PUBLISHING THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

A STUDY OF

THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS OF NOVELISTS AND PUBLISHERS

IN ENGLAND

1830--1880

DISSERTATION

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* * * * * *

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Introduction

During the years 1830-1880 many forces were at work enlarging the British reading public. For various economic, religious, and political reasons it had become desirable that even the lowest classes be taught to read, if only a very little. The result was that during these years a long step was made toward the final democratization of the reading public and the thorough commercialization of the publishing trade. For publishers rose in ever increasing competitive force to supply and, indeed, to help expand the needs of the new market—there was a great deal of money to be made—and authors appeared in even greater numbers to supply the needs of the aggressive publishers.

One literary form, the novel—the form which demanded least of its readers and which provided them with the most sustained entertainment—profited more than any other from these developments. The public's money followed its pleasure, and writers who were attempting to live by their work sought out that money, naturally. Playwrights, who could not earn a living in a theatre which dined off French meats, transferred their plots to the novel (and the

\[1\] This phenomenon was noted at the beginning of the fifty years here under study by that practical literary craftsman Bulwer-Lytton, who discussed the novel's new importance in his 1830 preface to Paul Clifford. See Edward G. E. L. Lytton, The Life, Letters and Literary Remains of Edward Bulwer, Lord Lytton (London, 1883), II, 261-62.
novels subsequently appeared as plays!); highbrow essayists found they could theorize there; poets discovered they could earn more money working in prose. The poor aristocrat in need of a few extra hundred pounds, the politician in need of a party, the churchman in pursuit of lost souls, the mother attempting to forget the loss of a child, the poor widow—whoever could put pen and paper together and make words did so, and wrote novels. Whereas in 1820 there were only about 26 new novels published, 1864 saw around 300 going into print.\textsuperscript{2} Everything, the system of distribution, improved manufacturing techniques, the publisher's willingness to supply and over-supply the market, the willingness of authors to write anything publishers would buy, combined to flood the nation with novels.

Developments such as these are worth study, and one way of studying them is to examine the economic relations of novelists and publishers in this critical age. In the encounter of Victorian novelist and Victorian publisher—an encounter which has been recorded in especially rich detail—the world of business and the world of art can be heard scraping together. Here the buyer and the producer meet. In his contact with the publisher the novelist comes face to face with the realities of his profession. If

\textsuperscript{2} George H. Ford, \textit{Dickens and His Readers. Aspects of Novel-Criticism Since 1836} (Princeton, 1955), p. 27. Ford's source is an unidentified newspaper clipping in the Forster Collection.
there is any question of compromise with artistic integrity, 
it will come to light here. Here the writer must decide 
what his attitude toward his public is. To what extent is 
he willing to seek out a public--and which public? To what 
extent is he willing to abandon his own artistic vision in 
order to create one which will attract customers?

My interest, primarily, is in the novelist as artist-
businessman. How did he fare? Could he live by his work? 
Did he try to? And if he did, what did that mean to his 
art? But to answer these questions we must explore the 
records of the publishing business. The history of the 
trade during these years plays both a direct and indirect 
part in the whole question of the novelist’s livelihood 
and his art. We will want to see, for example, in what 
forms and at what prices the Victorian publishers offered 
their wares, what efforts they made to expand the audience, 
and what kind of literature they found it most profitable 
to sell to that audience. We will need to see what the 
publishing trade did to increase the value of its wares 
for itself--its attitude toward the term of copyright, 
foreign markets, and colonial reprints--and the effect of 
this, if any, upon the public and the writer. Of course 
the income of the Victorian novelists must be given primary 
consideration. How much did they make from their work? 
Did publishers deal fairly with authors or did they take
advantage of naïveté or necessity to reduce the authors’ receipts, and thereby, perhaps, cause them to write faster and with less care than was good for their lasting fame? And who in this age of popular support was best paid among the "respectable" Victorian novelists—was it the man who thought contemptuously of the public and wrote "down" to it, or was it the author who maintained his artistic standards? Finally, what was the effect of the commercialization of literature upon the Victorian writer as a man of his age. What did it mean to him, as a member of a practical society which nevertheless held serious literature in high esteem, to join fortune hunting with the priceless stuff of art?

I have concerned myself with about twenty of the important novelists—including the best ones in terms of literary value—whose work took on its characteristic shape during the years 1830–1880 and whose careers began before 1860. All of these novelists were "respectable"; that is, they wrote for the circulating libraries and the responsible publishers. Important though they are, the relations of publishers with the other class of novelists—those who like G. W. M. Reynolds and the younger Pierce Egan wrote for the enormously popular penny press and who never intended to be read by the serious literary critics of their day—are not surveyed here and must await some other study.
Publishing Circa 1830

A leap of the imagination is needed to visualize the British publishing world of the early decades of the nineteenth century. What with our modern publishing houses, with their branch offices situated throughout the world, our international copyright laws, and our extensive national reading publics, the publishing world of the early nineteenth century appears at this distance much like the proverbial mustard seed, almost wholly potential. The business of bookselling in those years was simple and relatively informal, but it was also beginning to grow.

What strikes one immediately when looking at novel publishing before 1830 is that the high price of original fiction severely limited the market the publisher served. Respectable novels usually appeared in three-volume form and at a cost which was prohibitive. In Smollett's time, a buyer paid 2s. 6d. or 3s. per volume;¹ by 1812 the price had risen so high that Sir Walter Scott complained: "few people except princes can afford to marry or buy books without making their own eyes arbiters of the bargain."² At that time the cost was about 5 or 6 shillings per volume. Ironically it was Scott himself who drove the price


higher, first to 7s. per volume with his first novel, Waverly (1814), and finally to the peak of one-half guinea the volume with Kenilworth in 1821. This would not have been so critical a matter if the 3ls. 6d. price per three-decker had been reserved for so popular a writer as Scott. Unfortunately, Henry Colburn, a publisher who specialized in fiction, adopted the figure and it became standard.

There can be no doubt that the high price severely limited the number of book buyers. Only those with sufficient wealth and a desire to display it ostentatiously could afford to build a library. Since such persons were few and since the circulating libraries had not yet developed the tremendous clientele that was to be theirs in the ensuing decades, not many books were sold. The average edition of a serious book in the pre 1830's was 750 copies, and even during the mid years the average circulating library novel had an edition of only about 1,000 to 1,250 copies. The result was that around 1830 the "respectable"

\[\text{Altick, p. 263.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}See Theodore Besterman (ed.), The Publishing Firm of Cadell & Davies (London, 1926), p. xxxi, and Altick, p. 264. It is true that in 1852 Gladstone claimed no more than 5 per cent of new works sold over 500 copies (Hansard, cxxi (1852), p. 596), but John Murray immediately wrote him to flatly contradict the statement (George Paston [pseudonym of Emily Morse Symonds] At John Murray's: Records of a Literary Circle 1843-1892 (London, 1932), pp. 112-114).}\]
novelist and his publisher addressed a fairly narrow audience of well-to-do, not to saytonish people.

Before 1830 not only was the novelist’s market restricted to those who could manage the high price, it was also limited to those who lived in Great Britain. While theoretically British copyright protection (28 years from the date of publication or the duration of the author’s life, whichever was longer) extended throughout the British Dominions, in practice a demand had to exist before there could be any market, and none of any significance existed in the 1820’s. Moreover, no international copyright laws were yet in effect; all publishers could freely translate or reprint works first published in foreign lands. While this absence of applicable law did not prevent a British publisher from attempting to sell his books in France, say, the only foreign market that British publishers did try to capture was the United States, where the common language bond eliminated all translation costs. In the first decades of the nineteenth century British publishers freely exploited the American audience, but as the United States developed its own publishing trade, American sales by British producers declined greatly. Like other foreigners, American publishers did not have to pay British authors; unlike other foreigners they did not even have the expense of translation. On their native grounds they could sell
British novels at a price much lower than could the British publishers. By the 1820's, therefore, British novelists and their publishers were economically, as well as geographically, in a sea eneisled.

But even at home, British publishers were not completely safe. The import laws allowed a traveller to bring one copy of any foreign produced book into the country. While this law seemed fair enough, it easily became the loophole by which an illegal import business was carried on. It would sometimes pay a large French or Belgian reprinter of English works to hire "travellers" to cross into England with single copies of many different books. By this means the demands of circulating libraries and other interested parties residing near the coasts could be met. Just how seriously this method of importation cut into the publisher's home market there is no way of knowing, but, as we shall see later, the publisher complained that his profits were thereby reduced, and that high prices for novels and moderate fees for novelists were accordingly justified.

If the publisher's market in the 1820's was thus a limited one, his production expenses were higher than they had ever been. The cost of paper had doubled since the Napoleonic Wars had produced a paper shortage. Two-thirds of the total cost of an edition of 500 copies went for
paper. To this basic cost was added the paper tax: 3d. a pound. Moreover, printing was expensive. Printing-house compositors were among the best paid skilled workers in London; in 1801 they made 33s. a week, and in 1811 the rate went to 36s., where it remained until 1832. Steam printing was still not in general use for book production, and hand labor could turn out a modest 250 impressions an hour. Since only the most modern houses employed stereotypes, usually publishers had the expense of resetting the type whenever a new impression of a novel was called for. 5 Additional expenses had to be met besides those of production. In 1830, for example, the publisher was still required to donate to eleven libraries in the United Kingdom and Ireland one copy of any publication the libraries demanded. Then, too, since 1815 a tax of 3s. 6d. had to be paid on every advertisement no matter how small. Thus it is understandable that the price of books was higher in 1830 than it had been in 1812, although whether the 3s. 6d. charge allowed the publisher no greater margin of profit than was absolutely necessary at the time, it is impossible to say in the absence of figures on typical books.

As we shall see, publishing costs were to decline during the fifty years 1830-1880. On the other hand, in this latter period the publisher was to take on expenses which were not his in 1830. The publisher of the early nineteenth century did not have to send out travellers to the libraries and country booksellers; he did not even have to bind his books. Most of this work was handled by a middleman—the wholesale distributor. Joseph Shaylor has described the events of publication day:

The Libraries did not purchase the novels from the publishers, but from middlemen who were bookbinders, and much competition existed between these rival binders. The books were then issued by the publishers in sheets with a square label upon which was printed the title of the book and the volume, and it was a race with these binders who could get the sheets earliest and deliver them quickest to the libraries. Upon the issue of an important novel the publisher would supply the binder with sheets soon after midnight upon the day of publication, when the binder would have the covers ready; he would fold the sheets, paste on the label, and deliver the work complete to the libraries by eight o'clock in the morning. This was considered a wonderful example of business despatch...

The early orders of these distributing houses made up a very important part of an edition's total sale. For instance, of the 706 copies of Bulwer's Last Days of Pompeii which were subscribed (that is, sold in advance of publication), three distributors, Longman, Hamilton, and Richard-

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son, bought 451 between them. The same wholesalers bought 406 copies in sheets of the 769 subscribed copies of Maria Edgeworth's Helen. 7

But it would be misleading to imply that all a publisher had to do to sell his wares was to announce their existence. He still had to induce the booksellers to buy. This he did by offering attractive discounts. The pre-publication price of a 2ls. 6d. novel was 2ls. 3d., 25 copies as 24 (that is, each bookseller ordering 24 books would receive an extra book free). 8 To move works which were already published, and thus subject only to the usual trade discount, most publishers had "trade sales" once or twice a year. Although practices varied, the custom was to invite "selected" booksellers to dine with some of the publisher's more popular authors at a special dinner. In the eighteenth century, the booksellers were invited to make a day of it; in the early Victorian days, sales began later, following dinner and a "flowing bowl." Thus relaxed, and under the eye of the authors themselves, the booksellers would announce the number of copies they would buy of each work held up to their attention. The sale worked to the advantage of all. The publishers moved their books.

8Ibid., p. 35fn.
and booksellers made their purchases at rather less than the usual trade prices, receiving a further discount for cash, or, if they wished, credit at 3, 4, 8, 12, and 16 months, depending upon the size of their purchases. 9

Trade-sale dinners highlighted the years when book-making and bookselling were still small businesses. In the decades following 1830, publishing was to lose its intimate tone and to take on some of the impersonality of big business. By the end of the century the trade-sale dinner—which began to fall from fashion at least by the 60's--was but a memory for old publishers to wax sentimental over. 10

However, one method publishers of the pre-1830's used to attract business grew in importance as the years passed. The power of the well-placed advertisement was beginning to be understood by the more enterprising publishers. Colburn, for example, is said to have told Cyrus Redding that $100 laid out discreetly in advertising would ensure the success of any book—not so much because of the advertisements themselves, but because reviewers were inclined to


10Huxley, p. 163.
report favorably on works which had been promoted in the periodicals for which they wrote.\textsuperscript{11} William Jordan, longtime editor of the \textit{Literary Gazette}, gives supporting evidence that a well-placed advertisement could have a valuable effect. At least one author, asking him to retract an unfavorable notice, thought so: "Can I send some advertisements to your office? Can I expect an answer to this? Do be a good man. Benevolence and beneficence do so much good."\textsuperscript{12}

As the voluble Jordan reveals, there were other methods of getting good reviews. One could always threaten to take his advertising elsewhere, or do as the minor publisher Commo Orme did and hint that he would bring out a rival magazine of his own.\textsuperscript{13} Publishers naturally used the magazines they owned to further the sale of their books—sometimes at the expense of rivals. Cadell, for example, wrote William Blackwood in May, 1827, that, try as he might, he had been unable to get Blackwood's advertisements inserted in the \textit{Literary Gazette}, nor did he think he would succeed at all until after the Longman advertisements and those of Colburn had appeared. Longman

\textsuperscript{11}Henry Visetelly, \textit{Glances Back Through Seventy Years: Autobiographical and other Reminiscences} (London, 1892), I, 212.


