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CHARLES DICKENS AND THE SELF-MADE MAN

by

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INTRODUCTION

In our generation there has emerged in literary criticism a coming-together of traditionally separate disciplines: aesthetics, history, psychology, sociology, economics, biography, have merged to create striking literary studies. Of course, no really first-rate literary criticism ever excluded what used to be called "the life and times" of the author whose work was under examination (the contributions of the new critics notwithstanding); and no really good literary biography ever existed which ignored aesthetics and history, trafficking only in gossip. But the merging in various degrees of these diverse areas of thought--according to the predilections and sensitivities of the critic--has given a remarkable texture and depth to literary studies. Steven Marcus, Fern Brodie, Edmund Wilson, Humphry House are four eminent critics whose works possess different emphases, yet who all employ a multi-faceted approach to their material. All have made contributions to Victorian studies; perhaps more significant are their contributions to method.

This is not to say that intelligent biography or criticism are new, or that only modern criticism and biography is useful. Indeed, it is wise to resist the kind of modern criticism that rejects the obvious truths in favor of only those truths revealed by ambivalence, self-division. But the critics whose works all interest me seem to ask the same questions about a writer, however different their approach to answering the questions may be. And they seem to me the questions one ought to ask about a serious writer: What interests him most? How do we know? How are his interests--ideas, emotions--expressed overtly? Are they revealed covertly? Do these expressions differ?

Sometimes the intensity with which an author holds an idea is expressed by an entire work of art, a cri de coeur like Oliver Twist. Sometimes the answer can be found in the very lack of success of parts of an otherwise expert work, such as the portrait of the Cheerybles in Nicholas Nickleby. Sometimes, as in Barnaby Rudge, we encounter characters whose behavior displays an ambivalence on the part of their creator toward them. The uneasiness readers feel reading Barnaby Rudge is a direct reflection of Dickens's unresolved relationship toward his parents--his father in particular. The break with two publishers--Macrone and Bentley--was precipitated by Dickens's reluctance

to write Rudge. Perhaps it was not only the "tyranny" of these men, as Dickens claimed, that made him so unwilling to work on this particular manuscript, but also his discomfort at having to deal so directly and realistically with the father-son theme. Hence the strange emphases, the shifting sympathies, the lack of resolution in this novel, and the residual uneasiness that always remains with its readers.

The interesting question of what ideas and emotions are in the poet's mind, revealed by statements subtle and overt, can be pursued fruitfully by following one idea through the body of his work. If this idea manages to incorporate the author's interest in society with his revelations about himself, and in turn reflects changes in society and himself, this idea seems well worth examining.

Such an idea is that of "the self-made man." That such a figure should proliferate in Dickens's work is not surprising. He was acquainted with many such men through his philanthropic endeavors. He had only to look around him to see many more: Victorian England produced them as they produced Victorian England. The Victorian ethos supported, encouraged, indeed demanded them: you owed it to yourself--a characteristic turn of phrase of Samuel Smiles--to get ahead. The nation's progress was to be mirrored by

the individual's.

All this is clear enough. But examining the self-made men who are present in Dickens's novels we find a contradictory series of figures. We are given a clue as to how sharp a burr the concept of self-made success was in Dickens's psyche by the existence of such varied handling. At times these characters are sickeningly and unconvincingly sweet; at times, extremely ugly. Consider the Cheerybles; consider Josiah Bounderby. They often exhibit an emphasis inappropriate to their frameworks.

Why such men should evoke such equivocal responses in Dickens is not hard to see. He has been called "a kind of capitalist himself." In Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, Steven Marcus asserts that "Dickens remains the pre-eminent novelist of the nineteenth century capitalism and of the epoch which saw its greatest triumph and prosperity. Being its chief novelist he was inevitably one of its chief critics."[1]

Strictly speaking, of course, Dickens was no capitalist. He was an artist, earning money by his own labor. When he was involved with journals, he was a working editor, novelist--even perhaps "business man"--but not a capitalist. Yet he was successful and self-made in a way that was peculiar to nineteenth century England.

My comments will have validity if we can see that Dickens's preoccupation with these self-made men reflects his interest in the world of commerce, and that this interest piqued and intrigued and in the end baffled him because he was unable to reconcile the "capitalist" that existed within him with those who existed outside. It is the juncture of the internal and external landscapes that provides the material for this study.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (New York, 1964), pp. 323-324.

CHAPTER I

DICKENS AS A SELF-MADE MAN

When one investigates Dickens as a critic of the self-made man, it soon becomes evident that one must consider him as "self-made." Shedding light on Dickens will shed light on his creations. This chapter will deal with Dickens as a self-made man. Although in Hard Times Dickens was to scoff at the absurdity of the notion of "the self-made man," the phrase can be applied to him as much as to anyone. To begin with, he was self-made in the most obvious sense: nobody helped him. A poignant phrase from the fragment of autobiography he gave to Forster reads, "No advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support, from anyone that I can call to mind, so help me God."[1] Everyone is now familiar with this document, outlining his father's misfortunes and dwelling on his own childhood miseries: his desolation when his family was in the Marshalsea, his sense of abandonment, isolation and shame when he was consigned to the blacking warehouse. Even twenty-five years later, his self-pity and bitterness of

tone--indicating his inability to dissociate himself from the events--are particularly marked when he relates how alone he was, how helpless and hopeless. His resentment that his parents saw no reason to be dissatisfied with this arrangement was to remain with him throughout his life.

> It is wonderful to me, how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me, that . . . no one had compassion enough on me--a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally--to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. . . . My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so, if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar-school, and going to Cambridge.[2]

Edmund Wilson was not the first to indicate how powerful an influence this experience was to be on Dickens. Dickens himself, Forster tells us, was keenly aware what an actuating force these circumstances were on the rest of his life. As with anyone, his circumstances helped make him. But <u>how</u> they affected him is most significant: he early knew that he had only himself to rely upon.

> What at once he brought out of the humiliation that had impressed him so deeply . . . was a natural dread of the hardships that might still be in store for him, . . . and this . . . became by degrees a passionate resolve. . . . not to be what circumstances were conspiring to make him. . . . He had derived great good from them but not without alloy. The fixed and eager determination, the restless and resistless

> energy, which opened to him opportunities of escape from many mean environments . . . brought with it some disadvantage among many noble advantages. . . . A too great confidence in himself, a sense that everything was possible to the will that would make it so, laid occasionally upon him self-imposed burdens. . . . In that direction there was in him, at such times, something even hard and aggressive; in his determinations a something that had almost the tone of fierceness; something in his nature that made his resolves insuperable, however hasty the opinions on which they had been formed. . . . when I have seen strangely present, at such chance intervals, a stern and even cold isolation of self-reliance side by side with a susceptivity almost feminine and the most eager craving for sympathy, it has seemed to me as though his habitual impulses for everything kind and gentle had sunk, for the time, under a sudden hard and inexorable sense of what Fate had dealt to him in those early years.[3]

"A sense that everything is possible to the will that would make it so--": this is the quality that we find in so many of Dickens's dealings. His contemporaries upon meeting him were often struck by the same characteristic. Forster records his own memory of "the eager, restless, energetic outlook on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books, and so much of a man of action and business in the world."[4] He reports Jane Carlyle observing of it, "'It was as if made of steel.'" And Leigh Hunt wrote to Forster, the morning after Forster had introduced them, "'What a face is his to meet in a drawing-room! It has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings.'" Forster adds, "In such sayings are expressed not

alone the restless and resistless vivacity and force of which I have spoken, but that also which lay beneath them of steadiness and hard endurance."[5]

For by the time Dickens and Forster became acquainted, the die was already cast. The blacking warehouse was behind him. By dint of his own efforts, he had become a shorthand reporter--an outstandingly proficient one. He had been frustrated in his love for Maria Beadnell. And although he had successfully won Catherine Hogarth's hand, his tone to her, judging by the letters, is significantly different from that to Miss Beadnell. There is an unmistakeable note of command behind his playful words. He is no longer the vulnerable youth courting his first love; he will not permit himself to be so open to pain again. In this relationship he intends to dominate. When he met Forster, he and Catherine had been married for only a year, but Sketches by Boz was behind him, and Pickwick Papers was just appearing.

In every area of his life, one can observe his reliance upon the ability of his will to conquer all obstacles. His industry and application alone were remarkable. As early as 1836 he was writing, monthly, both the first half of Oliver Twist and the second half of Pickwick Papers. Steven Marcus remarks that this may be one of the few instances in literary history in which a second book can have

influenced a first.[6]

His discipline was notable. Writing a certain number of pages each month required great self-control as well as enormous craft, but even more remarkable was his later success in raising the dipping sales of Master Humphrey's Clock by hastily revising his entire notion for The Old Curiosity Shop, and working it out in small, cramped, weekly installments.

After Dickens severed his relations with the Morning Chronicle he was installed as editor of the newly formed Bentley's Miscellany. To the task of editorship Dickens brought all of his formidable energies. He rounded up contributors. He wrote the "Answers to Correspondents." He wrote individually to rejected authors explaining why their manuscripts were unacceptable. Bentley's, like most contemporary journals, ran its material anonymously, and Dickens wrote a large portion of the material published. What he did not write, he frequently oversaw, rewrote, or collaborated on. In addition to writing and editing, he appears to have handled some aspects of the business end. And at the same time he was writing Oliver Twist for publication therein.

In later years--for Bentley's was the first of a line of publications that Dickens was to edit--his control

became even tighter, his involvement with every aspect of publication greater. In reference to Household Words, established in 1850, Edgar Johnson remarks, "Dickens maintained a vigorous, a dictatorial control over every detail. . . . His hand was everywhere, supplying titles, criticising stories, eliminating fuzzy or pretentious verbiage, rewriting passages and injecting color, tightening structure, sharpening clarity, cutting out dull patches."[7]

Again, Johnson comments,

> His vigilance never slackened. He read, rejected, accepted, rewrote. Though none of the articles were signed, the signature of his style was so obvious that readers often imagined the entire magazine [Household Words] to be written by Dickens. (Sometimes, in fact, they were not far from the truth. . . .)[8]

The work pattern of his life was thus early established. He was often "not even by a week in advance of the printer."[9] "The prodigal and even reckless energy with which Dickens kept both of these novels [Pickwick and Oliver] running concurrently, sometimes barely a week ahead of the printer, was already arousing amazement and doubts of his ability to keep it up."[10] And before Oliver was half finished, he began his third novel. "His days hummed with the electric energy of a dynamo."[11] One sees this work-pattern throughout his life: in 1857, for example, he writes to Forster, "Too late to say, put the curb on and don't

rush at hills--the wrong man to say it to. I have no relief but in action. I am become incapable of rest."[12]

Dickens had stormy relations with various of his illustrators, beginning with the tragic affair of the Pickwick Papers artist. With Hablot Knight Browne--"Phiz," as he signed himself--Dickens worked harmoniously for many years. J.W.T. Ley, in The Dickens Circle, conjectures why:

> From Dickens's standpoint, Phiz was ideal. . . . he was, as one of his biographers put it, "a marvel of pliability"; he was "amenable to discipline," so to speak. It was sufficient for Dickens to say, "I want this one done in such-and-such a way"; he could rely upon it being done so. I fancy the relations between Dickens and Browne, as author and illustrator, resembled those of superior and subordinate. If Browne had been a man of very strong individuality I doubt if he would have illustrated Dickens for twenty-three years. In effect, he was content to receive instructions from the novelist and do his best to give satisfaction.[13]

The tenacity of Dickens's will is nowhere more clearly seen than in his relations with his various publishers. That an author should argue about money with his publishers is not unusual, and that this author had a healthy respect for the good things money could buy is well-known. Dickens's conflicts with his publishers, however, reflect not only the ordinary wish for more money but a fierce determination that no one should ever get the better of him, that he should get what he considered his due.

The barest outline of some of these complicated proceedings must suffice. In May, 1836, Dickens made an agreement with John Macrone to write a novel, tentatively called Gabriel Vardon, later called Barnaby Rudge. He happily agreed to the sum of £200 for the proposed 3 volume work. But when Dickens contracted with Bentley in November to become editor of Bentley's Miscellany they determined between them that Oliver Twist was to appear in it almost at the outset of publication. And following Oliver's monthly appearance, the Miscellany was to run Barnaby Rudge. Dickens appears to have believed that Macrone understood and concurred in these alterations, but Macrone was furious, and a relationship that had been a genuinely friendly one, extending to the two families, deteriorated and was soon severed.

With Richard Bentley Dickens was at first on the best of terms. After Oliver, Rudge was to appear--the copyright of which Dickens was now selling for £500. As he reminded Bentley, "Recollect you are dealing with an author not quite unknown, but who, so far as he has gone, has been most successful."[14]

But at the very time that these arrangements were being hammered out, Pickwick Papers was being printed (by Chapman and Hall, by the way), and each month saw an astounding, spectacular increase in sales, in popularity, in

adulation of the young writer. As his worth rose, Dickens felt more and more that he had been caught in a trap. He had, in fact, caught himself: his own terms had been pretty much acceded to, first by Macrone and then by Bentley. Dickens's own dear friend, the actor Macready, conceived the issue this way: "He makes a contract which he considers advantageous at the time, but subsequently finding his talents more lucrative than he had supposed, he refuses to fulfil the contract."[15]

Macready's understanding of the matter was quite accurate, as far as it went, but, put another way, Dickens surely had a legitimate if not a legal grievance. Bentley had acquired him when his work was rising meteorically in value, each Pickwick number commanding a wider audience than the previous one. But naturally, contracts are made far in advance of publication of the work in question, and Dickens's recompense for Oliver Twist and Barnaby Rudge was to lag far behind what he ought to have commanded. What is more, his recompense was to lag far behind that of his publisher. This made Dickens chafe. In Chapter 14 of Oliver Twist, composed in August 1837, when relations with Bentley were particularly strained and new negotiations were pending, we find this passage:

> "How should you like to grow up a clever man, and write books?" said the old gentleman.
>
> "I think I would rather read them, Sir," replied Oliver.
>
> "What! Wouldn't you like to be a book-writer?" said the old gentleman.
>
> Oliver considered a little while, and at last said he should think it would be a much better thing to be a bookseller; upon which the old gentleman laughed heartily, and declared he had said a very good thing, which Oliver felt glad to have done, though he by no means knew what it was.[16]

As Oliver appeared each month in Bentley's Miscellany, Dickens sense of injury increased. His tensions were aggravated by the fact that he had characteristically over-extended himself, overrating even his terrific energies and powers of application: "My month's work has been dreadful," he wrote to Harrison Ainsworth, "Grimaldi [an editing task he was doing for Bentley], the anonymous book for Chapman and Hall [to whom he had been bound through Pickwick; the book was Sketches of a Young Gentleman], Oliver and the Miscellany. They are all done, thank God, and I start on my pilgrimage to the cheap schools of Yorkshire (a mighty secret of course) next Monday Morning."[17]

His relations with Bentley were further complicated by the position he retained as editor of Bentley's magazine. Questions of final authority were bound to arise with a man as stubborn as Bentley and another as determinedly independent as Dickens. In whose jurisdiction lay the final say, the

absolute editorial control? The problem was a continual cause of contention. In the '50s, when Dickens established Household Words for Bradbury and Evans, he was doubtless remembering his frictions with Bentley and other owners and publishers with whom he had been involved; he designated himself not only editor (at £500 per annum) but half-owner as well. By giving Forster 1/8 share of ownership, he gave himself unequivocal control--what he always craved.

Unquestionably, however, Dickens primarily felt aggrieved that he had made an agreement when he was "worth" less, and that his publisher and not he was realizing immense profits, and would continue to do so. For Barnaby Rudge, Dickens's agreement was to have brought him £800 in all, £40 less than he had received for Oliver Twist. So in a letter to John Forster, 21 January 1839, in reference to Barnaby Rudge, Dickens writes,

> It is no fiction to say that at present I cannot write this tale. The immense profits which Oliver has realized to its publisher, and is still realising; the paltry, wretched, miserable sum it brought to me (not equal to what is every day paid for a novel that sells fifteen hundred copies at most); the recollection of this, and the consciousness that I have still the slavery and drudgery of another work at the same journeyman terms; the consciousness that my books are enriching everybody but myself, and that I, with such popularity as I have acquired, am struggling in old toils, and wasting my energies in the very height and freshness of my fame and the best part of my life, to fill the pockets of others, while for those who are

> nearest and dearest to me I can realise little more than a genteel subsistence: all this puts me out of heart and spirits: and I cannot--cannot and will not--under such circumstances that keep me down with an iron hand, distress myself by beginning this tale until I have had some time to breathe. . . . There--for six months Barnaby Rudge stands over. And but for you, it should stand over altogether. For I do most solemnly declare that morally, before God and man, I hold myself released from such hard bargains as these, after I have done so much for those who drove them. . . .[18]

Bentley, loath to have such a writer bolt his stable, sent back a letter agreeing to a six-month delay in the writing of Barnaby, although he says pointedly that he finds no such clause in any contract between them, and proposing that Dickens write nothing for him or anyone else for the next half-year--except for Nicholas Nickleby, already in the works for Chapman and Hall.

The anger of Dickens's answer seems so disproportionate that one wonders if he is not pretending a bit in order to give himself an "out":

> I have merely to say that I do not "require" and demand this postponement:--firstly, because as one who is enriching you at the expense of his own brain, and for a most paltry and miserable pittance, I have a right to some regard and consideration at your hands; and, secondly, because such postponements are matters of common literary custom. . . . I have further to say that I do not, and will not receive it as a favour or concession from you--that I will not consent to extend my engagements with you for the additional term of six months--that I will not give you the pledge you so insultingly require--and that if you presume

> to address me again in the style of offensive impertinence which marks your last communication . . .[19]

And so forth and so on.

Not until June 1840 did the antagonists come to an agreement--on what terms to part. Dickens felt that he had bought his freedom for a heavy price. Indeed he had: he repurchased his own copyright to Oliver Twist and any future claims upon himself by Bentley for £1500. He paid an additional £750 for any copies of Oliver as yet unsold and for Cruikshank's plates illustrating the novel. But in addition to his "freedom" and his copyright, he had, as Johnson points out, gained something else:

> From their three year duel Dickens emerged not only completely victorious but with a will forged into a weapon of steel, his sense of power immeasurably sharpened, his tenacity immoveably strengthened. Strong from the days of his delicate and unhappy boyhood his will had always been, but it had operated with a certain diffidence and almost as an invisible force in his struggles to surmount obstacles. His imperiousness and his indignation had flared on only a few previous occasions when he had become convinced that he was being ill-treated. Never before had it tempered itself to the rigors of a prolonged conflict with an individual foe. Always clever in shaping the facts of a dispute to his advantage, he became a brilliant controversialist, highlighting every weakness in the position of his adversary with biting sarcasm. Never, from the time of his struggle with Bentley, did Dickens surrender in the smallest point to any antagonist. Even in repose the set of his features and the high carriage of his head often conveyed an impression of spirited defiance. And once opposed, whether by adverse literary critics, his publishers, his friends, members of his family,

> or the entire American press, he hardened into a relentless determination that was to sweep fatefully through all the sorrows and successes of his life.[20]

Dickens now had only one publisher: Chapman and Hall. They received him joyfully. To them he outlined his ideas for Master Humphrey's Clock, the new "Dickens" magazine. With Forster's help, he suggested financial arrangements to them, and painstakingly scrutinized their counter-proposals. An agreement was finally hammered out which not only gave Dickens a great deal more money than he had been getting, but altered the terms on which he was to receive it: they were to incur all the expenses of advertising, printing and illustrating. They were to pay Dickens half the profit on each number, but to bear the entire burden if any issue were to sustain a loss. They were to get half profits only after 20,000 copies were sold.

> Clearly Dickens had proved no inept pupil in the school of business experience. Only four years before, he had diffidently asked if his employers on the Chronicle would not perhaps think him entitled to some additional remuneration for the contribution of his sketches--. . . . Now, with Forster's aid and advice, he made a bargain not merely shrewd but stringent, and, as Forster put it, one in which he would rightfully not only be the gainer but always the greatest gainer. The "hard bargains" that had perpetually lagged behind his furiously mounting sales, the "slavery" "on journey-man terms" "to fill the pockets of others" were a thing of the past. Henceforth he would see to it, and his would be the "Iron hand," that he had full control of his work.

> His earnings would be proportional to his sales, his would be the major share of the profits, and he would have no losses at all.[21]

What Dickens demanded and received gave him indeed full control over the output of his brain. He stood only to gain. The contract thus altogether altered the relationship that had previously existed between author and publisher.

To read about Dickens and the copyright question is to come away with an impression not only of the bulldog will at work once more, but an awareness that when that will was opposed, opposition only succeeded in stiffening it.

All of Dickens's works, from his earliest publications, appeared in pirated editions, frequently inaccurate. He suffered continuously from stage versions of his novels as well, an abuse for which he had no legal recourse. No such recourse existed against foreign piracies of his novels, either, there being no copyright agreement covering reciprocity for English and American writers. But on this subject Dickens felt so strongly the injustice being done to him, to other English authors, and to American talent, that time and time again he either initiated or joined with others in an effort to make publishing profitable to authors

(and even to their authorized publishers) and not to book-pirates.

In 1837, an American firm which had published twelve parts of Pickwick Papers without authorization, wrote to Dickens offering him £25. His answer, put in milder terms than he was to use in later years, expresses his evident fear that acceptance of the money would appear to sanction such illegitimate publication: "I should not feel, under the circumstances, quite at ease in drawing upon you for the amount you so liberally request me to consider you my debtors in."[22]

Few American publishers extended this courtesy, however meager. And none took him up on his offer to enter into negotiations about approved editions of his novels. They merely printed his novels with varying degrees of accuracy and took their money.

Dickens's best-known statements on the copyright question were uttered on his first American tour. At a dinner in Boston, ending a speech complimentary to the audience and to America, he devoted a few words to international copyright: "'I hope the time is not far distant when they, in America, will receive of right some substantial profit and return in England from their labours; and when we, in England, shall receive some substantial profit and

return in America from ours.'"[23]

These few remarks, evidently fair and moderately expressed, stirred up a storm of protest that shocked Dickens. The newspapers screamed their fury, concentrating on several "telling" points. They expressed their injured sense of patriotism that an Englishman could find anything to criticize in America. They "exposed" his bad taste in raising such a subject at a dinner being given in his honor. They exulted in the "discovery" that he would stand to gain in the reforms he proposed, revealing this fact as if his being an interested party somehow disqualified him from discussing the issue. The press assumed a high-minded horror that anyone--particularly Dickens, parading as a man of heart--could express an interest in anything as sordid as money.

The material for satire in this situation is abundant: the newspapers as arbiters of taste, defenders of purity, recoilers from money! But the intensity of their reactions can be understood when one is aware that the press itself was the worst offender against the rights of authors. Dickens's own works had been printed in newspaper after newspaper, in vulgarized or truncated versions, sometimes between columns of sensational or vulgar news. The piracy angered Dickens. The distortion of the text

infuriated him. Its propinquity to some scandal drove him wild. Above all, he was concerned lest anyone believe that he had agreed to such a publication of his work.

This reception of his remarks had the opposite effect from what friend and foe desired. His comments, mild in Boston, became stronger in Hartford. At the dinner given him there, he announced that wherever he went, he would discuss copyright. At every opportunity he would utter over and over the words: "International copyright."

The Hartford Times began, "we want no advice on the subject,"[24] and this time, the American press really levelled its guns. Dickens was accused of every scurrility.

But opposition was grist to his mill. Now he was determined to show that he would not be bullied into silence. He realized with shock that all the American authors he knew were too intimidated to speak out on the subject, although to a man--Washington Irving, Washington Allston, Halleck, Prescott, Dana, Bryant--they agreed with him completely.

Indeed, under the status quo, American writers had reason to agree. They stood to lose even more than English authors. American printers, having to pay for native but not for foreign talent, much preferred the cheaper path of pirating the English to paying the American. Frequently, an American writer had to prove his command over an audience

by foreign printings before an American publisher would risk the expense of publishing him at home.

Not only would none of them speak out against the existing situation; they even begged Dickens to desist. (They knew better than he the depths to which the American press could descend--though he was learning fast.) This horrified him. He was enormously struck that in this much-vaunted free country the fear of speaking one's mind was so intense. He became one of a long line of critics of the tyranny of public opinion in America.

Not to be silenced, he wrote back home to Forster to round up a group of their friends to sign a public statement supporting his views. The statement was intended to indicate unanimity on the question. Bulwer-Lytton, Tennyson, Leigh Hunt, Sidney Smith and others signed a dignified letter appealing for protection for American men of letters against piratical competition. Carlyle wrote separately, using as his text, "Thou shalt not steal." Dickens sent copies of the letters to various east-coast newspapers.

