers, but he is in such a bad shape that soon he dies quietly, his hand in the hand of his beloved Rachael and his eyes gazing at the bright star. Before dying, he makes a request to Gradgrind to clear his name of robbery and Gradgrind finally does so.

Stephen's life is a tale of misfortunes and misery. Critics find biblical parallels in his character portrayal. He is likened to the biblical St. Stephen- the first Christian martyr to religion-who was stoned to death by his own people. Similarly we find Stephen Blackpool hated and ostracised by the members of his own class for taking an individual stand i.e. for his refusal to join the union. He too is a martyr in his own way.

Sissy Jupe

Sissy Jupe belongs to the circus people, who represent the world of fancy, imagination, love, affection, understanding and emotions- the things which are hated in the materialistic, utilitarian world of Gradgrind and Bounderby. Referred to as 'Girl number twenty' by Gradgrind, this student of Gradgrind's school is presented as an antithesis to the so called bright and successful pupils of Gradgrind's school. Sissy is unable to define the horse in terms in which Bitzer describes it. Such factual definitions are beyond the understanding of Sissy.

When she is deserted by her father, she accepts Gradgrind's invitation to

become a member of his household. At Gradgrind's school, Sissy's progress is very slow. She, reared to wonder and to fancy, cannot digest the volumes of facts and statistics taught in the school by M' Choakumchild. But at Gradgrind's home, under her influence Gradgrind's daughter Jane learns the wisdom of heart in addition to the wisdom of head emphasized by her father. Louisa too is influenced by Sissy. When Louisa comes back to her father's house after her shattering experience, it is Sissy who helps her in solving her problems. It is she who makes Harthouse leave Coketown, sends Tom to Sleary's circus for refuge and teach Louisa the lessons of compassion and understating.

In the conclusion of the book she is shown as a happily married woman with taking care that her children should 'have a childhood of the mind no less than a childhood of the body' (P. 248). She is portrayed by Dickens as an angel, giving love, affection and comfort to all who come in contact with her.

Minor Characters

In addition to the above mentioned major characters, we have a number of minor characters in the novel, who appear at a particular point in the development to the plot, serve their purpose and then leave the world of the novel. These minor characters provide comic relief, present a comparison or contrast with the major characters to make a transition in the plot. Some of the minor characters are given below :

Bitzer

Bitzer is the most brilliant pupil of Gradgrind's school. He is presented in the novel as a pale, cold, light-eyed and light-haired boy, out of whom the rays of the sun drew out what little colour he ever possessed. This boy with his factual definition of horse gives much pleasure to Gradgrind. He learns Gradgrind's lessons so well that he becomes an embodiment of Gradgrind's philosophy. Later he works in Bounderby's bank and there his great desire is to undermine the importance of Tom in Bounderby's household. He is now a cold man utterly selfish, calculating and ruthless in relation to others. When Gradgrind plans Tom's escape from the country, Bitzer reaches there to drag Tom back to Coketown. Gradgrind tries to stop him from doing so but Bitzer, who has been taught the principle of self-interest, says, "the whole system is a question of self-interest". His purpose is to please Bounderby and gain a promotion to Tom's former job. So this mean and servile man is presented as a contrast to the Circus girl Sissy who is all love and compassion.

Mr. M' Choakumchild

Mr. M' Choakumchild is a teacher in Gradgrind's school. As his very name

indicates, the system of education advocated by him 'choaks' the children or murders the innocent. He is well versed in such subjects as mathematics, physical science, French, German, Latin and Greek. Dickens very ironically comments that this man knows too much, "if he had only learnt a little less, how infinitely better he might have taught much more" (P. 6).

Mr. Sleary

Mr. Sleary, a stout flabby man, is the proprietor of the circus. He suffers from asthma and his breath comes far too thick and heavy for letter 's'. His philosophy "masks" the best of us with the worst (Make the best of it (life) not the worst) is also the philosophy of his creator. Sleary and his all circus folk present a contrast of the world of facts and figures represented by Gradgrind and Bounderby. If the representatives of Utilitarianism are motivated only by self-interest, the circus people are inspired to act by love. Sleary and his men help Tom to escape from the country not for any selfish motive. For Bitzer the whole social system is based on self-interest, but for the circus people love is the supreme force.

(Other members of the Sleary circus are Emma Gordon, Kidderminster, Mr. E.W.B children and Josephine Sleary).

Slackbridge

Slackbridge is the trade union leader, who can impress people by his speeches. He is the supposed saviour of the workers but Dickens shows that such labour unions may be as corrupt as their employers. These false prophets work for their self-interest and use the unions to their own advantage. Slackbridge through his arguments turns the other workers against Stephen Blackpool for not joining the union. In the novel he is described as a man "not so honest". He is not so manly and he substitutes cunning for their (workers) simplicity and passion for their solid sense'. Critics are of the opinion that the way Dickens has described Slackbridge shows his ignorance about labour organisation because labour organizers are not like Slackbridge.

