

CHAPTER III

SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

A. Flaubert's life and his works

Gustave Flaubert was born in December 12nd, 1821. He was the fourth son of a chief surgeon at Hotel Dieu Hospital in Rouen; while his mother was a daughter of a doctor in Pont-l'Eveque. He was educated at the College de Rouen and studied law against his will in Paris (1841) without any interest and success. He lived at the countryhouse at Croisset, near Rouen.

Since his family lived in a house on the hospital grounds in Rouen, he had many knowledge of scientific terms and ideas. While he was in Paris studying law, he made many new relationship and got entangled in literary matter. His talent for writing was encouraged by this situation.

Once, in 1844 he got a nervous attack - it was assumed as epilepsy - that made him to have his recovery by moving to the family's new home in Le Croisset, a suburb of Rouen. For the reason of health, he took this opportunity to give up law and most of his life time was now spent at Le Croisset where he lived peacefully and dedicated himself to the work of literature. Due to this illness, he was characterised to be a pessimist; was also full of hatred towards the middle-class society that so-called bourgeoisie society as the result of his experience to have his childhood in Rouen

bourgeoisie.

Flaubert had few close friends, but there were two women in his life that had a deep reflection inside his personality. The first was Elisa Schlessinger, a married older woman whom he met at Trouville when he was still fifteen and Elisa was twenty-six years old. He adored her, then she became the object of platonic and idealised affection. The second was a poetess, Louise Colet, who became his mistress between 1846 and 1854. They were rarely met; their relationship mainly existed in their letters. As many other things in his life, Flaubert was annoyed to accept that the reality of Louise was different from Louise that lived in his imagination. As the result, he usually preferred a solitary life at Le Croisset to catch other things that he thought it could fulfill his ideals. He kept searching the romantic love and desperately wanted to escape from bourgeoisie boredom. It was not far from the main character in his Madame Bovary. Flaubert's unhappiness and loneliness is best expressed by his famous statement, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi !".

In 1845 - 1850 he travelled in Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and Greece. The journeys had brought many inspirations for him. After his return, he settled down to the writing of Madame Bovary (1857) which took him full five years. Madame Bovary was a novel with great popular success; but there was an attempt to suppress it, and a lawsuit fell on him, charging the author with the immorality of public morals and religion. There was a scene that

is considered by the public prosecutor as pornographic. The defending counsel pleaded that the scene was necessary, and he insisted that the moral value was good because Emma Bovary suffered from the adultery she committed. Fortunately, at the same year he was acquitted of this charge. The rest of his life was uneventful. Although Flaubert was famous as a writer within his own life time, he was not financially successful (he made only 500 francs for the first five years sales of Madame Bovary). He was also hurt by the misunderstanding of his critics and readers. In 1887 he made a trip to the site of ancient Carthage in North Africa to prepare his writing, *Salamambo* (1862), a historical novel about the war between Rome and Carthage. In 1869 he wrote a novel which dealt with the theme of frustrations of the middle-class life and human aspirations entitled *Sentimental Education*; a rich and series of religious tableaux. Then he wrote *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* in 1874. Flaubert published *Three Tales* in 1877. It contains the beautiful short stories, *A Simple Heart*, *The Legend of Saint Julian Hospitator*, and *Herodias*. *A Simple Heart* has the same setting of Norman countryside and the same theme of disillusionment; it treats the life of a humble person with complete objectivity, concrete imagination, and clear in every details. These famous stories are the masterpiece of short fiction and concluded in his finest works. Unfortunately, his play, *The Candidate* failed after a few performance in 1874. His last novel, *Bouvard and Pechuchet* was left unfinished on

his death; it was published in 1881.

French novel reached a high level of development for Flaubert was one of the most important European writers of the 19th century, especially from the realism he delivered in his literary writing. Flaubert combined a feeling for romantic ideals and the objective outlook and the principles of realism to create a novel which has become a monument and trend-setter for other writers.

B. Flaubert's Realism

After the great wave of the international romantic movement had spent its force in the beginning of the 19th century, European literature, included France, moved in the direction of what is usually called *realism*. Flaubert was one of the trend-setter of realism in French, especially for his famous, Madame Bovary.

Flaubert was at once a realist and romantic. As a romantic, he hated reality and forced himself to escape from it. As a realist, he wanted to show to all the imbecility of the bourgeoisie. Madame Bovary is considered as one of the finest "realistic novel" for its unadorned, unromantic portrayal of daily life. The term of realism in literature must be understood in a way that one gets a view of the real world as seen through the eyes of the author.

Flaubert's realism lies in his capability in which he was able to capture the

dullness of the bourgeoisie society - in which he actually lived - without making his novel dull. Flaubert was intent that every aspect of his novel would ring true to life. He visited the places which he wrote about to make sure that his descriptions were accurate. The Prefect's speech at the agriculture show that he had written in Madame Bovary was precisely the same with the speeches that actually given by a district prefect, a moment after the publication of Madame Bovary; both speeches were full of clichés and boring.

At first sight, Madame Bovary is the description of the daily life in the French province of Normandy about the middle of the 19th century. Everything is told objectively. The author hides his feelings behind his personages. All the concern falls on Emma Bovary, as we follow the story of her romantic dreams, longings, and despair. Everything is written with accuracy of observation, and many details. Another example of the best Flaubert's realistic description was in Homais. He was able to select enough details to suggest how boring Homais' conversation is without telling the readers exactly that Homais' conversation is boring. Whatever it is, Flaubert's realism has placed him as one of the best of the best writers in the world.