Despite Dickens's disgust at the lack of privacy in America, he heartily enjoyed being loved wherever he went. This adulation accorded him became increasingly important to him. But he was prepared to jeopardize his position in the hearts of America for his convictions. And he continued

his public statements even after he realized that he was fighting a losing battle. While he was still in America, there was a convention of book-publishing interests, at which the notion of international copyright was protested, and mutilations of texts defended--on the grounds that alien materials had to be adapted to suit native tastes.[25] Indeed, it was not until twenty-one years after Dickens's death that Britain and the United States entered into a copyright agreement.

In no area of Dickens's life is his domineering will so obviously and so tragically manifested as in his determination to undertake, to continue, and to expand his public readings. He first seriously suggested the idea of the readings to Forster in 1856. Forster was immediately and unalterably opposed to them, feeling that it was unbecoming for so dignified an author to read his works for his own profit. (Reading and acting for charity Dickens had of course frequently done.) But, as Forster expressed it, "when he had neither self-distrust nor self-denial to hold him back, he would push persistently forward to whatever object he had in view."[26]

It is strange to see the hidden forces in Dickens's

nature work together to defeat him. Many elements were at play. As far back as November, 1844, when he was living at Genoa, he travelled back to London in miserable weather--although he had been feeling ill and he was concerned about money--to read to a circle of his friends the just-completed Chimes. Forster, who advised him against the journey, understood why: Dickens wanted to get "a vivider sense . . . of the effect of what he had been doing."[27] He wanted to see his power. "To hold the audience in the palm of your hand" is not a completely fanciful metaphor, as any actor knows: you can indeed feel, see, your power. Of course, he came to London; of course, his friends were there. He wrote Catherine: "If you had seen Macready last night undisguisedly sobbing, you would have felt, as I did, what a thing it is to have power."[28]

His love of money is another significant factor in his public readings. He repeatedly projects the huge sums he can make on different reading tours. During the tours themselves, he repeatedly reports to Forster and other friends the financial success he is having. "Think of £190 a night!"[29] "We had a tremendous hall at Birmingham last night £230 odd. . . ."[30] "1000 stalls already taken in Brighton!"[31] And for the third series of readings: "I have made it forty two nights for £2500."[32]

Of course, the suicidal course of continuing his readings--particularly his selection of the murder of Nancy--was not due only to his desire for money and for power, or due even to the need to pit his will against the world and show that he could forge on. For the need continually to impersonate suggests the need to get out of your own skin, a grave dissatisfaction with yourself; and the continuous emphasis he places on the adoration showered on him wherever he went indicates a constant need for approval and reassurance of the kind that a small child receives from his parents. Perhaps, in fact, these readings, undertaken against all advice, continued against all sense, do indeed suggest, as Edgar Johnson mildly speculates, that he had lost all desire for life. Anything more than these suggestions is plainly beyond the scope of this study. But it is clear how in every endeavor in which Dickens was involved--reportage, courtship and marriage, his exciting amateur theatricals, his prolific professional output, his disciplined mode of writing, his various editorships, his "brisk" 20-mile a day walks, the philanthropies to which he devoted so much time and such specific instructions, his financial arrangements, his relations with his illustrators and publishers, his readings--how in all these avenues of his life the need to conquer, to control, to mold an often

recalcitrant medium seems to be urging him on.

Of course, Dickens understood something about the force of his own nature. In a letter to Forster [unfortunately edited by him] written in mid-August, 1841, we find,

> Thank God there is a Van Dieman's-land. That's my comfort. Now, I wonder if I should make a good settler! I wonder, if I went to a new colony with my head, hands, legs and health, I should force myself to the top of the social milk-pot and live upon the cream! What do you think? Upon my word I believe I should.[33]

It remains to be seen how this characteristic in him showed up in his fictional characters: how many heroes has he with temperaments like his own?

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19. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 495.

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29. Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, Vol. 2, p. 243.

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32. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 253.

33. Letters, Vol. 2, p. 260.

CHAPTER 2

THE VICTORIAN RHETORIC OF THE "SELF-MADE" MAN

To say that Dickens was a self-made man is to place him among a group of persons for whom the Victorian age is remarkable. We shall see that a dramatic ascent was by no means unique. It was a time for such aggression, and for the development of a rhetoric which both encouraged and justified it. Samuel Smiles, himself an example of a Victorian success story and the delineator of many others' rise, thought that "there never was a time when skill and diligence received more general encouragement. . . . The road to success is as free and open to the mechanic [Smiles means engineer or inventor] as to any other . . . some of our largest capitalists have sprung directly from the working class . . . been the architects of their own fortunes."[1]

A literature flourished to the effect that one could be "the architect of one's own fortune"--opposed to being the inheritor of wealth. The United States had its Horatio Alger and Andrew Carnegie; England had its Samuel Smiles and George L. Craik, another writer of such inspirational tales. Their works have been called by Richard Altick "a collection of saints' legends . . . a vehicle of

consolation, guidance, and inspiration, though couched in secular and primarily materialistic terms."[2] Altick declares that the equation they advocate is "Book learning prudently used + Practice = the key to success."

Craik's work, The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties, deserves mention here. Although Altick classes him with Smiles and dismisses him in a sentence, this work is really in another category. To start with, the examples he gives are by no means restricted to the nineteenth century, but stretch from the Greeks and Romans, as in Chapter X , Vol. I, "Difficulties occasioned by Blindness Conquered," which begins with Homer, or Chapter III, "Humble Station no Obstacle," which tells of Aesop and Terence, slaves who became men of letters.

More important, Craik is not the materialist that Smiles is. "Success" for him is never presented in terms of money or status but of genuine achievement, often in the areas of intellectual or artistic endeavor, from Archimedes and Galileo to Giotto and Haydn: "We are about to select from the records of philosophy, literature and art in all ages and countries a body of examples to show how the most unpropitious circumstances have been unable to conquer an ardent desire for the acquisition of knowledge."[3]

Although Craik stresses the elements of perseverence

possessed by the men whose lives he sketches (vide the example of Erasmus, who was renowned for his "devotion to knowledge in extreme poverty"[4]) the book is less naive than Smiles's work; the lives presented are held up as figures to admire, but scarcely as models. So while this work doubtless falls into the genre of inspirational literature, this is no simple-minded self-help manual. It is, rather, a paean to mankind's progress from ignorance to knowledge--a declaration of Victorian faith and pride in man's "march of mind." As if to prove this "progress," a large proportion of the book is devoted to English eighteenth and nineteenth-century "engineering": to James Brindley, James Watt, Sir Richard Arkwright, Dr. Cartwright, and others.

Further-reaching in their effects were Smiles's works. They were influential in promulgating the myth of self-help, and they commanded colossal sales. His books are significant to this study for two reasons: first, the men whose lives he describes are precisely those men who found an environment susceptible to change, who gambled their own dynamic talents and powerful wills against the opportunities of the times, and succeeded in making themselves--and remaking the face of England. Second, the similarity in the pattern of the lives of these men with that of Dickens is noteworthy.

Smiles knew whereof he spoke. His autobiography details his own rise to fame and fortune. He had been an army doctor in the Napoleonic wars and was discharged following Waterloo. In the post-war period of unemployment he found his talent a drug on the market. He turned his hand to newspaper editing, but found it insufficiently remunerative to support a family; he wrote a book on the history of Ireland, he lectured to younger men on the concept of self-help. Then in 1845 he made his move. He tells us that

> down to 1844, the extension of the railways had been comparatively moderate. But with the increase of the traffic on the railways already made, and with the consequent increase of dividends, the shares rapidly rose in value, and many new lines were projected.[5]

Smiles took a job at the railroad office of the Leeds and Thirsk Line. His fortunes rode on the rails. He was involved when the Leeds and Thirsk connected the "manufacturing districts of the West Riding more directly with the towns and villages of Wharfdale, with Harrogate and Knaresboro Ripon and the coal and iron districts of the North West of England. The line . . . effected a junction with the Great North of England. . . . Railway and Thirsk and shortened the distance to the north. . . ."

Smiles tells us that his company was "usually at

war with the adjoining companies,"[6] and therefore that it could not stop expanding its lines, but had to add constantly to stay ahead. This led to the establishment of networks of railroads. His work brought him into communication with other men who were "intimately connected with the early history of railways in England."[7] Most were men who, able and aggressive, had worked their way up through the ranks rather than starting with the advantages of status and wealth and formal education. Henry Booth, who became the first secretary of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, was the inventor of the coupling screw--to attach the cars together--and several other useful and profitable contrivances connected with the works. Of George Stephenson, whose biography Smiles wrote later, we get but a thumbnail sketch here, but again Smiles stresses the self-made aspect of his life: Stephenson had been a colliery-engineer--doing labor never indulged in by gentlemen. In the mines, locomotives were used to pull the coals. It struck him that locomotives would be more efficient than horses in pulling trains; he convinced a financier of this, and went into the business of building locomotives with the financier. He made a fortune, became an employer of men himself, and most important, gave "the wonderful impulse . . . to civilization by the development of the railway locomotive."[8]

Smiles's greatest leap to fortune came as a result of his manual of success, Self-Help, which sold like hot-cakes in the English-speaking world and was then translated into scores of languages, bringing him immense monies and the knowledge--which he asserts pleased him more--that the book was the means by which so many climbed to success. He includes in Self-Help testimonials to this effect.

Before we go on, two curious coincidences should perhaps be noted here. In Smiles's life, we find that interweaving of families of the same class that seems peculiar to English life. His wife, Sarah Anne Holmes, the daughter of a contractor, had been educated in Liverpool by Harriet Martineau. (Miss Martineau, by the way, is introduced to Smiles's readers as "the sister of the well-known Dr. James Martineau."[9])

Smiles also had a trivial encounter with Ellen Ternan, although he does not mention her by name. An accident occurred on his rail line in June of 1865. Later, "a young lady" called to collect for damages. When asked if anyone had been travelling with her,

> "Yes," she said, "my mother and Mr. Charles Dickens." This was the first time we had heard that Charles Dickens was in the train. . . . He died five years later. Although railway accidents sometimes produce permanent injury to the brain, I never heard that he suffered from this

> cause. He died most probably from too much work, too much reading of his works, and too much unrest.[10]

We know what Smiles did not, that Dickens was forever after this incident frightened, even panicky, when he traveled by rail. But Smiles's assessment of the causes of Dickens's death is sufficiently acute.

The concept of striving and succeeding informs Smiles's biography of George Moore, too. In phrases that might well have been written about Dickens, Smiles emphasizes Moore's "really splendid pluck and energy,"[11] how "he burst out and displayed that energy and perseverence which always distinguished him, how he devoted himself to his duties with immense zeal."[12]

Like Dickens, Moore was a glutton for work: "There was only one method--work!" Moore put in 16-18 hours a day. "He was one of those men who could not be idle . . . he made work--He was of an active, persevering, indefatigable temperament."[13] We are told that his "marriage did not interfere much with his business . . . that he was rarely at home."[14] (He was a traveling salesman; first for a textile business, then for an insurance company.)

Like that of Dickens, his energy seems to have been contagious: "He would . . . rouse the people into activity. He would infuse into them some of his own energetic spirit."[15]

This sounds like the reports of Dickens's galvanizing behavior in his amateur theatricals.

Moore, like Smiles, lectured to the young. He often left them with the words, "Persevere! Persevere!" Christopher Hibbert quotes a letter Dickens wrote to his son Edward when he was leaving the house to seek his fortune: "What you have always wanted . . . has been a set, steady, constant purpose. I was not so old as you are now when I first had to win my food and do it out of this determination and I have never slackened in it since."[16] Indeed all the advice Dickens was to give his children emphasized hard work, perseverence, purpose--self-help, in a word.

Dickens knew Moore. Forster, in his Life of Dickens, says that "of all the men he had known, I think he rated [Moore] highest,--for the union of business qualities in an incomparable measure, to a nature comprehensive enough to deal with masses of men . . . humanely and justly."[17]

Moore established schools for the children of commercial travelers. Dickens spoke at the opening of one such school. Appropriately for his audience--and in line with his own interests--the speech compared travel as it used to be by coach with present day rail travel. He took the title of his Uncommercial Traveller from his acquaintanceship with Moore.

Smiles's best-known work is of course Self Help. In it we find numerous inspirational tales of "strenuous individual application."[18] We are invited to imitate many man who came of humble beginnings--such as Arkwright, Turner, Captain Cook, Burns, Newton and Shakespeare!

Smiles's naive materialism is expressed on every page of his work. While he prates endlessly about the "honor of labor"[19] and while he even includes a chapter entitled "Character: The True Gentleman," in which he defines a gentleman as the possessor of a keen sense of honor, rectitude, and "politesse de coeur,"[20] the proofs of gentlemanliness are what he urges, advocates, and holds out as reward: money and status. And he is by no means averse to a peerage. The prime minister's grandfather, the first Robert Peel, was a calico printer; his son was the first baronet of the line. Indeed, as Smiles accurately informs us, most peerages are modern--despite what their retainers would have us believe--and were recruited from the ranks of "honorable industry." Charles I knighted one Robert Foley, for making nails cheaper than the Swedes.were able to.

The true dignity or honor of labor seems to consist in rising out of its ranks, in raising oneself from humble to affluent circumstances.

But it is in chapter i, "Money, Use and Abuse" that we see most clearly the materialism of Smiles and the real goal of self-help. Money is no "trifling matter to be held in philosophic contempt, representing as it does to so large an extent the means of physical comfort and social well-being."[21] "Comfort in worldly circumstances is a condition which every man is justified in striving to attain. . . . It secures that physical satisfaction which is necessary for the culture of the better part of his nature."[22]

Moore puts it more crassly:

> "The parsons," he once said to a meeting of children, "will tell you a great deal about money. They will tell you that it is the root of all evil. But my opinion is that it is a good thing to make plenty of money, provided you make a proper use of it."[23]

Smiles adds, "This is what [Moore] himself did."[24]

Smiles appreciates another use of money: it provides the facade of respectability that Carlyle was to despise so much; that he was to call "gigmanity" from the phrase "he's respectable; he owns a gig."[25] Smiles puts it thus: "Nor ought the duty [of amassing wealth] to be any the less indifferent to us, that the respect which our fellow-men entertain for us in no slight degree depends upon the manner in which we exercise the opportunities which

present themselves for our honorable advancement in life."[26]

Let us look at another Victorian phenomenon, Henry Colburn's spectacular rise to fortune. As we know from Dickens's battles, many publishers got rich on the proceeds of their authors' books, but the story of Colburn's meteoric success must be very briefly outlined here because of his sensational publishing techniques. Also, with Richard Bentley, Dickens's sometime publisher, he achieved a sort of immortality through Thackeray's Bacon and Bungay, whom they represented. It was he who issued a spate of fashionable novels, from the '20's on, bringing great rewards to himself and his authors. He published perhaps nine-tenths of the high-life novels. According to him, "a signal revolution was effected in our literature. I it was who first gave you delineations of the most refined society, by its most refined members."[27] No other publisher controlled so many best-sellers over such a long period of time.[28] He published Burke's Peerage, and the Diaries of Pepys and Evelyn. But silver fork novels were his stock in trade, and he printed and sold them in huge quantities. In 1928 he published Mrs. Shelley, Hazlitt, Disraeli, Lester, Godwin, Landor, Ward, Hood, Bulwer-Lytton, Leigh Hunt, Theodore Hook, Lady Charlotte Bury. Seventy-four volumes of these were literature of "high life." He was considered to have paid his novelists rather well.

It is a curious truth that in all of these novels which cash in on lord-loving snobbery and delight in prying into the affairs of their "betters," men like Colburn are invariably held up to ridicule. For in these fashionable three-deckers no one is more absurd than the self-made man, the nouveau riche, the man who dares to amass and spend his money ostentatiously--and Colburn was famous for his bragadoccio and style.

But not only was Colburn's type a source of amusement in these silver-fork books, Colburn was personally the butt of the London wits--for what they considered his outrageous advertising techniques. Indeed the words "puffery" and "Colburn" became synonymous. His advertisements included promises of scandals, persons and places revealed, and so on. He is credited with spending £9000 per annum, an immense sum, on these tactics. He also paid to be mentioned in the newspaper columns. In John Bull, for March 25, 1827, a column reads, "We hear that this new work [Ward's DeVere] embraces affairs of the most elevated . . . nature. . . . None but the author in question, who is generally suspected to be an individual of political consequence, could detail the scenes and events . . . the high affairs of the Court, the mysteries of the cabinet."

Some of his writers were members of the upper class in

embarrassed economic circumstances. The Countess of Blessington, by the way, was hired by the Daily News in January 1846 (when it was still under Dickens's editorship) for over £400 per annum for "any sort of intelligence she might like to communicate of the sayings, doings, memoirs, or movements of the fashionable world."[29] In reference to Bulwer's Falkland: "Its plot is founded on a melancholy fact of recent occurrence, in elevated life."[30] (Of course, these novels were authored anonymously, and part of the titillation of reading them was the fun of guessing who the concealed author and characters were.)

Rosa, the author of The Silver Fork School, says that "Colburn was at his characteristic best when scheming with authors to copy recent events, throwing a "thin veil of fiction over particularly juicy news items or over celebrated personages." In the infinite pains he took to secure alluring titles, Rosa compares him with a Hollywood producer: the original title for one of Ward'sbooks was Bardolphe; someone suggested it be altered to Clifford; Colburn added "De"; and De Clifford it remained.[31]

The humor at his expense may or may not have touched him nearly. Perhaps, as is said in our day of a prominent vulgarian, he cried all the way to the bank: he is credited with having cleared £200,000 in 1827.

Dickens knew and respected many of these men, both for their force of character and their accomplishments.

Not included in Smiles's pantheon, but another man who made something of himself, was Thomas Carlyle. Like the Smiles hero, and like Charles Dickens, Carlyle's contributions greatly influenced nineteenth-century English life--its intellectual life.

Forster says that Carlyle was a hero to Dickens; "I would go farther to see Carlyle than any man alive," Dickens once told him.[32] Surely Dickens's intellectual debt to Carlyle was very great. Hard Times was dedicated to him, and in it were attacked two of Carlyle's "betes noires": "systems" and the doctrine of "laissez-faire." In Past and Present one of the recurrent symbols of man's futile attempt to deny his relatedness and responsibility to his fellows is that of the poor Irish widow who spreads typhus while wandering through the city seeking aid. Just such an idea is expressed in Bleak House by Jo's transmission of smallpox to Esther Summerson.

Some of Carlyle's suggestions for ameliorating the condition of England (in Sartor Resartus and Chartism) include education, emigration and above all, work: "Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe." It is Carlyle's doctrine of work that is most relevant here. Its influence must be accounted significant

on Dickens's life as well as on his work.

All of these men share the quality of being "self-made." A few of them share a more special quality: not as easy to define, yet real and unique to the period and to these men of the period. This Victorian period, this industrializing period, this urbanizing period, seems to lend itself to a peculiarly "self-made" quality, a manufactured quality. Even as the goods are made, so the men are made. New conditions of work led to new men--both worker and industrialist. Ruskin writes about division of labor being a misnomer, saying that what really has evolved in factories is division of man; but one could as well say that creation of labor led to the creation of a new breed of men.

What do men like Dickens and Smiles and Colburn have in common with these business-men? To begin with, the obvious similarity in force of character, in seizing the opportunities of the time, is plain. But there is something more profound in operation here: the men whose fortunes rose as the railway network was etched across England created new needs in the very act of satisfying old needs. New rails brought more coal and iron to textile factories, created more production; more lines were needed;

and on and on. Smiles says prosaically that "with the increase of the traffic on the railways already made . . . many new lines were projected."[33]

And Dickens? What of him? We have earlier observed that Dickens altered the relationship that existed between author and publisher, making sure that in the future no one would be able to batten off his talents in a way that left him, the creator, the loser as far as his profit was concerned. But Dickens manufactured something else as well: a new relationship between author and reader. Richard Altick, in The English Common Reader,[34] asserts that the great literary occurrence of the 30s and 40s was the challenge to the supremacy of the guinea and a half three-decker as the way to publish new fiction. In 1836, when Chapman and Hall laid the plans for Pickwick Papers, they had in mind a picture book with the continuity of the prose captions linking the pictures. After a slow start, the 15th part was selling 40,000 copies. By itself, Pickwick Papers established the fashion of issuing new fiction in parts.[35] The practice was continued by Dickens as we know, and, following his success, Thackeray, Ainsworth, and Trollope issued many novels in numbers, sometimes serializing in magazines simultaneously. Publication this way made it possible for many more people to buy a novel: a shilling

per month could easily be spent. The entire work was also actually cheaper, for the reader spent only 20 shillings entire, while in book form the cost would have been 31 shillings, sixpence. After serialization the work was published bound for 21 shillings. In general, only those novels that had first appeared serialized appeared as books at less than the customary price. Furthermore, most serialized books were longer, so that people got more for their money.

The immense sale of Dickens' works showed publishers that people would buy--if the author was popular and the price was right.

A significant comment about Pickwick Papers was Mary Russell Mitford's: "All the boys and girls talk his [Boz's] fun--the boys in the streets; and yet those who are of the highest taste like it the most."[36]

His understanding of the time and the audience was uncanny; in 1849, outlining the plans for Household Words, he insisted that poetry "or in any case something of romantic fancy" be included in every issue. This was to be "a cardinal point. There was to be no mere utilitarian spirit; with all familiar things, but especially those repellent on the surface, something was to be connected that should be fanciful or kindly, and the hardest workers

were to be taught that their lot is not necessarily excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination."[37]

We see Dickens's feelings in a letter he wrote to Knight: "The English . . . are the hardest-worked people on whom the sun shines. Be content if, in their wretched intervals of pleasure, they read for amusement and do no worse. They are born at the oar, and they live and die at it. Good God, what would we have of them!"[38] Altick remarks that Household Words's success shows how great was the need for liberation from the utilitarians. It supplied rest, amusement, pleasure. Its sale in monthly parts averaged 40,000 copies, its cost was 2 pence, a remarkable bargain.[39]

Altick particularly stresses that "through the excellence of its contents and the prestige of Dickens's name it helped to break down further the still powerful upper and middle class prejudice against cheap papers."[40] Our interest lies in Dickens's ability to generate a widening English readership, through the substance, quality, and mode of publication of his work. While doubtless, as Altick affirms,[41] its appeal to the average working class reader was not as great as that of the London Journal or the Family Herald, its readership at 2 pence did encompass all classes. Altick supplies these statistics on his

burgeoning audience; 1837, Bentley's Miscellany, 2nd number, 6000 copies; 1850, Household Words began at 100,000 copies and averaged 40,000. All the Year Round began at 120,000 copies in 1859. In 1869, it sold 300,000 monthly.

The Christmas numbers constituted special annual supplements: All the Year Round under Dickens' editorship set records for sales: from 1862-1865 between 185,000 to 250,000 copies were sold.[42] George Ford comments, "As editor of Household Words and All the Year Round, he fostered the growth of the popular fiction magazines, and his own success as a novelist . . . showed the possible resources of a new public which could be exploited . . ."[43]

As we can see, then, Dickens generated a new audience, and at the same time succeeded in arousing in this widening readership the appetite for what it fed upon.

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CHAPTER 3

THE VICTORIAN ECONOMICS AND POLITICS OF THE "SELF-MADE"

The self-made men of the Victorian period often fall into two categories: the industrialist and the financier. The fortunes of these men were intimately tied into the proliferating capitalism of the period. At the same time, it was their industry--and industries--that changed the face of England from a primarily rural to a primarily urban nation. It is a commonplace in Dickens criticism that his work reflects the change from the stage-coach nation of Pickwick Papers to the England of the railways which figure so prominently in Dombey & Son.

For the financier-speculators, often con-men and swindlers, we find no official apologia. But there does exist in Victorian economics a large body of material justifying the industrialist. The rhetoric surrounding him differs from that of his amateur apologists. Yet in comparing this chapter to the last, we shall see that the purpose of all these rhetoricians serves less to justify the industrialist than to praise him. He is plainly the most important new man on the horizon. He and his works were altering the relations between man and materials, and between man and man. Ivan Melada, in The Captain of Industry in English

Fiction, 1821-1871, remarks how fiction reflected the rise of this man. The industrialist of the 20's and 30's was a "master workman" who took on extra hands; fiction through the 60's portrayed him as nouveau-riche, the acquisitive man who had made himself.[1]

It was not, however, in fiction that the new industrialist found his defenders, but in popular works on economics. We can hardly over-rate the earnestness with which the Victorians regarded political economy. Humphrey House includes two chapters in The Dickens World entitled "Economy: Domestic and Political," to illustrate its gravity.[2] From the 1820's on, and with increasing intensity, the subject became one of popular concern.