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., IV, 21-23, 75.
and Colburn, together with Jordan, owned the Gazette.\textsuperscript{14}

For those publishers whose advertisements were not sufficient to sway the views of the Gazette properly, there were yet further means available. The genial Jordan relates how he had once upset his good friend Ackermann—the publisher of the first English annals—by a critical review of one of his publications. Ackermann wrote him protesting that the review was a "shlapp in the mouth" which was in particularly poor taste considering that he had just left some fine Moselle at Jordan's establishment. Jordan adds that the rift was made up, "for when publishers are kind, critics (whatever they may profess) are apt to be ditto." With proper self-righteousness, Jordan continues: "Except in the gross shape of money I seldom rejected and never was offended by well meant, and, I may honestly say, well deserved acknowledgments; and letters of thanks, personal courtesies, and even such material proofs, as books, prints, nay, game or samples of curious wines, etc., if offered with propriety, were received with pride and gratification. There was no prostitution in accepting honest tributes of this kind, the

\textsuperscript{14}Besterman, Cadell & Davies, p. 78. Colburn had such ownership influence on several magazines during his career. Besides the Gazette, the New Monthly Magazine, Court Journal, Literary Cleaner, United Service Journal, and even the Athenaeum felt his touch. In fact he helped start the Athenaeum as a rival to his own Literary Gazette because his one-third ownership had not prevented the Gazette from attacking one of his novels (Jordan, IV, 68-70).
value of which was great in the sentiment, though of small, if any possible, consideration in a sordid sense. 15

Offensive though it is, the purchased puff reflects something of the new spirit that had entered publishing during the early part of the century. In the eighteenth century the expense of producing a book was often divided among various booksellers. The owners might pay a share of the expenses for a share of the profits, take their share of the risk by buying a proportionate number of copies to sell themselves, or trade copies from their own publishing lists for copies from the lists of other booksellers. In effect, a publisher then was a bookseller who had, either on his own account or in company with other booksellers, arranged to see a work into print. About the second decade of the nineteenth century, however, there arose among booksellers, as Arthur Waugh says,

a sort of jealous tendency towards individual responsibility. One bookseller after another was fired by the ambition of drawing one of these brilliant young authors into his net, and of keeping him safe as his own private property. So Murray annexed Byron; Constable financed Walter Scott; and Longman gathered round him a bevy of outstanding promise and repute. As the separation between house and house became more marked, so the competition increased in vigour. One publisher bid against another; there was much fierce speculation; and the banks were called upon to advance

15 Jordan, IV, 243.
large sums to their publishing clients ... the trade, business, profession of publishing ... was fairly started on its career. 16

This publisher was something quite different from the bookseller-publisher before him. He was a trader who was willing to assume more and more of the risks of publishing in order to secure more and more of the profit. In the preceding years when the genus publisher did not exist, there was probably little zeal in the individual bookseller's efforts to push a work in which he had an interest of, say, 1/200th. A 200/200th share can make a man do vigorous and strange things. If under the old system profit seeking booksellers had worked their wares hard enough to drive out good writing by forcing, in Fielding's phrase, the public to "drink elder water ... because they can produce no other liquor," 17 what might not the full-grown publisher funnel down the public's maw? Even the worst of books could expect to receive full treatment by a man with such a comprehensive vested interest as the nineteenth-century publisher had. Thus, centering ownership in one man had its "values." It sold books; a fact of tremendous importance to the novelists who were to rise to supply the demand.


But the new publisher not only had his diner-outers, his puffers, his special ways to corrupt the critics; he not only knew how to push his line by advertising; he also knew how to move it by serving as the retail bookseller's banker. In Johnson's day it was the wholesale distributor who extended credit to booksellers;¹⁸ in the nineteenth century the publisher took this task upon himself and extended credit as much as sixteen months. Before we assume, however, that this new burden reflected a growing magnanimity upon the publisher's part, it should be said that the extended credit was not all money out of the publisher's pocket. He could extend credit to his customers because he himself demanded and received credit from his paper suppliers and printers. Actually, therefore, it was the printer and the paper maker who had to provide the money that financed the books, at least for their first months' journey.

Of course there were traps in this procedure to catch the incautious publisher and throw him flat. More than one publisher, having received from the printer a longer credit term than he extended to his own customers, failed to set aside the proceeds from a successful book to pay the printer for it (and for its less successful comrades); that

is, what he collected from Peter he neglected to pay Paul. For some publishers such conduct was more deliberate than accidental. As Visetelly reports, it was part of a regular system "for impecunious publishers and proprietors of struggling periodicals to get sufficiently deep into a wealthy stationer's debt as compelled him to find them both cash and paper, in the hope of saving the amount they already owed him from becoming irrevocably lost." 19

In any event, it is clear that the new publisher needed to put up no money to meet trade expenses until after a book had begun to make returns. The only expense the publisher might have to meet in advance was that involved in obtaining the manuscript. However, payment to authors rarely occurred before the date of publication, and even then it was generally made in bills payable in the future.

Nevertheless, the competition which developed among publishers during the early decades of the nineteenth century sent rocketing the fees paid to the most popular writers. Theodore Hook, for example, was astonished when Colburn offered him £600 to write a novel. 20 Miss Ferrier received £1000 from Blackwood for Inheritance. 21 and she

19Visetelly, II, 11.

20Michael Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction. A Bibliographical Record Based on His Own Collection (Cambridge, 1951), II, 125. The novel was Sayings and Doings, which sold 6000 copies at 3s. 6d.

21Tredary, p. 53.
reportedly made £1700 on her next novel, *Destiny*. Meanwhile, among poets, Byron was paid £2000 for the third canto of *Childe Harold*, and Longman offered Thomas Moore £3000 for a poem the length of *Bokeby*. Of both poets and novelists, Sir Walter Scott, of course, was the highest paid, his income reaching as much as £15,000 in one year.

But if the most successful authors were getting better wages than they had ever received before, writing fiction was not yet a decent and respectable occupation. Even the most popular writers had other sources of income, and they looked on authorship with a doubtful eye. Writing to Crabbe in 1812 Scott said, "I have often thought it the most fortunate thing for bards like you and me, to have an established profession and professional character, to render us independent of those worthy gentlemen, the retailers. . . ." No doubt one reason the literary calling was viewed askance was that literary pauperism—

25 *The Life of George Crabbe, by His Son* (London, 1947), p. 175. Lockhart reports that in one year and a half period, January, 1826--June, 1827, Scott earned at least £28,000. Scott himself wrote that "each novel of three volumes brings £4000, and I remain proprietor of the mine after the first ore is scooped out." John G. Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott* (New York, 1871), II, 513, 533.
which, like the poor, is always with us—more than offset the lush prosperity of the Scotts and Ferriers. Vizetelly remembered the professional literary man of the late 1830's as poverty-stricken. He could recall men "who were accustomed to spend a fair portion of their lives within the high walls of the Fleet or King's Bench prisons," and he himself ran proofs back and forth between his father's establishment and the prisons in which writers for his father's *Comic Almanack* were quartered.26

The blame for such indigence usually fell upon the publisher. Indeed in his relations with the author and even with other members of the book trade the publisher has been subject to reprobations since the day booksellers first gained pre-eminence in the business. In the first half of the seventeenth century, for example, we find George Wither, an embattled author who was fighting the Stationers' Company for the right to a monopoly over his own book, lashing out against booksellers in a way that was often to be emulated in the centuries to come. In his *Schoellers Purgatory* Wither claimed that "the Bookeseller hath not onely made the Printer, the Binder, and the Clasp-maker a slave to him; but hath brought Authors, yea the whole Commonwealth, and all the liberall Sciences into bondage. For he make all professors of Art labour for his...

26 Vizetelly, I. 110.
profit, at his owne price, and utters it to the Common-
wealth in such fashion, and at those rates, which please
himselfe." While Wither does acknowledge that there are
some honest stationers, he feels that too large a number
are represented by the man who "imagines he was borne al-
together for himselfe." Such a stationer, he concludes,
is "a dangerous [sic] excrement, worthy to be sutt off by
the State; to be detested of all Schollers; to be shun'd
of all the people; and deserves to be curtst, and expell
out of the Company of Stationers." By the late eight-
eenth century there were many authors who felt that
Wither's "Meere Stationer" had encompassed the entire
trade, and that the bookseller with a conscience was a
rare creature. As the satirist John Wolcott versified in
his Peter Pindar Odes:

Such, such indeed the avarice of the clan;
Fors'd, every minute of the hour,
To grind, forsooth, for them the flour,
And feed myself, alas! upon the bran.
Hard is their bridle—Lord! with pains I shrink;
Too hard upon my bleeding jaws they pull;
What shame that they, the lazy imps, should
drink
Claret and Burgundy from my poor skull;
And, with a saucy, satisfying sneer, 28
Bid me be happy upon dead small beer.

27 Quoted in Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling, pp. 117-122. Further evidence of the "hopeless economic pre-
dicament" of Elizabethan authors may be found in Edwin Haviland Miller, The Professional Writer in Elizab than

28 John Wolcott, Peter Pindar Odes.
Charles Lamb, in 1823, could not, like Wolcott, turn the rapaciousness of publishers into a bitter joke. To him the booksellers were "Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck." As a result of working for such employers, some authors he had known had starved, some went mad, "one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse." It is a "slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale and breasts of mutton, to change your free thoughts and voluntary numbers for ungracious task-work. Those fellows hate me. . . . I contend that a bookseller has a relative honesty towards authors, not like his honesty to the rest of the world."29

In much of this abuse booksellers were outrageously maligned as a group because of the conduct of a few; but if publishers did not literally drink claret and burgundy from poor authors' skulls, they certainly did lord it over the average writer. Patronage had really passed into their hands. In the eighteenth century, the important literary man could expect to be surrounded by a group of publishing booksellers; in the nineteenth century authors swarmed to the drawing rooms of the important publishers.30


30 Mumby, Publishing and Bookselling, p. 257.
What is more, the typical new publisher with whom novelists had to deal was a free-wheeling agent who, in Wither's phrase, imagined "he was born altogether for himself." Sadleir claims that it was Henry Colburn who wrought these changes by revolutionizing publishing in its every respect. According to Sadleir, Colburn had "no scruples whatsoever." "A gambling publisher," he regarded every author as having his price and the public as gullible fools." He would invent a book which he judged likely to be popular, "choose his author and offer a sudden dazzling fee for the copyright." He cared little about book design, little about craftsmanship. To him cheapest was best. He published on the principle of the quick turnover, and made a fortune (he died leaving £25,000). His servility was as calculated as his generosity. To the socially great he would crawl; to authors he wished to tempt or to placate, he was an open-handed paymaster. To those who were useless to his business, or who were his inferiors, he was hard and insolent. All of his actions were designed to bring in a profit.31

Such a description of the man who revolutionized novel publishing at the start of the Victorian period must cause us to look forward to that period with a wary eye. But it is rather hard to sustain the view that publishers gener-

31 Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 112.
ally during the nineteenth century were such villains as Colburn seems to have been. Nor does an examination of the important publishers of novels in 1830-1880 bear out the conclusion that they were evil men. After all, many practices which we today call unjust were then accepted as the custom of the trade. Business was business, and these men acted according to what light they had.

The chief cause of the difficulties that arose between author and publisher in this age, as in our own, was the fact that both men had to gain their livelihood from the same proceeds. The result was an almost inevitable friction. As one observer puts it: "The publisher is exploiting another man's work for their joint benefit, and while he brings to this work his business machinery, his experience, his skill in dealing with men, he is, at the same time, a trustee of the author's interests, and from the nature of the case, a trustee with endless business opportunities of working the partnership of trust in his own favour." 32

As we shall see, this concept of a "partnership of trust" was beyond the capacity of some Victorian publishers to imagine. And even among those who developed a sincere interest in individual authors, no one ever ignored his own pocketbook. There was no reason why he should.