HARD TIMES-A Thematic Analysis

Hard Times is a novel concerned to 'shake some people in a terrible mistake of these days' (as Dickens declared in a letter requesting permission to dedicate the work to Thomas Carlyle'), and the values of carefree childhood and of expansive imagination which are juxtaposed to the blighting influence of narrowly conceived rationality find their appropriate image in the object of Tom and Louisa's curiosity, the circus.

One of the memorable moments of *Hard Times* occurs early in Book the first, in Chapter 3, when Mr. Gradgrind, walking past Sleary's circus booth, discovers his children Louisa and Tom outside, striving to peep in. Thomas

Gradgrind, the hard-headed social theorist, is astonished by this act of disobedience, as well he might be, for it represents a direct challenge to the very principles upon which his system is based. His children have literally and metaphorically found 'a loophole'. Sullen, emotionally stunted, and inarticulate, they still evince an instinctive awareness that life holds 'hidden glories' not catered for by their father's blinkered ideas.

But the novel was written not simply to make money. *Hard Times* is driven by a sense of urgent social problems, and the evocation of circus values carries conviction precisely because it is a response to what Dickens diagnosed as a pressing need. That the subject is manifest in the very opening sentence of *Hard Times* : before a single character or situation is heard of the dogmatic proclamation. 'Now' what I want is, Facts' dramatically introduces the central issue which impels the book's action.

The speaker is Thomas Gradgrind, guiding luminary of the Coketown school, stern opponent of Sleary's Circus, proud father of Tom and Louisa, friend of Bounderby, the Member of Parliament for Coke town, and eventually victim of his own dogmatism Gradgrind is a crusading theorist whose ill conceived idealism blinds him to the essentials of those around him, with calamitous results. He is basically a decent and humane man, and by the end of the book the split between his head and his heart has widened to give him tragic stature. When his beloved daughter lies collapsed at his feet, brought down by his teaching, he is compelled to reassess the very basis of his system, and the delicacy with which Dickens shows Gradgrind facing this painfully jumbling task gives the final chapters a moving poignancy.

For Dickens, Mr. Gradgrind is the representative of widely prevalent and deeply pernicious ideas about man and society. These ideas can be broadly labelled as Utilitarianism and Political Economy. Strictly speaking, the two concepts are not synonymous but they are closely related and for Dickens they came of the same things in the end. Utilitarianism was the brainchild of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), an eccentric philosopher and social reformer, who held that virtue was a matter of *utility* : an action was good if it helped to bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Promulgation of that happiness was the function of the State, and education of the populace and extension of political franchise were fundamental tenets of Benthamism. Political Economy, on the other hand, was a socio-economic system deriving from Adam Smith (1723-90) and David Ricardo (1772-1823), whose disciples taught that distribution of wealth was governed by immutable laws of nature. National prosperity depended on the profits of industrialists, and the wages of workers could not rise without jeopardizing economic harmony, to the detriment of workers and

industrialists alike. Because the pursuit of individual, self-interest was held to promote the general welfare. The duty of the state was to adopt a policy of *Laissez-faire* in order to allow that inevitable process to operate freely, without interference.

For Dickens Utilitarianism and Political Economy were based on a fallacious conception of human nature. Their trust in economic forces and their reliance on statistical evidence made no allowance for noble human qualities such as generosity, altruism, and imaginative sympathy : their concern with quantitative analysis made them insensitive to the lot of the individual; and their high-minded notions of general prosperity were deficient in providing scope for values and generosity.

The Principal forum in which Mr. Gradgrind promulgates his Philosophy of Fact is the School, and the setting for the novel's opening scene is a model school. Education was a major concern of Dickens throughout his career. The Utilitarians considered universal education an essential prerequisite for achieving the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

For Mr. Gradgrind the Philosophy of Fact is a matter of principle, but for his friend Mr. Bounderby it is a source of slogans. Bounderby represents the underside of Political Economy, the man who uses it to justify his own self-serving ends. Dismissive, and hypocritical, he fabricates a public image of himself which is the very reverse of the expansive play of imagination which the circus properly inspires. For him invention is falsehood, cynically pursued for self-aggrandisement and at the expense of others. With him Dickens satirizes that respected Victorian figure, the self-made man: boasting incessantly of his rise up the ladder of success, he is finally exposed as a sham, and with his discomfiture Dickens gives the lie to the Utilitarian principle that the pursuit of individual fortune benefits society as a whole. For Dickens, selfishness, is finally, simply selfishness.

Bounderby's position as a factory owner introduces another urgently topical theme of *Hard Times* i.e. the industrial relations.

In *Hard Times* Dickens fixes blame for the unrest in Coketown between Mr. Bounderby, who is pig-headedly contemptuous of the "Hands", and Slackbridge, the union leader whose incendiary oratory is equally destructive. *Hard Times* does not purport to offer a comprehensive picture of industrial relations; rather, Dickens is concerned to expose the divisiveness of self-interested positions. Here, as throughout his fiction, he is emphatic that social harmony is possible only when men and women of all classes recognize their mutual problems and interests.

