

THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

The revolt against Classical Movement became visible in 1726, when James Thomson published the first part of 'The Seasons'. The poem was different both in matter and manner from any writing during the previous hundred years. The followers of Dryden and Pope abused the classical method of writing. They felt that art degenerated into artifice. The Spenserian stanza was used after an interval of two centuries. Collins and Gray continued the movement though the classical spirit was strong in both the authors. Goldsmith and Burns, along with Cowper and Crabbe and more revolutionary Blake, are in real sense 'Transition Poets'.

In 1798 the publication of 'Lyrical Ballads' of Wordsworth and Coleridge made a cleavage between the two movements. This work was one of the landmarks of English Literature.

Characteristics of the Romantic Revival:

a) A Reaction against Rule and Custom:

Victor Hugo terms Romanticism as "liberalism in literature". It insists upon spontaneity and the

principle that every man has the right to write in his own thought in his own way. The classical literature has a general impression of sameness, as if their poems were made by the same machine. But the romantic writers have endless variety. Individualism was the keynote of the new movement. It derived much inspiration from Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. It was in most respects a revival and not an innovation.

b)Return to Nature and the Simple Life:

The Romantic writers wrote about simple, natural, country life. Before them the Augustans too were influenced by the natural beauty but their formal method of writing conveyed no sense of rural life. Wordsworth and his friends tried to write in ordinary language about the real life and people of the countryside. Their characters were the plain people of the farm and the village. Their poems were about their lives and labours.

The poets of the Lake School-Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and their followers achieved most moving effects by the use of simplest language. They primarily

aimed that 'a selection of language really used by men'.

c) Variety and Individuality:

The Romantics were entirely individual. The work of every poet is different from that of another. They might choose identical subjects but the approach and the technique would be wholly different in each case. They favoured subjectivity and emotionalism, impulse, colour rather than line, and the free play of imagination over a limitless variety of subject. The Augustans were always similar but the romantics were entirely individual.

d)The Return of the Lyric:

During the Romantic Movement the poetry once more became musical, non-intellectual, sensuous and impassioned. This free expression of feeling demanded a lyrical mode of expression. Shelley gave a new scope, richness and fervor to the lyrical verse. The Romantics of Europe and England were the lyrists of the first order. This quality kept it fresh and alive, despite all changes in taste and outlook.

e) Interest in the Middle Ages:

The Romantics were fascinated by medieval life and legend. The art and culture of Middle Ages, their primitive morality, made an appeal to the feeling for the picturesque writing. As a result the Ballad form came back. The later poets turned towards remote place and time and took inspiration from the 'gorgeous East'.