32Huxley, p. 225.
But most Victorian publishers were concerned about making their own fortune first; to them the author might live as best he could.

As we shall also see, Victorian novelists met this challenge in one of three general ways. Some had other means of support; these wrote more or less when they pleased, and generally were satisfied with whatever they could get. In this group can be included the Brontë sisters, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, Charlotte Yonge, and Miss Jewsbury. Another group tried to beat the system by writing as many novels as they could and by practicing— with some exceptions—a pleasant docility to the publisher’s wishes. Here we must mention G. P. R. James, Ainsworth, Marryat, Charles Lever, Mrs. Oliphant, and Anthony Trollope. A few were satisfied neither to write as many novels as possible nor to accept whatever the publisher chose to give. The novelists who struggled to increase their share of the proceeds, and thus to improve the conditions of all authors, were led by Dickens, but included also George Eliot, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Reade.

Admittedly these three categories are arbitrary and not all-inclusive. Some writers, like Thackeray, Bulwer, Disraeli, and Meredith, will not fit any of the classifications and stay there. There is no doubt, however, that some writers fought for their rights and some did not. In
this latter group were not only the novelists who did not care to "taint their souls by bargaining," but also those who would have fought but who simply could not afford to. There have always been men who have felt constrained to accept an immediate handout rather than chance further hunger. In 1830-1880 too many publishers took advantage of such weakness. Yet, while elsewhere in his fields of interest the publisher saw everything going his own way, during the fifty years here under study the publisher had more and more to make room for the author.

Although nothing like equity existed when the fifty years were up, the 1880's saw the author in a much stronger position than he ever had been in before. By then "the avarice of the publisher and the envy and poverty of the author [had] created an impasse," which was broken when, for the first time, the publishers' union which had been in existence in various tangible and intangible forms since the sixteenth century finally had posed against it a union of authors, the Author's Society. In the 80's also, the literary agent came into existence, and since then, riding over the opposition of publishers, has made his influence a powerful one. Today's writer need not stand alone. The

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34 Ibid., p. 92.
literary agent can guide him surely in his negotiations with the publisher. The Victorian novelist had no such help. He signed his contract on his own. It is to the credit of both the Victorian novelist and his publisher that he fared as well as he did.

35 It would be a mistake to assume that the relationship between author and publisher is now ideal. In the past few years publishers have so succeeded in "a steady, stealthy and unrelenting campaign . . . to push down the royalty rates of authors" that a novelist in 1957 could not make as much money as he drew from the sale of the same number of copies before the war. The modern writer more than makes up the difference, however, in the receipts from his ancillary sales—T. V., radio, serial, films, etc. Modern publishers are attempting to encroach upon this domain by taking advantage of the new writer's weak bargaining position. In their contracts with such new writers, publishers are now inserting a clause which recognizes their right to "a proportion of the earnings a book may make in its various adaptations." John Hampden, ed., Book World Today. A New Survey of the Making and Distribution of Books in Britain (London, 1957), pp. 20-21.
The Interests of The Publisher

I--The Forms of Production

It is difficult to discuss the developments of the book trade in the years 1830-1880 without betraying an anti-publisher bias. To admit this bias, however, is not to relinquish a general appreciation of the publisher's point of view. There is nothing malicious, for example, in observing that the publisher's chief concern throughout these years was to maintain and increase his share of the profits his business produced. It would be unreasonable not to expect this to be so. Authors likewise, to the extent that they could act effectively, acted for their own gain. The public, also, as it was represented by government, occasionally acted for its own good and not necessarily for that of either author or publisher. Self-interest was in any case the operative force. While we acknowledge this obvious fact, we must also recognize that of the three parties—the publishers, authors, and public—the publishers had the greatest opportunity to translate their wishes into realities simply because of their general unity of purpose and their very real control over the organs of public opinion.

After all, the publishers were businessmen. If their businesses were successful they could afford to consider the interests of others. If they were doing little more
than make ends meet, they had to think first of themselves. Their position and its justification was as genuine as that. It was all very well for Daniel Macmillan, in the years before he became a publisher, to cry, "These wretched men--these publishers! What fools they are..." when the owner of the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* refused his request that an article he liked receive separate printing.¹ Experience with the business taught him the needs of prudence; at least we can suppose so from a comment his brother, Alexander, was to make several years later to a disappointed would-be contributor: "That is my business, to calculate what will commercially pay. Unless it will there is no reason why it should be printed."² And indeed a publishing business guided entirely by the most elevated lights was in danger of wandering like some cartoon character unconsciously over a cliff, there to tread the air with apparently purposeful strides until the darkness underfoot should force itself into his consciousness and he should fall with all the grace of a bankrupt. Toward the end of the century Kegan Paul was to record that his firm "for good or evil... always preferred to be literary and scholarly..."³ Paul's reward was to be swallowed up by


Routledge. The conclusion is obvious. If publishers looked out for themselves in the fifty years from 1830-1880, they had good reason. Nobody else would do it for them.

One of the ways Victorian publishers protected their own interests was by keeping the price of respectable first editions fantastically high. They were able to do so because the 3ls. 6d. price pleased the circulating libraries, supplying their raison d'etre; since few private individuals could afford to buy novels, those who wished to read them had to patronise the libraries. This in turn satisfied the publishers because, although their market for first editions was severely limited, the stable nature of the demand allowed them to calculate a book's chances fairly closely, while the high price made possible a substantial profit on minimal sales.

The importance of the circulating libraries in the economics of Victorian publishing, therefore, cannot be ignored. As early as the 1830's these libraries were a power to be reckoned with; by the 1850's and 60's their influence was simply enormous. By then Mudie had arrived to volunteer the services of his library to subscribers—even those living in the country—who would pay him only one guinea per year. W. H. Smith and Son had developed their network of bookstalls and lending libraries in the railroad stations across the country. These firms became
so powerful that, together with a third, the ill-fated Library Company, they practically monopolized the lending business, for most lesser libraries, though by no means all, succumbed to them.

The kind of business represented by the large companies is suggested by the size of Mudie's orders for a given title, which usually ran in hundreds. He purchased 1500 copies of the three-volume edition of Adam Bede, and 900 of the two-volume reprint. In a period of a little less than three years, 1858-1860, he bought 391,083 books, 165,445 of which were fiction; and in the ten-year period 1853-1862, he purchased almost 960,000, about half of which were novels. Furthermore some publishers enjoyed special contracts with the libraries. W. H. Smith & Son, for example, had a standing order with Routledge for 1,040 copies of each new work they published. These guaranteed sales were sufficient to assure the publisher of considerable profit. No wonder publishers swayed to the libraries' baton.

The libraries, enjoying so advantageous a position,

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5Mumby. The House of Routledge, pp. 140-41.
exact from the favored publishers special discounts beyond those extended to other customers. If the publisher offered no special discount, the libraries slighted his output—as can be seen from the fate of Eliot's works which were issued by Blackwood.

Blackwood was one of the last firms to offer library purchasers the extra discount. In fact, when, in 1858, Blackwood had induced Mudie to take 350 of Eliot's first book, Clerical Scenes, by giving him an additional 10 per cent, John Blackwood wrote Eliot to keep the matter secret. The extra percentage whetted Mudie's appetite, and for the next ten years or so Blackwood argued with him over discount, and even retail prices. When the time came to order Adam Bede, for example, Mudie insisted that Blackwood should give him the special 10 per cent regardless of the size of his purchase. As a weapon he threatened not to buy Adam Bede at all and to have his clerks answer any requests for the book with the statement that all copies were out.

In this instance, John Blackwood was so sure of his product that he held back for an order of at least 500 before allowing the discount. Emboldened to threaten a little himself, he warned that if Mudie "chooses to go to

war and tries to burke any book of ours, we may saddle his bones by an exposure of his 'Not at home' system . . . "7 Madie gave in on that occasion, but 1860 found him trying to dictate the price at which Eliot's next book, The Mill on the Floss, should be sold. He offered to take 3000 copies (he eventually did anyhow) if Blackwood would bring it out at 21s. Blackwood's comment to George Eliot shows that the 21s. 6d. novel was not all the fault of the circulating library. "Confound his impudence," Blackwood groused, "it would have been simply diverting something like 3000 times 8/-—from the pockets of author and publisher into his voracious maw."8 George Eliot and George Henry Lewes were in full agreement with Blackwood's resistance, and yet Eliot often naively enquired why both Madie and W. H. Smith and Sons failed to push her works.9

Eliot did not feel the full effects of the libraries' power until Felix Holt was published in 1866. John Blackwood told Eliot that the libraries "starved the book, or rather their customers."10 And Eliot reported a very revealing conversation Lewes had had with Frederic Chapman of Chapman and Hall: "Mr. Chapman . . . told Mr. Lewes

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7Ibid., III, 7, 8.
8Ibid., p. 297.
9Ibid., pp. 262, 371, 444.
10Ibid., IV, 207.
that W. Smith said to him. 'They are tearing us to pieces for Felix Holt.' 'Then why don't you get more copies?' 'Why, do you know what we give for them?--twenty-two and six pence' (with slow emphasis), 'Now,' said Mr. Fred. Chapman, 'I should do differently--I should offer it at 15/s per copy, and they would take no end.' Mr. Lewes said, 'I think Blackwoods are right.'" George Eliot added on her own that it was now finally clear "how . . . subscribers to libraries can get nineteen books they don't want, and can't get the twentieth which they do want."11

A like fate awaited the cheap edition of her works:

"I suppose the reason my 6/editions are never on the railway stalls is partly of the same kind that hinders the free distribution of Felix. They are not so attractive to the majority as 'The Trail of the Serpent'; still a minority might sometimes buy them if they were there."12 Later she was to muse, "I cannot understand why W. H. Smith does not use his stalls for better works, when they are known to be popular."13 Blackwood knew, and he was full of disgust: "The library system I feel to be a false one. It fosters the production of mediocre novels, but of a really good book each copy is made to do duty some hundred times

11Ibid., IV. 308-9.
12Ibid., pp. 308-9.
13Ibid., pp. 500-501; and see V. 441.
over." By 1872 Blackwood had given in on his discounts; his firm had not yet reached the 16s. fee Bentley said was all he could get from the libraries, but the asking price was down to 18s.  

Other firms had succumbed much sooner and, as Chapman had indicated, were glad of it. The libraries had become inordinately strong. W. H. Smith and Sons, for example, could hold out against any opponent. That firm bought up copyrights itself and arranged to publish the works under the Chapman and Hall imprint in order that other publishers should not know that many books in the Smith stalls were the firm's own property, giving a double profit. They carried on this collusion for a quarter of a century, when they finally sold their copyrights for £10,000. No wonder Eliot could say, "the cheap books that crowd the stalls are always those which look as if they were issued from Pandemonium." And no wonder W. H. Smith and Sons could wear down the opposition of recalcitr-

14 Ibid., IV, 352.
15 Gettman, A Victorian Publisher, p. 131.
transt publishers.

As the Publishers' Circular pointed out:

Great libraries ... are always under a temptation to take fewer of some books and more of others than are actually wanted. The difference in the price of books, the difference in discounts allowed by various publishing houses, will sufficiently explain this. In such a case it is, of course, the interest of the clerk at the counter to furnish the applicant, not with the work he came for, but with some other work of which there happens to be a large number of copies in stock. If the customer be content, it is difficult to see what motive the libraries can have for improving the system."

The consequence of this fact is apparent: the existing system did not reflect the actual public demand, for the libraries could exercise considerable influence over their circulation. Had the libraries been compelled to satisfy each customer's request, they would have been forced to buy new works "in quantities exactly proportioned to the public demand for them"—with the additional result that "the author who had written and the publisher who had issued a popular book, would then obtain the full benefit of their labour and enterprise . . ."22 As it was, the system ——

21 Publishers' Circular, XXX (1867), 89-90.

22 Ibid., pp. 113-114. In March, 1867, the Library Company claimed it had had a "Guaranteed Subscription" plan in effect for twelve months, under which plan every demand was met. The price for this service, however, was double the regular rate. The Circular said that this proved the public had been unreasonable in its complaint that the libraries did not supply them with any work they requested; if the public wanted such service they should be willing to pay the extra price, but they weren't.
worked to the advantage of those publishers who would sell their books at the greatest discount. Since these were usually the publishers who had bought manuscripts at a very cheap rate—such as the Newbys, for instance—and since very cheap rates generally signified poor or apprentice work, it is safe to say that the novels pushed off upon the public—the novels which thus helped to shape the public's taste—were the trash of the Victorian age. "They read," a commentator in the *Fortnightly* said of the public in 1886:

but they read from hand to mouth, as they get their rolls each morning from the baker round the corner. Except that the baker, being libera-
ly dealt with, always serves them as they wish; while in return for the starved sub-
scription to the library they most often put up with stones for bread in the most unwhole-
some of badly-baked pastry. Not that the lib-
rary should be blamed, for what can be given for a guinea? It can hardly be said that either the intellect or literary taste deteri-
orates under a course of inferior works, for neither one nor the other have ever been cul-
tivated. But having never learned to disting-
uish between good and evil, many of these cheap subscribers have actually come to pre-
fer mawkish sentimentalism or highly-spiced sensation.