The industrial themes of *Hard Times* are focused principally upon the effects of bad practices for single worker, Stephen Blackpool. Stephen is introduced as a man stoically enduring the toil, poverty, and monotony of his lot as a

Coketown hand, patiently doing his job well, and taking what little comfort he can find in the companionship of Rachael, the woman he loves but cannot marry. As the novel proceeds, he is victimized by his fellow workers for standing out against their collective self-interest as defined by the demagoguery of Slackbridge by his employer Mr. Bounderby for drawing his personal discontent to the attention of that intolerant blowhard and by a social superior who hypocritically proffers assistance, the 'whelp', Tom Gradgrind, simply for being available as a convenient scapegoat.

Stephen's plight is a salient example of Dickens's characteristic approach to topical subjects. Public issues are explored in relation to private lives, and social problems are diagnosed in relation to their moral causes. Dickens insists that it is the consequences for individual men and women that matter most in a social system, and looking beneath manifestations of social unrest he seeks root causes in defective attitudes. Stephen's marital plight is related to his troubles as a worker. Neither Bounderby nor Slackbridge is prepared to consider Stephen as an individual with his own thoughts, feelings, and motives. The obstructive legal system which withholds divorce as a virtual impossibility (and which is buttressed by the reactionary stubbornness of people like Mr. Bounderby) makes no allowance for the misery of individuals. Stephen considers life a 'muddle', and although the dogged hopelessness of his lot finally diminishes interest he might otherwise command, there is strong allegorical appropriateness in his ultimate fate. Falling down Old Hell shaft, he is destroyed by an infernal 'black ragged chasm' in nature, left by the uncaring *Laissez-faire* industrialists and lawmakers who have plagued him from the beginning.

Stephen's is the most pathetic life in *Hard Times*, but the depiction of Mr. Gradgrind and his children Tom and Louisa is both more complex and more compelling. Through these characters Dickens examines the central theme of *Hard Times*, the impoverishment of life which results not simply from the lack of sympathy endemic to the Philosophy of Fact, but from what he believed to be its fundamental misconception of human nature. Mr. Gradgrind discovers his error by witnessing the results of his teaching for his children; his love for them comes to serve as a sadly ironic commentary on his ideas.

Fancy, Dickens insisted, was not an acquired taste, but an inalienable part of being human. For the "hands", it offers relief from the grinding drudgery of their existence; for Louisa it represents possibilities of fulfillment not catered for in her father's system. Spontaneity, freedom, release, enjoyment, fellow-feeling, contentment with one's lot-these were the values which Dickens associated with fancy, and these were the values which he held up as positive alternatives to the leaden Philosophy of Fact.

And this is where the circus comes in. With its horses, riders, acrobats and clowns, the circus existed precisely as a stimulus to the vital power of fancy. Exotic costumes and skillful tricks, exuberant energy and glittering spectacle provided pleasures which were decidedly non-utilitarian. Instead they offered an escape from the hardships and routines of daily life, and an escape into a fantasy world of glamour, excitement, and novelty. Performing to an audience, it offered shared pleasures, with no pretence of instruction or utility, but with the simple and humble purpose of providing amusement.

Sissy is the foremost representative of the circus and it is Sissy who embodies its values. It is she who accepts Mr. Gradgrind's patronage, not as he supposes, turning her back on her childhood friends, but out of loyalty to them. She proves quite impervious to his attempts at indoctrination, and yet she brings such grace and warmth to Stone Lodge that even Mr. Gradgrind, hard-headed as he prides himself on being, is forced to admit her worth. Cut off from Louisa by the latter's marriage to Mr. Bounderby. Sissy is, nevertheless there to give comfort and support when the crisis explodes. She is with Rachael when Stephen is found and vindicated; she guides Mr. Gradgrind to the ringmaster, who orchestrates Tom's rescue. Above all, unobtrusive and self-effacing though she is, it is Sissy who routs the otherwise headless Jim Harthouse. By her presence Sissy authenticates the essentially humanizing values which Dickens correlates with an ability to understand why people need circuses.

The circus represents not a practical course of action within existing society, but an alternative attitude, one to replace a widely held dogma which he believed was crushing the human spirit. Utilitarians and Political Economists, joined by evangelical Christians and Sabbatarians, denounced the very idea of leisure. However, Dickens vigorously proclaimed its necessity.

Hard Times is constructed on a series of contrasts, between fact and fancy head and heart, age and youth, work and play, and the circus is a key element in this pattern of antagonistic forces. Although the circus personages, apart from Sissy, appear only near the beginning and end of the *Hard Times*, the attitudes they represent are emphatic throughout the book. In part this is because the absence of their values is so keenly felt : not only in the poverty, monotony, and ugliness in which the Coketown hands must toil, but in the yawning emptiness in Louisa's heart.

Forty years ago F.R Leavis celebrated *Hard Times* as a "moral fable" and this view of the novel has dominated the critical response ever since.

Above all, the very method of *Hard Times* reinforces Dickens's themes. The stylized characters, theatrical scenes, and expressive prose require the reader to respond imaginatively if he or she is to understand what the author is trying to convey in this work.