> From the third decade of the nineteenth century, political economy was both bone and mode of contention. The most famous writers on the subject, like Malthus or McCulloch, could demand from publishers higher payment than any but the most popular novelists. Chairs were set up in the universities and filled with distinguished theorists. The important periodicals retained political economists who could be sent into battle against political rivals--where contributions to economic science were only incidental to contemporary political and intellectual battles. The newspapers took up the cry, and judges began to lecture from the bench. Of course, as the science moved out of the study into parliament, street, and press, it changed its character. Abstractions were converted into rules of action; qualifications disappeared. . . . popularization in short had its usual effect.[3]

It is with this popular economic theory and its theoreticians that we are concerned. "In various forms, according to the intelligence and circumstances, the leading ideals of laissez-faire and the Malthusian principle of population were current everywhere. . . ."[4] Yet Carlyle's view that economics was the "dismal science" was not confined to him. "No one can have studied political economy in the works of its earlier cultivators without being struck with the dreariness of the outlook which, in the main, it discloses for the human race."[5] A substantial improvement in the conditions of the masses seemed impossible. Everyone knew that "the generalizations of . . . The Wealth of Nations [had been] given a pessimistic turn by Malthus' law of population."[6]

And everyone feared that Malthus was right, that unless the population of the poor was somehow limited, all Europe would be drowned in a morass of poverty; the fast-procreating lower classes would drag everyone down with them. Many felt that the conclusions of the economists were hard-hearted, "but as their statistics grew in volume and their arguments in solidity, and as the Westminster year by year continued its propaganda in their cause, it became more and more difficult for the ordinary man to doubt the likeness in the gloomy picture they drew of the world."[7]

Thousands, then, found the articles of belief amply depressing--but harder and harder to refute.

> If political economy was true--and its advocates had no doubt of that--then men had to be brought to accept it. All of the political economists were ardent advocates of education, and their own subject was a primary concern. Malthus was conclusive about its importance; McCulloch said that people should not be left uninstructed. . . .[8]

Of course, it was considered increasingly important to teach the proper understanding of political economy to "the people" because the people were already demonstrating their various misconceptions about it: by trade-union organizing, by rioting and striking, by rick-burning, machine-breaking and other acts of sabotage, by demanding higher poor-rates and so on. In fact what was on the intellectuals' minds was there largely because it was already in the streets. Thompson[9] puts it bitterly: "People of property saw the need to put the house of the poor in order."[10] Its disciples had no doubt that the people needed education in this most important science. And Hannah More, Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, Samuel Smiles, Andrew Ure, Charles Knight, Fredrich Engels all set out to redress the grievous inadequacy of the public's knowledge.

The first of these in point of chronology was Hannah More, a brief discussion of whose work in this area will serve to mark the specifically Victorian character

of the others' work. According to Thompson, "The sensibility of the Victorian middle class was nurtured in the 1790s by frightened gentry who had seen miners, potters and cutlers reading The Rights of Man, and its foster-parents were William Wilberforce and Hannah More."[11]

The terms Thompson employs help delineate Hannah More's sphere for us; the "Victorians"--particularly those we will have dealings with--do not refer to "potters" and "cutlers." But Miss More is in essence an eighteenth-century figure. Her dates are 1745 to 1833; she was friendly with Dr. Johnson and the Garricks as well as with Wilberforce; unlike the other writers on economics, she was religious. In fact, she was predominantly interested in religious subjects, and her popular works on practical piety and her establishment of Sunday schools set her sharply apart from the fundamentally secular approach of others. (Indeed, Andrew Ure was no atheist, but his religion, as we shall see, was a different matter altogether: a faith held hand in hand with faith in manufacture.) By contrast with her, they are all crass materialists. Not one of them has, or could have, her eighteenth-century Goldsmithian piety. It was in that spirit that she first turned to writing on political economy. Her very motivation differed from that of the Victorians. Their works were produced in order to

explain political economy to middle-class and working class readers, to teach them to obey economic laws; her work calls on her readers to obey moral laws.

She is writing less to educate for political economy than to warn against Tom Paine and other misleading influences. Her tale "'Tis all for the Best" is opposed, of course, to Voltaire.

In keeping with her Goldsmithian characteristics, her cast of characters is distinctly eighteenth-century, too: cutlers, farmers, carpenters, shoemakers who set up shoemaking shops and become capitalist-artisans (rather than the capitalist-industrialists we will encounter later) constitute her dramatis personae. Not surprisingly, nearly every one of her tales features an exemplary parish priest; her setting, then, is usually the small town or open country rather than the city. Her style is delightful, full of balanced antithesis of phrase. It is also allegorical in nature, differing markedly from the attempted verisimilitude which (however spurious its realism) marks later writers for whom the novel had become the most important source for literary types. Mr. Trueman, for example, is the hero of More's "History of Mr. Fantom, the New-Fashioned Philosopher," one of the Repository Tales. Will Chip is the name of the good carpenter.[12]

Unlike Miss Martineau, who encourages diligence and good workmanship by assuring the working-man that he can get ahead and become a kind of capitalist himself (we see this in The Hill and The Valley) overseeing a few laborers, Hannah More retains a rigid concept of class lines and a virtually static concept of society. Mr. Worthy, the hero of "The Two Wealthy Farmers," consults two rules-of-thumb before purchasing anything: "Can I afford it?" and "Is it proper for me?"[13] Mr. Bragwell, on the other hand, has money and social standing as his objects. In this story, piety is pitted against "self-seeking," the man who accepts his class against the climber.

Only in "The Two Shoemakers" is commercial business dealt with, and that obliquely. The good shoemaker does not ill-use his apprentices, for he knows that he has a Master in Heaven.[14] Indeed, he is not even of a truly different class from his apprentices. He is a master shoemaker, turned tradesman. One way in which he attained his business success was by good workmanship and by never giving out shoes on Sunday. He holds himself accountable for his apprentices "as if they had been his children."[15] (The plea to treat employees as if they were your children is made over and over again in the Victorian period--never by economists, but plaintively by Dickens, Carlyle, and above

all by Ruskin.) Like a father, he holds himself responsible to teach them religion; a chief tenet of which is that a servant is to be "obedient to his master in singleness of heart as unto Christ." Only Andrew Ure, the most outspoken apologist for the industrial capitalist in the Victorian period, will dare to use this equation again. And he will even use it without the other side of the coin: the duty of the master to tend his flock. But he writes this way seldom; for like the others, he does not traffic much in "morality." The Victorians begin to supply a truly economic rationale for the employer-employee relationship.

Another profound difference between More and those who follow her (although the chronological gap is not large) can be indicated by the following exchange between Will Chip and Tom, the malcontent in "Village Politics, Addressed to All the Mechanics, Journeymen and Laborers in Great Britain, by Will Chip, a Country Carpenter." [16] The discontented laborer is complaining of his lot: he wants reforms. "Then the shortest way is to mend thyself" is the rejoinder of the hero. "Have you read the Rights of Man?" asks Paine's namesake. "No, not I, I had rather by half read the 'Whole Duty of Man.'"[17]

Of course, the basic difference between those who believe that the ills of the world lie in ourselves (whether

through original sin or demon or Dybbuk or psychological aberration) and those who lay the blame upon a corrupting society, thinking that people will improve as society improves, is one that has never been resolved. But not one of the true Victorian writers will take a position as simple as Hannah More's--not even Carlyle. All of them saw that institutions deeply affected man, and all of them recognized that institutions were extremely vulnerable to change. Many of them campaigned actively to alter institutions they considered outmoded or evil, or both; to abolish the old poor law and replace it with a new one, to repeal the Corn Laws, to abolish slavery, to sweep away the suffocating bureaucracy that had gathered around the legal system, to cite a few of the most obvious examples.

But now we come to a curious truth: much as the Victorians are interested in altering institutions (not leaving improvement in life to every man's bettering his own soul), most twentieth-century readers would agree that the Victorian writers on economics suffer from a profound confusion as to what constitutes an institution and what an irrevocable law. There are some things that cannot change or be changed. The "laws of God" may be dispensed with in a modern world; yet "acts of God" continue. Man is born, grows, dies. These things appear inevitable and the

laws governing them inexorable. They are not ever to be abrogated; the wise man can merely bend like a tree when the winds of adversity blow. In such terms are "the natural laws of economics" presented. Marcet, Knight and Martineau will not claim that a law is "God-given." Seeking for a foundation more unshakeable, an authority less questionable (and less tied up with morality)--they will turn for authority for their economic text to those laws of nature which no man can deny. Secular in their outlook, they substitute for More's "God-given" laws, "laws of nature." But as much of their day as she was of hers, what they have done is to substitute one set of "immutable laws" for another. They have postulated a group of dicta as if it were God-given. Their general secularism, their sophistication, their "scientific" outlook made them reluctant to put these new laws into "moral" terms, but they invested them with an irrevocability that put them but one remove from God-given laws. For example, analogies between laws of economics and behavior in nature abound. In Harriet Martineau's A Manchester Strike,[18] her spokesman says, "If ever Parliament passes a law to regulate wages, we must have a rider put to it to decree how much rain must fall before harvest."[19] In the same Tale we hear Adam chide his day-labourers: "You talk to me," says he, "as if I could

get capital down from the clouds. . . ."[20] Samuel Smiles asserts that "to declare against the law of gravity were indeed quite as futile as to declare against the law of supply and demand."[21] And in Jane Marcet's Conversations on Political Economy, in "Conversation 6: On Capital," we read, "The rich and the poor are necessary to each other; it is precisely the fable of the belly and the limbs. . . ."[22]

An American literary critic, E.P. Whipple, writes that the criticism of Utilitarian hardness in Hard Times is childish because it challenges the "laws" of political economy: "The time will come when it will be as intellectually discreditable for an educated person to engage in a crusade against the established laws of political economy as in a crusade against the established laws of the physical universe."[23] George Ford remarks that Whipple, committed as he was to contemporary economic dogma, could not help objecting to Dickens's social criticism, although he otherwise admired him as a novelist.[24]

Engels is the only economist who does not treat these "laws" as immutable; he has the imagination to envision a future society with altogether different relations governing production, or, to put it simply, with a different economic system; he does not consider the class structure as it stands as a "law of nature"; nor does he feel that

capital is the basis of the production of goods. Even within the limits of capitalism, moreover, he doubts the validity of these laws--especially the "trickle-down" law, of which more shortly. Yet, what, in fact, does Engels do but substitute yet another set of "immutable" laws for the conventional Victorian set?

"Laws of man" and "laws of nature" are the two phrases which we will find constantly contrasted in the works of Victorian writers on economics. Most repugnant to these writers and most futile is the attempt to alter "natural" laws by passing man-made laws.[25] Of the antagonism of "laissez-faire" economists to legislation which binds "progress" in trade much has been written; we shall see some examples of spokesmen on both sides.

What are some of the "natural laws" which are relevant to this study? What, in a word, was the Victorian rationale for the industrialist? He is portrayed as the supplier of goods to the public. Perhaps even more important, he is the source of the nation's economic well-being. To put it another way, Victorian writers on economics held to the "trickle-down" theory. Still espoused by some economists and by many laymen, the theory means that money spreads itself around, benefitting the many while but a few possess it in any quantity. The rich spend, spreading

money around by purchasing goods and services. More significant than this purchasing power, however, in the period of capitalism with which all these writers are involved, is their power to invest money in a factory, supplying jobs. The employees in turn support their families. All these working people spend their earnings, passing more money around and further enriching the community. Again, only Engels sees fit to doubt the trickle-down theory, having grave doubts that the possession of money by the few will tend to enrich the many. (He believes, of course, in an almost opposite theory: the "natural" warfare between classes.)

Several of Harriet Martineau's twenty-four volume Illustrations of Political Economy (later called Popular Tales, which they proved to be), illustrate the principle that the aggregation of capital by the few, if invested for their own profit, serves to benefit the entire society. In The Hill and the Valley, we encounter a situation in which a young iron works manufacturer decides to build a factory in the unspoiled valley. By doing so, he provides work for nearly three hundred people, and promotes "the comfort and convenience of many hundreds more."[26]

If the capitalist by the very act of investing his money for his own benefit is conferring such an immense

benefit on others, then the first corollary of the trickle-down theory is naturally that what is good for the rich is good for the poor. Whatever makes more for the capitalist will confer greater benefits on the community. This is precisely the first ramification of the trickle-down theory. (In our day, the phrase runs "what is good for General Motors is good for the USA.") This implication of the trickle-down theory is hammered into the reader by one writer after the other; all deny that different classes have different interests. In Conversations on Political Economy, Jane Marcet's Mrs. B. says that "He who accumulates a large fortune by his industry injures no-one; on the contrary, he confers a benefit on the community."[27] The reader learns as well what Miss Marcet (the daughter of a wealthy Swiss merchant who resided in London) considered fit reading matter for a laborer: little fairy tales.[28]

In the pamphlets of Charles Knight, The Results of Machinery and the Rights of Industry,[29] we come to a more acute appraisal of the mind of the working-man. Knight was a man of letters, a newspaper editor and the editor of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (which published Martineau's works). In these two pamphlets we find reference to Rousseau, Mme. de Stael, Peter the Wild

Boy, Alexander Selkirk, Adam Smith, Holingshead, Proverbs, and to original documents of travelers among American Indians. Knight, in fact, writes, "The besetting weakness of the learned and aristocratic" was that they "insisted upon the habit of talking to thinking beings, for the most part to very acute thinking beings, in the language of the nursery."[30] His respect for his readership was evidently justified. Altick's Appendix B,[31] "Best Sellers," lists Knights' The Result of Machinery as selling 50,000 copies (in an unspecified time). But however more sophisticated the trappings are, the burden is the same as Miss Marcet's: the common interest of labor and capital.

This common interest is insisted on by every writer whose works we deal with in this chapter (with the notable exception of Engels). Andrew Ure claims he believes in the two classes' common interest, too, but his crowing satisfaction every time a worker is bested by his employer is so clear as to reveal the man behind the mask. When he says that something which benefits the manufacturer is good for the laborer, he means it as a parent spanking a child claims that it is good for him.

All these writers set out to prove to the laborer that he harms himself and his employer by rioting or striking. Such acts fly in the face of natural laws, that, left

to work themselves out lead to higher profits, therefore higher pay. In Martineau's early work, The Rioters,[32] the middle class hero gives a lecture to the parents of a young malcontent:

> Tell your son that by rioting, he sins against himself by endangering his life and liberty; he sins against his family, by exposing them to misery and disgrace; he sins against society by violating public order, and by invading the security of property; he sins against the state, by despising its laws; he sins against his kind . . . he sins against his God. . . . Fear God; honour the King.[33]

So un-scientific a plea will never again be heard from Harriet Martineau.

In The Hill and the Valley the factory has been built and the valley is booming (no more, alas! blooming). By now the number of workers has grown from 300 to 1100. But because of various economic causes--over-production, foreign competition and the like--a slack season ensues. The employers are forced to lower wages, "which excited murmurs among the ignorant. . . ."[34] A turn-out is called. A fire is started in the plant. The final scene of the book shows the workers amassed to hear a parting lecture from the industrialist-hero to the now chastened workingmen on the latters' errors, and on the true mutuality of the two classes' interests. "For now, we manufacturers are forsaking your valley. We have no choice. Impress on your

children that 'the laws must be obeyed,' or all will suffer." (He means "economic laws," of course.) And as a final bolt--surely below the belt--"we forgive those who injure us."[35]

It ought not to be forgotten that all these writers who provide the rationale that what is good for the industrialist is good for his workers are spokesmen for the middle-class. Of them all, Andrew Ure takes the strongest position. While Ure claims his antagonism to strikes rests on the fact that they injure master and man alike, his malice towards the working-man periodically shoots out. For example, a case in which a struck employer brings in a new machine to replace strikers "affords an instructive warning to workmen to beware of strikes, by proving how surely science, at the call of capital, will defeat every unjustifiable union the labourers may form."[36] The cotton-spinners, "proud of the power of malefaction,"[37] agitate to make satisfied men turn out. Most of the men they force to strike have "no fault to find with their wages, their work, or their masters. . . ." according to Ure.[38] And the poor suffer, for strikes always result in lower wages. Employers will immediately look for other workers to replace the recalcitrants. Strikes are a vicious error, for the ignorant laborer cannot be aware of

how much he disrupts the factory routine and production by absenting himself, as "mankind at large can never fully estimate the evils consequent upon an infraction of God's moral law."[39]

One way industry fought against "control by the workers" is through the machine. Again, all of these writers except Engels proselytizes zealously for machines. Each one is out to convince the worker that the machine is good for him as well as for the master. In fact, true to the trickle-down theory, the machine is good for him because it is good for the master.

Though I have chosen to separate the two questions, the issue of strikes and the issue of machines were very closely related in the nineteenth century: many strikes were against machines. Luddite sabotage occasionally erupted in factories. When they could, struck employers would bring in machines. Technological unemployment was a common occurrence, and machines consequently were a recurrent threat to the workingman.

To set the workers' fears at rest, Marcet, Martineau, Knight, Ure and Smiles sought to assure him that the machine, by making money for the capitalist, could only profit the working man.

Jane Marcet leads off with a little story, The

Three Giants, one of the fables for our time from John Hopkins Notions of Political Economy. People on a desert island find three giants: Aquafluentes, running water, who runs a waterwheel; Ventosos, wind-power, wilful and harder to catch, but even more useful, and Vaporoso, steam-power, of no use unless chained, but, once subjugated, able to run factories to clothe all the people on the island.[40]

Knight, as always, is more sophisticated in his vocabulary, but the theme is identical: "temporary discomfort," may be felt as an effect or "result" of machinery, says Knight--he means unemployment[41]--but greater productivity leading to cheaper goods will in turn lead to greater profits and greater demand for labor in the end.

Naturally, Harriet Martineau takes the same position. Indeed, she devotes several volumes to it. Thanks to machines, she claims in A Manchester Strike, almost one and a half million people are now supported by cloth manufacture.

In The Rioters, Martineau's hero tries to correct the mother's erroneous notions of the cruelty of the masters in employing machinery,[42] and to explain to the unemployed father that the machine was really the cause of his former unexampled prosperity, for English goods were made more

cheaply by power looms than foreign goods by hand.

No one touted the machine more unequivocally than Andrew Ure. His book's title, The Philosophy of Manufacture, means "how factories work." He becomes very specific, even technical, about the technology of factories and the processes of the works.

He recounts the benefits of the machine to the nation at large: over a million men have been afforded employment. The establishment of a factory renders manifold benefits to entire areas, offering comfortable subsistence to thousands. When a factory went up in the town of Belph, other things rose with it; a neat refectory, medical care, dancing room, Sunday school, bacon consumption. Some operatives lived in cheap and commodious cottages built for them by the owners.[43] The factory system raised "magnificent edifices . . . to show to what extent capital, industry and science may augment the resources of a state while they meliorate the condition of its citizens."[44]

Ure quotes the New Poor Law Commissioners on how the factory system has benefitted the nation; he calls the Commission "this unexceptionable tribunal" whose documents show "that but for the renovating influence of its manufacturers, England would have been overrun ere now with the most ignorant and depraved race of men. . . ." It is only

"in factory districts . . . that the demoralizing agency of pauperism has been effectively resisted and a noble spirit of industry, enterprise, and intelligence called forth."[45]

About the advantages of machine-labor to the young Ure has a great deal to say: children love factory work. He has seen them himself and can attest to this. Are they not far better off in modern factories than in homes "too often ill-aired, damp and cold?"[46]

> You consider twelve hours too long a day for a child to put in on a job? But you do not consider how machines relieve people of labor; that if a child works at a machine twelve hours a day, he actually has nine hours of inaction, for it is the [fine-spinning] machine that does the job and not the child. Children will be children, of course, and often will hurt themselves needlessly--instead of going around a machine, how often will they try to slide under it--but then, the number of factory accidents has been greatly exaggerated.[47]

Yet despite Ure's repeated asseverations of the benefits accorded to master and man alike, no worker would lay down the Philosophy of Manufacture secure in the belief that he and his employer have a common interest, and that that interest lies in the use of more and more machinery. Besides the evidence of his senses, fear would be inculcated into the working reader by Ure's recital of three benefits of the machine: that it can do many things that hands cannot;

that the operative can produce more, in less time, and that the employer is able to substitute unskilled for skilled labor.[48]

He gives examples of machines he admires--examples calculated to render any working reader insecure: a machine which has replaced many operatives is called "The Iron Man," a "creation destined to restore order among the industrial classes."[49] "This invention confirms the great doctrine . . . that when capital enlists science in her service, the refractory hand of labor will always be taught docility."[50] Machines have the added advantage of enabling the owner "to become once more master of his mill which is no small advantage."[51]

Obviously, an enormous amount of repugnant material can be extracted from The Philosophy of Manufacture. But Ure does make a real contribution. It lies not, of course, in his standard apologia for the manufacturer, nor in his unrelieved fear and scorn of the worker, nor in the vulgar jingoistic John Bullism which marks his works--we must grab new inventions or other nations will get ahead of us--nor its amusing white-man's burden version of colonialism in which the machine is seen as a "minister of civilization [diffusing] with its commerce, the life blood of science and religion to myriads of people still lying in

the region and shadow of death."[52] His real contribution lies in his genuine appreciation of the wonders and potential of machinery. The book is lavishly and painstakingly illustrated, with close and interested explanations of just how mills, looms, elevators, fine spinners, work. He loves their promise.

He is not alone in this: it is a characteristic he holds in common with many Victorians. Harriet Martineau wrote a series of articles for Household Words on the same theme. "The Wonders of Nails and Screws,"[53] describes how the output of nails has proliferated in her generation. It is "marvellous," she says--a word to which she often recurs in reference to machine production and productivity--to see them made.[54] "The Magic Troughs of Birmingham" is an article written in praise and explanation of electro-plating. Martineau calls ëlectroplating "an astonishing process." The best wages and the most constant work are given. A factory like this is "a model for life."[55]

In her fiction, too, we are asked to admire machines. The wife of the hero of The Hill and the Valley extols"the beauty of machinery."[56]

This fascination with "the philosophy of manufacture" frequently blends into a fascination with the manufacturer--often asstrong man. Ure's vision of industrialists as

the heroes of the day can be seen in this passage: Industry needed

> a man of Napoleonic nerve and ambition, to subdue the refractory tempers of work people accustomed to irregular paroxysms of diligence . . . such was Arkwright, who suffering nothing to stay or turn aside his progress, arrived gloriously at the goal, and has forever affixed his name to a great era in the annals of mankind, an era which has . . . opened unbounded prospects of wealth and comfort to the industrious.[57]

Arkwright, Ure solemnly affirms, helped to repeal the primeval curse, "In the sweat of thy face thou shall eat bread."[58]

The adulation of the machine and of the manufacturer, seen so often in this period in Marcet, Martineau, Smiles, and Ure suggests another quality held in common by all of these men and women: their excessive and unquestioning materialism. No shadow of a doubt exists in their minds about the positive benefits that greater material goods confer; cheap goods and plenty are always a benefit. We want more money for more goods for more people. Rich is always without question better than poor. To rise from the class into which you were born is an unequivocal benefit. It is indeed, one of the goals of each poor man--and one of the "uses" of education. The following exchange appears in Robert Southey's

Sir Thomas More: Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society:[59]

> Montesinos: You would make me apprehend, then, that we have advanced in our chemical and mechanical discoveries faster than is consistent with the real welfare of society.
> More: You cannot advance in them too fast. . . .

"You cannot advance in them too fast" would make sense to all of our writers. (In 1898 Samuel Gompers was asked what did the workers want? "More," he replied.) It is not so remarkable that this should be so. More easily obtainable material goods doubtless made life easier for millions than it had been. Even the absence of any "Christian" or moral ethic is not so very surprising. But noteworthy is the total absence of spirituality: the sense of something--anything--being lost while a greater good is gained; the ghost of an admission that there is a price paid for these "obvious" benefits accrued by man. This is astonishing. All of them see the future in the factory and the factory in the future, and all of them embrace what they see whole-heartedly, unequivocally. Never do they look back. The contrast with Ruskin is extreme. So is the contrast with Engels, who is surprising in his absolute hostility to the

introduction of new machines. It is in Dickens, in Dombey and Son,[60] that we encounter the point of view that makes the most sense yet. Describing the effect of the railway, he writes,

> The miserable waste ground, where the refuse-matter had been heaped of yore, was swallowed up and gone; and in its frowsy stead were tiers of warehouses, crammed with rich goods and costly merchandise. . . . the new streets formed towns within themselves, originating wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves, and never tried nor thought of until they sprang into existence. Bridges . . . led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks. . . .[61]

> As to the neighborhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its struggling days, that had grown wise and penitent, as any Christian might in such a case, and now boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation. . . .[62]

> To and from the heart of this great change, all day and night, throbbing currents rushed and returned incessantly like its life blood.[63]

The railway as "life blood" is also the type of "the triumphant monster, Death" which kills Carker, and is

> the power that forced itself upon its iron way--its own--defiant of all paths and roads, piercing through the heart of every obstacle, and dragging living creatures of all classes, ages and degrees behind it.[64]

The machine is, of course, both of these things: neither good or evil in itself, it carries immense potential for either quality. It is able, as Dickens saw, to free or to enslave mankind.

Of all the "popular economists," Harriet Martineau was the most important. She was extremely influential in her day: prolific, she turned out twenty-five volumes explaining the "laws of political science" to the people--volumes which came with reason to be called Popular Tales. She was a powerful force in the abrogation of the Old Poor Law and the establishment of the New. She was also important to Dickens, for whose Household Words she wrote many informative articles on the wave of the future.