The high-priced library three-decker in this sense at least was not a boon to English literature, but it paid the manu-
ufacturer and distributor of books.

Of course, throughout the period 1830-1860 there were scattered attempts to break the 3ls. 6d. price by publish-

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24 Alexander L. Shand, "The Novelists and Their Pa-
ers who felt they could get an increased share of the market by announcing books at greatly reduced rates. In 1833, for example, Smith, Elder's Library of Romance planned to give the public the same amount of text as the three-decker, but in one volume and at a price of six shillings. The venture was thwarted by the apathy and distrust of the circulating libraries and the retail booksellers. The libraries would not patronize a scheme which would undermine them. Booksellers, again, were too conservative to buy quantities of books which had not been sampled by buyers in the library form first. The public would not buy unknown original novels at 5s. The best authors avoided writing for the series since it could offer only £150 for the copyright of each work. And other publishers were reluctant to follow a policy which, as the editor of the series said, would force them to be more careful in what they published. 25 The Library of Romance began in January, 1833, and ended in August, 1835, having produced fifteen titles. Novel readers, as the Derbyshire Courier had warned a reluctant public when the series first began, were "condemned, for the term of their natural lives, to continue to pay exorbitant prices for the trash of New Burlington Street." 26

26 Quoted in Huxley, p. 16.
Richard Bentley, of New Burlington Street, was the next publisher who felt that the high price of fiction had checked the public's craving for books. But although he advertised in January, 1839, that he would reduce his price from 10s. 6d. per volume to 8s., the reduction prevailed only when the novel had originally appeared in magazine form. Bentley did not again bid for cheaper originals until 1843. In February of that year, the Publisher's Circular announced that one of the chief results of a new law— to be discussed later—prohibiting the importation of foreign reprints was to destroy the high priced first edition:

The legislature having put an end to this unjust traffic, Mr. Bentley has taken the lead among the eminent publishers of the day in lessening the high price which a circulation, narrowed by foreign piracy, of English works of fiction, hitherto rendered necessary. Relying upon the present increased protection of the law, Mr. Bentley has now determined to issue his future works of fiction at little more than half their former cost.

These new stories were to be by Cooper, G. P. R. James, and Mrs. Thomson (author of Widows and Widowers). James's new novel, The False Heir, was indeed announced in three volumes, at 21s., but his next, Arabella Stuart, came out at the old 31s. 6d. price, as did Cooper's Wyandotte and Mrs. Thomson's Rualand Castle. Thus, within two months the

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27Athenaenum, XII (1839), 1.
28Publisher's Circular, VI (1843), 45.
29Ibid., pp. 7, 15, 29, 287, 389.
price reductions the new law had brought to the British public had been quietly wiped out.

Two years later Chapman and Hall's Monthly Series (1845-48) promised to issue original novels in four monthly parts at 3s. each. The completed novel would contain as much text as the three-decker, but would be published in two volumes at 14s. The series quickly ran into difficulties, and in September, 1846, the part issue was abandoned and the cost per set was raised to 18s., or mighty close to the 21s. price for two regular library volumes. Two years later the firm felt it was best to return to the orthodox price and, as Sadleir has said, to publishing without "any idealism." 30

There were other attempts to break the price barrier, but they all failed. 31 The trade refused to support the change, the libraries were hostile, and the public remained apathetic.

Meanwhile a second threat to the policy of expensive first editions arose from the independent booksellers. So long as booksellers maintained the "net" price advertised by the publisher—the book industry's equivalent to our modern "fair trade" prices—no danger to the guinea-and-a-half novel existed. When a few booksellers stole a march

31 See Sadleir's discussion in XIX Century Fiction, II, passim.
on their competitors by selling much below "net," however, a real threat to high prices existed; for if a price war became general, the public might find that it really liked the lower charges.

The first break in the net price arrangement for first editions occurred around 1828-29, when some of the less "select" booksellers began undercutting their colleagues. The Committee of the Booksellers' Association, which had been formed in 1806 to oppose the activities of the first remainder merchant, James Lackington, again became active in protecting, as one victim said, "their own interests, at the expense of those of the public." They laid down confidential regulations to which all booksellers had to subscribe if they wished to continue buying books from publishers at the regular trade discount. The committee hired spies to discover whether books were actually being sold at less than authorized prices, and also to discover who supplied books to those merchants who had been blacklisted. Because the committee kept the regulations secret from even those it demanded should subscribe to them, a kind of reign of terror was said to exist, for a bookseller might find himself denied trade prices merely because "his shop was within a few doors of that of his persecutor."

This Association continued to work more or less openly until 1832 when it was forced underground by an expose'
in Babbage's *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures*, which discussed its practices under the chapter heading: "Combinations of Masters against the Public." After several years of intermittent activity, the group again began to assert its authority in 1848. Declaring its right to regulate the conduct of all booksellers, the committee issued a new trade ticket without which retailers could not get their usual discounts. To obtain the ticket purchasers had to agree to comply with the publishers' regulations.

Although most booksellers fell in line, the new rules did not go unchallenged. One bookseller who was also a publisher, the maverick John Chapman (not of Chapman and Hall), resisted the Association's efforts to determine the price he should set upon foreign books. When his ticket was taken up, he fought back by printing a lengthy article on the subject in the *Westminster Review*, which he published. Of even greater importance, he enlisted the aid of authors and politicians to help break the price stranglehold, and the struggle became public. Most London papers, counting publishers among their largest advertisers, defended the association. Only the *Athenaeum* and the *Times* attacked it. Gladstone now took the matter up in parliament, and in a speech on the paper duty unveiled the book trade's combination "against the public." Dickens meanwhile served as chairman of a group of authors who met at
Chapman's house to urge abolition of the association. As a result of all this controversy, the publishers agreed to submit their case to a special committee consisting of Lord Campbell, Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench; Dr. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's; and George Grote, historian. After two meetings, and with public opinion now running heavily with the undersellers, the arbitrators decided unanimously against the association, and in May, 1852, it met and dissolved. 32

Though the ticketing of booksellers now formally ceased, the practice of combining against undersellers continued to a modified extent. Chapman himself found his products boycotted by a sour trade. 33 And others complained that publishers refused to sell them books if they offered the public large discounts. 34 Nevertheless, underselling became widespread, the discount going as high as 25


33 Haight, George Eliot & John Chapman, p. 54.

34 Joseph Shaylor, Sixty Years a Bookman, with Other Recollections and Reflections (London, 1923), pp. 141-42.
per cent. 35 Such undercutting, Macmillan said, was one reason publishers were forced to price books high; they had to "calculate . . . for the large allowances to the trade which these discounts to the public necessitate . . . ." 36

Obviously, as Macmillan's comment indicates, a considerable difference existed between the 3ls. 6d. price tag on three-deckers and their actual production costs. Surely the distance between costs and possible returns widened during these fifty years. George Bentley, writing in 1896, estimated that the price of paper itself was then five times lower than it had been in 1835. 37 Bindings also became cheaper to produce as the decades passed. In 1846, for example, 100 demy 8vo. cloth casings, lettered on the back and stamped blind, could be had for 75s., while 100 foolscap 8vo. bindings, similarly prepared, sold for 50s. In 1856 these were available at the lower rates of 50s. and 20s. per 100 respectively. 38 Similar reductions occurred in the cost of binding the post 8vo. volume.

35 Altick, p. 305.
36 Graves, pp. 286-88.
37 George Bentley, Some Leaves from the Past (1896), p. 92.
the typical volume of the three-decker. In 1845 100 bindings sold at prices ranging from £6-2/3s. for lettered back and stamped blind sides, to 100s. for full gilt. In 1874 Bentley told one of his authors that his cost would be 50s. per hundred, while in 1873 he had actually paid 38s. per hundred for the binding of Rhoda Broughton's *Nancy*.40

Again, the cost of printing decreased during the half-century here under discussion. Firm figures are hard to come by and prices varied from book to book, but a brief comparison will illustrate the change. In 1845, the writer of *The Author's Hand-Book* claimed that 1000 sets of a three volume novel containing 312 pages per volume could be printed for as little as £121.41 In 1873 Bentley had 2250 copies of *Nancy* printed for £134. Even more revealing, the printing of 2000 copies of Wilkie Collins's *Poor Miss Finch* (1874) cost Bentley only £87 18s. 6d.42

Besides savings in manufacturing costs there were reductions in the taxes levied on varying phases of the publishing business. In 1830, for example, the publishers bore a severe paper tax of 3d. per pound. This tax was cut

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39 Churton, p. 42.
41 Churton, p. 39.
42 Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher*, pp. 119, 126fn.
in half in 1837 and eliminated altogether in 1861. 43 The effects of the reductions were reflected in the cost of paper--a reduction of about 9s. per ream occurred after the 1837 cut alone 44--but the saving was never passed on to the book buyer. 45 Again, the tax on advertising, which in 1830 amounted to 3s. 6d. on each advertisement, was a grievance to publishers. The Westminster Review, and others, argued quite cogently that this tax was one of the chief causes of high book prices. Some houses spent between £70 and £150 advertising each of their productions, and the Westminster estimated that literally half of the cost of advertising was accounted for by the tax. 46 But when the tax was removed nothing happened to the retail price of new editions.

Thus the gap between production costs and first edition prices widened throughout these fifty years. Nevertheless it is impossible to say with certainty that the publisher’s real profits actually increased, since, as we have seen, publishers were forced to give greater and greater discounts to their wholesale purchasers as time went on.

43 Altick, pp. 277-78, 306.


45 Dickens had declined to fight these so-called “Taxes on Knowledge” because he felt that this would be the result. The reduction would have only a fractional effect upon each copy, and so publishers would simply pocket the savings. See Walter Dexter, The Letters of Charles Dickens. The Nonesuch Edition (1937), 11, 373.

Before we can arrive at any firm conclusion on this point we need more figures than are presently available. The difficulty involved in determining whether the percentage of profits increased can be illustrated by a few comparisons. On the one hand, in 1847, 2250 copies of Disraeli's Tancred (Colburn) made a profit of £1550,47 while in 1873 2191 sets of Rhoda Broughton's Nancy (Bentley) produced £1463.48 This would suggest that although the publisher's expenses were decreasing his real profits did not increase.

On the other hand, 948 copies of Trollope's Three Clerks (Bentley, 1858) cleared £344, while projected figures show that a like sale of Mrs. Linton's Christopher Kirkland (Bentley, 1885) would have made about £650.49 No doubt many factors were at work to cause such varying figures as these, and quite obviously we need more information, but there can be little doubt that the distance between costs and at least possible profits was great. The receipts needed to pay for the manufacture of editions which sold out ranged from 43 per cent for Trollope's Three Clerks to about 20 per cent for Broughton's Nancy.50 If we set be-

48Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, p. 126.
50Ibid.
side these figures the 72 per cent of receipts which manufacturing costs consumed in 1956, we can clearly see the huge profits available to Victorian publishers. It is not surprising, therefore, that by one argument or another, the trade kept the 3ls. 6d. edition alive until 1894 when the circulating libraries issued an ultimatum to the publishers that within six months the retail price per volume must be reduced to 6s. When the change occurred publishing became much more of a gambler's enterprise than it had been for half a century.

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The circulating libraries remained the chief outlet for original novels in book form during the Victorian period. But during this half-century, original novels were not only issued in book form. For the first time on a large scale, they were also offered as serials. The serialization itself could take two forms—either that of the magazine issue, with which we are familiar today, or the numbers issue, in which instance the novel would be published in nearly equally divided parts over a period of from twelve to twenty-four months. Because of their cheaper cost, both of these vehicles—and particularly, at first, the numbers serial—reached an audience virtually

excluded from the purchase of the guinea-and-a-half complete work, and more than likely excluded from the circulating libraries' lists. Potential customers could more easily part with one shilling once a month than they could with twenty or thirty-one shillings all at once.

Actually it was because this wider potential audience had come into existence that novels could be offered in this second form at all. Until a publisher could reasonably expect that a serial run might increase the circulation and value of his magazine more than it would decrease book sales, there was no economic justification for a first production in serial form. Indeed the widened reading public and the serial publication worked upon each other—the enlarged market, because of its willingness to buy, making possible serial publication; and the serial publication, because of its cheaper price, helping to enlarge the reading public.

