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“A Study of Human Heart”: Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens

Abstract

The present paper aims at describing about the novel Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens. This is about how a girl of tender age in a family come across many problems and how she overcome all those hurdles in her life and how she saves her family which includes her father who was imprisoned for a long period for his debts and her brother and sister. By the end of the article we find her life ended happily and how she was blessed with a happy life, who helped her to solve her problems and ended her tragic life. The role played by her throughout novel to overcome her problems.

Key words: Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, problems, solve, overcome.

Introduction

Charles Dickens is remembered today as one of the greatest and most popular writers of the novel ever to have lived. Dickens captured the spirit of his age in both a profound and entertaining way. He wrote wit and humour, but he also wrote about the everyday tragedies of life he saw around him. Dickens was the greatest of English 19th century novelists but also captured the spirit of the times in which he lived. His own life and the age in which he lived were tightly intertwined, more so than with most writers.

Dickens believed in the ethical and political potential of literature, and the novel in particular, and he treated his fiction as a springboard for debates about moral and social reform. In his novels of social analysis Dickens became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions. Dickens was not the first novelist to draw attention of the reading public to the deprivation of the lower classes in England, but he was much more successful than his predecessors in exposing the ills of the industrial society including class division, poverty, bad sanitation, privilege and meritocracy and the experience of the metropolis. In common with many nineteenth-century authors, Dickens used the novel as a repository of social conscience.

Marshall sea prison is a place which stood within high walls in the London borough of Southwark. These walls encircled squalid houses which contained all manner of people all of whom shared a common fate for one reason each had the disgrace of being in debt. Rather than being granted the liberty to earn money to repay their creditors, they languished in prison. Mr. Dorrit was one such man. His complex business affairs had failed, and for the past 22 years he and his children had lived in one house within the prison. For all the 22 years of her life, the Marshall Sea was the only home little Dorrit known.

In Marshall sea prison Mr. Dorrit saw his wife die in prison, and there his children had grown up. The passing years had made this shabby, soft mannered debtor respectful figure among other prisoners, gradually earning him the title of "Father of Marshall sea." In this grand capacity Mr. Dorrit would welcome new prisoners with pomp and gravity and receive money it became traditional to pay him upon departure.

"It became a not unusual circumstance for letters to be put under his door at night, enclosing half a crown, two half –crowns, now and then at long intervals even a half –

a-sovereign, for the Father of marshalsea, and with the compliments of collegian taking leave (LD.P.80)”

Arthur settled and earned a lot of money in business and decided to return back to London where his mother stayed. In past 20 years he had been working in china with his father. He returned back and felt there was no change and development in London. He found his family in its familiar gloom and darkness. The house brought him back all painful memories. His parents believed that suffering in life would gain them forgiveness for their sins when they die. Arthur is 40 years old .he feels he became old and decided to spend rest of his life in London with his mother. But his mother was not happy for his return from china. She is confined to wheel chair. Arthur handed his mother an old fashioned watch in a heavy case. He said it was his father’s last wish to present this before he died. The watch has the letters DNF inside it. He asked his mother the meaning of it. She felt very anger and bitterness. She can neither forget nor forgive. At that movement Arthur noticed a girl for first time, a girl sitting in the shadows was employed in some needle work. She was working with his mother. The girl was very calm, she never ate the food given to her but she take to home. She worked for 12 hours; his mother has a good concern for her.

As the days passed Arthur grew increasingly curious about the girl who worked so quietly for his mother for 12 hours a day. The truth about little dorrit he came to know was that with love and devotion she worked hard to support her family. She had learned needle work from a milliner in the marshal sea prison, so she could earn money for her father.

She has secured work as a dancer for her sister Fanny and had found numerous jobs for her slovenly brother Tip. They all relied on her .They all took her for granted. Little Dorrit might have been little in body but not in spirit. This is the life to which Little Dorit returned as she fitted through the prison gaiter watched by Arthur clennam .One day he made up a story for the gate keeper, handed over a little money and was shown to Mr.Dorrit room. Little dorrit was alarmed when she opened the door to her employers son, but his eyes treated her to trust him. She introduced him to her father as a friend. Arthur invited little dorrit to walk with him outside the prison.

“Thus they emerged upon the iron bridge, which was as quite after the roaring streets, as though it had been open country. The wind blew roughly, the wet squalls came rattling past them, skimming the pools on the road and pavement, and raining them down into river. (LD.P.114)

Mean while she explained everything about her family and about her father. Arthur agreed that a man cannot be blamed simply for being poor. Arthur said that many good people are there who have fallen on misfortune through no fault of their own. Arthur expressed his wish to be a friend of Dorrit. He also asked her to tell the names of creditors so that he may try to persuade them to cancel defects Little Dorrit said thought for a moment .She said there was somebody called Barnacle .He works in circumlocution office.

