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class - B. A. I
Paper - I
Topic - Charles
Dickens as a Novelist.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

In the nineteenth century novel Charles Dickens is predominant. He is the only novelist of Shakespearean stature in English literature. His success as a novelist rests on two causes — one social and the other literary. Dickens was not merely a storyteller, but a social reformer. He used fiction as a platform for his social appeals. He proved to be the type of reformer who could moralise with a smile on his lips. In most ways he is the greatest novelist that England has yet produced. He has become more than a writer wielding a pen — he has become a national institution.

On. After his preliminary sketches by Boz (1830s), he published Pickwick Papers. It is the supreme comic novel in the English language. The comedy is never superimposed, for it is the effortless expression of a comic view of life. Oliver Twist (1838) was written at the same time as Pickwick Papers.

It is a proof of Dickens' imaginative versatility. The novel deals with the underworld of London. Oliver Twist, an orphan, is ill-treated at the workhouse, and he runs away only to fall into the hands of a gang of pick-pockets and rogues acting under Fagin the Jew. The gang includes Bill Sikes and the Artful Dodger. Conditions in the workhouse under the repulsive overseer Bumble are vividly described, while the doings of Fagin and his associates give ample scope to the portrayal of criminals and villainous characters. In his next novel, Nicholas Nickleby (1838), Dickens shifts his scene to the abuses in private schools and the affairs of travelling the