To understand the clash between these two, we must go back a bit to sketch Harriet Martineau's background. All of the writers we deal with in this chapter are middle-class, but perhaps no one of them sums up in his life and work what we have to come to understand by a middle-class dissenting Victorian philosophical radical. Only a composite man or woman--a manufactured one--could characterize a period; yet to read this woman's life and works is to get a sharp insight into that immensely powerful, indeed,

predominant Victorian trend--for its strength was far beyond its numbers--called variously dissenting, radical, utilitarian, middle-class, aggressive, industrial, urban. Reading her life and works--indeed, perhaps only after reading her life and works--do we understand what Ruskin, Carlyle and Dickens pitted themselves against. House points out that set against a reading of Martineau, much of Dickens' satire loses the name of farce.[65] (Needless to say, this name-calling omits many qualifications, notably her sex and her deafness.)

She was born a Unitarian, one of a tightly-knit dissenting group. She carried within her what appear to us the anomalies of her position, but seemed to her and her contemporaries perfectly compatible ideas. Born a Unitarian, she became a free-thinker; bred a rationalist, she became a promoter of mesmerism. She unflaggingly supported the abolitionist cause in the United States. While some people doubt that she served as the original for Mrs. Jellyby in Bleak House (officiously raising money for the natives of Bario-Boola-Gha, while Jo, the sweep, dies of neglect and poverty under her eyes), no one can doubt that she fought against legislation to regulate wages and hours and working conditions at home--even in reference to child-labor. By her several works in the Illustrated Tales of Political

Economy series--"The Parish," "The Hamlet," "Cousin Maxwell"--she opposed the laxness and sentimentality that she believed informed the Old Poor Law, and was exceedingly influential in the promulgation of the New Law with its stringent and punitive regulations, and its refusal to give any help whatever to the needy "out of doors--" only in the poorhouse. She was, then, a dissenter religiously, a member of the middle-class socially, a believer in laissez-faire.

Her intellect was never idle. But however much her opinions changed--and they changed early and often, and were rushed into print with each new enthusiasm--her intellect never swerved from its comfortable middle-class bias. As far as our interest is concerned, the most important single influence in her life was the accident of birth that made her the daughter of a Norwich cloth manufacturer, whose business collapsed in 1825, apparently through no fault of his, and who died shortly thereafter. She was always ordering, lecturing, hectoring the poor into--she hoped--middle-class ways. (One recalls Beatrice Webb's comment that the true distinction of the upper middle-class was its habit of giving orders.[66]) In any sort of labor-management question, she always retained, consciously or unconsciously, her sympathy with the employer. We have made mention of her

industrialist heroes. They are possibly grounded in some sort of fact; her industrialist-benefactors seem pure fantasy. In The Rioters the hero informs the impoverished sufferers that

> some of the richest men in the kingdom are ruined; all who are in the trade have suffered; but they know your misery is the greatest; they have the deepest sorrow for you, and I tell you again, they would share their last shilling with you rather than you should starve.[67]

And in The History of The Thirty Years' Peace, she describes the slack times of 1840: "From working the mills short time, in order to prolong the prospect of any work at all, the mill-owners were soon working even the short time at a loss, rather than turn the poor people adrift entirely; and their capital was melting away from week to week--given to feed the poor as truly as if it had been paid as poor rates. Meanwhile [would-be legislators] were regarding this class of man as oppressors . . ."[68] And this in sober history, not in a tale, which might plead that its characters were exemplary!

Over the years, Miss Martineau expressed herself against any legislative interference with matters she deemed the sole province of manufacturers: in The Thirty Years' Peace,[69] she quotes and agrees with Sir Robert Peel that the Factory Act for the protection of children was

> like applying a perpetual blister to the sides of the country . . . the fact is unquestionable, that though you may exempt the child from fatigue, you also deprive it of prospective employment, by driving the manufacturers to seek elsewhere that protection which is denied to them at home.[70]

> Millowners resented this interference with the management of their affairs, which operated as a reduction of the value of the machinery which they had put up in the expectation of freedom in making their arrangements . . . seeing all the time, how fruitless must be all attempts to legislate between parents and children, and how manufacturers must droop under arbitrary restrictions imposed by the legislature.[71]

Needless to say, Miss Martineau and Dickens were on opposite sides in the poor law controversy. Her arguments in Poor Laws and Paupers follow the simplest Malthusianism. They echo to an astounding degree arguments used against welfare today. With many people, "any excuse will serve where there is no will to work."[72] All should be denied charity because some abuse it. She makes a distinction between the worthy and the unworthy poor, but unfortunately, the undeserving poor are essentially defined as those who require and ask public assistance.

By the old law, says Miss Martineau, in a nice phrase, "we offer premiums upon idleness, and tax the virtuous to support the profligate."[73] The dispenser of the dole for the parish begins to understand what is needed: work, not handouts. And not any work, but fruitless work,

because "no work is so disagreeable as that which is known at the time to be useless."[74] So useless work is prescribed for paupers because they will not like it and thus will be encouraged to relieve the rate-payers of their expense.

"The Hamlets" shows the improvement wrought by the New Poor Law. One scene is set in the workhouse, where men are stonecutting. Women are working, too, on the other side of the house. No talking--it hinders work. No disposable pay. If one prefers grinding corn, one may--but "the grinders had not the amusement of seeing the effects of their labour; a partition having been set up between the mill and the handle . . . like blinded horses."[75]

"Cousin Marshall" goes further yet, condemning all poor relief, and raising grave doubts about the benefits of clinics, or almshouses for the aged, on the ground that the existence of such institutions tends to keep up the pauper population.[76]

It is just this sort of grim approach to the poor that Dickens ranged himself against. House selects a quotation from Martineau's History of the Thirty Years' Peace to illustrate what was so repugnant to Dickens. The selection is about Dickens:

> His sympathies are on the side of the suffering and the frail, and this makes him the idol of those who suffer. . . . We may wish that he had

> a sounder social philosophy, and that he could suggest a loftier moral to sufferers;--could lead them to see that 'man does not live by bread alone,' and that his best happiness lies in those parts of his nature which are only animated and exalted by suffering, if it does not proceed too far;--could show us something of the necessity and blessedness of homely and incessant self-discipline, and dwell a little less fondly on the grosser indulgences and commoner beneficence which are pleasant enough in their own place, but which can never make a man and society so happy as he desires them to become. . . .[77]

"Necessity and Blessedness!" says Humphrey House.[78] "In the linking of these two words is seen the grim alliance between Malthusianism and Nonconformity against which so much of Dickens' social benevolence was a protest."

The New Poor Law was the triumph in practice of her brand of Malthusianism. It was this law, with its compulsory sparse diet, its miserableness on principle, its attitude that paupers must be made uncomfortable and unhappy--on policy--that Dickens attacked in Oliver Twist.

In her autobiography, Miss Martineau talks about Dickens' incursions into areas he knows nothing about.[79] She is critical of Dickens'"vigorous erroneousness" about matters of science (political economy, she means), as shown in Oliver Twist and in Hard Times. "There are many who wish he would abstain from a set of difficult subjects on which all true sentiment must be underlain by a sort of

knowledge which he has not."[80]

With all these differences between them, with her being so decidedly a "Westminster woman" as Philip Collins calls her,[81] that being his shorthand for a Benthamite or Utilitarian, one who supported and was in part supported by the Westminster Review--it is perhaps surprising that Dickens should have asked her to contribute to Household Words. In fact she contributed fifty-five articles to the magazine between 1850 and 1855, one in every five issues on the average. In 1854 he asked her to write a series on factories and how they work. She accepted. Her series appeared. But the situation was bound to erupt, and did in 1855.

Laws demanding the fencing of machinery were on the books, though generally unobserved. These laws were under attack by the National Association of Factory Occupiers--the Manchester manufacturers--and by other manufacturers, both individually and through their organizations. Dickens asked Henry Morley to write a series on factory accidents, with an eye to the retention and stricter enforcement of the laws.[82] The series ran in 1855, unsigned, as did all Household Words material. It triggered a response in Harriet Martineau so intemperate as to make one recall that she was first and last the manufacturer's daughter.

Back in the 1830's, Martineau had taken on the issue of the putative danger of machines, and poo-poohed the whole question. In The Hill and the Valley new machinery is brought into the plant. A boy is "careless and put himself in the way of receiving a blow on the head which killed him on the spot." Does not her convoluted construction reflect her difficulty in accounting for the situation? Martineau goes on, "There was no more reason to complain of the new machinery than the old on account of this accident."[83]

Her pamphlet against Morley, The Factory Compromise, A Warning Against Meddling Legislation was published in 1855 by the National Association of Factory Occupiers--who appear to have been the NAM of their day. (Its offices were located, appropriately, at 13, Corporation Street, Manchester.)[84]

Embarrassed by her sponsors, she takes pains in the preface to ward off the charge that the pamphlet was instigated or paid for by the factory-owners. She reveals to the reader that she had originally hoped to see it in the Westminster. Chagrined that they will not print it, she will nevertheless not be deterred, for her conscience demands its publication: "when vicious legislation and social oppression are upheld by men in high places, the vindications of principle and exposure of the mischief must come before consideration of private feeling."[85] She

opposes factory legislation in the name of justice: is it just that "only one class has been singled out for stringent restraint?"[86] And again and again: is it fair that the Common Law operates for all but that the Factory Acts should be "intended for the special protection of the factory operatives?"[87] A rupture is brewing between the textile merchants in Great Britain and the government. For such laws and textile manufacturers "cannot longer co-exist."[88]

The pamphlet takes the tack that legislation is a curb to our liberties. A new danger to a free people is arising from "the tendency in busy and shallow minds to recur to legislation."[89]

> Mr Horner . . . pillories, as culprits, some of the first citizens of the kingdom side by side with such hard-hearted, sordid, law-hating men as Mr. Dickens chooses for his heroes or his butts; and as Household Words supposed to be fair specimens of mill-occupiers of Great Britain.[90]

They are not only unjust; they are inaccurate. Indeed, every battle between the mill-owners and the law is interpreted by Miss Martineau as a contest between the legislature's ignorance and the manufacturers' superior knowledge that the laws would make factories less safe;[91] the profit motive really never figures in the factory-owners' logic, for the "natural humanity" of capitalists makes them want to save life and limb at any cost."[92] She never seems

to perceive the irrelevance of her repeated statement that accidents are caused by the workers' own carelessness. She "demolishes" Inspector Horner's case that a few shillings could have saved the life of one poor man, by saying, as if this effectively dismissed the entire matter, "we have seen . . . he threw it away."[93]

Ten pages of the pamphlet[94] are aimed expressly at Household Words, and refer directly to Dickens, who, as Miss Martineau properly says, must take responsibility for its contents, whoever actually did the writing. We know that Dickens had a direct hand in the articles, acquainted as we are with his domineering work-habits, and coming across such a phrase for the National Association of Factory Occupiers as "The National Association for the Protection of the Right to Mangle Operatives." Miss Martineau is disgusted at this brand of levity and at its object. She also resents the manner in which

> he uses the opportunities of the subject in the palpable way which a just-minded writer would scrupulously avoid,--vividly describing the crushing of bones and the rending of flesh, and the tearing of joints out of their sockets, carrying this method so far as to speak of members of the Association as 'men not squeamish about a few spots of spilt brain, or a leg or an arm more or less upon a poor man's body.'[95]

Though the controversy is about the casing of shafts, he does not discuss the merits or demerits of the case, but

persists in calling them "these deadly shafts." (The third article, 23 June 1855 was entitled "Deadly Shafts.") And "when the manufacturers produce facts in answer to romances about the numbers [of accidents] concerned, he presents them as reading out of 'Death's Cyphering Book'" (the title of the second article in the series)[96] and proceeds to beg the question, as usual. Miss Martineau never had much use for Dickens when he invaded her province:

> It might be a pity, as a matter of taste, that a writer of fiction would choose topics in which political philosophy and morality were involved; but the criticism was willingly restricted to this. But Mr. Dickens himself changed the conditions of his responsibilities and other people's judgments when he set up "Household Words" as an avowed agency of popular instruction and social reform. From that time, it was not only the right but the duty of good citizens to require from him some soundness of principle and some depth of knowledge in political philosophy. It is not within our scope now to show how conspicuous has been Mr. Dickens' proved failure in the department of instruction upon which he spontaneously entered. We need refer to only a single instance out of many--as his tale of "Hard Times."[97]

In an intensified attack on Dickens she says that

> if he can be satisfied to represent the great class of manufacturers--unsurpassed for intelligence, public spirit, and beneficence--as the monsters he describes, . . . we do not see how he can complain of being classed with the pseudo-philanthropists whom he delights to ridicule. He has exposed philo-criminal, and philo-heathen cant; but his own philo-operative cant is quite as irrational as either, while it has the distinction of being far more mischievous.[98]

More mischievous, because if the workers did not understand their own case better than he does, and appreciate "the beneficence of their employers, educating them long before the Factory Law made education compulsory, and feeding them in times of hardship," Mr. Dickens would have to be answerable for the "burning of mills and the assassination of masters;" as in Luddite times.[99] In a curious turn-about indicating, I think, that Miss Martineau at least was innocent of any suspicion that she was the prototype for Mrs. Jellaby, she declares,

> If the names of Dickens and Jellaby are joined in a firm as humanity-mongers in the minds of his readers, the gentleman may resent being so yoked with a noodle; but the lady might fairly plead that her mission had no mischief in it, if no good,--no exciting of fierce passions and class hostilities through false principles and insufficient knowledge. In conceit, insolence, and wilful one-sidedness, the two mission-managers may compare , with each other; but the people of Borrio-boola-gha could hardly be so lowered and insulted by any ministrations of Mrs. Jellaby as the Lancashire operatives would be if Mr. Dickens could succeed in reviving on their behalf the legislation which their ancestors outgrew some centuries ago.[100]

Again, she mentions Bleak House:

> We must say that a mission to Borrioboola-Gha is an innocent enterprise, in comparison with that which Mr. Dickens has undertaken on behalf of meddling and mischievous legislation like that of the fencing clauses of the Factory Acts.[101]

The paper ends with a serious and important question: "What is the true sphere and duties of government?" And answers it, descending to the level of Andrew Ure, and claiming that government's "sphere and duties" are precisely what the Factory Association deem them to be: "It appears to us that the public are under great obligations to the National Association of Factory Occupiers. . . ,"[102] that "in freeing themselves from ignorant and factious interference . . . [they have] purged [our] legislation from a barbarism, and released its industry and independence from an oppression and a snare."[103]

Dickens's answer appeared in the Household Words of 19 January 1856. According to Harry Stone, the editor of Charles Dickens's Uncollected Writing From Household Words,[104] the Household Words Office Book lists "Our Wicked Mis-statements" (the title of the responding article) as solely by Morley, but Dickens's letters indicate that he edited portions of the piece with great care and even added passages. In a letter of January 6, 1856, to Wills, his editor, following a request that a section of Morley's be stated more clearly, he delivers this opinion:

> Miss Martineau, in this, is precisely what I always knew her to be, and have always impressed her upon you as being. I was so convinced that it was impossible that she could be anything else, having seen and heard her,

> that I am not in the least triumphant at her justifying my opinion. I do suppose that there never was such a wrong-headed woman born--such a vain one--or such a Humbug.[105]

In the article itself, Dickens is more mannerly. Of course he has an enormous advantage: his readership at the time was colossal, immeasurably larger than Miss Martineau's pamphlet could command. Household Words began publication selling 100,000 a copy; while this phenomenal sale slackened, it sold about 40,000 copies at this time.[106] Many readers would have heard of her attack only through his response. He can afford an urbane air. We need not point out his greater command of the language. His humor and her lack of it we need not illustrate. Observe his easy reliance on the faithfulness and approval of his readers. He begins by begging his readers to respect her (all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding):

> If no question of public justice were involved, we should prefer misinterpretation to the task of showing weakness in a sick lady whom we esteem. We have a respect for Miss Martineau won by many good works she has written and many good deeds she has done which nothing that she now can say or do will destroy; and we most hearily claim for her the respect of our readers as a thing not to be forfeited for a few hasty words, or for a scape or two of argument too readily adopted upon partial showing.[107]

Dickens flatly contradicts Miss Martineau's assertion that most accidents are caused from "climbing up

to death, for while this mode of behavior will occur to any man or woman as excessively probable, . . . it is not true";[108] some deaths may arise from the momentary inadvertence, others from an article of clothing being caught in moving machinery.

On the fundamental issue involved, "Our Wicked Mis-Statements" stands by the concept, which Miss Martineau decries, that

> it is strictly within the province of the law to protect life, and to prohibit any arrangements by which it is shown that the lives of people in pursuit of their lawful and useful work, are without necessity endangered.[109]

How could the Common Law provide?

> It knew nothing of steam-engines, and it is impossible that it should have foreseen such cases as arise out of the new systems of railway and factory. Common Law will not make factories safe working places for the operative; special consideration must be given to the subject. [110]

One of Miss Martineau's statements comes in for special derision: that England's textile manufacture and present legislation cannot co-exist. They rephrase her:

> It seems to be agreed by the common sense of all concerned who have any common sense, that our manufacturers must cease, or the factory law as expounded by Mrs. Horner, must give way. We believe that it was Mr. Bounderby who was always going to throw his property into the Atlantic, and we have heard of Miss Martineau's clients being indignant against Mr. Bounderby as a caricature. And yet this looks very like him! . . .

> We refuse to listen to the cry of Mills on Fire--Ruinous Expense--Manufactures must cease--Fatal Principles--Property going to be pitched into the Atlantic--and simply wait until the recusant Lancashire Mill-Owners have done calling names and litigating, and have learned that if they will not voluntarily take the necessary steps to prevent the more horrible sort of accidents in their mills, they must take them by compulsion.[111]

This controversy terminated the business and personal acquaintance of Dickens and Martineau. She bitterly resented Bounderby; he--as he often did--called upon her non-fiction prose to corroborate the reality of his fictional character. Dickens always resented it when people claimed that his characters were fanciful, or fantastic, or puppet-like caricatures; he always claimed that they were real-life people as he saw them. "When a reviewer in the Sun said that Dickens' characters were 'as actual as flesh and blood, as true as humanity,' he earned the novelist's warmest gratitude and friendship." [112]

Dickens, of course, came out ahead in the controversy. Edgar Johnson dismisses the question by saying that "Our Wicked Mis-statements" quashed her every argument.[113]

We can see how in this altercation Dickens's ire was aroused by the mill-owners; how his instincts went out to the employee as spontaneously as Martineau's went out to the employer. Yet, as we know, Dickens had an astonishing

amount in common with these Captains of Industry, these new "self-made men."

For the other class of self-made men bred by the system, the speculators--often swindlers and confidence men, we find no official apologia. Dickens portrays such men as Montague-Tigg of The Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Life Assurance Company in Martin Chuzzlewit, and, with a more sombre cast, as Mr. Merdle in Little Dorrit. Among their dupes are poor Mr. Nickleby who has gambled and lost all he possessed in a get-rich-quick scheme.

> "Speculate with it," said Mrs. Nickleby.
> "Spec-u-late, my dear?" said Mr. Nickleby, as though in doubt.
> "Why not?" asked Mrs. Nickleby. . . . "Kate, poor girl, without a penny in the world. Think of your brother. Would he be what he is, if he hadn't speculated?"[114]

Samuel Smiles remarks, "The mania for speculation was not confined to the precincts of the Stock Exchange, but infected all ranks. It embraced merchants gentry and clubs. . . . The few quiet men who remained uninfluenced by the speculation of the times were, in not a few cases, even reproached for doing injustice to their families in declining to help themselves from the stores of wealth that were poured out on all sides."[115]

Arthur Clenham, a man ordinarily prudent, principled and intelligent, loses his own and his partner's belongings

trying to profit through speculation.

These fictional representations of Dickens's reflected the facts. In reference to the railways alone, Smiles reports:

> Folly and knavery were, for a time, completely in the ascendent. The sharpers of society were let loose, and jobbers and schemers became more and more plentiful. They threw out railway schemes as lures to catch the unwary. They fed the mania with a constant succession of new projects. The railway papers became loaded with their advertisements. The Post-Office was scarcely able to distribute the multitude of prospectuses and circulars which they issued. For a time their popularity was immense. They rose like froth into the upper heights of society, and the flunkey FitzPlushe, by virtue of his supposed wealth, sat amongst peers and was idolized. Then was the harvest-time of scheming lawyers, parliamentary agents, engineers, surveyors, and traffic-takers, who were alike ready to take up any railway scheme however desperate, and to prove any amount of traffic even where none existed. The traffic in the credulity of their dupes was, however, the great fact that mainly concerned them, and of the profitable character of which there could be no doubt.[116]

There is another class of self-made men that flourished then, but they are not specifically characteristic of the period: usurers. What <u>is</u> characteristic of the period, however, is a justification of usury; it is legitimized by the new economics. In Jane Marcet's <u>Conversations on Political Economy</u>, Caroline is informed that there exists "a prejudice against lending money at interest." The legal rate is now 5 percent, but "Why," Mrs. B. asks, "should there

be a limit to the terms at which money may be borrowed. . . ?"[117]

Kirkland, in his book on American big business, quotes John D. Rockefeller on "the operational advantages of separating morality and business: . . .'In the early days there was often much discussion as to what should be paid for the use of money. Many people protested that the rate of 10 percent was outrageous, and none but a wicked man would exact such charge. I was accustomed to argue that money was worth what it would bring.--No one would pay 10 percent, or 5 percent, or 3 percent unless the borrower believed that at this rate it was profitable to employ it. All the arguments in the world did not change the rate, and it came down only when the supply of money grew more plentiful.'"[118]

What had once been a sin at any interest became part of the new "laws" of political economy. The fact that there was a concerted attempt to make palatable the exacting of exorbitant rates may explain why so many of Dickens' ugliest characters are usurers: he was consciously countering the newly-prevalent justification of this old evil. In Chapter 1 of Nicholas Nickleby we are told that Ralph began by "putting out at good interest a small capital of slate pencil and marbles, and gradually extending his operation." Dickens calls him "the capitalist"; he is actually a usurer.

By so calling him, Dickens is not only ironic toward him, he is casting irony on capitalists and their methods as well. Arthur Gridley, that filthy old man, is also a lender-at-interest. Jonas Chuzzlewit is a usurer, too; through his usury he is drawn to the crime of murder. Those ugliest of mean characters, the Smallweeds of Bleak House, who hate and fear one another hardly less than they hate and fear everyone else, are also practitioners of the trade. These men are characteristically self-made, by the way, and for them Dickens has only contempt. Again, he is ranged against the new economics.

So although, like the men revered by the economists, Dickens, too, is successful and "self-made," he finds himself, once again, ranged against the new economics and, to a great extent, against its heroes. The next chapter will discuss the self-made man in Dickens's novels, in order to ascertain how Dickens tries to reconcile what he was with what he so disliked.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. Ivan Melada, The Captain of Industry in English Fiction, 1821-1871. Albuquerque, 1970.

2. Humphrey House, The Dickens World (London, 1965). "Economy: Domestic and Political (I)," pp. 55-76; "Economy: Domestic and Political (II)," pp. 77-105.

3. R.K. Webb, Harriet Martineau: A Victorian Radical (New York, 1960), p. 102.

4. House, The Dickens World, p. 73.

5. Ibid., p. 70, quoting J.E. Cairns, Appendix to Bain's John Stuart Mill (London, 1882).

6. Webb, Harriet Martineau, p. 100.

7. House, The Dickens World, p. 70.

8. Webb, Harriet Martineau, p. 104.

9. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1968).

10. Ibid., p. 57.

11. Ibid., p. 57.

12. Hannah More, The Repository Tales (New York, 1833).

13. Ibid., p. 33.

14. More, "The Two Shoemakers," Repository Tales, p. 215.

15. Ibid., p. 216.

16. More, "Village Politics, Addressed to all the Mechanics, Journeymen and Laborers in Great Britain, by Will Chip, a Country Carpenter," Repository Tales, pp. 359, 360.

17. Ibid., pp. 359, 360.

18. Harriet Martineau, A Manchester Strike, Illustrations of Political Economy (London, 1832), 1833.

19. Ibid., p. 34.

20. Ibid., p. 38.

21. Samuel Smiles, "Workmen's Earnings, Strikes and Savings," Quarterly Review, 1860. Reprinted by John McMurray (London, 1862).

22. Jane Marcet, Conversations on Political Economy (London, 1816). Conversation Six: "On Capital," p. 98.

23. E.P. Whipple, "Dickens's Hard Times," Atlantic Monthly, XXXIX (1877), p. 357. Quoted by George Ford in Dickens and His Readers (University of Cincinnati Press, 1955), p. 102.

24. George Ford, Dickens and His Readers, p. 280.

25. In America too, according to Edward Chase Kirkland, apologists for the status quo declared that "under the fixed laws of trade, of supply and demand, the employer has really little more control over prices . . . than over the winds and the weather" (The Report of the Commission of the Senate, 1855, Vol. 2, p. 922, Commercial and Financial Chronicles, XVII. Quoted by Kirkland in Dream and Thought in The Business Community, 1860-1900 [Ithaca, 1955], pp. 22, 23.)