Arthur mind was full of questions that night about little Dorrit, he questioned himself, why he was trying to help her. What reason could his mother have to treat Little Dorrit with unequal kindness He thought that Mr.Dorrit debts had something to do with the Arthurs business He also thought Dorrit confinement in prison and his mothers self imprisonment in her room both be part of a deal she had struck with heaven. The Circumlocution office was the main office of the British government, specialising in meetings, committees, complaining forms. It never made any decisions nor took any positive actions. It insisted to squash original ideas and dam pick independence and inventiveness. The works of thousands good people with projects that might benefit the people of Briton were lost under piles of papers in circumlocution office.

The Barnacles were a large, very important family they held all the most powerful positions in the circumlocution office just as Barnacles cling to a ship of state. If the ship sank with them clinging to it, that was the ships problem, not theirs. After 5 days of queuing and filling in forms at the circumlocution office, Arthur finally had the houer of meeting at Barnacles but the junior to Barnacles said he had not got appointment .Arthur felt very disappointed .He said to fill a another form ,send to another department ,for sign from there to other department.

Barnacle junior said about this, Arthur suggested it was not the way to do business, but the junior said, if you want you can, otherwise stop filling them. Arthur sat with his head in his hands outside the circumlocution office, wandering what to do. Next to him a soft weary voice observed, Arthur turned and saw a person who was very smartly dressed, gray haired man at his side. His name was Daniel Doyce. Arthur introduced himself about how 12 years ago; he invented something and thought he could make useful to their country. He said that he had been wasting his time and money in circumlocution office, trying to advance his invention he was the inventor, public offender and outlaw.

Arthur also introduced about himself ,he said about his work hope” bleeding heart yard”, he said it was an appropriate named for a place where peoples hopes had been crunched .Hence then Introduced his friend Mr.Pancks who was a rent collector, he introduced him to Arthur. Pancks said he has a great in rest tracking family histories. Pancks explained, he said he can find all orts of things forgotten wills, Estates that Avnet been claimed. Arthur briefly explained his business at the circumlocution office. He explained everything of Mr.Dorrit. Then Pancks promised that he will find out information.

Arthur gladly accepted Doyce offer of a job taking care of his company finances. They became very close friends. Arthur felt very happy over bleeding heart yard and spending his time with Little Dorrit. Once Little Dorrit came to his office and said that her mother’s servant Mr.Flinwinch in the shadows by the prison gate, and also another man with strange black spiny. By the time Pancks got in and introduced himself to Little Dorrit and asked to give her palm and said about her future. Arthur work in Bleeding heart yard brought him into contact with a gentleman called Mr.Meagles and his beautiful daughter Pet Meagles. Arthur remains of himself that he was 40 years old, Far too old to fall in love.

It was a very good thing for Arthur that he had resolved not to fall in love, for otherwise he would have grown to hate the handsome wealthy Mr.Gowam who would have been his rival in Pets love. against the will of her father Pet Meagles loved Mr.Gowdam, and agreed to marry him when Arthur heard of their Intended marriage .He went along for a walk by the river, carrying a bunch of roses he had intended to give to Pet as the roses were go into the river, the roses floated away on the river .Arthur went to marshal sea several times to see Little Dorrit.

“He put the roses in his breast and they walked on for a little while, slowly and silently, under the umbrageous trees. Then he asked her, in a voice of cheerful kindness, was there anything else that she would say to him as her friend and her father’s friend, many years older than herself (LD.P.398)”

But whenever he called she was too busy to see him. Once they meet each other left the confines of the prison and walked side by side. Dear Little Dorrit soothed Arthur. He asked her why she was avoiding him, did she have a secret love with anyone, and Dorrit said not at all and said she was busy.

“They were very near the end of their walk, and they now came out of the gateway to finish it. Nothing would serve Maggie but they must stop at the grocer’s window, short of their destination, for her to show her learning (LD.P.122)”

By the time Arthur and Dorrit returned to Marshalsea Mr.Pancks was waiting at the gate. He was carrying a huge file full of papers. He said to Dorrit, as good fortune Arthur feeling a Fluttered of anticipation, took Pancks to his side and spoke hurriedly. Arthur made Dorrit to sit on a stone bench and held her hands in his face and said that his father can be a free man, he had inherited great wealth. Little Dorrit felt a dizzying sensation, as thought she was been physically lifted from the scholar around her.

