

## PREFACE

The present thesis is a modest attempt to call attention to a comparatively unexplored aspect of Dickens as an artist. A celebrity as a novelist even in his life time Dickens's reputation as a novelist has grown ever since. In range and sweep in depth and understanding the fictive world of Dickens is almost matchless.

It is natural therefore that Dickens's venture as a dramatist has been completely ignored. He wrote just six plays out of which two are collaborative authorship - one with Mark Lemon and the other with Wilkie Collins. These six plays incidentally are spread over a period of thirty years (1836 - 1867) and this shows that Dickens never really completely lost interest in drama. His first play was written when he had already achieved success as a novelist and, after that last play he had practically written nothing of significance. A close look at these plays provides a new dimension to Dickens's genius, and it would not be wrong to say that even as a dramatist Dickens is quite in his elements. Theatre was possibly in his blood.

In our critical survey of the plays we have examined them chronologically, in the following pattern :

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

STORY OUTLINE

CHARACTERS (In order of appearance)

HUMOUR

CRITICAL ESTIMATE

Dickens may not be a great dramatist but his achievement as a dramatist, even when judged on the basis of these plays seems to be quite commendable. We feel that the plays constitute a significant, though minor, tributary to Dickens's Creative genius and present Dickens in a new light.

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