It was in 1831 that a monthly magazine first made serial stories a regular feature, and it is symptomatic of the conservatism of the publishing trade that this new vehicle for the novel was first employed consistently by an author-publisher and not by a regular publishing establishment. Beginning in 1831, Captain Marryat used his Metropolitan Magazine to merchandise his creations; and for the next six years of the magazine's life, no issue
lacked one of the Captain's novels in the process of unrolling. Nevertheless, it was not until Bentley began his Miscellany in 1837 that the practice of serializing original novels was taken up by the independent publishing houses and pushed appreciably. Following the Miscellany's success with Oliver Twist and Lover's Handy Andy, other half-crown magazines took up the practice, and by 1840 the new serial story was a regular feature, often the most important one, of most of the half-crown monthlies. 52

This new serial, however, at first did not greatly alter the price structure. People who could pay a half crown for one issue of a magazine were not getting much more for their money than were those who could pay the entire guinea and a half for a three-decker, although, of course, the magazine included other materials than the current chapters of the leading novel. Made up in volume form, a four instalment story at best could be stretched into one volume length, and a twelve instalment tale might possibly be made into a thin three-decker. By the time the subscriber had paid his thirty shillings for the twelve issues, he had paid the retail price of the regular library

novel. All that he had gained was the illusion of thrift.

On the other hand, the serial in number form really
did tap a market that was wider than the one served by the
libraries. At first considered an inferior form of publica-
tion, the number serial became respectable entirely
through the accidental, happy juxtaposition of an ambitious
fringe publishing house and a marvellously talented ap-
prentice author. Before Dickens's Pickwick began its par-
titioned appearance in 1836, the public paid its shilling
per number to enjoy the art work of these part publica-
tions; and just as readers of our modern picture magazines
ignore the letterpress, most of the buyers of the pre-Pick-
wick numbers ignored the text. Dickens himself had been
hired chiefly to supply the letterpress for the artist Sey-
mour's pictures; but the triumph of his tale changed all
this. After Pickwick the buyers bought the story, and the
part issue became a popular vehicle for original novels.

Considering the price of the three-decker, the buyer
of a novel issued in numbers certainly got his money's
worth. Issued at one shilling per number, the complete,

53 Phillips, Dickens, Reade, and Collins, p. 55. Of
course, if he wanted to, the reader could buy all twelve
issues of any one year bound up in two volumes (not three)
at the reduced price of one pound seven shillings; but
there was no guaranteeing that his novel would be completed
within the span of the calendar year. Ainsworth's Magazine
is advertised at this price in the Publishers' Circular, VI
(1843), 9.
unbound, twenty-part novel cost the buyer 20s. instead of
the 3s. 6d. charged for the same quantity of print in
three-volume form. Bound in two volumes, the twenty-part
Dickens novels sold for 21s., as did Thackeray's *Vanity
Fair*. Other prices might run up to 26s. In each case the
total sum included the original pamphlet price and a charge
for binding. More important than the final book cost was
the 1s. price per part. It was this which enabled the
number issue to successfully lighten the purses of the
readers who, as *Fraser's* put it, found it "so convenient
to pay one's cash as it comes— in driblets."55

While the 1s. number issue did not displace the three-
decker, it did compete successfully with the half-crown
magazines. The competition was to the public's benefit,
for it meant that publishers would seek out still cheaper
ways of bringing the serial to them. The monthly magazine,
however, was not to capture the serial market until late
1859 and early 1860 when *Macmillan's Magazine* (November,
1859) and *The Cornhill Magazine* (January, 1860) hit the
stalls at a cost of one shilling each. With Hughes' *Tom
Brown at Oxford* to help launch *Macmillan's*, and with
Thackeray's editorship to adorn *Cornhill*, both magazines

55 *Fraser's Magazine*, XLIII (January, 1861), 75.
were immediate successes, the Cornhill touching a high of 110,000 to 120,000 with its first issue. 56

The success of these magazines was to mean the end of the market for new novels in parts. Cornhill and Macmillan's beat out the field by selling both the popular serial of the numbers issue and the non-fictional ingredients of the serious magazines at the regular price of the numbers issue alone, 57 so that the public got for 1s. what had formerly cost two and even (in the case of the quarterly reviews) six shillings. 58 On the publisher's side, the good will created by a successful novel could be capitalized upon in a magazine, for the audience did not disperse when the serial ended. Quite naturally, therefore, when the part issue was no longer more profitable than the magazine the number form was dropped.

The change did not take place overnight. In fact, other experiments were to be made with the part form. For

56 Huxley, The House of Smith, Elder, p. 119; Phillips, Dickens, Reade, and Collins, p. 3.

57 Actually, the public got more of a novel in the part issue than in the magazine. Although the quantity of text varied, the usual unit for a one shilling part novel was two sheets per instalment, and sometimes three, while the usual unit for a novel in the 1s. Cornhill was one-plus sheets. In the 2d. weekly All Year Round, the allotment was about ½ sheet per issue. See Phillips, p. 55; and Graves, Macmillan, pp. 120-21.

58 Huxley, p. 89.
example, Trollope's *Last Chronicles of Barset* and *He Knew He Was Right* first were issued in modest 6d. weekly numbers, while Eliot's *Middlemarch* came out expensively in eight 5s. parts—an innovation Blackwood could safely try because the volumes were large enough for circulating library use and Eliot was a popular writer. But after Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* and Trollope's *Prime Minister* were issued in part form in 1876, no important novel was first published in that way.  

Meanwhile, part publication had served to increase the paying audience for books and thus to enlarge both the author’s and the publisher’s income. With the success of the shilling magazines in the 60’s, the demand for novels increased tremendously. New magazines such as the *Argosy* (1866), *Belgravia* (1866), and *Saint Paul’s* (1867), catered almost exclusively to the growing taste for fiction. While in the 1850’s, Dickens’s *Household Words* had only occasionally regaled its subscribers with a serial, in the next

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59. *Publishers’ Circular,* XXXI (1866), 643-44. This was not the first venture in weekly part publication, however. Back in 1843, J. K. Chapman brought out Lady Blessington’s *The Exile* in three numbers of his 9d. *Chapman’s Weekly Magazine.* The law stopped him on the general ground that the venture was a newspaper. Then too, *Master Humphrey’s Clock,* issued in weekly portions, also developed into a disguised kind of part publication. See Pollard, "Serial Fiction," p. 259.

60. Pollard, p. 262.
decade the novel became a staple ingredient of his 2d. weekly *All the Year Round* and of its similarly priced competitor, *Once a Week*. Through these means original novels by some of the very best Victorian writers were made available at extremely low prices. For example, *A Strange Story*, *The Woman in White*, *No Name*, and *Great Expectations* were published in *All the Year Round* at a total cost to the subscriber of 4s. 4d., 6s. 6d., 6s. 8d., and 4s. 4d. respectively. 61

By 1860, therefore, the market available to the publisher and author was a tremendously widened, though splintered one. At one end of the spectrum were the readers of the *Fortnightly*, *Blackwood's*, *Macmillan's*, and *Cornhill*. At the other end were the 2d. weeklies, the 6d. monthly ventures, and, operating on a very distant level, the 1d. novel papers which served the millions who made up "the unknown public." 62 Even this market had been entered by a few of the "respectable" novelists of the age. As early as 1856 Reade's *White Lies* appeared in the *London Journal*--a periodical which, along with the *Family Herald* and *Reynolds' Miscellany*, had been serializing fiction by

61 "Sensation Novels," *Quarterly Review*, CXIII (1862), 513 fn.

less "literary" authors since the mid-forties.63

Alongside the potential market offered by the ld. weeklies was that of the newspapers. The London papers in fact had started the practice of serializing novels as early as 1840 when Marryat's "Joseph Rushbrook" was brought out in the 1841 the Sunday Times gave Ainsworth £1000 to issue his Old Saint Paul's weekly throughout the year, and, in 1848, repeated the venture with £1000 more for his Lancashire Witch. In 1867, the Publishers' Circular reported that it was a growing fashion among provincial weeklies to print novels by writers in good standing. According to the Circular, Tom Hood's The Golden Hunt had originally appeared in a large Birmingham paper. Currently, Edmund Yates had signed for a new novel in the Liverpool Leader.64 Original newspaper publication did not flourish, however, until the arrival of the newspaper syndicate, which, because it distributed the cost, could afford to pay authors well. Tillotson's "Fiction Bureau" thus pioneered original serial fiction in the weekly and daily papers, syndicating in the 70's and following, works


by such writers as Wilkie Collins, Trollope, Miss Braddon, and Charles Reade.65

After the 1830's, therefore, there were many ways of issuing a novel, each designed to appeal to a somewhat different audience. A work might first appear in weekly and monthly parts before appearing in volume form; it might first seek out its market as a magazine or newspaper serial; it might make a combination of these journeys, and appear successively and even jointly as a magazine serial and a numbers serial before turning into a circulating library three-decker. While the text of the novel might be altered between versions,66 for the general public the only difference between the issues was the package. Nineteenth century publishers and novelists learned how to get the last penny from their wares.

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One further means of broadening the novel reading public occurred during the years 1830-1880. The practice of issuing cheap reprints of successful contemporary works seems so sensible to the modern mind that it is hard to believe that it did not originate until the years here under


66 See Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, pp. 50-51; Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction. II, 95; and John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work (London, 1957), passim.
study. Yet such is the fact. Until Cadell launched his Author's Edition of the Waverley Novels in June, 1829, no living novelist had had his comparatively recent works (less than ten years old) reissued in a more popular form than the three-decker. Cadell broke new ground with his experiment. In doing so he established a pattern which was quickly followed on a broader scale by the recently formed partnership of Colburn and Bentley. Cadell had issued the Scott in monthly volumes at 5s. each, and at two volumes per story; Colburn and Bentley's Standard Novels, an avowed Companion to the Waverley, differed from its model in that each monthly volume sold at 6s. and usually contained a complete novel by one of many popular writers. When Cooper's The Pilot led off the series in 1831, The Spectator called it a phenomenon, and the Literary Gazette, naturally, piled its praises high. The Pilot had been first printed only seven years before. 67

The new series, therefore, was a real innovation. It was the first sustained attempt by any publisher to exploit a cheaper market for his popular books. Nevertheless, successful as the Colburn and Bentley series was, it did not have a competitor until 1835, when Colburn, having sold

67 Ibid., pp. 91–93. The only other Cooper novel to be reprinted earlier at a cheaper price was his Spy, which had been pirated in one volume at 6s. 6d. in Whittingham's Pocket Novelists (1828).
Bentley his share in the Standard Novelists when the two split company in 1832, returned to the market with his Colburn's Modern Novelists. Not until 1841, when Blackwood's Standard Novels series was begun, did a third publisher enter the field. No doubt high production costs kept many publishers from venturing into the reprint field in the 1830's and early 40's. By midcentury, however, as we have already seen, new manufacturing techniques had been developed which made possible very cheap books, and with these inventions really cheap reprints quickly materialized.

It was an Irish firm which broke the price of the reprints. In 1847, Sims and M'Intyre issued volume one of their Parlour Library at a charge of 1s. in boards and, a little later, 1s. 6d. in cloth. While its first novel was a new work, the Library became chiefly a reprint series with original titles appearing only occasionally. The Library was immediately successful. By 1849 Bentley had been forced to reduce many of his Standard Novels to 3s. 6d. and 2s. 6d.; Colburn and Blackwood followed suit.

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Other publishers invaded the Parlour territory. The first imitation was Routledge's Railway Library, begun either December, 1848, or January, 1849. It was followed in February by George Slater's Shilling Series. In December, 1849, Chapman and Hall countered Sims and M'Intyre's announcement of a "Parlour" G. P. R. James with their own special edition of a "Shilling Ainsworth." 70 In 1850 Slater produced a Shilling Library for Parlour Table and Railway Journey, combining the titles of the earlier successes. Other shilling series and collections poured out: Bohn's Shilling Series (1850), Grant and Griffith's Favorite Library (1850), a "Shilling Disraeli" (1851) by David Bryce, Bentley's Shilling Series (1851) at 1s. 6d. and 2s., Visetelly's 1s. Readable Books (1852), Sims and M'Intyre's 6d. Books for the People (1852). 71

So great was the success of the shilling reprints that Bentley allowed his Standard Novels to die on the vine; only four new titles were added between 1853 and the series' end in 1855. 72 At the shilling stage, the sales——

70 Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 105-06.
72 The cheaper publishers were now invading the "Standard Novels" market. Routledge began its Routledge's Standard Novels in 1851—bringing out as their first fourteen volumes works which had appeared in two volumes in the Railway Library. These were now reissued in one volume at 2s. 6d. Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 99, 169.
of the more popular works were huge. Bulwer's *Pelham* had been first published by Colburn in 1828 at 3s. 6d. In 1852, Routledge printed it in his 1s. 6d. Railway Edition and, according to Mrs. Leavis, within five years sold 46,000 copies. By 1855 the format of various cheap reprints had become standardized and the bookstalls which featured inexpensive fiction were enlivened with the gaudy gleams of the "Yellow-Back"—a book which usually combined the following characteristics: content, fiction; price, 2s.; basic coloring, yellow. The size of an ordinary yellow-back's first printing indicates the extent of the broadened market. Whereas the circulating library novel averaged an edition of 750 to 1500 copies, a first printing of a yellow-back ranged from 1000 to 5000 copies, and, occasionally, from 7500 to even 10,000 copies. By the 1880's sales had become even larger. The 2s. and 1s. form for the cheap reprint was being replaced by the 6d. version, with a corresponding change in distribution. In 1886 Routledge was said to have printed nearly six million volumes of fiction within a single year. Of these 42,000 were of Dickens; 60,000 were Marryat productions; 65,000

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73 Mrs. Leavis reports that in seven other editions ranging in price from 6d. to 3s. 6d. between 1859 and 1893, Routledge sold 152,000 copies of this novel. "D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London, 1932), p. 306. Regrettably, Mrs. Leavis has not revealed her source.