John D. Rockefeller, justifying lending at exorbitant rates, claims that the cost of borrowing will decrease only when the supply of money grows more plentiful. Note that natural law, not man made manipulation, is involved.

Kirkland sums it up (p. 22):

> Again and again the areas of . . . science, physics, chemistry, meteorology, and biology, and of common sense observation supplied analogues for economic phenomena. Panics and

> prosperity were extremes of the 'swing of the pendulum'; panics, financial hurricanes, never occur 'except as a growth from seeds which have long been germinating,' and business changes were the alternations of disease and health. When disease lopped off weak members, like some forms of organic life, our economic system quickly puts forth newer and stronger members to take their place.

26. Harriet Martineau, The Hill and the Valley, in Illustrations of Political Economy, p. 38.

27. Marcet, Conversations on Political Economy, "Conversation Six: On Capital," p. 98.

28. So far as I know, in Miss Marcet's Conversations occurs for the first time the phrase "immediate gratification," as a characteristic of the desires of the ignorant that might, with education, be bred out of them.

29. Charles Knight, The Results of Machinery (London, 1830); The Rights of Industry (London, 1831).

30. Richard Altick, The English Common Reader (Chicago, 1957), pp. 104-105; quoting Knight's Passages of a Working Life, Vol. I, pp. 242-243.

31. Ibid., "Best Sellers," Appendix B, p. 390.

32. Harriet Martineau, The Rioters (London, 1827), pp. 95, 96.

33. Ibid., p. 181.

34. Harriet Martineau, The Hill and the Valley, in Illustrations of Political Economy, p. 141.

35. Ibid., p. 181.

36. Andrew Ure, The Philosophy of Manufacture (London, 1835), p 41.

37. Ibid., p. 282.

38. Ibid., p. 283.

39. Ibid., p. 279.

40. Marcet, "The Three Giants," in John Hopkins' Notions of Political Economy (Boston, 1833).

41. Knight, The Results of Machinery.

42. Martineau, The Rioters, p. 11.

43. Ure, The Philosophy of Manufacture, p. 347.

44. Ibid., p. 18.

45. Ibid., p. 354.

46. Ibid., p. 301.

47. Ibid., pp. 301ff.

48. Ibid., p. 30.

49. Ibid., p. 367.

50. Ibid., p. 368.

51. Ibid., p. 365.

52. Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

53. Harriet Martineau, "The Wonders of Nails and Screws," Household Words, November 1, 1851, #84.

54. Ibid.

55. Harriet Martineau, "The Magic Troughs of Birmingham," Household Words.

56. Martineau, The Hill and the Valley, pp. 62-63.

57. Ure, The Philosophy of Manufacture, p. 16.

58. Ibid.

59. Robert Southey, Sir Thomas More; Or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (London, 1829), Vol. I, p. 206.

60. Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 8.

61. Ibid., pp. 219, 220.

62. Ibid., p. 220.

63. Ibid., p. 220.

64. Ibid., p. 282.

65. House, The Dickens World, pp. 74, 75, 76.

66. Webb, Martineau, p. 48.

67. Martineau, The Rioters, p. 59.

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69. Ibid., p. 409.

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73. Ibid., p. 11.

74. Ibid., p. 111.

75. Harriet Martineau, "The Hamlets," from Poor Laws and Paupers, p. 39.

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79. Harriet Martineau, Autobiography (Boston, 1877), Vol. 2, pp. 375-379.

80. Ibid., p. 379.

81. Philip Collins, Dickens and Education (London, 1964).

82. Morley's articles were entitled "Fencing with Humanity," 14 April; "Death's Ciphering Book," 12 May; "Deadly Shafts," 23 June; "More Grist to the Mill," 28 July; and "Two Shillings per Horse Power," 8 Sept. 1855.

83. Martineau, The Hill and the Valley, p. 144.

84. Harriet Martineau, The Factory Compromise: A Warning Against Meddling Legislation (Manchester, 1855).

85. Ibid., p. v.

86. Ibid., p. vii.

87. Ibid., p. 10.

88. Ibid., p. 7.

89. Ibid., p. 6.

90. Ibid., p. 27.

91. Ibid., p. 27.

92. Ibid., p. 17.

93. Ibid., p. 38.

94. Ibid., pp. 36-46.

95. Ibid., p. 37.

96. Household Words, 23 June and 12 May, 1855.

97. Martineau, The Factory Compromise, p. 36.

98. Ibid., p. 45.

99. Ibid., p. 45.

100. Ibid., pp. 43, 44. Note the Social Darwinism in the phrase, "Their ancestors outgrew."

101. Ibid., p. 44.

102. Ibid., p. 47.

103. Ibid., p. 48.

104. Charles Dickens's Uncollected Writing from Household Words (Bloomington, Ind., and London, 1968). Ed. Harry Stone.

105. Ibid. Letter from Dickens to Wills, Jan. 6, 1856.

106. Altick, The English Common Reader, pp. 393, 394.

107. "Our Wicked Mis-Statements," Household Words, 19 January 1956. Quoted by Harry Stone, Dickens's Uncollected Writings, p. 553.

108. Ibid., p. 553.

109. Ibid., p. 550.

110. Ibid., p. 560.

111. Ibid.

112. George Ford, Dickens and His Readers, pp. 132, 133.

113. Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York, 1952), p. 855.

114. Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 16, p. 5.

115. Samuel Smiles, Lives of the Engineers (New York, 1868), Vol. 3, p. 374.

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117. Marcet, Conversations on Political Economy, pp. 238, 239.

118. Edward Chase Kirkland, Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900 (Ithaca, 1956).

CHAPTER 4

THE SELF-MADE MAN IN THE NOVELS OF DICKENS

Let us now turn to an examination of those characters in the novels of Charles Dickens who exemplify the concept of the self-made man. We will consider Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit together, as they present similar problems.

In Nicholas Nickleby two of the successful middle-class characters are odious: Ralph Nickleby and Arthur Gride. We have seen that contemporary "progressive" economics sought to justify lending at whatever rates the traffic would bear; we shall see that Dickens here again ranged himself against the new theory, frequently making it his business to vilify usury. Nickleby and Gride are portrayed with all the stereotypic ugliness that the usurer has traditionally summoned and that Dickens could convey. Here is the repulsive portrait of Gride:

> The person . . . was a little old man, of about seventy or seventy-five years of age, of a very lean figure. . . . His nose and chin were sharp and prominent, his jaws had fallen inwards . . . his

> face was shriveled and yellow. The whole air and attitude of the form, was one of stealthy cat-like obsequiousness; the whole expression of the face was concentrated in a wrinkled leer, compounded of cunning lecherousness, slyness and avarice.
>
> Such was old Arthur Gride, in whose face there was not a wrinkle, in whose dress there was not one spare fold or plait, but expressed the most covetous and griping penury, and sufficiently indicated his belonging to that class of which Ralph Nickleby was a member.

"The old money-lender," Dickens calls him on the same page.[1]

Ralph is presented to us more fully. From his childhood on, "Ralph always wound up these mental soliloquies by arriving at the conclusion, that there was nothing like money."

> Not confining himself to theory, or permitting his faculties to rust, even at that early age, in mere abstract speculation, this promising lad commenced usurer on a limited scale at school; putting out at good interest a small capital of slate-pencil and marbles, and gradually extending his operations until they aspired to the copper coinage of the realm, in which he speculated to considerable advantage.[2]

While Dickens also calls him "the capitalist" and "the man of business," he is in fact primarily a usurer.

Jonas Chuzzlewit, eventually involved in redder crimes, began his career lending sums, as well; Lewsome's confession reads in part,

> "We met to drink and to game; not for large sums, but for sums that were large to us. He generally won. Whether or no, he lent money at interest to those who lost; and in this way,

> though I think we all secretly hated him, he came to be the master of us. To propitiate him, we made a jest of his father: it began with his debtors; I was one: and we used to toast a quicker journey to the old man, and a swift inheritance to the young one."[3]

If Jonas would forgive him a debt, he would supply the poison with which to kill the old man.[4]

Speculation comes in for its share of criticism as well. Indeed, the book turns on the fallen fortunes of the Nickleby family, reduced to genteel impoverishment (a situation with which Dickens was unhappily familiar) and dependency on Ralph by the foolish attempt to take advantage of one of the many get-rich-quick schemes that flourished in Victorian England. Although the South Sea Bubble is invariably used as a reference, for proliferation and enormity of sums it was merely the type but by no means the most immense or catastrophic incident.

Ralph is both usurer and speculator. He is involved (Chapter 2) in the floating of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. One day a caller, "a pale gentleman in a violent hurry," comes to inform him that there is not a moment to lose, as

> "Sir Matthew Pupker takes the chair, and three members of Parliament are positively coming. . . . It's the finest idea that was ever started.

> 'United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. Capital Five Millions, in five hundred thousand shares of ten pounds each.' Why, the very name will get the shares up to a premium in ten days."
>
> "And when they are at a premium," said Mr. Ralph Nickleby, smiling.
>
> "When they are, you know what to do with them as well as any man alive, and how to back quietly out at the right time," said Mr. Bonney, slapping the capitalist familiarly on the shoulder. . . .[5]

The hilarity of the "United" deepens into a greater sort of comedy with the Anglo-Bengalee of Martin Chuzzlewit. Steven Marcus sees the Anglo-Bengalee as making a comment on the vulgarity, the crudity and the facade of respectability of Victorian society in England, on what Carlyle called its gigmanity.

Marcus writes,

> . . . as the Dandy is a parody of the self as a work of art--displaying the outward form which covers an inward nullity--so the Anglo-Bengalee is a parody of the Victorian faith in the appearance of substantiality. Everything is 'substantial and expensive . . . the iron safes, the clock, the office seal--in its capacious self, security for anything. Solidity! Look at the massive blocks of marble . . .' (Chap. 27) Bullamy, the porter, attests to the respectability of the concern: "Respectability, competence, property in Bengal or anywhere else . . . were all expressed in that one garment."--Bullamy's waistcoat. (Chap. 27) What is behind that waistcoat, and behind Tigg's flowered one, is what is back of the Anglo-Bengalee --nothing.[6]

England is seen as "the colossal swindle of the Anglo-Bengalee. . . ."[7]

Geoffrey Russell has an Appendix to Martin Chuzzlewit in which he explains the workings of Tigg's Life Assurance Company:

> At the time Martin Chuzzlewit was in the writing there was sitting a Select Committee formed in 1841 to examine into fraudulent promotions of Companies and among the most flagrant examples were some of the mushroom Assurance Companies.
> . . . From disclosures made to the Select Committee and particularly with regard to a company called West Middlesex General Annuity Assurance Company, Dickens got his idea of the bogus Life Assurance Company.
> . . . It was a time of speculative boom. Anyone could form what was called a Company, but was in fact a partnership, could state as the capital any figure he liked (the capital of Montague's Anglo-Bengalee was 'a figure of two and as many oughts after it as the printer could get into the same line') and issue a prospectus stating as much or as little as he thought fit to state. And on the basis of such a prospectus the Company would issue script or, later, transfers in blank, and these pieces of paper, almost as in the times of the South Sea Bubble, could be sold to gambling speculators by brokers at constantly rising prices. The pieces of paper were, in the case of the Anglo-Bengalee, worthless, for the only 'amenable' asset of the company was property in Bengal which Montague said he owned. This Montague described to one of his tools as a 'devilish fine property to be amenable to any claims!' Montague chose a Life Assurance Company because large sums could be collected as premiums for life assurance or the purchase price of annuities with no legal obligation to reserve the amounts required for the future obligations on the death of the assured or the survival of the annuitant.[8]

The workings of both the "United" of Nicholas Nickleby and the "Anglo-Bengalee" of Martin Chuzzlewit involve the collusion of large segments of "respectable"society: both are abetted by doctors, lawyers, Members of Parliament.

As conventional and unimaginative a figure as Samuel Smiles attests to Dickens's accuracy in this regard. The government, he says, did not help matters. Not only is there the usual legislative lag to economic changes, but many Members of Parliament exploited the situation:

> Parliament . . . interposed no check--attempted no remedy. On the contrary, it helped to intensify the evils arising from this unseemly state of things. Many of its members were themselves involved in the mania, and as much interested in its continuance as the vulgar herd of money-grubbers. The railway prospectuses issued . . . were headed by peers, baronets, landed proprietors, and strings of M.P.'s. Thus it was found in 1845 that no fewer than 157 members of Parliament were on the list of new companies . . . as subscribers. . . . The projectors of new lines even came to boast of their parliamentary strength, and of the number of votes which they could command in "the House."[9]

These aggressive men are figures of grotesque criminality. They become figures of ugly farce in America, where as self-made men they are equally hateful, and operate with a crass absence of veneer. Dickens saw little in America to offset the Eden Land Corporation (the stateside counterpart of the Anglo-Bengalee): "little to restrain the ruthless, aggrandizing self, the unchecked and rapacious will."[10] Here, business techniques are by definition disgusting: to make money is to exploit slave labor, or to sell to credulous people deeds to noxious swamps like the Land of Eden. Most

distasteful to Dickens is the arrogant pride taken in these "sharp dealings," for the assurance that the speculator has done a clever thing is shared by all his countrymen, particularly when the dupe is an Englishman:

> Mr. Chollop was so delighted at the smartness of his excellent countryman having been too much for the Britisher, and at the Britisher's resenting it, that he could contain himself no longer, and broke forth in a shout of delight. But the strangest exposition of this ruling passion was in the other; the pestilence-stricken, broken, miserable shadow of a man: who derived so much entertainment from the circumstance, that he seemed to forget his own ruin in thinking of it, and laughed outright when he said "that Scadder was a smart man, and had draw'd a lot of British capital that way, as sure as sun-up."[11]

There are, of course, "good" self-made men in Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit. Conspicuous among them are the Cheeryble brothers. It is no accident that Dickens was driven to declare that they were not figures of his imagination, but "real people," the Grant brothers of Manchester. He was forced to this defense; they are so much less real than the figures of his imagination! They are patent examples of his wish to believe that business and benevolence could be coupled. In the actions of William and Charles Grant he saw a welcome corroboration of this desire:

> William and Charles Grant were the sons of a farmer in Inverness-shire, whom a sudden flood stripped of everything, even the very soil which he tilled. The farmer and his sons, with the world before them where to choose, made their way southward

> in search of employment. . . . They found employment in a print-work, in which William served his apprenticeship; and they commended themselves to their employers by their diligence, sobriety, and strict integrity. They plodded on, rising from one station to another, until at length the two sons became employers, and after many long years of industry, enterprise, and benevolence, they became rich, honored, and respected by all who knew them. Their cotton-mills and print-works gave employment to a large population. Their well-directed diligence made the valley teem with activity, joy, health and opulence. Out of their abundant wealth they gave liberally to all worthy objects, erecting churches, founding schools, and in all ways promoting the well-being of the class of working men from which they had sprung.[12]

This is written by Samuel Smiles, not surprisingly. If Dickens liked to believe in this mythology, how much more was it grist to Smiles's mill. Smiles offers an anecdote, the invariable insert designed to relieve the dreadful monotony of the unrelieved praise and the deadly triplets:

> One amongst many anecdotes of a similar kind may be cited to show that the character was by no means exaggerated. A Manchester warehouseman published an exceedingly scurrilous pamphlet against the firm of Grant Brothers, holding up the elder partner to ridicule as "Billy Button." William was informed by some one of the nature of the pamphlet, and his observation was that the man would live to repent of it. "Oh!" said the libeller, when informed of the remark, "he thinks that some time or other I shall be in his debt; but I will take care of that." It happens, however, that men in business do not always foresee who shall be their creditors, and it so turned out that the Grants' libeller became a bankrupt, and could not obtain his certificate and begin another business again without obtaining their signature. It seemed to him a hopeless case to call upon that firm for any favor, but the pressing

> claims of his family forced him to make the application. He appeared before the man whom he had ridiculed as "Billy Button" accordingly. He told his tale and produced his certificate. "You wrote a pamphlet against us once?" said Mr. Grant. The supplicant expected to see his document thrown into the fire; instead of which Grant signed the name of the firm, and thus completed the necessary certificate. "We make it a rule," said he, handing it back, "never to refuse signing the certificate of an honest tradesman, and we have never heard that you were anything else." The tears started into the man's eyes. "Ah," continued Mr. Grant, "you see my saying was true, that you would live to repent the writing of that pamphlet. I did not mean it as a threat--I only meant that some day you would come to know us better, and repent having tried to injure us." "I do, I do, indeed, repent it." "Well, well you know us now. But how do you get on--what are you going to do?" The poor man stated that he had friends who would assist him when his certificate was obtained. "But how are you off in the mean time?" The answer was, that, having given up every farthing to his creditors, he had been compelled to stint his family in even the common necessaries of life, that he might be enabled to pay for his certificate. "My good fellow, this will never do; your wife and family must not suffer in this way; be kind enough to take this ten-pound note to your wife from me: there, there, no--don't cry. It will be all well with you yet; keep up your spirits, set to work like a man, and you will raise your head among the best of us yet." The overpowered man endeavored to express his gratitude, but in vain; and with choking utterance and putting his hand to his face, he went out of the room sobbing like a child.[13]

Just as Dickens asserts the Cheerybles's "reality" by reference to the Grants, Smiles uses this anecdote to show that their character was by no means exaggerated; and refers his readers to Dickens: "The brothers Grant became widely celebrated for their benevolence and goodness, and it is said

that Mr. Dickens had them in his mind's eye when delineating the character of the brothers Cheeryble."[14]

As the Cheeryble brothers, they have aroused vigorous antipathy: they always patter, they never walk, they seem to welcome catastrophe with a ghoulish glee as giving them an opportunity to exercise their paternalistic behavior. They love one another; tears are continually welling up in their eyes at the goodness of others. They have been uniformly dismissed by the critics of our day. Edgar Johnson says,

> But it is not only impossible to believe that the over-grown elderly babies whom Dickens presented as the Cheerybles could ever have been successful in business; to most modern readers they are thoroughly tiresome in their handrubbing, their unctious smiles, their child-like benevolent glee. Indeed, to some they are even nauseating: two "gruesome old Peter Pans," Aldous Huxley calls them. And even in Victorian England there were dissenters to their charitable bullying. It was "quite as probable," said Fraser's Magazine, "that Ralph Nickleby "would have been foiled by Lord Verisopht or Smike, as by a couple of such unredeemed and irredeemable old idiots" as "those pot-bellied Sir Charles Grandisons of the ledger and the daybook."[15]

But overdone as the portrait of the Cheerybles is, it represents an important aspect of Dickens's early beliefs; indeed, their very sentimentality as well as Dickens's insistent calling on real life to validate their reality indicates how important his will to believe in them was and

how strong in him was the will to make others believe in them. He was determined to prove to others as well as to himself the possibility of reconciling under one head (two, really) the qualities of thriving business practice with active religious benevolence. He knew that such men were in the smallest minority. He was plaintively showing them as examples to be wished.

In Martin Chuzzlewit the very idea of earning a living honestly is dismissed as naive: Dickens indicates that Martin may actually possess some talent for architecture, but in the world of this work Pecksniff is to steal those plans and increase his own importance and wealth. Only self-made people like Pecksniff, American con-men, usurers and speculators, can flourish--and flourish dishonestly.

As we turn to the heroes of these two early novels, the picture at first looks more optimistic. Both novels early establish the Dick Whittington pattern: the young man is on his own, out to seek his fortune. But although he labors hard, and suffers the vicissitudes of the man out to make himself, the pattern is nullified at the end of each book. Martin and Nicholas are never to be self-made men. Both are donated their fortunes, the one by the Cheerybles, the other by his grandfather. Their fortunes crown

their acts; they are gifts, unearned. They are rewards incommensurate with achievement, marking the hero's true nobility of character. So for heroes being self-made is irrelevant, or even--given the examples that surround them--tainted with suspicion. Later in this chapter the implications of this recurrent truncated Dick Whittington pattern will be discussed.

In The Christmas Carol, Dickens comes to grips with the self-made man. Scrooge is the very type: Edgar Johnson aptly dubs him "economic man," as he has taken to heart the lessons of the utilitarian economists. Two gentlemen come to solicit money to make the burdens of poverty a little less miserable at Christmas-time for "many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

> "Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.
> "Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.
> "And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"
> "They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."
> "The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?" said Scrooge.
> "Both very busy, sir."
> "Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I'm very happy to hear it. . . . I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have

> mentioned; they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."
>
> "Many can't go there; and many would rather die."
>
> "If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."[16]

Scrooge's answers are in the best Martineau tradition. Charity is humbug, or worse, costly and self-perpetuating. Good men might short-sightedly believe they were relieving misery, but they were in fact prolonging it.

But it is important to observe that Scrooge is no thief, he is no speculator, he is no usurer. As unattractive as he is, there is nothing to indicate that he is anything but honest. Here is a self-made man. Throughout the short novel, this element is insisted upon: He has to make conscious choices between economic values and family values.

In "Stave Two: The First of the Three Spirits," we see the moment of one conscious decision:

> For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.
>
> He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

> "It matters little," she said softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."
>
> "What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.
>
> "A golden one."
>
> "This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!"
>
> ". . . I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off, one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not? . . . if you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl--you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain; or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentence and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you."[17]

So we see his choice; Scrooge is making himself what he wills himself to be. Clearly his choice is between love and the human family and community; and money and solitude. When Scrooge's nephew tells the assembled company at Christmas that Uncle Scrooge would not come, they are sorry for him in his state of isolated wealth which "is no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking --ha, ha, ha!--that he is ever going to benefit us with it."[18]

The end of the work presents Scrooge as regenerated. Having changed his choices, he is remaking his path in life. He has become a loving family man; he is no longer economic man.

In Bleak House, the appearance of John Jarndyce, the deus ex machina, is a return to figures like Brownlee and Pickwick, men not self-made but comfortably off, the source of whose wealth is never disclosed. Most of the people who strive to succeed in this novel are a despicable lot. With Smallweed we have a corresponding return to the image of the usurer, his life dominated by the profit motive, who has reared a family in his own likeness. In the style of Jonas Chuzzlewit, the children see their parent as consuming the fortune that might be theirs, and consider him legitimate prey.

But the possibility of honest work leading to affluence is not altogether rejected in Bleak House, in which the figures of the Rouncewell brothers are poised against each other. George, the economic failure, is presented as the more beautiful person. Everything in the presentation of the elder Rouncewell brother is checkered, grey, a la mortel. He is enterprising, hard-working, honest. He is clever as an "engineer," a word that can encompass a great deal in the Victorian period: inventor, manufacturer, working-employer, man involved in the works, the engines, and so on. We see him as a good brother, father and son. He wishes his mother to leave the Dedlocks and spend her old age with him. He cannot understand her unquestioning

acceptance of Sir Leicester's paternalism. Politically, he is a new man, uniting with others like him to send to Parliament those who will represent their own interests. But even in a book dedicated to exposing the suffocating effects of moribund institutions, we are never permitted to forget the price of progress: the city Ironmaster works in, that his works are in, that his work has worked, is hideously ugly. Absent from him are those exquisite virtues of refinement, those nuances of delicacy, of love and loyalty even when unrequited, that his brother George possesses. George has the Christian virtues: when he rejoins his mother, for example, he devotes himself to soothing Sir Leicester's dying days. The Ironmaster has the capitalist virtues. George is Mr. Harding to his brother's Mr. Grantly.[19]

Hard Times is an economic parable in a modern setting. The opening scene is a schoolroom, M'Choakumchild is the teacher; the schoolroom is England, and the new thought is dominating it. Coketown too stands for England, with its ugly factories, its blackened air, its two nations. Hard Times is set squarely against the grimness of the new economics. Gradgrind, bringing up his children on its barren mechanical principles, drummed into them by rote, discovers too late the failure of such principles to deal with the emotions of his own daughter. His theory breaks down with

her emotional collapse. Once more, love balances the scale: Sissy Jupe and the world of Sleary's circus are contrasted with the world of Coketown. It is Sissy's love that nurses Louisa Gradgrind back to health.

In Hard Times Dickens scrutinizes the mythology that has accrued around the concept of the self-made man. He wholeheartedly repudiates that element in the concept which implies that we are not our brother's keeper, that our lives are not inextricably and irrevocably bound up in one another's. For along with Bounderby's claim that he is self-made, comes the--to him--inevitable conclusion that having no ties, he has no responsibilities to others. Dickens's position here, as in all of Hard Times, is in opposition to the laissez-faire ideologists. It is well to keep in mind that this novel was written when Dickens was strongly under the influence of Carlyle, to whom it was dedicated.

One is reminded of the tales of Samuel Smiles by the jargon of Bounderby. Scarcely a Smiles hero but was born poor, or early impoverished. Many were orphaned young or ill-treated by their parents, and each, by dint of his hard labor, worked his way up the financial ladder. Smiles's work, which seldom formally impinges on the province of the economists, serves to promote the notion of self-help,

of course.