All the three went to Mr.Dorrit in his old gray room wearing old gray gown and black cap. Dorrit informed his father about their fortune. She said the wall was gone, and you are prosperous. Arthur explained everything about the inheritance, Mr.Dorrit demanded to see Pancks and he was happy to pay him some money. His priority was to incur that his family should be worthy of noble and dignified family name of Dorrit. All wore new clothes, they all claimed into their carriage but they not found Little Dorrit. They saw Arthur carry Dorrit in his hands, and said to them that they forgot her, when she went to change her dress she fainted away.

The Dorrit family escape from the prison was a grand occasion people cheered from the yard as the great gate opened. Anybody with sufficient wealth to be accepted by society knew of Mr.Merdle he was immensely rich and it was rumoured that every business he ever touched turned to gold, whether it be banking or building Mr.Merdle did everything that society accepted of him. Mr.Merdle was a reserved man and his wife was dissatisfied. It was to society that Mr.Dorrit and his family were now introduced .Mr.Dorrit had instructed his three children never to mention the Marshalsea. They must abandon all their previous habits of humility and present themselves as anybody’s equals. They has a son Edmund Sparker who started at fanny in admiration from the movement he saw her. Mrs.merdle was keen to encourage this relationship with such a fine family. Within weeks arrangements had been made for Mrs.Merdle and her son to join the Dorrit family on a grand tour of the Alps and Italy.

A few weeks later Arthur received a letter from Dorrit and come to know about her sister marriage and about her. Arthur feels as he missed Little Dorrit terribly. Daniel Doyce had finally decided to his invitation to Russia, when he was meeting with great success. He

had left Arthur in a charge of the business in Bleeding Heart Yard. Doyce feels he had perfect confidence in Arthurs ability .He suggested him not to make risky investment. Arthur shared his partner's opinion. He says he had seen men lost all their money by making unsafe investments. Arthur said his mother about the Dorrits family change of fortune, then his mother felt happy and said to herself that she did nothing harm to her and felt relived.

Pancks suggested Arthur to invest Doyce money in Merdles and it would be as safe as house. He believed and investment in merdles so Doyce's property would double. Mr.Dorrit felt to accompany Fanny and Edmund back to London for their wedding. During the long journey back to Italy Mr.Dorrit felt ill and tired. He experienced a strange yearning for his former life in Marshalsea, yearning which made his heart ache .After they have arrived in Italy, Little Dorrit noticed the change in her father. He looked shrunken and old, ate little and asleep often.

A few days later some friends held a dinner to welcome the traveller back from London. In the dinner some of other guest insulted him as Ladies and gentleman, welcome to Marshal Sea both the father and daughter were pale and felt ashamed. As he wasted away next few days. Finally his spirit broke free of all earthly Concerns, Little Dorrit wept bitterly or her father death. Week later Arthur came to know about two news and shock, His head in his hand. One is that he got letter from Little Dorrit about her father death, and other his very bad news about Mr.Merdle had slit his wrist with penknife and was the news in morning news paper.

Arthur had gone against Doyce advice and invested Doyce money in Mr.Merdle business; he wept with regret and felt he had ruined his father. Arthur however was not so fortunate taking solely responsibility for Doyce new debts, he allowed himself to lead into the Marshal sea. He was placed and looked into Mr.Dorrits old room. He felt lonely and sighed for Little Dorrit days passed and Arthurs health and spirit sank under the weight that bore down on him .He was sure that he would die there, because it was so difficult to breathe .He slipped slowly into a fever a week later when he opened his life, there was a vases full of roses and in the corner, he found Little Dorrit knitting in the corner of the room, he was shocked to see her there. Her father hasn't invested everything in Merdle, she was poor again but she was not ruined, and was happier than before.

“I have nothing in the world. I am as poor as when I lived here. When papa came over to England, he confided everything he had to the same hands, and it is all swept away O, my dearest and best, are you quite sure you will not share my fortune with me now? (LD.P.976)”

Mrs.Clennem collected a legal document from her desk and moves out of her house and went to Dorrit and said she must explain herself to her and said she done a great wrong to her. She said by a complex maze of business intrigue and wills, little Dorrit was left with money and said she had kept it from her. She said that she had to restore it before she dies and asked Dorrit to forgive. She took the legal document from her bag and handed over to Dorrit, she read and forgave her.

By the time Dorrit reaches the prison Mr.Doyce was in Arthur room and they were in discussion about debts and Doyce excused Arthur and said Arthur you will have a new and prosperous career .Little Dorrit threw the document into the flames and never revealed to Arthur about the will. Arthur was released and both went too directly from Marshal Sea to the church where together they took their first step towards a modest useful and happy life.

“They all gave place when the singing was done and little Dorrit and her husband walked out of the church alone. They paused for a moment on the steps of the Portico, looking at the fresh perspective of the street in the autumn morning suns bright rays, and then went down (LD.P.986)”

From that day onwards they felt forever blessed as they followed life path together sunshine and shade, and lived very happily.

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