74 Sadler, "Yellow-Backs," pp. 127, 150.
were "a far lower type of fiction," Ainsworth; and 80,000 constituted a 6d. Bulwer series. 75

Thus in the 1850's and 60's reprints of popular novels became common. Generally, all publishers reissued their successful works, although the time-lag between first publication and cheap reprint varied considerably. 76 Moreover, publishers differed in the extent to which they would invade the low price field. Although Blackwood, for example, had been one of the pioneers of the medium priced reprint, the firm only reluctantly sought out the very thin purse. In 1867 they did print a cheaper version of their Standard Novels--in cloth at 2s. 6d. or 1s. 6d. and in boards at 2s. or 1s.--but as a rule their editions were higher. Their more dignified productions--George Eliot's works, for instance--never appeared in a very cheap format in this


76 In the 30's and 40's, a 6 or 7 year span had existed; in the 50's and 60's that span was reduced to 2 or 3 years, although it remained fairly long for such authors as Dickens. An astute publisher could not reprint too quickly even if he wanted to. The libraries needed a period of high prices to make their service worth the customer's while. Furthermore, the libraries needed time to resell their used copies to the public at their own reduced prices. It was because publishers eventually did reprint cheap editions before the libraries could dispose of the expensive ones, that, in 1894, the libraries were forced to put a stop to the 3ls. 6d. novel. See Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 99, 103; Publishers' Circular, VI (1843), 143; Shaylor, "The Issue of Fiction," p. 566.
period. 77 Macmillans also rarely went below the half-crown edition, 78 and Smith, Elder, too, stood aloof. 79 Other publishers, such as Bentley, Colburn, Chapman and Hall, and Longman did sell inexpensive reprints, but, generally the very cheap editions came from publishers like Routledge, Ward and Lock, and Chatto and Windus, who concentrated more upon reprints than upon original publications.

Authors also varied in the extent to which they would allow their works to be reprinted at very low prices. Some authors, such as G. F. A. James, Charles Lever, Ainsworth, and Mrs. Oliphant, often had nothing to say in the matter because they had sold their copyrights. Those who retained some control, however, had differing reactions, varying from Charles Reade's adamant refusal to allow pub-

77 Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 124. One of the additions Blackwood made to their standard series when it was issued in the shilling form was Symondson's Two Years Abart the Mast. This kind of work, Blackwood did not mind selling cheap.

78 See A Bibliographical Catalogue of Macmillan and Co.'s Publications from 1843 to 1889 (London, 1891), passim. They did issue Trollope's Sir Harry Hotspur at 2s. 6d. in 1871, but usually they did not bring out their reputable novelists in less than 6s. editions before 1880. By 1889, however, their policy had changed. After printing one million copies of a 6d. Kingsley edition, they had to produce another million. See Morgan, House of Macmillan, pp. 135-36.

79 Unlike Trollope's other publishers, Smith, Elder did not allow any Trollope novel first published with them to come out in yellow-back form; this was evidently policy on their part. See Sadleir, XIX Century Fiction, II, 74.
lishers to bring him out in cheap form, to Wilkie Collins' active desire to explore the great unknown. Although Beade had no scruples against publishing *White Lies* in a ld. journal, he went to court to prevent Bentley from ruining his reputation, or so he thought, by printing his works in an unauthorized cheap form. Wilkie Collins, on the other hand, changed publishers when George Smith of Smith, Elder refused to comply with his desire to reissue his books in a 1s. or 2s. format. Collins had to take his venture to Chatto and Windus. 80 Between these two extremes was George Eliot, who was anxious that her works be reprinted in a less expensive form (12s. editions), but not so anxious as to put any of her books "in a yellow cover with figures on it reminding one of the outside of a show, and charging a shilling for it . . . for the good of mankind." Even if she was so generous, she feared, her book "would hardly bear the rivalry of 'The Pretty Milliner,' or of 'The Horrible Secret.'" 81

The effect of all this was that the cheaper products had the run of the bookstalls, which, it should be emphasized, served a larger, more "democratic" public than the bookshops. When a publisher refused to bring a popular

writer like Collins out in 2s. form, when George Eliot's cheap Cabinet Edition (1879) was 5s. a volume, when even in 1879 Charles Dickens was not yet available in less than the 2s. form, when Thackeray was kept at 5s. and 6s. until the 80's; when, as we have seen, the book retailers favored those works which brought them the greatest margin of profit—it is evident that the average visitor to the bookstalls did not find many works of quality to choose from at a price he could afford.82 In many ways it certainly was not wonderful that W. H. Smith could stand one morning awaiting the train at Rugby "in mournful contemplation of the effects of a revolution which he himself had created. The bookstall at that station was a coruscation of yellow novels and white newspapers . . . the public would have nothing but fiction. Smith sadly shook his head, but, true to his principles would not discourage the clerk in charge by expressing any distrust of his discretion; the management of the stall had been committed to him, and he must not be interfered with."83

Thus important publishers and important novelists alike held aloof from the very cheap market. It was left


to those who were willing to publish (and write) anything. And W. H. Smith the distributor would not sift the supply, except as the discounts might determine. Not that the better publications could have driven the vulgar literature out; yet the public taste could have been leavened. As George Eliot had said of her novels in one of her more hopeful moods, "a minority might sometimes buy them if they were there." The fact of the matter is that the taste of the newly literate classes was generally formed by novels that could no longer draw more than a shilling from the higher income groups. If a book was considered still good enough to sell to a middle-class audience, it was sold at a middle-class price. Inferior novels fitted inferior audiences.

The dichotomy between the high-brow and low-brow audience, which, of course, always had existed, became more pronounced as a result of this emphatic split of the high-priced and low-priced markets, and especially was this so as the low-brow audience grew in both size and influence. When one work is considered too good for one market and another work is considered barely good enough, the valuation which originates as a matter of sound business policy begins to carry cultural overtones. Eventually the man who

84 Eliot, Letters, IV, 309.
sets out to write for the low-priced market, and consequently for the very broad public, is tagged, deservedly or not, an inferior author.

These cultural overtones were present as early as 1840 when Captain Marryat brought out his "Joseph Rushbrook" (subsequently published in three volumes as The Poacher) in the cheap weekly newspaper The Era. In consequence, Fraser's Magazine told him he ought to "more carefully cultivate a spirit of self-respect. That which was venial in a miserable starveling of Grub Street is perfectly disgusting in the extravagantly paid novelists of these days--the caressed of generous booksellers. ... Captain Marryat ought to disdain such pitiful peddling."

In reply to these remarks Marryat said that Fraser's was not the only party to tell him it was infra dig. to write for a weekly newspaper, but it was the first to call such writing "perfectly disgusting" and "pitiful peddling."

Marryat denied the latter charge on the grounds that he easily could have made more money by selling the novel to either Bentley's Miscellany or Colburn's New Monthly, that, in fact, he deliberately had not considered his own interests. To the charge that it was infra dig. to write for the masses, Marryat argued:

85Quoted in Marryat, Life of Captain Marryat, II, 100.
You will agree with me that the great end of literature is to instruct and amuse—to make mankind wiser and better. . . . who are those, may I ask, who most require instruction, and, I may add, amusement? Are they not those who cannot afford to purchase the expensive literature of the present day—not even to delight themselves with the spirited pages of your magazine? . . . You assert it is beneath me to write for a weekly newspaper, taken in chiefly by the taverns frequented by the lower classes, and perused mainly by the mechanics and labourers of the country . . . I feel quite the contrary, and I would rather write for the instruction, or even the amusement, of the poor than for the amusement of the rich; and I had sooner raise a smile or create an interest in the honest mechanic or agricultural labourer who requires relaxation, than I would contribute to dispel the ennui of those who loll on their couches and wonder in their idleness what they shall do next. . . . I have latterly given my aid to cheap literature, and I consider that the most decided step which I have taken is the insertion of this tale in a weekly newspaper—. . . In a moral point of view, I hold that I am right. We are educating the lower classes; generations have sprung up who can read and write; and may I inquire what it is that they have to read, in the way of amusement? . . . They have scarcely anything but the weekly newspapers, and, as they cannot command amusement, they prefer those which create the most excitement. . . . If I put good and wholesome food . . . before the lower classes, they will eventually eschew that which is coarse and disgusting, which is only resorted to because no better is supplied. Our weekly newspapers are at present little better than records of immorality and crime, and the effect which arises from having no other matter to read and comment upon, is of serious injury to the morality of the country. . . . I consider, therefore, that in writing for the amusement and instruction of the poor man, I am doing that which has been but too much neglected. . . . Neither do I consider that the patrons of our expensive literature have any cause of
complaint at the step which I have taken. When I have ministered to the wants of the humbler classes, I can wash my hands and face, put on clean linen, and make my appearance in the three aristocratic volumes which you consider as necessary to my self-respect. 86

Too many Victorian novelists would not follow Marryat in his descent to the untouchables; certainly the publishers did nothing to encourage them; and the masses exercised their new reading powers on the shoddiest material available.

The Interests of the Publisher

II--Copyrights at Home and Abroad

Until 1774 English booksellers had bought and sold copyrights secure in the belief that when they purchased a literary work their ownership lasted forever. The concept of perpetual copyright upon which this belief was based, however, had never been formally recognized in the nation's statutes. The idea had grown as a matter of common law out of the favors granted the politically important stationers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And, in fact, copyright itself had achieved statutory recognition only in 1709, when the Copyright Law (8 Anne, c. 19) was passed. It was this law, however, which ultimately destroyed perpetual copyright, for it defined the term of copyright to be fourteen years, and it provided for only one renewal period. Under this law, therefore, no book could enjoy protection for more than twenty-eight years. Nevertheless many courts held that the 1709 statute had changed nothing and that, by common law, an owner's rights should not be violated, regardless of the original publishing date. Not until 1774 were such findings clearly overruled, when the House of Lords, upsetting a Chancery decision in the case of Donaldson v. Beckett, established that the limits set by the 1709 law were
definitive and that copyright was a terminable property.

This decision had the effect of cracking the dam of privilege that the stationers had labored long to build and maintain, and their initial response was to repair the damage by conferring upon each other a kind of perpetual ownership by mutual consent. As late as 1816, six years after any copyright in Burns' poetry could legally be remaining, the sale of this "customary copyright" had brought the publisher of his works £4160--some £3000 more than Burns himself had received. The cooperative spirit did not last, however, for, as John Lockhart observed in the Quarterly Review, the development of steam printing and an increased reading public combined to excite "aggressive tendencies" in the "bosoms" of publishers.¹ They became less and less reluctant to publish what formerly had been the property of their fellows, and by the late 1830's, the business of reprinting works whose copyrights had lapsed was thriving. In 1838, for example, the inventory of the chief reprinting publisher, Thomas Tegg, was about £170,000.² Under these circumstances publishers could no longer expect their colleagues to acknowledge their proprietary interests once the period of legal ownership had ended. "Courtesy copyright" became a thing of the past.

²Hansard, 3rd series, XLII (1838), 1063.
To make up for the loss of "courtesy copyright" publishers of original works joined with authors to get an extension of the copyright term. The extension was achieved, but only after a five year struggle which saw the birth and demise of several "Copyright Bills" in the House of Commons. The delay was owing not only to the fierce opposition of the reprinters--Tegg for example was said to have his own representative in the House--but also, initially, to the indifference and even hostility of the publishers of original works themselves. While the position of the reprinters is understandable--any extension of copyright meant that they would have to wait longer before taking advantage of a book's continuing popularity--the hostility of the regular trade requires some explanation. In the first place the great publishers were slow to recognize the advantages to them of an extended copyright term, and secondly, as the copyright bills were initially constructed, they gave more to authors than the publishers were willing to concede. In particular the bills contained a "retrospective clause" which made any extension of copyright applicable to works currently protected; more important, the clause provided that even if an author had sold his complete copyright to a publisher, the rights would revert to the author at the outset of any extended term. Before the large publishing houses would accept the
copyright bill, the obnoxious qualities of the "retro-
spective clause" had to be eliminated.