But if Dickens merely wished to expose the absurdity of Bounderby's claim of success without outside aid, he might well have been satisfied to let the lives of Stephen Blackpool and Rachel illustrate how irrelevant the notion is that self-denying hard work will lead to success. Who is more honest or harder working than Stephen Blackpool? And who less likely to succeed?

But the Bounderbys are not content to stop there: they use their success stories. A characteristic boast of Bounderby's is,

> I was to pull through it I suppose, Mrs. Gradgrind. Whether I was to do it or not, ma'am, I did it. I pulled through it though nobody threw me out a rope. Vagabond, errand boy, vagabond, porter, clerk, chief manager, small partner, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown. These are the antecedents, and the culmination. Josiah Bounderby learned his letters from the outsides of the shops, Mrs. Gradgrind, and was first able to tell the time upon a dial-plate, from studying the steeple clock of St. Giles's Church, London, under the direction of a drunken cripple, who was a convicted thief, and an incorrigible vagrant. Tell Josiah Bounderby of Coketown of your district schools and your model schools, and your training schools, and your whole kettle-of-fish of schools; and Josiah Bounderby of Coketown tells you plainly, all right, all correct, he hadn't such advantages. . . .[20]

We discover that Bounderby's claim that "nobody threw [him] out a rope," that he was without human antecedents, is fraudulent, for he had parents who loved him and

gave him all they could afford. Dickens is saying that his claim is necessarily fraddulent. Equally important, Dickens is rejecting the implications of Bounderby's boast. The most significant of these implications for Dickens, working under the influence of Carlyle, is the exploitation of the myth of being self-made to sever human ties and responsibilities. Josiah Bounderby will not throw a rope out to anyone. He will not support "your district schools and your model schools, and your training schools, and your whole kettle-of-fish of schools." His assertion that he is a self-made man becomes his rationale for limiting education, for keeping down wages, for declaring that the poor want everything handed to them on a silver platter, desiring "to be fed on turtle soup and venison with a gold spoon." "We couldn't improve the mill," Bounderby avers, "unless we laid down Turkey carpets on the floors."[21]

Another of the implications which had accrued to the myth of the self-made man was that of his superiority over the poor. If he "made it" so can any man. Anyone who really strives can succeed; ergo, the poor have not striven; ergo, they deserve poverty. We see Bounderby waving the self-made flag over the genteel poor; we see how hugely he enjoys having in his pay--in his power, that

is--Mrs. Sparsit, a decayed specimen of the aristocracy; and we see how he uses the myth to maintain his superiority over the working poor. Dickens in Hard Times exposes most bitterly and trenchantly how the idea of the "self-made" is exploited in order to deny human ties and to maintain power.

Yet it is a curious truth that despite Dickens's acute puncturing of the Smiles-like rhetoric that accrued around the myth of the self-made man, despite his keen understanding that the myth was used so often and so sueeessfully as justification to isolate oneself and to depress others, Hard Times is by no means wholly opposed to the ideal of social independence. Indeed, Dickens is himself a prey to its rhetoric. For is it not anomalous that in a novel which decries spurious--because impossible--"self-madeness," and affirms the interrelatedness of all men, Dickens can so obfuscate matters by raising the bugaboo of trade-unions? Trade-unionism in England, more than in any other country, employed the rhetoric of a moral imperative. Like that of British socialism, its impetus came as much from impulses toward primitive Christianity as from theories of Marxist class-conflict. Here, if anywhere, could the Rachels and Stephen Blackpools find a brother-and-sisterhood--a family--that would continue their

inheritance of strength through union.

But Dickens, like most of the Victorian middle-class, was frightened and confused. While neither Stephen nor Rachel wants, or in fact, thinks it possible to be totally independent of others--"self-made" in the Bounderby sense--they and their creator have swallowed enough of the rhetoric of the self-made to confuse self-reliance and independence with an abhorrence of unions. Indeed, it is not only the trade-union they reject. Stephen and Rachel reject personal union, too, although being together might help to ease the pain of their lonely lives. And Stephen will only seek aid for his economic plight "independently"; by means which, as Dickens shows, are doomed to failure. In a way, the lower-class hero and heroine of this novel act out another aspect of the myth of the self-made man. They end up the victims of their delusions.[22]

Dickens wishes to show the way in which England --modern industrial Coketown England, run by laissez-faire economists and utilitarian philosophers--treats the pure of heart. But he succeeds in showing his hero and heroine as credulous believers in a rhetoric served out to them by their superiors--a rhetoric which condemns

them to martyrdom, loneliness, bewilderment: "It's all a muddle," and untimely death. These are their rewards: exploitation for them, and for us, generations of readers, a legacy of the discomfort that martyrs always bequeath.

Certainly Stephen is manly and Christian; Rachel is pure and good. But the direction of their independence and their Christianity tends toward abnegation. They deny themselves everything: love, sex, work, money, union --and in the end they deny themselves. They <u>are</u> self-reliant, but they are nothing more; through their internalization of an empty rhetoric, they become self-unmade. How artistically unsuccessful they are suggests Dickens's lack of conviction in them as heroes of his work--a lack of conviction that recalls the Cheerybles. No wonder Dickens is forced to show the ultimate failure of their ethic, and to deflect the moral center of the novel away from the public or social aspects of the conflict to its private or personal considerations, of which Sissy Jupe is the heroine.

In <u>Little Dorrit</u> we are shown the impossibility of an admirable and enterprising self-made man becoming

a success, a variation on an old theme. Daniel Doyce embodies this idea. Dickens paints his portrait in Smilesian terms to hammer the point home:

> . . . [Doyce] was a man of great modesty and good sense; and though a plain man, had been too much accustomed to combine what was original and daring in conception with what was patient and minute in execution to be by any means an ordinary man. It was at first difficult to lead him to speak about himself, and he put off Arthur's advances in that direction by admitting slightly, oh yes, he had done this, and he had done that, and such a thing was of his making, and such another thing was his discovery, but it was his trade, you see, his trade; until, as he gradually became assured that his companion had a real interest in his account of himself, he frankly yielded to it. Then it appeared that he was the son of a north-country blacksmith, and had originally been apprenticed by his widowed mother to a lock-maker; that he had "struck out a few little things" at the lock-maker's, which led to his being released from his indentures with a present, which present had enabled him to gratify his ardent wish to bind himself to a working engineer, under whom he had laboured hard, learned hard, and lived hard, seven years. His time being out, he had "worked in the shop" at weekly wages seven or eight years more; and had then betaken himself to the banks of the Clyde, where he had studied, and filed, and hammered, and improved his knowledge, theoretical and practical, for six or seven years more. There he had had an offer to go to Lyons, which he had accepted; and from Lyons had been encouraged to go to Germany, and in Germany had had an offer to go to St. Petersburg, and there he had done very well indeed--never better. However, he had naturally felt a preference for his own country, and a wish

> to gain distinction there, and to do whatever service he could do, there rather than elsewhere. And so he had come home.[23]

But Doyce, granted recognition and respect abroad, is ignored and rebuffed at home. The inventor of a product, unspecified but vouched for as useful by everyone introduced to its properties, he is altogether stymied in England:

> "This Doyce," said Mr. Meagles, "is a smith and an engineer. He is not in a large way, but he is well known as a very ingenious man. A dozen years ago, he perfects an invention (involving a very curious secret process) of great importance to his country and his fellow-creatures. I won't say how much money it cost him, or how many years of his life he had been about it, but he brought it to perfection a dozen years ago. . . . He addresses himself to the Government. The moment he addresses himself to the Government he becomes a public offender! . . . He ceases to be an innocent citizen, and becomes a culprit. He is treated, from that instant, as a man who has done some infernal action. . . .[24]

For the England to which Doyce has returned is symbolized by the Circumlocution Office. It stops him short at his every attempt. Indeed, as Mr. Meagles has indicated, it has taken to treating him as a suspicious character. Now we have an acceptable, indeed an admirable self-made man; a man constructed on precisely Smilesian terms--and he is unable to succeed. The fairy tales are over. One now

lives in a world in which one has to settle for minimal contentment--resignation is perhaps a better word. Dorrit's release from prison is gratuitous. The marriage of pretty Pet Meagles to the young aristocrat Henry Gowan is at best a checkered affair, compromised by unhappy undercurrents. The marriage of the principals, Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clenham, is without excitement, glamour, sex, money, joy, success. No reconciliation of success with honor is now possible. Rational success is impossible in this Kafkaesque England. The successful man is Merdle: the shadow of a fraud, a colossal swindler; the acme of the bubble, the balloon, the waistcoat of the butler in the Anglo-Bengalee. This gross and unglamorous speculator is the grand success.

The fairy tales are over, with the exception of Boffin in Our Mutual Friend. But though Boffin has worked hard, his fortune was inherited, a legacy. He has never worked his way up. His success more closely parallels the truncated Dick Whittington pattern of Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit. Even with the searing pictures of the terrible Yorkshire schools that fill Nicholas Nickleby, the world of the late 'thirties is a far sweeter one than the garbage-filled London of Our Mutual Friend, written in the mid-sixties. If no one could believe in the Cheerybles then, how could they believe in the Boffins now?

Our Mutual Friend shows somewhat different self-made men, and casts a somewhat different perspective on them. With Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone we will see Dickens's most mature assessment of the limits to being honestly self-made in the modern world.

Knowing what we do about Dickens's life, how do we reconcile these facts? How do we reconcile the fact that in the early novels aggressive business behavior is absurd or evil or (for the heroes) irrelevant; that in the middle works economic man is counterpoised against the man who can love and be loved; and that the late works reject totally the possibility of honesty joined with business tactics? How do we reconcile these facts with his life, with his own extremely aggressive behavior?

First of all, we can restate the question in another way--in two other ways. For the problem, while vitally important to Dickens, was by no means unique to him: the problem of the respect of Dickens for himself coupled with his dislike of aggressive businessmen whom he, in his colossal assertiveness and willfulness, so much resembles, is a problem that men have always had to cope with.

It is the problem of reconciling the breadwinning aspects with the softer aspects of a man's nature; a problem doubtless aggravated by the intensely competitive nature of capitalist society, but probably always in conflict. In a competitive world, aggression is the means, and achievement of money and status are the prizes. It is hard to be aggressive in one area of your life and gentle and loving in another. It is hard to compartmentalize nature.

Another way to look at this question is to see it as the problem of Christianity in our time. The ideals of the meek, of the passive, of the self-abnegating, are in conflict with the ideals of the self-aided, "masculine," potent accomplisher of one's own destiny.

The conflict has been called the innocence/power conflict. "Power tends to corrupt," said Lord Acton. "Absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely." This suspicion of power is inherited by all of us. But let us differentiate between two kinds of power. They are not easy to separate, but they are nonetheless distinct. There is the power to dominate others, imperialism of a personal or political nature. This I suggest is evil, violating another. But there is another power which has always been confounded with the first: power over one's own life, power to make

decisions in one's enlightened self-interest, with the ability to execute them. On a political level, we call it self-determination. This power is not only good; it is necessary to goodness, and its opposite is evil: powerlessness corrupts. But the debilitating Christian tradition that tends to equate powerlessness with goodness is an inheritance we all receive. It has existed for a long time; indeed, while I have simplified it here, the conflict no doubt exists inside every one--maybe it is inborn as well as absorbed. But perhaps never was the problem so acutely presented as to Victorian Englishmen. Virtually no one living in nineteenth-century England could avoid receiving both the Christian and --shall we say--the capitalist ideals at once. Not only was the Christian inheritance handed down with one's mother's milk, but, curiously, in an age that made progress a hero, that adored its own ability to grow and change and develop, that was able to alter the face of the nation with steam power, that took from Chambers, Lyell and Darwin the concept of evolutionary development and changed it in all kinds of subtle ways (as well as in the grosser manifestations of Social Darwinism) so that the word "change" became almost one with "development," in an age whose heroes were engineers, self-made men, self-helped men, mill-owners, and so forth; in this very age thinking men who retained any intelligent

area of reserve or critical area of self-examination turned back to the Christian ideals as a bastion of non-materialism. For Dickens the problem was intensified because of the man that he was and had to be: aggressive and self-made. For, doubtless as the very other side of this drive, he was as well the possessor of a powerful sense of other things that make life worth living: love and cheer and hope and innocence and charity and faith; the very virtues that more and more, in a world that men like him helped to create, become the means of salvation.

How does Dickens deal with this? One way was to continue to see himself as a child; as Oliver-like, still. Oliver is passive. He is kidnapped back and forth by one side and the other. The only way out of his helplessness is by becoming criminally aggressive--by joining Charley and the Artful Dodger. To be good is to do nothing. Here the choice is clearly influenced by the power of received religion. Powerlessness = innocence, the great virtue.

In the next two novels of which we have spoken, Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit, Dickens again abdicates the problem by the patent unreality of the fairy-tale Whittington formula; it is further abdicated because the rewards of the heroes, as we have seen, do not rest upon their performances, but are, in all particulars, unearned

donations, not led to by their acts.

In this curious way is Dickens able to salve both the needs of his nature. This is his problem: if his heroes are self-made aggressive men, he fears they will be unloveable; if they do not work hard, and strive to succeed,they will be unworthy of the respect due a man. Employing the fairy-tale technique, he solves their joint problem. They are willing to work--but they are not tainted by success. One of the reasons they are worthy of their inheritances is that they have demonstrated their will to work.

Dickens's progression was toward a softening of the obvious fairy-tale aspects of these earlier novels. In David Copperfield and Great Expectations we no longer have the good fairy bringing the rewards at the end. We now encounter an inverted Dick Whittington pattern, from poverty to relatively gentle standing to the test. The test is the test of Labor, of self-madeness, despite the hero's temporary elevation into gentlemanliness. The deus ex machinas have enabled our heroes to earn their livings in more refined ways than their birth would have entitled them to. But the hero must earn his rewards in these novels. Our respect for David dates from the time when Aunt Betsey tells him all her money is lost, and he takes on responsibility. Pip, too, when the chips are down, repudiates the snobbery that his

ostensible patron has bred in him and the money that his real patron has given him, and goes to work, running a business with his friend.

In both these works, the fairy-tale element is more refined than in Nicholas Nickleby and Martin Chuzzlewit. It is represented by another eternal childhood fantasy--that of adoption. Probably Dickens would have loved such a parent as Aunt Betsey, such an idyllic education as at Dr. Strong's school. The adoption motif that runs through fairy literature--and these novels--surely represents deep unfulfilled childhood dreams.

The conflict between aggression and abnegation is as acute in Dombey and Son as it is in The Christmas Carol. Where in The Christmas Carol it can best be discussed in economic terms, in Dombey it can probably be handled best in psychological terms, as the problem of coping with both masculine aggression and with love and gentleness. For though Dombey, like Scrooge, also behaves like "economic man," he does so with a difference. He loves his son Paul deeply and single-mindedly, although his love is perverted into love for the child as potential head of the firm:

> Dombey sat in the corner of the darkened room . . . and Son lay tucked up warm in a little basket bedstead. . . . Dombey was about eight-and-forty years of age, Son about eight-and-forty

> minutes. . . . "The house will once again, Mrs. Dombey, be not only in name but in fact Dombey and Son, Dombey and Son!"
>
> Those three words conveyed the one idea of Mr. Dombey's life. The earth was made for Dombey and Son to trade in, and the sun and moon were made to give them light. Rivers and seas were formed to float their shapes. . . . Common abbreviations took new meanings in his eyes and had sole reference to them. A D had no concern with Anno Domini, but stood for Anno Dombei-and Son[25]

The firm possesses Dombey. George Orwell complains that we never really see Dickens's people at work--or never, at least, in the more mundane professions characteristic of the nineteenth century. He asserts that this putative celebrator of the poor shows only the oddest types--the midwives, the gentleman's gentlemen, pick-pockets, fishermen, and so forth. Orwell complains of the essentially eighteenth-century quality of the work that they do.[26] Dombey is a merchant trader; his firm sends ships all over the world.

But Orwell is unaware that Dombey the man is illustrated by indirection throughout the novel. The railroad for the first time is an integral and essential feature of a Dickens novel. It is not background; it is not "local color." Polly Toodles's husband is a railway engineer, a self-respecting able man of a new class. It is a class that Dombey signally fails to understand, preferring that of Polly, whose services he can "buy" as a baby nurse for his motherless children; he can even pay for the changing of

her name, so much is she a non-person to him. But Mr. Toodles, however respectful, is independent of Dombey. It is a superb touch that after Paul dies Dombey is affronted when he sees Toodles wearing a black arm band. How dare he mourn for Paul: "this presumptuous raker?" The class snobbery as well as Dombey's personal anguish is acutely registered.[27]

Dombey takes the railroad to Bath; and it is a symbolic as well as an actual journey. For it is in Bath that he meets the woman he is going to marry, an impoverished member of the aristocracy. He is the man of the railroads, buying--for appearances' sake--a pretty and useless decoration--and incidentally consolidating the two classes.

The railroad is the revealer, not the creator of evil:

> . . . There are dark pools of water, muddy lanes, and miserable habitations far below [the train]. There are jagged walls and falling houses close at hand, and through the battered roofs and broken windows, wretched rooms are seen, where want and fever hide themselves in many wretched shapes, while smoke and crowded gables, and distorted chimneys and deformity of brick and mortar penning up deformity of mind and body, choke the murky distance. As Mr. Dombey looks out of his carriage window, it is never in his thoughts that the monster who has brought him there has let the light of day in on those things: not made or caused them.[28]

In Chapter 15, the railroad is described in more clearly positive terms:

> There was no such place as Stagg's Garden. It had vanished from the earth. Where the old rotten summer houses once had stood, palaces now reared their heads, and granite columns of gigantic girth opened a vista to the railway world beyond. The miserable waste ground, where the refuse-matter had been heaped of yore, was swallowed up and gone; and in its frowsy stead were tiers of warehouses, crammed with rich goods and costly merchandise. The old by-streets now swarmed with passengers and vehicles of every kind; the new streets that had stopped disheartened in the mud and waggon-ruts, formed towns within themselves, originating wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves, and never tried nor thought of until they sprung into existence.[29]

As Steven Marcus expresses it, "It was the Dombeys of the world who financed and often built the railways . . . it was their kind of will which accomplished the vast social changes whose salutary influence this novel looks to with hope."[30]

So it is important to recognize that whatever his personal limitations, Dombey's abilities are at no time deprecated; we are asked to admire his labor as socially useful. The office of Dombey and Son is clearly presented as the only place in which useful labor is performed. It is contrasted with the aristocratic world of Edith, Mrs. Skewton, and Cousin Feenix. Their parasitism is connected with their attachment to the past, and is satirized particularly in the person of Mrs. Skewton, whose grotesqueness in denying the effects of time on her body is mirrored by

her affected adoration of the middle ages:

> "Such charming times!" cried Cleopatra [Mrs. Skewton]. "So full of faith! So vigorous and forcible! So picturesque! So perfectly removed from commonplace! Oh dear! If they could only leave us a little more of the poetry of existence in these terrible days! . . ."
>
> "We are dreadfully real, Mr. Carker," said Mrs. Skewton; "are we not?"
>
> Few people had less reason to complain of their reality than Cleopatra, who had as much that was false about her as could well go into the composition of anybody with a real individual existence.[31]

Dombey's labors are also contrasted with the "work" in the shop with the wooden midshipman: Sol Gills's and Captain Cuttle's world, in which life has "gone past" them.[32] We are called on to respect Dombey's ability and his integrity.

Yet Dombey, the creator of change in one sense--and a very salutary sense--is incapable of accepting change that is not of his making.

Paul's death turns him from the emotionally dessicated man he always was into a bitter and hateful one, the source of intense suffering to his adoring and adorable daughter, Florence. When she dares to offer him sympathy for his personal reverses, he repels her violently. She then runs off to the home which has been established as a contrast with the Dombeys' throughout the book: that of Captain Cuttle. Of course, Cuttle has no money, of course

he is incompetent as a man of business: this is intended as a proof of his love and gentleness. Of course he opens up his heart and his home to her. We are called upon to love Captain Cuttle and Sol Gills (his pallid reflection) for their sweetness and goodness and the protection they afford poor Florence. But if we look closely we find a new component creeping into Dickens's treatment of these men. At several other times in Dickens's novels, most notably in the portrayals of Pickwick and Miss Mowcher, the stress of periodical writing made it difficult for him to sustain a unified portrayal of his characters. So although Dickens clearly intends Gills and Cuttle to be lovable, we feel a strain of impatience running through the portraiture; what was perhaps intended as the charm of the child let loose in a world of economic sharks becomes the querulousness of incompetence parading as a virtue:

> As I said just now, the world has gone past me. I don't blame it; but I no longer understand it. Tradesmen are not the same as they used to be, apprentices are not the same, business is not the same, business commodities are not the same. Seven-eighths of my stock is old-fashioned. I am an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned shop, in a street that is not the same as I remember it. I have fallen behind the time, and am too old to catch it again.[33]

When money is needed, Gills replies,"'Yes--yes--oh yes--' looking in bewilderment about him, 'I've got some. . . . But the little I have got isn't convertible, Ned;

it can't be got at. . . . I'm old fashioned, and behind the time. It's here and there, and--and, in short, it's as good as nowhere.' He had so much the air of a half-witted person. . . ."[34]

Dickens was as far from the incompetence of Gills as he was from the passivity of Cuttle. He did not admire the hopelessness of the helpless. Cuttle fears that his landlady will capture him, and

> he never dreamed that in the event of his being pounded on by Mrs. MacStinger, in his walks, it would be possible to offer resistance. He felt that it could not be done. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, put meekly in a hackney-coach and carried off. . . .[35]

But Dickens can understand Dombey. Marcus puts it this way:

> Dombey, the worshipper of will and idolator of his self-appointed destiny, embodies in part the ethos of the nineteenth-century businessman, who conceived of the world as a kind of neutral material to be acted upon and fashioned to one's designs. Dickens understood that ethos. . . . He had been endowed as no other English novelist of his time with enough of that will to speak of it with authority; and there is little doubt that he knew Dombey from the inside, that he had a Dombey in him.[36]

Indeed he had a Dombey in him, and he could not see how to reconcile him with goodness and sweetness. So, in the last scene in the book in which we see Dombey with his daughter and his grandchildren, he too has become a child again. "We may accept his creator's assurance that

catastrophe broke down the proud man into a kindly, almost drooling, grandfather. . . ."[37] Learning to love, he has been robbed of his dignity; he is the image of the emasculated male. It is impossible to imagine this Dombey as a competent and responsible adult, functioning in the world of business.

In Dombey & Son, Dickens deals with the conflict he feels exists between aggressive and loving behavior by splitting them into two personages: Dombey and Cuttle. Once more he plays the alphabet game, as with David Copperfield, Darnay and Carton, Charles Dickens. These two elements in his own nature have been separated into two men. They define the conflict within him.

Another way that Dickens handles the problem of the reconciliation of aggression with "goodness" is by using women as his protagonists. If children are essentially helpless and passive and innocent and incapable of being Dombeys--but legitimately being Cuttles--so in the Victorian ethic, are women. Aggressiveness is an equally inappropriate emotion to them.

Many critics have complained about the pantheon of passive heroines in Dickens: Little Nell, suffering and praying, self-denying and saint-like; Amy Dorrit, Agnes Wickfield, Lucie Manette, Florence Dombey, Esther Summerson.

For with a heroine, Dickens felt that it was not incumbent on him to resolve this conflict; it is not the role of the woman to make her way in the world; she does not have to choose between vigor and softness, between aggression and honest self-denial: her way is clear. There is no doubt that as the conflict in Dickens's world and in his personal life became sharper and sharper, as he found it harder to reconcile his ideals with his own realities, he turned more and more to female protagonists. In them the Christian image could remain unsullied; they did not have to be both meek and aggressive. (Indeed, most of them did not even have to earn a living.)

There is another way that Dickens solves the problem that confronts him: by elimination. His work is marked by the absence of that overwhelmingly prominent figure on the Victorian scene: the nouveau riche. The absence of this character is particularly remarkable in that it is used primarily for the humor of satire.

The tradition of the nouveau-riche figure as a butt of humor is a venerable one. He abounded in the Victorian age. For the serious non-fiction writers of the day he was both a source of humor and a source of real fear. Carlyle always professed high hopes for the industrialist, whom he accurately recognized as the strong man of his time, as

the new man on whom the fate of a new England hung:

> The leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the world! If there be no nobleness in them there will never be an Aristocracy more. But let the Captains of Industry consider: once again, are they born of other clay than the old Captains of Slaughter; doomed forever to be no Chivalry . . . Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognizable as the only true ones: Fighters against Chaos, Necessity. . . .[38]

But in the next paragraph Carlyle expressed his fears as that the industrialists would prove mere Mammon-worshippers, or as he puts it, "Chactaw Indian scalp-hunters":

> Bucanneers, Chactaw Indians, whose supreme aim in fighting is that they may get the scalps, the money, that they may amass scalps and money: out of such came no Chivalry, and never will! Out of such came only gore and wreck, infernal rage and misery; desperation quenched in annihilation. Behold it, I bid thee, behold there, and consider! What is it that thou have a hundred thousand-pound bills hung up in thy wig-wam? I value not them or thee. . . .[39]

In the same book Carlyle taps more conventional sources of humor on the topic: Book 3 scores Plugson of Undershot,[40] and his funnier butt is Bobus Higgins, sausage-maker (Book 1), who recognizes money as the only talent and who, Carlyle warns, will elect Bobussimus.[41]

All of Ruskin's writings on "the condition of England question" are peppered with references to the industrialist, the self-made man, the new man. They all carry the same burden. "The Roots of Honour" in Unto This Last states it

clearly: the captain of industry is like the officer of the regimentals. The one with the most care for his men will develop the most strength through the power of their affections: "The battle was rarely won, unless men loved their general." Paternalism is the reiterated ideal; Christian ethics are the only touchstone for a workable economy.

