

CHAPTER IV

Conclusion..

CONCLUSION

Bret Harte, was the first American writer who used the early western mining settlements, the colourful lives of the immigrants, early ranchers, and frontier women in his short stories. And thus he found the most perennially popular type of American reading-- "the Western". His stories are not only the first, but among the finest "westerns" for the reason that he actually lived during the colourful era of the early west. There has not been any kind of guessing in the description of this life in his stories. Harte first introduced the colour and excitement of the early west in his works. The early stories of Harte are not only among his best work, but they are notable historically, as the original character studies of the soon to be passing world of the mining camps, of gentlemanly gamblers, and of lucky strickers. It was a very special world, the gold rush world, with ways of living, thinking, feeling and acting so particularly of its own that there has never been anything quite like it anywhere.

If we read the short stories by Harte, we notice such a good many other important aspects in them as the fact that Tennessee's Partner doesn't pine away simply because Tennessee is gone, but also because he considers himself to be guilty for Tennessee's death; or the fact that it was not really a snow storm that trapped the Outcasts, but it was the crudeness of the social justice which ruled at the time. The literary gold that Harte mined

for stories was the picturesqueness of the life in the mining camps. His varied experience as an itinerant gold miner, school master, journalist and printer provided him with the material for his sketches and stories by which he gained wide reputation. He dealt with many countries and communities in his stories and often his accuracy in the portrayal of California is evaluated by considering such elements as the characters he portrayed, the situations and events he described and the general atmosphere he created, as well as the actual physical appearance of the land. He is regarded as one of the major short story writers of his generation to capture the complex spirit of the changing geo-cultural reality.

Harte was initially an optimist and an uplifter. He believed in inherent goodness of man and in the possibility of redemption for every sinner. For him the redemption or salvation was to be gained at the cost of death. And he saw human life as the purgatory for the human soul, where it was to be tried and achieved its ultimate goal - salvation. Again, this final ending is for Harte, a selfless act of devotion on the part of the heroes. Thus, redemption was an act of selfless heroism, of love and devotion. Harte uplifts his heroes through these acts from the petty world of self interest. The characters, thus become people of real feelings. The men who are supposed to be villains are Harte's heroes -- a moment of brightness in the lives of these heroes or a deed of sacrifice atones for a life of wickedness. There are many evidences

in his stories in every paragraph and sometimes in every sentence, of a colourful and significant era now past - its languages, dress, means of travel, and its attitudes toward life. The reviewers and critics of his stories praised Harte's combination of human responsibility and the operations of blind Fate. Harte's moral themes demonstrating the natural goodness brought out by circumstances in the roughest and most hardened hearted people, were praised. The critics considered Harte's stories as new as his themes, scenes and people. It was remarkably clear, simple and economical according to them. It was quietly controlled, precise and suggestive in its descriptive passages. The accuracy of his portrayal of California gold rush life has been taken as a new realism.

Unquestionably, the influence of Harte upon the American short story has been greater. The influence is far greater than the quality of his work that has given him the centre of the stage. He began to write when the imagination of the whole world had been caught by California gold era and the field had been untouched. Thus his material was timely to the moment. Harte has been credited with creating the local colour story in American fiction and despite the passing of time, his fictional world is as existing to-day as it was when he created it.