

for their courage; sympathy for their weakness; compassion for their human freedom at the hands of others. That is why, The Queer and White Devil are ranked second to Shakespearean tragedies on the Jacobean stage.

(8)

Hard Times — title

~~Seventh~~ Paper (2nd) 7th

Charles Dickens is from first to last a novelist with a purpose — nay, with a mission. He is in the words of E. H. Baker "the true chronicler of the Victorian Age." In Hard Times (1854) he chronicles the ills and evils of Victorian Utilitarianism that plague different institutions be it education, factories or courts (or so called charity homes). The very title of the novel shows that Dickens is here concerned with the average life of his time. Most of the twenty-five possible titles for Hard Times and the fourteen he short-listed suggest the theme of human life ground down by calculation and routine: for example, 'According to Cocker', 'Prove It', 'Hard Times', 'Hard Heads and Soft Hearts', 'A Mere Question of Figures'.

'Hard times' is a vernacular phrase common in folk songs especially between 1830 - 1855.

'Hard times' (or 'tickle times', 'weary times', 'bad times') usually meant a period when scarcity food and low wages or unemployment bore particularly hard. Much less often it could mean the more pervasive state in which people felt that the essential and permanent conditions of their lives hemmed them in ineluctably as in the refrain of a song from the mill of South Carolina around 1890:

✕ Every morning just at five,
Gotta get up, dead or alive,
It's hard times in the mill, my love,
Hard times in the mill.

Every morning just at six,
Don't that old bell make you sick?
It's hard times in the mill, my love

And it seems Dickens emphasizes the latter ^{morning} ~~evening~~.

Dickens seizes this popular phrase and uses it for a novel which is not about a time of ^{economic} special neediness but rather about a kind of "bondage to routine and calculation", as Marxist critic David Craig comments.

The very opening lines of the novel uttered by Thomas Gradgrind strike the keynote: "Now, WHAT I WANT is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life."

emotions, 'Fancy' which have no practical utility would be replaced by 'facts', which can aid in economic life. Denying the value of 'fancy', Gradgrind annihilates 'the flowers of existence', reducing Sissy Jupe to 'girl number twenty'. Likewise ^{workers} in the factory are called 'hands'. ^{children are "little wheels"} In the world of Josiah Boundersby and Gradgrind ~~human~~ man is reduced to number only. To them life is merely an economic transaction: every inch of the existence of mankind from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. Consequently life loses its charm. Coketown and its inhabitants have lost their uniqueness. Everywhere there is a feeling of repetitiveness, monotony and drudgery.
_{repetitiveness}

It (Coketown) contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who ~~will~~ went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom everyday was the same as yesterday, and tomorrow and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

The repeated use of the word "same" and the phrase "like one another" reveals both the monotony of Coketown and the drudgery of its inhabitants. And no doubt 'monotony' is produced from the 'bondage to routine and calculation'. Here life is lifeless.

That the monotony has a tremendous impact on the ~~the~~ inhabitants of Coketown is

the shackles of industrialization.

The title of the novel ^{emphasizes} consideration of
apt from another viewpoint. According to M. L. Clay, the
novel is not seriously concerned with Trade Union
matters, conditions of work, standards of living. The
title inevitably suggests the humanness of humanity.
Humanitarian as Dickens is, he thinks in terms of
people, not in terms of systems. We must ask ourselves
'What makes times hard?' Man's inhumanity
to man, is the right answer. We are told that
Stephen snatches a quick bite of 'bread' but a little
bread' when his employer enjoys 'sherry and
Bourbon' is hard on Stephen - hard in spirit, not
hard as a taskmaster. The workers and their leaders
like Slackbridge are hard on him. Tom was
hard on him, all in promotion of self-interest.
To fulfill Dickens' plan Stephen's death is necessary.
He finds a serious spiritual flaw in the
Utilitarian attitude to life. Last but not the
least the hardness of heads makes times 'hard'.
Turn the title in apposite.

evident in the moral lapse of Tom and Louisa
and in the utter destruction of Stephen Blackpool,
having no outlet for Louisa's emotional life except
her love for her brother, she lives for him and marries
at the command of her eminently practical father, the
aggressively utilitarian Bounderby, the 'self-made humbug',
'banker, merchant, manufacturer' - for Tom's sake
('what does it matter'). She wants to be pleasant
and useful to Tom. Then by restrictions and starvation
of the Gradgrind regime, she lives a loveless, emotionless
conjugal life. And it is natural for her to ~~not~~
be ^{allured by} ~~attracted by~~ ^{the popular tale} ~~the popular tale~~ like ~~James~~ ^{James} ~~Harthouse~~ ^{Harthouse}. As for Tom,
the regime has made him a bored and sullen
whelp and 'he was becoming that not unprecedented
triumph of calculation which is usually at work
on number one' - the utilitarian philosophy
has done that for him. He declares that when he
goes to live with Bounderby as having a post in
the bank, 'he'll have his revenge' - 'I mean,
I'll enjoy myself a little, and go about and see
something, I'll recompense myself for the way
in which I've been brought up.' His descent
into debt and bank-robbery is natural. In the
concluding chapter of Book Two justifiably entitled
'Down', Louisa realizes that she has been crushed,
her 'better angel' into a demon, and now her
father's 'philosophy' and 'teachings' will not
'save' her. Now it is really 'hard times' for
Gradgrind to find out a solution to the problems
of his children. The other victims of Utilitarianism
are Stephen and Rachael who could not escape
'a woman of pensive beauty'.