Nevertheless, although these required changes were
made, publishers still did not campaign actively for a new
copyright law until all that was entailed in the demise of
"courtesy copyright" was brought clearly home to them.
Over the five years of debate, 1838-1842, the Teggs and
Chamberses, with unexpected support from Masaulay, argued
much too loudly that "the main result" of any extension
"would be, that the business of selling the popular books
of recent ages would become a genuine monopoly in the hands
of a few overgrown houses." The truth of this argument
finally reached the trade's understanding: "The leading
publishers of the kingdom." Lockhart wrote in the Quarter-
ly:

as soon as the real objects of Mr. Talfourd's
movement were understood by them petitioned,
we believe without exception, in favour of his
bill. They perceived plainly that unless some
change were made in the law, it could no long-
er be for their interest to risk their capital
in great undertakings; and they saw . . . no
plan so feasible for prolonging their interest
in adventures of that high class as the enact-
ment of a law which should entitle the author
to an assured prolongation of the usufruct of
his work. 4

Lockhart knew whose usufruct the publishers were really

3Chambers' Journal. X (1841), 28-29.
anxious to prolong. "Courtesy copyright" having fallen victim to the new "spirit of the age."

There could be no chance for success in any attempt to procure for the publisher, as a separate class, a legal substitute for the customary protection that has received its death-blow. We do not see how, as regards the period of protection, they can be placed in a position more favorable to the great national interests at stake, otherwise than through and in the author; whose natural claim has in it a strength acknowledged of all candid men.6

The large publishing houses, therefore, began actively to support efforts to change the copyright law. What is more, they now saw in the proposed revision an opportunity to strengthen their economic position generally. For example, not only could the new law provide an extension of the copyright term, but it could also put a stop to the importation (for sale or hire) of foreign reprints of English works—an intrusion upon the British market which both Victorian publishers and authors deplored. Consequently, as Thomas Hood said, the copyright bill of 1842 was "supported by authors and booksellers with a harmony as strange as pleasant . . ."6 and as a result the bill was enacted into law.

The act of 1842 remained the basic law on literary

5 Ibid., pp. 219-20.

6 Thomas Hood, "Copyright and Copywrong," Athenæum, XV (1842), 524.
property for the rest of the century. It lengthened the term of copyright to a period of forty-two years or life plus seven years, whichever was longer, and it prohibited the importation for sale or hire of books enjoying British copyright. But it did not prevent the publisher from issuing an abridgment of an author's work without the writer's permission; nor were the dramatic rights of a novel reserved to the author. As interpreted by the courts, the law awarded United Kingdom copyright—a copyright which extended throughout British controlled territories—to only those books first published in the United Kingdom. A book first published in a colony, even if by a resident of the United Kingdom, could not have copyright protection anywhere except in the colony of first publication. In short, the law of 1842 strengthened the Victorian publisher's position considerably more than it did the author's, although the gain to the writer was by no means negligible.

What was true of the Copyright Law was true generally of most Victorian legislation which touched on the book trade. The Customs Act of 1842, for example, went beyond the Copyright Law, which had allowed tourists to bring home personal copies of foreign reprints of English works, and prohibited the introduction into Britain of all reprints, with the one exception that the English copyright owner
himself was entitled to import copies of the piratical editions if he so wished. Not satisfied with the exclusive control of the market in the United Kingdom, English publishers sought also to halt the flow of foreign reprints into the colonies—which, they complained, were "literally inundated with French and American reprints." Since the difficulties of distance made any absolute prohibition impractical, the Foreign Reprints Act of 1847 attempted to compensate the English copyright owner (who was frequently the English publisher) by allowing foreign reprints to be sold in the colonies if a royalty were secured for the English owner.9

More important than the legislation dealing with

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7This law must have been only indifferently enforced. Mrs. Oliphant, writing a history of the Blackwood firm in the 1880's, was surprised to discover that by bringing Tauchnitz reprints back from the continent she and her contemporaries had unwittingly broken the law innumerable times. William Blackwood, II, 232-33.

8 Athenaeum, xV (1842), 610.

9 By 1876 nineteen colonies had used the Act, fixing royalties to the British copyright owner ranging from 12½ to 20 per cent. Actual payments were slight, however. Over the ten year period ending 1876, the nineteen colonies contributed a total of only £1155 12s. 2½d., of which £1084 came from the Canadians. Seven colonies contributed nothing. There was also the problem of sticky fingers. William Blackwood, commenting on the first payment he had received for colonial sales of foreign editions in a long time, could not help suspecting that "the late Government must have pocketed several sums." Copyright Commission Report (1878), Qq. 192-94; Eliot, Letters, VI, 80.
foreign reprints, of course, was that which attempted to regulate the book trade between nations. Here also, while benefits to authors were quite real, the interests of the publishers seem to have determined the shaping and passing of the laws. The International Copyright Act of 1844, for example, which served as the basis for the first international copyright treaty, was conceived primarily as a measure for giving the British copyright owner an absolute monopoly over all editions published in the English language. Under the Act translations were specifically exempted. This meant that British publishers were free to translate any foreign writer they pleased without guaranteeing him a shilling.\(^{10}\) It also meant that British authors could lay no legal claim to payment for translations of their works in countries with whom a copyright treaty had been signed. And even when, in order to secure the important French treaty (signed in 1851), the law was altered to allow some control over translations, that control was kept to a minimum. If the right to translation was expressly reserved, and if translation was actually

\(^{10}\) On this score Britain was less generous than some of her co-signers, who did use the copyright treaty to guarantee a British author’s translation rights. Prussia, for example, allowed German translations of English novels full copyright on the basis of a Prussian law which permitted Prussian subjects who first wrote in a foreign language full protection when their work was translated into German. \textit{Athenaeum, XXIII} (1860), 344.
begun within one year of a work's registration, it had protection for three years.

The chief value of the International Copyright legislation, therefore, was to establish the proprietor's right to the productions of his property in his own language anywhere. This concept of a language copyright worked well enough between countries which spoke different tongues. But for the full fifty years under study, it helped to prevent the signing of an international copyright treaty between Britain and the United States. Although it is impossible here to go into the whole involved story of the many efforts to establish such a treaty, it is easy to see why the British should have wanted one. Only rarely, in the first half of the century, did American publishers pay British authors for their work, and even after it became a "custom" of the American trade to voluntarily pay British copyright owners for advanced sheets, the publishers were in no way obliged to give full value. Until 1891 British copyright owners—whether authors or publishers—had no legal claim to any American profits.

The transatlantic argument over a British-American treaty developed two chief themes. The British said that American publishers were trying to avoid the added expense of paying British authors for work they could get free. The Americans said that the United States would not stand
for international copyright because it would force prices beyond the average citizen's reach, and the publishers felt a duty to protect the American citizen. There was truth on both sides, but not so much truth as to make either party the saint of this transaction. American publishers in the late 1830's did begin to pay British copyright owners, as I have said, on a voluntary basis, and, in many cases, only token payments. As for the American's concern for the public, in the end American publishers were willing to give British writers a legal copyright on the condition that their works should be completely remanufactured in America—a process, of course, which would make necessary the apparently extraneous additional expense of double production. Actually, the nub of the dispute was here. The Americans wanted a treaty which would insure the American publisher the greatest chance of selling British works in America. 11 The British publisher wanted that chance for himself. 12

Had the two countries spoken different languages no difficulties would have arisen, for the treaties which were worked out between Britain and the continental countries show that British publishers could respect the right of a

publisher to the principal market of his native land. The publishers did not object—it would have been irrational for them to do so—to the expense a French publisher would have to meet to publish an English novel in French; but the publishers did object to the expense an American publisher would go to to publish the English novel in the American tongue. It was as though the British publisher could not realize that the Americans actually were an independent nation.

Thus the argument went, with neither the British nor the American publisher giving in to the other, and with the British (and the American) novelist suffering the consequences. What pay British authors did receive from the important American market in no way resulted from the efforts British publishers claimed they were making to secure the British author’s rights. As late as the 1880’s and early 1890’s British publishers resented the pay British authors got from sending advance sheets to America. Arthur Waugh, as he made the rounds of British publishers to pick up sheets to send to the Lovell Company in America, met with “a very indifferent welcome. For the English publishers were getting nothing out of the deal, which was conducted exclusively with the author; and there was a
general air of grumbling over this unprofitable American interference.\textsuperscript{13}

The "interference" occurred when the American firm went directly to the British author, for—unless that author were a famous one—the usual policy was for the Americans to work through the British publisher, and by no means all British novelists were aware of the American custom of paying for advance sheets. In such cases of unhappy ignorance, it was the British publisher who gained from the American trade. He gained from that trade in other ways. He could sell advance sheets of his periodicals or the electrotypes of the illustrations. He could and did sell a limited number of his British editions in the United States, and could also contract to print up whole editions directly for interested American publishers.\textsuperscript{14}

Obviously the period of anarchy in international copyright was not an unprofitable one for Victorian publishers. Why should they have rushed into a treaty with the United States if they could not get the kind of treaty they wanted? Why, on their side, should not American publishers have insisted upon a national monopoly before giving up


their piratical privileges? British publishers insisted on the same thing.

During the fifty years 1830–1880, therefore, publishers managed to improve the state of their affairs considerably. As for the British public and the British author, the facts are not so clear. Because the publishers did not have to meet the competition of foreign and colonial re-printers, one pressure to lower the high cost of British novels was eliminated. Because international copyright conditions were not very satisfactory, British authors received less than they might have from sources overseas. So far the effect of the Victorian copyright legislation (or lack of it) seems purely negative. But the monopoly British publishers secured over British works in one way at least actually aided the Victorian author, for it made his work especially valuable to the publisher. Since the novel was a highly profitable literary form, novelists were in great demand. Thus it is no economic wonder that in the reign of Victoria the native English novel flourished and flourished.
Publishing the First Novel

If one wanted to confirm the low status of the novel during much of the period we are studying here, he would need only to notice how few Victorian writers actually aspired to be novelists. Bulwer, in many respects typical of the new writing spirit, began his career as an author of romance so that he could "obtain a reading for 'Poems.'"¹ It is doubtful whether the Brontës valued prose as much as poetry, and certainly Charles Kingsley's wish was to "lisp in rime."² Eight years elapsed between Meredith's first book of poems and his first novel. If Charles Reade desired the life of a dramatist, Disraeli preferred that of the politician. "Poetry," he wrote in his diary, "is the safety valve of my passions—but I wish to act what I write."³ Many authors, it would appear, turned to the novel, or stayed with it, for the compelling reason that it paid. That this condition was good for the Victorian novel is to be questioned, that it was bad for the writer whose talents lay elsewhere should be beyond dispute.

At any rate, for whatever reason he began, once the writer decided to publish he had to find a publisher. As

¹Early Lytton, Bulwer. I, 184-86.


³Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli. I, 99.
one anonymous Victorian commentator said, such a writer "has courted the Muses and been accepted. All he wants for is that the hymensal tie shall be drawn, and the mystical ceremony consummated. In such mystic rites the publisher is the desiderated priest. . . . without the publisher, the writer must slumber in obscurity. . . . Not unoft is this proverb fulfilled in the literary world. 'The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.' The publisher . . . is the indispensable accom-bneur of the brains' offspring. None but he can bring them forth into the world."4 This was the rub. A publisher was necessary and many a Victorian aspirant felt, just as do many beginners today, that publishers did not give proper consideration to first novels. "How many a writer of eminent ability," queried the Author's Handbook "--how many a work of great and striking merit--has been doomed to oblivion, by the capricious verdict of an interested publisher, whose judgment has, in all probability, been biased by his own speculations, and not unfrequently formed without any reference to the manuscript placed before him."5

Only two of the writers I have considered had any difficulty finding a publisher for their first novel, and

4Counsels to Authors and Hints to Advertisers (London, 1856), pp. 9-11.
5Churton, Author's Handbook, p. 6.
these two--Charlotte Brontë and Wilkie Collins--obviously did not let that defeat them. Charlotte Brontë's first novel, The Professor, went round Publisher's Row without finding a taker. It received this frigid reception for a very clear reason--one which points up the influence the marketplace can have upon the type of literature that is produced. According to Charlotte, the publishers found The Professor's plot too quiet, too unsensational. As she later told G. H. Lewes when he cautioned her to follow Jane Eyre with a work that was less melodramatic and more attuned to reality:

When I first began to write, so impressed was I with the truth of the principles you advocate, that I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides, and to follow to their very footprints; I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement; over-bright colouring too, I avoided, and sought to produce something which should be soft, grave and true. My work . . . being completed, I offered it to a publisher. He said it was original, faithful to nature, but he did not feel warrented in accepting it; such a work could not sell. I tried six publishers in succession; they all told me it was deficient in 'startling incident' and 'thrilling excitement', that it would never suit the circulating libraries, and as it was on those libraries the success of works of fiction mainly depended, they could not undertake to publish what would be overlooked there.