The most spectacular of his statements about the new rich is doubtless to be found in "Traffic," an address he delivered in 1864. It was later gathered into The Crown of Wild Olive. He had been asked to lecture to a group of Bradford businessmen on how to go about building a new Exchange. He sees, and says, precisely what art and the artist mean to the nouveaux-riches:

> You are going to spend £30,000, which to you, collectively, is nothing. . . . But you think you may as well have the right thing for your money. You know there are a great many odd styles of architecture about, you don't want to do anything ridiculous. . . . you hear of me, among others, as a respectable architectural man-milliner; and you send for me, that I may tell you the leading fashion; and what is, in our shops, for the moment, the newest and sweetest thing in pinnacles.[42]

In this extraordinary and surely unlooked-for-lecture, he tells his listeners that edifices are generally decorated with what their builders worship: Since the Greeks worshipped wisdom, they built the Parthenon; the

Christians worshipped comfort, they decorated with the bringers of salvation; the Renaissance plainly worshipped pleasure--vide Versailles and the Vatican. And you? You worship the Goddess of Getting on. So, Ruskin fears, you must construct a statue of Brittania of the Market. And build your columns with places to attach bills and purses!

But it remained for Matthew Arnold to turn his civilized and superior fire on the nouveaux-riches in a way that really renders them absurd, in the great Bourgeois Gentilhomme manner. Arnold generally tends to lump the self-made man with the other Philistines, but there are a few specific references to him--funny and snobbish--in "Doing as One Likes," (Chapter 2 of Culture and Anarchy). He quotes one Mr. Bazley, M.P., for Manchester, freshly created Sir Thomas, as saying that he does not believe that the middle class needs any additional education. Arnold makes mention of Cole's Truss Works.[43] And in the same chapter he invites us to look at the inspiring picture of Sir Daniel Gooch, surely a spoof of the Smiles hero. For Sir Daniel, now a railway magnate, was once a poor boy, who, as he trudged off to the works each day, was exhorted by his mother to heed this "divine injunction": "Ever remember, my dear Dan, that you should look forward to being some day manager of that concern!" This phrase Arnold dubs, "Mrs. Gooch's

Golden Rule."[44]

The nouveau-riche is a stock character in the silver-fork school of novels. He appears in many of those published by--of all people--Henry Colburn. He is frequently less an object of serious satire than the expression of the writers' thoughtless assumptions, a type they include as they include the hero as young lord in love or the servant intended to amuse, who speaks in uneducated tones, often in dialect. These novels exploit the snobbery of those who, whatever their backgrounds, dearly love to read about the upper class, and no doubt fantasize about themselves. A large part of their readership was composed of women. So it is in the interests of the novelists of the high life to make fun of and snub the middle-class. Two examples will suffice. The first is from Theodore Hook's Maxwell, published by Colburn and Richard Bentley in 1830. Apperton, presented over and over as a prosaic but honest fellow, with business in "the city," explains to his beautiful new wife the uses of money:

> "Money, says some book I once read, is like manure; stuck of a heap it has a nominal value, and there an end; but scatter it, distribute it, spread it, and it not only retains its own value, but creates new sources of profit by the general fructification of the surrounding land."[45]

His wife meets an old flame of hers with whom she

is still in love. She collapses. Her father feels he owes Apperton an explanation of her behavior:

> He found the coast clear, and Apperton alone, sitting gazing at the fire, and seeing in the glowing embers the brilliant chambers of the teeming mines, of which he was so extensive a shareholder, and longing for the return of his father-in-law from his wife's room, in order to hear, not as a very tender husband in the first week of the honeymoon ought to have wished, how his beloved Kate was going on; but what truth there was, in the account of the failure of a second banking-house in the city, of which the rumour had the day before reached Brighton, and what, if possible, was the price of the North Shields Sawdust Consolidating Company's shares at the last quotation.[46]

It turns out that Apperton, down to earth, prosaic, honest Apperton, is actually a dishonest speculator, a forger, an adventurer, and the illegitimate son of the hostess of The Cat and the Cauliflower! Such ridiculous pretensions to marry a Maxwell! But then, these men in trade . . .

Another example is from Disraeli's Vivian Grey:

> "I will tell you about them," said the Baron. "This family is one of those whose existence astounds the Continent much more than any of your mighty dukes and earls, whose fortunes, though colossal, can be conceived, and whose rank is understood. Mr. Fitzloom is a very different personage, for thirty years ago he was a journeyman cotton-spinner. Some miraculous invention in machinery entitled him to a patent, which has made him one of the great proprietors of England. He has lately been returned a member for a manufacturing town, and he intends to get over the

> first two years of his parliamentary career by successively monopolising the accommodations of all the principal cities of France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, and by raising the price of provisions and post-horses through a track of five thousand miles. . . . This is by no means the first of the species that we have had in Germany. . . . Their money flows with such unwise prodigality that real nobility ceases to be valued; and many of your nobility have complained to me that in their travels they are now often expostulated with on account of their parsimony, and taunted with the mistaken extravagance of a stocking-maker or a porter-brewer."47

This is a cut above the ordinary, because of the charm and vigor of Disraeli's prose, and the delightful name "Fitzloom"--by far the best name given to the mill-born rich. The thrust of the satire is commonplace: the ostentatious spending of the newly-wealthy "stocking-maker or porter brewer."

The type was also a stock-in-trade to those more serious novelists, not of the silver-fork school. Thackeray whose Vanity Fair demolished the school, by delivering to the novels of high-life the death blow that real intelligence always delivers to inanity, was intensely preoccupied with self-made men and women.

But fruitful as a discussion of Thackeray's attitudes toward the self-made person might be, those of Anthony Trollope serve as a far more interesting counterpart to Dickens's.

Trollope was miserable as a child, in many of the

same ways that Dickens was: consigned to that special brand of non-proletarian poverty; poverty, indeed, with aspirations to gentility. He was a charity student, on and off, for twelve years. On the very first page of his autobiography, he tells us that his misery arose as a result of "poverty and gentle standing on the part of my father."[48] He goes on:

> A sizar at a Cambridge college, or a Bible-clerk at Oxford, has not pleasant days, or used not to have them half a century ago; but his position was recognized and the misery was measured. I was a sizar at a fashionable school, a condition never premeditated. What right had a wretched farmer's boy, reeking from a dung-hill, to sit next to the sons of peers,--or much worse still, next to the sons of big tradesmen who had made their ten thousand a year? The indignities I endured were not to be described.[49]

Already Anthony feared and detested the social climber as a real menace to him and to the society he cherished: that of "gentlemen." His horror of competitive examinations to fill the civil service and to provide commissions in the Army and Navy is well-known: "There are places in life which can hardly be well filled except by 'Gentlemen.'"[50]

> I do not think that I ever toadied any one, or that I have acquired the character of a tuft-hunter. But here I do not scruple to say that I prefer the society of distinguished people, and that even the distinction of wealth confers many advantages. The best education is to be had at a price as well as the best broadcloth. The son of a peer is more likely to rub his shoulders against well-informed men than the son of a

> tradesman. The graces come easier to the wife of him who had great-grandfathers. . . . The discerning man will recognize the information and the graces when they are achieved without such assistance, and will honour the owners of them the more because of the difficulties they have overcome:--but the fact remains that the society of the well-born and of the wealthy will, asa rule, be worth seeking. I say this now, because these are the rules by which I have lived. . . .[51]

And on the Palliser series, he asserts: "Plantaganet Palliser I think to be a very noble gentleman,--such a one as justifies to the nation the seeming anomaly of an hereditary peerage and of primogeniture."[52]

His writing paper at Waltham House bore the crest of his cousin, Sir John Trollope. But most significant of all is a statement not in his autobiography, but in James Pope-Hennessy's Anthony Trollope:

> When his two sons were christened in the Protestant church of St. Mary in Clonmel, County Tipperary, the sacristan had naturally been obliged to ascertain the father's profession. On both baptismal certificates Anthony Trollope described himself not as a postal surveyor (which was the work he was engaged in at Clonmel) but as a 'gentleman.'[53]

But despite his repeated assertions on the transcendent importance of class, Trollope, like Dickens, actually experienced inner conflict about the questions of will and assertiveness. For he too had two strands to reconcile within himself: the aggressive, an inheritance from his

remarkable, able, but odd mother; and his father's legacy, the aristocratic. Early in Anthony's life, he saw how his father had mis-spent the family monies, had antagonized anyone who was likely to help him, saw him go mad and finally die, leaving Frances Trollope with the children. He saw his mother hold together what remained of the moribund and insane family by grinding out book after book, day and night, without rest and surely without pleasure.

Like his mother, Anthony early developed the capacity for hard work and concentration. He was an active and competent employee of the postal service--a job he initially acquired through his class and connection, not through merit or qualification. And then he turned to writing novels. Luckily for him, he had not his mother's desperation, her agony of need and pain of composition. But that makes his discipline under less demanding circumstances still more remarkable. Indeed, his shoemaker approach to his craft was notorious even in his own day: "Frederick Harrison recalls a small dinner party . . . at which, in his harsh loud voice, Anthony began his customary brag about sitting down to write each morning at five-thirty, with his watch upon his desk. In three hours, he said, he regularly produced 250 words every quarter of an hour."[54] He took no periods of rest between completed works.

The day after he completed Doctor Thorne he started The Bertrams, for he had, by this time, reached what Pope-Hennessy calls "a questionable decision":

> I was moved now by a decision to excel, if not in quality, at any rate in quantity. An ignoble ambition for an author, my readers will no doubt say. But not, I think, altogether ignoble if an author can bring himself to look upon his works as does any other workman . . . It is not on my conscience that I have ever scamped my work. My novels, whether good or bad, have been as good as I could make them. Had I taken three months of idleness between each, they would have been no better. Feeling convinced of that, I finished Doctor Thorne on one day, and began The Bertrams on the next.[55]

Trollope's autobiography appends detailed and specific data of monies received for each novel. He tells the following tale, characteristic of his attitude toward money: when he was contracting with Longman, his publisher, for The Warden, his next projected novel, he asked him for a lump sum in advance, naturally preferring that if loss were incurred by the book, Longman and not he should sustain it. Longman demurred, and Trollope warned him that he might take his goods to another publishing house. His publisher told him that though he might get more cold cash elsewhere, his, Longman's, name wasworth more. Trollope reflected: "This seemed to me to savour of that high-flown doctrine of the contempt of money which I have never admired. I did think much of Messrs. Longman's name, but I

liked it best at the bottom of a cheque."[56]

In many ways, then, like Dickens, Trollope also "made himself," from most inauspicious beginnings of family disease and insanity, genteel poverty, personal homeliness and awkwardness, and a most uningratiating manner, to an extremely competent, respected postal inspector and an exceedingly wealthy novelist.

Everyone from Henry James on has speculated on the reason for Trollope's disconcerting intrusion of his own person into the world of his novels. The real reason may be that to preserve the mask of being a hack was terribly important to him; no artist, he, and no bourgeois. The ethic of hard work that he espouses looks to the hard work done by the Plantaganet Pallisers, not by the Ferdinand Lopezes. His assertion is that it is the inherited gentry and aristocracy who must still work hard, for it is they who must run England. No wonder he so detested the portrait of the Tite Barnacles and the Circumlocution Office in Little Dorrit. One must bear in mind that Trollope was an appointed civil servant of the Post Office, and a conscientious one, "who firmly believed in the importance of his own work."[57] The Three Clerks, a novel on the Civil Service, is a direct reply to the Circumlocution Office, as is this comment in John Caldigate:

> The popular newspaper, the popular member of Parliament, and the popular novelist,--the name of Charles Dickens will of course present itself to the reader who remembers the Circumlocution Office--have had it impressed on their several minds,--and have endeavored to impress the same idea on the minds of the public generally,--that the normal Government clerk is quite indifferent to his work. No greater mistake was ever made, or one showing less observation of human nature.[58]

Trollope had learned in the Post Office that "reform must develop from a slow and laborious weighing of the alternatives. Dickens's fearless and explosive haste seemed to him 'horrifying and . . . irresponsible.'"[59]

Trollope takes pains to deny that he is a self-made man. He will not lump himself with the new rich. This is not, however, because he wishes on moral grounds to deny the assertive and aggressive behavior which he and they possessed in common, and which he, indeed, glories in, but because he prefers to see himself as a gentleman taking once more his rightful place in the world--a place temporarily forfeited by his father's incompetence, but still his by right. His hack-writing approach was part of the determined philistinism that was, he felt, the prerogative of his class: a proper characteristic of the hearty, beef-and-potato-eating, horse-riding, hound-coursing upper-class English-variety philistine--not to be confused with the bourgeois brand.

A comparison between Dickens's Dombey and Son and

Trollope's The Prime Minister will prove useful in this context. The similarities in the two novels are remarkable. The Prime Minister contains the story of Lady Glencora and Sir Plantagenet Palliser and how they rule England. It features, however, as its chief appeal, the rise and fall of Ferdinand Lopez. He is a trader, a buyer and seller on the market--"in the city." He is a man whose nature combines in it at once the characteristics of Dombey and of Carker: he is in trade, he is a cold and calculating man and a catlike and insinuating one; like Dombey, he marries into gentility. In both Dombey and Son and The Prime Minister marriage is extremely important, and class as a component of marriage extremely significant. And in both works the railroad is a means of working out the plot, serving as a deus ex machina: while furiously pursued by an avenging Dombey, Carker falls before an oncoming train; in The Prime Minister, as the demons of financial collapse and family deterioration close in on Lopez, "he walked down before the flying engine--and in a moment had been knocked into bloody atoms."[60] Trollopians were pleased to discover that Tolstoi was reading The Prime Minister while he was working on Anna Karenina, and that he considered it 'a beautiful book.'"[61] Trollope must have read Dombey and Son, which appeared 15 years earlier than The Prime Minister.

But the differences are more interesting, and they illuminate the similarities. We have remarked that both Lopez and Dombey are in trade. But the head of Dombey and Son is treated with respect in his capacity as merchant; Lopez is viewed with contempt. There is no getting around this difference by saying that Dickens too has his Merdles, and that Trollope's trader is like the speculators of the United Metropolitan Crumpet Company or the Anglo-Bengalee Life Assurance crew. For Trollope, no other kind of man exists or can exist by trade. The man of commerce is per se a shady sort, a finagler, a speculator. Lopez's fortunes fluctuate with the price of guano, of all ugly commodities. Is this a shadow of Merdle and the French pun? More likely, Trollope merely wants to express his feeling that Lopez and his ilk are necessarily sullied men. Note, too, that Trollope's book was written at a time, 1876, when men in trade were more integrated into the significant life of England, and the aristocracy was more plainly a moribund caste.[62]

Dombey and Lopez are men of the middle class who marry women of the upper class. Their situation is so far identical. But as the aims of the authors differ, so does their treatment. At no time is Dombey held up to obloquy for wishing to take in marriage a high-born and elegant lady. His emotional

blindness is deplored, but it is the parasitic aristocracy which is held up to shame and scorn. Dickens draws the slum scenes of Alice the prostitute and her mother to parallel the sale of high-born Edith by hers.

In these works, the class difference in marriage is identical and significant. In Dombey and Son, as Jack accurately and embarrassingly puts it at the housewarming in Chapter 36, "She is regularly bought, and you may take your oath he is as regularly sold!"[63] In The Prime Minister in which class as a component of marriage is even more important than in the Dickens work, the marriage of Lopez and Emily, the crucial one for the book, is a love match. Trollope wishes to say that despite "love," the twain shall never meet. For the question that obsesses Trollope hardly even exists for Dickens (who will only deal with it in Great Expectations): can Lopez be considered a gentleman?

The issue arises with the first sentence of The Prime Minister:

> It is certainly of service to a man to know who were his grandfathers and who were his grandmothers if he entertains an ambition to move in the upper circles of society, and also of service to be able to speak of them as of persons who were themselves somebodies in their time.[64]

And the next few pages air the problem of Ferdinand Lopez in terms that are familiar to Trollope readers:

> No doubt we all entertain great respect for those who by their own energies have raised themselves in the world; and when we hear that the son of a washerwoman has become Lord Chancellor or Archbishop of Canterbury we do, theoretically and abstractedly, [sic] feel a higher reverence for such self-made magnate than for one who has been as it were born into forensic or ecclesiastical purple. But nonetheless must the offspring of the washerwoman have had very much trouble on the subject of his birth. . . . After the goal has been absolutely reached, and the honour and the titles and the wealth actually won, a man may talk with some humour, even with some affection, of the maternal tub;--but while the struggle is going on, with the conviction strong upon the struggler that he cannot be altogether successful unless he be esteemed a gentleman, not to be ashamed, not to conceal the old family circumstances, not at any rate to be silent, is difficult. And the difficulty is certainly not less if fortunate circumstances rather than hard work and intrinsic merit have raised above his natural place an aspirant to high social position. Can it be expected that such a one when dining with a dutchess shall speak of his father's small shop, or bring into the light of day his grandfather's cobbler's awl?[65]

So does the novel begin, so is the problem laid before us, and so is the situation of Ferdinand Lopez introduced. It is done with that irony of which Trollope is such a master; that irony so disconcerting in that Trollope feels in the end the need to quell within himself the doubts and questions and anomalies and discrepancies and ambivalences and qualifications that create his particular rich tone of irony.

It is at times like this that Trollope steps in in

his own person. He must assert his upper-class philistinism, and quench within himself those qualities that led him to create for twenty or more pages a thoroughly interesting and complex figure. He must bury his own inconsistencies. In The Way We Live Now, after 900 pages, including scores and scores about that wonderful flawed anti-heroine, Mrs. Hurtle, he feels it incumbent on him to say, "I think Mrs. Popkin was right, and that Mrs. Hurtle, with all her faults, was a good-natured woman"--a comment that ludicrously reduces her.[66]

The Prime Minister is fraught with attitudes that plainly could never have been entertained by Dickens: Mr. Wharton, in the interview in which Lopez comes to ask for Emily's hand in marriage, tells him,

> "I shall never willingly give my daughter to any one who is not the son of an English gentleman."
>
> "My father was certainly not an English gen--tleman. He was a Portuguese."
>
> . . . [Mr. Wharton] thought it possible that the Portuguese father might be a Portuguese nobleman, and therefore one whom he would be driven to admit to have been in some sort a gentleman;--but yet this man who was now in his presence and whom he continued to scan with the closest observation, was not what he called a gentleman. The foreign blood was proved, and that would suffice. As he looked at Lopez he thought that he detected Jewish signs, but he was afraid to make any allusion to religion, lest Lopez should declare that his ancestors had been noted as Christians since St. James preached in the Peninsula.[67]

On Lopez's profession: "I have the greatest respect

in the world for mercantile enterprise, and have had as much to do as most men in mercantile questions. But I ain't sure that I wish to marry my daughter in the City. . . ."[68]

The prejudices of class, of color, of religion, of nationality are repeated and corroborated by John Fletcher, a "warm-hearted, sharp-witted" young man, the brother of the man Emily should have married: "Fancy a girl like Emily Wharton," said he . . . "throwing over a fellow like Arthur for a greasy, black foreigner."[69]

John Fletcher's pronouncements are intended to validate the prejudices of old Mr. Wharton. But his existence in The Prime Minister is redundant. For the burden of the entire book corroborates the attitudes of old Mr. Wharton and the Tory lot who constitute "the family":-- Sir Alured Wharton of Wharton Hall, for instance, who though a baronet "whose forefathers had been baronets since baronets were first created, and whose earlier forefathers had lived at Wharton Hall much before that time," had almost become ashamed of his rank, since, "as he was wont to declare was now the case,--every prosperous tallow-chandler throughout the country was made a baronet as a matter of course."[70]

The point of the novel is to justify the prejudices of this Tory lot, for we know long before poor Emily does what

a dreadful mistake she has made in marrying a man who was not a gentleman, instead of the man of her own class who always loved her so well, so refinedly, so whitely, so Englishly, so like a gentleman.

The most instructive comparison of Dickens with Trollope concerns The Way We Live Now and Little Dorrit. Both books could well have had Trollope's title, for both contain disillusioned appraisals of the state of English life. Both books portray England as a moral jungle: Trollope uses the anomaly of an honest Jew countered against a bigoted English gentleman to emphasize moral chaos, and decay.

In his autobiography, Trollope clearly states his motives for writing The Way We Live Now:

> To the writing of which I was instigated by what I conceive to be the commercial profligacy of the age. . . . That men have become less cruel, less violent . . . no doubt;--but have they become less honest? If so, can a world, retrograding from day to day in honesty, be considered to be in a state of progress. We know the opinion on this subject of our philosopher Mr. Carlyle. If he be right we are all going straight away to darkness and the dogs. But then we do not put very much faith in Mr. Carlyle,--nor in Mr. Ruskin and his other followers. The loudness and extravagance of their lamentations, the wailing and gnashing of teeth which comes from them, over a world which is supposed to have gone altogether shoddywards, are so contrary to the convictions of men who cannot but see how comfort has been increased, how health has been improved, and education extended,--that the general effect of their teaching is the opposite

> of what they have intended. It is regarded simply as Carlylism to say that the English-speaking world is growing worse from day to day. . . .
>
> Nevertheless, a certain class of dishonesty, magnificent in its proportions, and climbing into high places, has become at the same time so rampant and so splendid that there seems to be reason for fearing that men and women will be taught to feel that dishonesty, if it can become splendid, will cease to be abominable. If dishonesty can live in a gorgeous palace with pictures on its walls, and gems in all its cupboards with marble and ivory in all its corners, and can give Apician dinners, and get into Parliament, and deal in millions, then dishonesty is not disgraceful, and the man dishonest after such a fashion is not a low scoundrel. Instigated, I say, by some such reflections as these, I sat down . . .to write The Way We Live Now.[71]

Dickens suggests similar reasons for writing Little Dorrit:

> I had the general idea . . . of the Society business before the Sadleir affair, but I shaped Mr. Merdle himself out of that precious rascality. Society, the Circumlocution Office and Mr. Gowan, are of course three parts of one idea and design. Mr. Merdle's complaint . . . you will find in the end to be fraud and forgery. . . .[72]

Forster says all the parts are "one satire levelled against prevailing political and social vices,"[73] by which Forster means in large part, the idea of "society courting a newly rich man."[74] Grahame Smith says,

> Merdle represents, in fact, that rage for wealth which was taken to be the dominant fact of their age by most of the best minds of the nineteenth century, and through him Dickens is able to show society's imprisonment by the desire for money at every level.[75]

Merdle and Melmette are modeled after the same financier whose meteoric rise and flashy grandeur dazzled society, and the wreck of whose fortunes revealed him as a swindler and a thief.

He was John Sadleir, M.P., banker, company promoter, and forger, who 'on the collapse of his schemes in 1865 slit his throat on Hampstead Heath . . . [although] some features of Merdle's story are derived from that of George Hudson, the 'railway king' who fled to France in the panic of 1847-8."[76] It was Sadleir's financial collapse which led the world to consider him unpalatable. The books share one ostensible aim: to expose how society worships wealth. Given this purpose, we are not surprised to encounter section after section of snobbish and typical anti-middle class, anti-new-rich propaganda in Trollope. The vulgarity and arrogance of Melmotte are plentifully revealed:

> Six months since he had been a humble man to a Lord,--but now he scolded Earls and snubbed Dukes, and yet did it in a manner which showed how proud he was of connecting himself with their social pre-eminence and how ignorant of the manner in which such pre-eminence affects English gentlemen generally. The more arrogant he became the more vulgar he was, till even Lord Alfred would be almost tempted to rush away into impecuniousity and freedom.[77]

> "Some of you fellows in England don't realize the matter yet; but I can tell you that I think myself quite as great a man as any Prince." Lord Alfred looked at him with strong reminiscences of

> the old ducal home, and shuddered. "I'll teach them a lesson before long. Didn't I teach them a lesson tonight,--eh?-- . . . Didn't I make him go on my business? And didn't I make'em do as I chose?"[78]

> . . . Lord Alfred had been born and bred a gentleman, and found the position in which he was now earning his bread almost insupportable. It had gone against the grain with him at first when he was called Alfred; but now that he was told "just to open the door," and "just to give that message," he almost meditated revenge.[79]

Beauchamp Beauclerk, who is running Melmotte's election campaign for the Conservatives reflects that "among the loud vulgar upstarts whom he had known, Melmotte was the vulgarest, the loudest and the most arrogant."[80]

For the bulk of The Way We Live Now, Augustus Melmotte, the center of the book, is seen only as others see him. Everything pivots around him; other characters are portrayed, are defined, even, by their relations with him: several people wish their sons to marry his daughter for money; only one gentleman--the moral center of the book--would never visit him or permit such a man into his home; but Westminster elects him to Parliament. Chapter 21 is entitled "Everybody Goes to Them." Society adores him.

> The great man did not quite know himself where, from time to time, he was standing. But the world at large knew. The world knew that Mr. Melmotte was to be Member for Westminster, that Mr. Melmotte was to entertain the Emperor of China, that Mr. Melmotte carried the South Central Pacific and Mexican Railway in his pocket;--and the world worshipped Mr. Melmotte.[81]

Trollope reflects even more bitterly on the world's knowledge: "It seemed that there was but one virtue in the world, commercial enterprise,--and that Melmotte was its prophet."[82]

But Melmotte we do not yet know. Neither Trollope nor Dickens professes any interest in the man himself. He represents "the commercial profligacy of the age," in Trollope's phrase, and Society's worship of him represents how far we are fallen away from the straight and narrow. To go within him, to explore his motivations, would arouse sympathy for him.

Yet Trollope, whose genius lies in the subtle delineation of the nuances of character, in its ironic contradictions, cannot resist going inside Melmotte. His inability to deny this call for complexity in character leads him to include whole chapters which minutely describe Melmotte's panic as his financial ruin nears, such as "Mr. Melmotte on the Day of the Election," "Mr. Melmotte in Parliament," "Mr. Melmotte Makes a Friend,""Mr. Cohenlupe Leaves London." We read, for example, in "Mr. Cohenlupe Leaves London,"

> He told himself over and over again that the fault had been not in circumstances,--not in that which men call Fortune,--but in his own incapacity to bear his position. He saw it now. He felt it now. If he could only begin again, how different

> would his conduct be!
>
> But of what avail were such regrets as these? He must take things as they were now, and see that, in dealing with them, he allowed himself to be carried away neither by pride nor cowardice. And if the worst should come to the worst, then let him face it like a man! There was a certain manliness about him which showed itself perhaps as strongly in his own self-condemnation as in any other part of his conduct at this time. Judging of himself, as though he were standing outside himself and looking on to another man's work, he pointed out to himself his own shortcomings. If it were all to be done again he thought that he could avoid this bump against the rocks on one side, and that terribly shattering blow on the other. There was much that he was ashamed of,--many a little act which recurred to him vividly in this solitary hour as a thing to be repented of with inner sackcloth and ashes. But never once, not for a moment, did it occur to him that he should repent of the fraud in which his whole life had been passed. . . . Though he was inquiring into himself as closely as he could, he never even told himself that he had been dishonest. In that respect he accused himself of no want of judgment. . . . But why had he not conciliated Lord Mayors? Why had he trod upon all the corns of all his neighbors? Why had he been insolent at the India Office? Why had he trusted any man as he had trusted Cohenlupe?[83]

This is indeed Trollope acting malgre-lui, revealing the double strain within himself, for our absorption in Melmotte--in any man portrayed with such empathy and irony, elicits sympathy in him, militating against the ostensible thrust of the book.

In an article called "Trollope Changes His Mind," P.D. Edwards notes that Trollope had originally planned a long courtroom trial for Melmotte. Instead, he abruptly has him kill himself, an act we are not permitted to see. We are

merely told that his body was found the next day and the novel continues working out the ramifications of this act, among others. No doubt Trollope became aware that too much interest was developing in Melmotte himself, and altered the course of the novel to abruptly deflect interest back to society and money--or Melmotte as symbol.[84]

Dickens had similar aims, and used much of the same material, but the difference in Dickens's Merdle is striking.

Which is more surprising: given Trollope's aim, and what we are led to expect from a man with his point of view--his traditional snobbish anti-middle-class humor and his use of the nouveau-riche stereotype--that at the end he cannot help but invest him with the dignity that complexity necessarily lends; or that Dickens alone among Victorian novelists fails to exploit the figure of Merdle for the amusement to be gleaned out of his ostentation?

In Little Dorrit, Merdle is a shadowy figure enough. On a "class" level, he is shown exerting immense power on England's institutions, illustrating what we have come to call the "institutionalizing of corruption." On a personal level, it is the purchased aristocracy, "the bosom" and her half-witted son, more than Merdle, whom Dickens repudiates. Merdle rattles around in his big house, not talking to anyone, afraid of his wife and of the butler, consuming

twopenny's worth of food, handcuffing himself--a pathetic rather than a vulgar figure. Dickens gives him almost the same treatment that Trollope accords Melmotte's unhappy daughter.

Whatever doubts Trollope may have suffered from, whatever doubleness of feeling led him against his very will and the drift of the novel to raise unsettling feelings in reference to Melmotte at the end of The Way We Live Now, in the main Trollope retained the point of view of a gentleman: a gentleman who could well afford (despite his true and commendable self-madeness) to mock a go-getter. Trollope was not climbing, he was merely regaining his rightful place.

Dickens in a way was climbing. Although Forster claims that one could as soon say that Dickens was not a writer as that he was not a gentleman,[85] Dickens himself plainly did not feel that way. And neither did his class-conscious contemporaries; Trollope for one would have disputed Forster's assertion. Many of his contemporaries made fun of him with his "dandified clothing"; ". . . a small compact figure . . . and dressed à la D'Orsay rather than well--this is Pickwick . . ." said Carlyle of Dickens when they met in 1840;[86] his dinners at Devonshire Terrace were "rather too sumptuous for a new novelist with a young

family . . ." Lord Jeffrey said.[87] Jane Carlyle writes home to her family that the Dickenses' table was far too elaborate, overloaded with fruit and candles and artificial flowers.[88]

There is no doubt that Dickens wants his heroes to get along; indeed he wants them to live "well." Self-denial was never his ideal. This receiver of the Christian tradition was also a worshipper at the shrine of "the Goddess of Getting On." Abnegation and aggression were his double inheritance. So where Trollope was able to use Melmotte as an example of boorishness, of middle-class vulgarity and aggressiveness, Dickens could not afford these luxuries. The difference in approach is clear.

One of the most interesting manifestations of the difference demands more study than this account can encompass: a discussion of "the big house--" the house that the increasingly rich man buys or builds for himself as the public statement of his newly acquired position. The humor inherent in this idea has led to an immense literature. Yet Dickens never avails himself of this tradition.

Love in a cottage may have been delightful on paper, but in real life Dickens was too bourgeois to take advantage of it. His own Swiss Cottage on the Gad's Hill estate had some of the Petit Trianon character about it.

Dickens had completely refurbished the Devonshire Terrace house in 1845, although he considered the estimated

amount of the cost of the drawing room "a staggerer. I had no idea it would amount so high. It really should be done; for as it is, it is very poor and mean in comparison with the house--and I have been 'going' to do it these five years."[89]

Ten years later he bought Gad's Hill Place. Since his childhood he had loved it and had dreamed of owning it. He paid £1790 for it, a huge sum.

In his novels, Dickens generally uses people's homes as a barometer of their inner state. The home of Dan Peggotty, Ham and Emily's uncle, is cosy and warm--an expression of love; in the same novel, the home of the Wickfields (however unhappy the father may be) is kept orderly and serene by Agnes, its "good angel," and is contrasted with Dora and David's ill-run, ill-managed house, an expression of their undisciplined lives. The homes of Jonas Chuzzlewit and Ralph Nickleby are squalid, dingy and ugly, indicating the squalor and miserliness of their inner lives. Even when Dickens shows us the sumptuous home of Mr. Dombey and his second wife, he conspicuously refuses to show it as a symbol of social climbing. Instead he uses its cold wealth as an index of the emotional coldness within it: Florence falls on the "marble floor" when her father repudiates her.[90] He even uses Merdle's

house in a similar way, contrasting its putative wealth and lavishness and ostentation with its nullity of real wealth or emotional riches. It is the picture of Merdle as a prisoner with all this magnificance that Dickens insists that we remember. The description of the Veneerings, as well as their name, emphasizes their below-surface emptiness, but does not necessarily repudiate their luxuries.

Dickens virtually never avails himself of the "big house" tradition. Where Trollope could afford to use it, Dickens felt he never could; it would strike--literally--too close to home.

Dickens may have lacked the habit of introspection, but he was no fool. By the time he wrote Our Mutual Friend he had a pretty clear idea of the dilemma he was caught in. His conclusions are by now extremely pessimistic; he concedes the impossibility of commendable self-madeness.

Both Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn are self-made men, but only Eugene, with his inherited advantages, can make himself into a "hero"--can get the girl, for example. To be sure, he has to change--make himself over--to be worthy of her: Lizzie Hexam's influence and the baptising waters must wash away the indolence and triviality that constitute his class heritage; he must replace them with a middle-class earnestness and desire to buckle down. But what

a wry comment on self-madeness! First, be born rich; acquire the graces and education that high birth lends; then, throw away the vices of the wealthy but retain their charms. Wrayburn has attained an admirable condition in a manner denied to Dickens, and to most of us.

For here Dickens is indulging in another prevalent fantasy: the dream of rejecting what in fact you cannot possess. It is a fact that people often feel they cannot reject something unless they first prove they have it. In American literature the most common manifestation of this syndrome is found in the "reluctant vigilante" tradition, in which the hero, a pacifist, must illustrate that he is actually the fastest gun in the west in order that his pacifist position shall have validity. Adolescents indulge in this sort of fantasy: "Let him come to me begging--I'll turn him down."

Part of Dickens knows this is emotional nonsense. He is thoroughly acquainted with "society," as exemplified by the Veneerings and their dreadful dinner-parties, and he thoroughly abhors it. Yet how he would love to be in the position to reject it from within. This is Wrayburn's enviable state.

Forster has remarked that Dickens was unable to find consolation for his domestic disappointments in "what

is called society. It did not suit him, and he set no store by it." This is indeed true. But as Foster so frequently does, after dismissing an attitude of Dickens's in a simple and truculent manner he goes on to qualify it sensitively:

> No man was better able to adorn any circle he entered, but beyond that of friends and equals he rarely passed. He would take as much pains to keep out of the houses of the great as others would take to get into them. Not always wisely, it may be admitted. Mere contempt for toadyism and flunkeyism was not at all times the prevalent motive with him which he supposed it to be. Beneath his horror of those vices of Englishmen of his own rank of life, there was a still stronger resentment at the social inequalities that engender them, of which he was not so conscious and to which he owned less freely. Not the less it served secretly to justify what he might otherwise have had no mind to. To say that he was not a gentleman would be as true as to say that he was not a writer; but if anyone should assert his occasional preference for what was beneath his level over that which was above it, this would be difficult of disproof. It was among these defects of temperament for which his early trials and his early successes were accountable in perhaps equal measure. . . . The inequalities of rank which he secretly resented took more galling as well as glaring prominence from the contrast of the necessities he had gone through with the fame that had come to him; and when the forces he most affected to despise assumed the form of barriers he could not easily overleap, he was led to appear frequently intolerant . . . in opinions and language.[91]

We know that part of Dickens was never comfortable with his own self-madeness. His fear of toadying was the obverse of the insecurities shown by the social climber. His

anomolous social position affected him uncomfortably throughout his eminently successful life. We would know this from his novels and their portrayals of self-made men, even if we did not have Forster's explicit statement.

His discomfort is most acutely expressed through Bradley Headstone, the other "self-made man" in Our Mutual Friend. His is, alas, the final picture we have of the conventional self-made man; conventional at least in that he is working his way up; not, like Eugene Wrayburn, down. The serious parts of this novel are presented in psychological, not moralistic, terms. The painful naturalism of this character study, in contrast to the fairy-tale aspects of the Bella-Wilfer-Boffin parts of the book--reveals how close Dickens is to it. The chinks in Headstone's stoic armor are shown; the exquisite pain that ridicule can inflict on such a man, especially when inflicted by a cool and nonchalant and sadistic member of a higher class--(heaven knows, Wrayburn is no angel)--may have been experienced by Dickens. The sense of isolation of the proud man without a class reflect his own sensations--since the days of the blacking-warehouse.

The entire mode of presentation of the self-made man has been altered. Bradley is no simple hero or villain. He is not simple at all: a complex, complicated, agonized man,

he is respected for what his will has led him to accomplish--raising himself from a background of grinding poverty to become a school-teacher. But one can make oneself over just so far, as Dickens had learned--and then human nature will refuse to respond to the demands of the will. Dickens was by this time very well aware of the limits of his own--or of any man's--nature, and of how far it may be possible to bend human material before it snaps. Self-madeness here--finally--is no longer viewed as good or bad. We are no longer presented with a choice between Cheerybles or Bounderbys. Self-madeness is merely one way--and a very hard way--to get along, to get ahead. Its limits are stringent, and its cost, as Dickens knew, very high.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Charles Dickens, Complete Works, Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 16, pp. 614, 615.

2. Ibid., p. 3.

3. Dickens, Complete Works, Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 14, p. 745.

4. Ibid., p. 746.

5. Dickens, Complete Works, Nonesuch Edition, Vol. 16, p. 10.

6. Steven Marcus. Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (New York, 1964), p. 230.

7. Ibid., p. 258.

8. Geoffrey Russell, Martin Chuzzlewit (London, New York, Toronto, 1951), Appendix.

9. Samuel Smiles, Lives of the Engineers (New York, 1868), vol. 3, p. 375.

10. Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, p. 258.

11. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 14, p. 525.

12. Samuel Smiles, Self-Help (Boston, 1863, p. 410.

13. Ibid., pp. 411-412.

14. Ibid., p. 411.

15. Edgar Johnson, Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph (New York, 1952), Vol. 1, p. 289; Aldous Huxley, Vulgarity in Literature (London, 1930), pp. 54, 55; Fraser's Magazine, April 1840, 381-400.

16. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 4, p. 10.

17. Ibid., p. 34.

18. Ibid., p. 52.

19. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 3.

20. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 9, p. 503.

21. Ibid., p. 605.

22. The middle class feared violence to property, as Bronte's Shirley and Gaskell's Mary Barton illustrate. Unfortunately, any effort of working people to organize was portrayed by the middle class as an inevitable prelude to violence.

23. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 13, pp. 195, 196.

24. Ibid., p. 124.

25. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 8, pp. 1, 2.

26. George Orwell, Dickens, Dali and Others (New York, 1946), pp. 45, 46.

27. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 8, p. 282.

28. Ibid., pp. 283, 284.

29. Ibid., pp. 219, 220.

30. Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, p. 323.

31. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 8, p. 386.

32. Ibid., p. 39.

33. Ibid., p. 39.

34. Ibid., p. 123.

35. Ibid., p. 455.

36. Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey, p. 324.

37. Colin Brooks, "Mysteries of the Dombey Family," The Dickensian, Vol. XLIV, Part I, Winter 1949, 1950, p. 31.

38. Thomas Carlyle, Works, Centenary Edition, Ed. H.D. Traill (New York, 1969), Vol. 10, pp. 271, 272.

39. Ibid., p. 272.

40. Ibid., p. 188.

41. Ibid., p. 31 ff.

42. John Ruskin, The Works of John Ruskin, ed. Cook and Wedderburn (London, 1903-12), Vol. XVIII, p. 434.

43. Matthew Arnold, The Complete Works, ed. R.H. Super. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960), Vol. 5, p. 130.

44. Ibid., p. 122.

45. Theodore Hook, Maxwell (London, 1830), pp. 64, 65.

46. Ibid., pp. 164, 165.

47. Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey (London, 1919), pp. 208-9.

48. Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947), p. 1.

49. Ibid., p. 10.

50. Ibid., p. 34.

51. Ibid., pp. 142, 143.

52. Ibid., p. 152.

53. James Pope-Hennessy, Anthony Trollope (Boston and Toronto, 1971), p. 191.

54. Ibid., p. 203.

55. Ibid., p. 167.

56. Trollope, An Autobiography, p. 92.

57. George Ford, Dickens and his Readers (Princeton, N.J., 1955), p. 107.

58. Anthony Trollope, John Caldigate (New York, 1907), Vol. 2, pp. 166, 167.

59. Ford, Dickens and his Readers, p. 107.

60. Anthony Trollope, The Prime Minister (New York, 1908), Book III, p. 86.

61. Pope-Hennessy, Anthony Trollope, p. 331.

62. Little Dorrit was written in 1857, The Way We Live Now in 1875, The Prime Minister in 1876.

Trollope's fears, however absurd they appear to us, because of his confusion of moral fiber with class lines, seemed to him justified by the facts. Indeed, the drift that he and Samuel Smiles both observed (drawing just opposite conclusions, depending on which class each one affiliated himself with) has been borne out by the facts. Until 1885, only seven peers were not drawn from background of nobility or gentry. Of these seven, created from the ranks of commerce and industry, three had made outstanding contributions to public service [pp. 9-11][pp. 11-12]. After 1885, people with backgrounds in commerce and industry represented almost 1/3 of the new peers (compared with 1/10 prior to 1855). These new peers had become rich in the machinery, railways, newspapers, chemistry, textiles, brewing, and of course banking. The fathers of some of these men were obscure immigrants; some were Jews.

Yet although symbolically the tone of the peerage altered--decayed, as Trollope would have thought--in sum there was not a great change. Also, peers sometimes now invested in industry.

In 1911, when the Parliament Act blocked the power of Lords, it sealed the fate of the political power of the nobility. It was in this way, really, coming as a result of complex economic and social changes, that the result Trollope and Smiles had foreseen really came into being: the aristocracy had indeed become a middle-class institution (p. 16). Ralph Pumphrey, "The Introduction of Industrialists into the British Peerage: Ã Study in Adaptation of a Social Institution," American History Review, Vol. 65, #1, October 1959.

63. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 8, p. 517.

64. Trollope, The Prime Minister, p. 1.

65. Ibid., pp. 1, 2.

66. Anthony Trollope, The Way We Live Now (London, 1951), Vol. 2, p. 448.

67. Trollope, The Prime Minister, pp. 35, 36.

68. Ibid., p. 37.

69. Ibid., p. 201.

70. Ibid., p. 159.

71. Trollope, An Autobiography, pp. 293-294.

72. John Forster, Life of Charles Dickens (London and New York, 1948), Vol. 2, p. 183.

73. Ibid., p. 183.

74. Humphrey House, The Dickens World (London, 1950), p. 29.

75. Grahame Smith, Dickens, Money and Society (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968), p. 168.

76. Johnson, Dickens: Tragedy and Triumph, Vol. 2, p. 888.

77. Trollope, The Way We Live Now, Vol. 1, p. 35.

78. Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 42, 43.

79. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 36.

80. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 85.

81. Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 330, 331.

82. Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 411.

83. Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 296.

84. P.D. Edwards, "Trollope Changes His Mind: The Death of Melmotte in The Way We Live Now," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XVII, 1963, pp. 89-91.

85. Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, Vol. 2, pp. 193, 194.

86. John A. Froude, Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London, 1834-1881 (New York, 1884), Vol. 1, p. 152.

87. J.W.T. Ley, The Dickens Circle (London, 1918), p. 102.

88. Jane Carlyle, Letters to Her Family, 5/17/49 letter to Jeannie Walsh. Quoted by Edgar Johnson, p. 666.

89. Johnson, Dickens: Tragedy and Triumph, p. 557.

90. Dickens, Complete Works, Vol. 8, p. 667.

91. Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, Vol. 2, pp. 193, 194.

CONCLUSION

"A sense that everything was possible to the will that would make it so": these are the words Dickens's friend John Forster used to express Dickens's reliance on his own power in determining his own fate. We know this statement to be in large measure true: his life illustrates the power of his will. Writing in exhausting monthly--sometimes weekly --installments; editing, performing plays and readings, fighting for control at home and abroad over his own creations; performing the offices of husband, father and friend, doing philanthropic work--his own unremitting labors are what he called on. In his life he came down strongly on the side of the doers, the potent accomplishers. He was one of the makers of Victorian England as truly as the railway magnates.

Yet everything in Our Mutual Friend contradicts Forster's assertion. Bradley Headstone is a self-made man, and a self-made man presented in naturalistic terms; he is unlike Scrooge, for instance, who is presented as a self-made economic man in a parable with ghost- story aspects. For

Dickens had by this time come to a sophisticated understanding of the price one pays for self-determination and aggression and a still more significant understanding of the limits of the will--significant in personal as well as novelistic terms.

Headstone is aggressive, hard-working, honest. But these characteristics will not save him. That Lizzie does not love him is pain, but that he cannot help loving her is his true agony. He is incapable of prevailing over himself. His will will not help him, either to achieve or to extirpate his passion. It consumes him.

Dickens, having earlier become infatuated with Ellen Ternan, had already written about a man with a passion in spite of himself, against all his well-being; against all reason, devoid of joy. In Great Expectations, under the influence of friends, he had produced a spurious happy ending; only by a gigantic suspension of disbelief or a gigantic reversion into childhood fantasy can the reader accept the notion of Pip and Estella enjoying domestic happiness together. But in Our Mutual Friend Bradley's end follows more realistically from his character. From the outset he is doomed to failure. For what is this uncontrollable passion but nature's revenge for his having so molded, so controlled and so subdued the other elements in himself?

Dickens understands this perfectly, for by now he sees ambition not in terms of morality, but more realistically, in terms of the enormous price that he has paid for getting ahead, for having to get ahead, for being, in a word, a self-made man, and the unquestionable success he was.

No longer is Dickens in the grip of the conflict between innocence and power. He no longer has to indulge in the old fantasies. They have one by one been discarded. Gone is the child-hero, the hero whose innocence is proven by his absence of will. Gone are cardboard figures pasted together in an attempt to fashion characters who are self-made, yet benevolent, like the Cheeryble brothers. The fantasies of the good fairy coming to reward the young man who tries hard are long past, and the truncated Dick Whittington pattern, which combines the need to prove that you have the will to work, with the purity you retain by not reaping the rewards of your own work. Even those long-suffering females have disappeared: Bella Wilfer is irritating, but she is no passive female heroine. And Lizzie Hexam, however long-suffering, is a lower-class heroine who even has to work for a living. Long gone are the simple schema of The Christmas Carol and Dombey and Son--in money, out love; or out will, in love--in which the successful making of money is seen in specific contrast to the

ability to love. The fantasy of adoption and education by a benefactor has never entirely been eliminated, for this fantasy dies hard--it operated as far back as Pickwick Papers, it flourished in Oliver Twist's Brownlee, in Bleak House's Mr. Jarndyce, and in David Copperfield and Great Expectations. In Our Mutual Friend it appears as the Boffin's patronizing Bella Wilfer, but in David Copperfield and in Great Expectations we find treatments of this fantasy more in line with our theme, for in both of these novels, we do see the operation of the will; in both of these novels, the direction of the will is exemplary; but in both of them the heroes have been rescued from the taint of aggressive self-madeness by the use of the motif of adoption, an adoption which gave them an education that removed them from lower-class grubbing about.

In Hard Times and Little Dorrit, the ideal of being self-made is upheld, but in Hard Times Dickens fails to convince us of the value of an ethic which appears to operate against the benefit of simple people. He shows us, apparently against his will, how their attempt to live by the self-help ethic brings them only increased misery. Throughout Little Dorrit the genuine respect meted out to Daniel Doyce, the Smilesian inventor, or "engineer," is set against Dickens's unremitting criticism of those who attempt to succeed by investment schemes.

The final fantasy of "self-madeness" lies in the portrait of Eugene Wrayburn, the high-born youth who makes himself over by rejecting his dilettante class. But this last fantasy, of rejection of the upper-class from within, so patently failed to satisfy Dickens's cravings that he presents Wrayburn's opposite number in painfully realistic terms. Dickens's wish--or will, or fantasy, whatever you choose to call it--is expressed here side by side with his reality, in a mature recognition that in the end, the conflict of innocence and power that he had so desperately to resolve in order to retain both his self-love and his self-respect --his image of self as good Christian man and strong powerful worker--was irrelevant to his reality, which was also the reality of Victorian England. It was--it is--not easy to reconcile the ideals of being self-reliant and of being self-respecting within a Christian tradition. To accomplish this feat, one must recognize the moral problem, not evade it with fraudulent claims of being responsible only to oneself, or the equally fraudulent claim that strength is evil. Indeed, such reconciliation involves understanding the nature of power, understanding that it is intrinsically neither moral nor immoral.

"A sense that everything was possible to the will that would make it so . . .?" Hardly. But no longer is the

will evil. It is merely one way, and a hard one, to have to operate. Dickens also knew by now the stringent limits of the will. Bradley Headstone may be self-made, but at the same time he is self-destroyed. For his aggression and the pain of his love are the two sides of the same coin.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

1. John Forster, The Life of Charles Dickens (London and New York, 1948), Vol. 1, pp. 34, 35.

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