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6 It may be of some significance that both of these authors met with their refusals in the years 1847-48, a period of general economic and social unrest and not a very good time for publishers.

Finally, when she had received Smith, Elder's counsel to take a more sensational approach and write a longer novel that would fit the libraries' preferred length, she set about altering a story she had in progress. Within a month she had stretched out *Jane Eyre* to the required length and had sent it to Smith, Elder, who at once rushed it into print. All that Charlotte Brontë the novice had to do was to write a novel which a publisher actually could sell.

Wilkie Collins had a somewhat similar experience. As an ambitious young man of twenty, he composed a Polynesian novel that, as he put it, "ran riot" with noble savages. Going the rounds of "all the publishing houses in London," the manuscript excited no interest whatsoever, and eventually Collins burned it. Whether this was a novel qualified for immortality is to be doubted; in any event young Wilkie persevered and three years later, in 1848, having successfully published a memoir of his father, he set off with a new manuscript, *Antonina*. The work was first offered to Colburn, who was not impressed. Collins next had Ruskin take it to Smith, Elder, but even this influential introduction failed to help the cause. Dis-

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9 *Davis, Wilkie Collins*, p. 42.
appointed, Collins made a fresh list of London publishers, and then mailed the manuscript to his first prospect, Richard Bentley. Bentley was slow responding, but eventually he accepted, and eighteen months later, in February, 1850, the young author saw his work advertised as "available at all libraries."  

But the experiences of Charlotte Brontë and Wilkie Collins were not typical of their contemporaries whose talents eventually led them to the top ranks of their profession. Most Victorians who became successful novelists had no difficulty getting accepted by a publisher. Nor is this hard to understand. With the swelling demand for books confronting them, Victorian publishers were on the look-out for fresh talent, the more aggressive, such as Colburn and Bentley, even soliciting it. Leigh Hunt, Charles Lever, and Sidney Smith were each approached by Colburn on the subject, and the idea for Lever's first

10 kenneth robinson, wilkie collins, a biography (new york, 1952), pp. 53-54.

11 Leigh Hunt declined Colburn's original proposal only to have to come begging later when his funds were low (Earl Lytton, bulwer, i, 376). Lever also turned down a Colburn invitation to write a novel because he felt more at ease writing short sketches (Downey, lever, i, 80-81). And Smith laughed off Colburn's request by outlining a risqué tale involving a Bishop—only, Smith said, Colburn was willing that he should write it (Mrs. Cliphant, william blackwood, ii, 356-57). Of invitations from "Bentley, Colburn, larner, &c., to write something in the style of 'Harry Lorrequer,' but longer and more pathetic," Lever, with one novel to his credit, said, "They order a book, as they would their breeches" (Downey, lever, i, 122).
book, *Harry Lorrequer*, came from his publisher, M'Glashan of Cary and Company, who thought that the series of sketches Lever was running in the *Dublin University Magazine* could be turned with ease into a unified tale.\(^{12}\)

Kingsley's first novel, also, was a response to a request from Parker, the publisher of *Fraser's*.\(^{13}\) It will be remembered that Dickens became a novelist upon the invitation of Chapman and Hall.

While it is understandable that publishers should be willing to serialize the first novels of men who had proven themselves in the magazines, many Victorian authors did not have magazine experience before their first books were published. Not only was this true of authors whose careers began before the periodical market opened, but also of several novelists who began writing around midcentury. Such a list must include the three Bronté sisters, Mrs. Oliphant, Anthony Trollope, and Charles Reade. It is clear, therefore, that Victorian publishers, like modern ones, were willing to accept new talent wherever it could be found.

Finding a publisher did not in itself, however, insure the newcomer much more than the glory of print. "A first


novel," *Fraser's* said at midcentury, "is never paid for. One publisher is known to print gratuitously any novel not too wretched, with the understanding that 'if it succeeds' (what a latitude!) the author shall be paid 'something' (another!) for his second novel. In this way he is enabled to keep up a running fire of new novels, scarcely one of which is ever paid for."¹⁴ We shall see that actual conditions were not always as bad as this, but generally speaking there is no doubt that the financial road of the beginning novelist was far from smooth.

Three factors counted heavily in determining the pay the beginning novelist received: the publisher's business methods, the bargaining position of the author, and, of course, the marketability of the book. As far as the first of these was concerned, Charlotte Brontë, for example, was fortunate that the rejections of *The Professor* eventually led her to Smith, Elder, a firm noted for their generosity. William Smith, recognising the sales possibilities of *Jane

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¹⁴ *Fraser's* was not in entire disagreement with this policy. Actually, it said, literature "should be a profession, just lucrative enough to furnish a decent subsistence to its members, but in no way lucrative enough to tempt speculators." *The Condition of Authors in England, Germany, and France,* *Fraser's*, XXXV (1847), 285, 290.

¹⁵ We shall have occasion to question the extent of that generosity in a later chapter, but certainly Miss Brontë's first novel was paid for on terms better than most Victorian beginners received.
Eyre, offered £500 for the copyright. In contrast, Emily and Anne Brontë, who were unfortunate enough to attract a publisher more easily, were caught in the snare of the infamous T. C. Newby. This gentleman, though he had taken £50 from Emily and Anne to guarantee the costs of publishing \textit{Wuthering Heights} and \textit{Agnes Grey}, delayed publishing the novels for months, and even then did not bother to have the proofs corrected. Almost a half year after Newby had brought out the novels, the two sisters still had not received any return on the £50 they had advanced him.

Such transactions as that imposed upon the Brontës seem to have been characteristic of Mr. Newby, and Trollope's experience with that publisher confirms our sus-

\footnote{It was paid for in drafts of £100 which followed each new edition. This would suggest that the novel might have been bought by editions, in which case £100 would have been the bargaining price for the first edition, the sum which she received when \textit{Jane Eyre} first appeared. If this were indeed the case, Smith, Elder's offer was not very spectacular. But all the biographers say that she received £500 for the copyright. I have not been able to discover the origin of their statement. Obviously the point needs clarification. See for example, K. A. R. Sugden, \textit{A Short History of the Brontës} (London, 1929), p. 46; Flora Masson, \textit{The Brontës} (London, n.d.), pp. 70, 75, 87; Bertram White, \textit{The Miracle of Haworth, A Brontë Study} (New York, 1939), p. 210.}

\footnote{Clement K. Shorter, \textit{Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle} (New York, 1896), p. 162.}

\footnote{Masson, \textit{The Brontës}, p. 71; Shorter, \textit{Charlotte Brontë}, p. 162.}
picious. Trollope fared better than the two Brontës, however, in that at least he did not have to contribute any money towards the publication of his first work, *The Man
dermots*. Instead Newby agreed to publish the novel under what we shall later see described as "the half-profits swindle." Trollope relates:

I can, with truth, declare that I expected nothing. And I got nothing. Nor did I expect fame, or even acknowledgment. I was sure that the book would fail, and it did fail most absolutely. I never heard of a person reading it in those days. If there was any notice taken of it by any critic of the day, I did not see it. I never asked any questions about it, or wrote a single letter on the subject to the publisher. I have Mr. Newby's agreement with me, in duplicate, and one or two preliminary notes; but beyond that I did not have a word from Mr. Newby. I am sure that he did not wrong me in that he paid me nothing. It is probable that he did not sell fifty copies of the work;—but of what he did sell he gave me no account. Newby was not the best man with whom to make a start.

The experiences of Trollope and the Brontës point up the fact that if a book is to become known, its publisher must publicize its existence. In the wrong hands even a good book could fail. As Thackeray told young Bedingfield, that beginner's first work had succumbed, "not from want of merit, but from want of a publisher." Thackeray himself

19 But over the years, Trollope must have gained something from this indifferent publisher, or from his successor, for the *Autobiography* lists £48. 5. 9. as the total receipts produced by *The Manndermots*. Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (London, 1950), pp. 75-76, 363.
had made the mistake of issuing "the best book I ever wrote" (The Second Funeral of Napoleon) from the house of "an unknown publisher," Hugh Cunningham, only to have the work fail miserably despite its following upon the heels of his successful Paris Sketchbook and despite laudatory notices in a score of journals. A book, Thackeray said, had to be kept "perpetually before the public" to succeed; a publisher who either through ignorance or neglect failed in this first principle doomed a book's career at its outset. 20 One only has to recall what happened to the volume of verse by "Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" to see what might occur under extreme conditions. Published by a minor company, Aylott and Jones, at an expense to the authors of £31. 10s., this book received three reviews and sold two copies. 21

Trollope's experience with The Maidemore also underlines the second important factor in the negotiations for a first novel, the beginner's bargaining position. For if the novice came shuffling his way to the publisher's door, cap in hand, he could not expect anything more than a hand-out. Yet that, in effect, was what Trollope did. He put his book into his mother's hands to dispose of as efficac-

ciously as that much-published author could--this was wise enough. But Trollope lacked faith in the work, and Mrs. Trollope, he knew, lacked faith in his ability. He made no effort to disabuse her, but instead agreed that "it would be as well that she should not look at it before she gave it to a publisher." With such a send-off it is little wonder that the book found its way to Mr. Newby, and since Trollope failed to ask "any questions" it is not surprising that he received no answers. This was hardly a procedure calculated to push sales or to encourage the publisher to treat fairly with him, and in dealing with Mr. Newby some precautions in these respects had to be taken.

It is hard to know just how to interpret Trollope's behavior in this instance. Was his conduct simply amazingly naive for a member of such a literary family as his, or was it admirably realistic, or, as seems more likely, was it the method a sensitive mind took to protect itself from unnecessary pain? In any event, Trollope's method was in direct contrast with that of such writers as Disraeli, G. P. R. James, Wilkie Collins, and George Eliot, who bargained from as strong a position as was possible for beginners. Disraeli, for example, betrayed a natural shrewdness in his approach to authorship. He not only

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chose to write a fashionable-life novel (Vivian Grey) of the type Plumer Ward had popularised in 1825 with Tremaine, but he also secured Sara Austin, whose husband had been Ward's agent, to negotiate the sale of the manuscript for him. While no overt attempt was made to pass the novel off as by Plumer Ward, the true author's name was kept secret even from the publisher, Colburn. Colburn did not mind, but offered £200 for the book, and capitalized upon its anonymity by hinting in the various periodicals under his control that a new novel of high society was about to appear by an author who "for obvious reasons" would remain nameless. The public took the bait, and when Vivian Grey was issued in April, 1826, it sold readily. By the time the author's identity and unimportance were discovered, the book had made a profit, Disraeli's reputation was established with the publishers, and Colburn—though complaining that he had been tricked—was ready to pay well for a new and extended version. If we take this second fee into account, Disraeli's reward for writing Vivian Grey was £700, one of the largest sums ever received by a Victorian novelist at the outset of his career.23

But, of course, not many novelists approached publishers with the skill of a Disraeli, and in any event not

23 Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, I, 79-90.
many could negotiate from strength. Particularly was this so as the period wore on and as a plentitude of writers came forward. Indeed, if there was any change in the beginner's position during the years 1820-1860 it was for the worse. Against Disraeli's £700 in 1826, Marryat's £400 in 1829, G. P. R. James' £500 in 1829, and Lady Blessington's £400 in 1834, place the following sums from the 1840's and 50's: Mrs. Oliphant and Mrs. Gaskell received £150 and £100 respectively for Margaret Maitland (1849) and Mary Barton (1850). Wilkie Collins was paid £200 for Antonina, while two years later, in 1852, Reade managed to draw £10 from Bentley for Peg Woffington's first edition. Of these first publishing in the 40's and 50's only Charlotte Brontë with her £500 and George Eliot, with the £443 she received for magazine and first edition rights in Scenes of Clerical Life (1857) approached the sums made by the highest paid beginning novelists in 1829. Later


26 Davis, Collins, pp. 66-67; Reade, Eighth Commandment, p. 84.

the situation became much worse. In the 1860's, William Clark Russell considered himself fortunate to receive £25 for his first three-decker; in 1871 it cost Thomas Hardy £25 to see Desperate Remedies brought out by Tinsley, and in 1878, Stevenson was lucky to bargain a £20 advance from Kegan Paul for his first novel, An Inland Voyage.

Thus the pay declined, and for good reason. William Clark Russell's description of his experience in 1867 with his first novel is revealing. Informed that Sampson Low would pay £25 for his work, Russell immediately went to the publisher's offices and there was introduced to Edward Marston, a partner in the firm. Marston commented kindly on Russell's book and said:

"Twenty-five pounds is not much to offer for a three-volume novel." I smiled, and answered, "it is not," but without emphasis. "But," said he with an arch look, "we can do without it." I gazed about me at the clerks, the richly lined bookshelves, the countless illustrations of a flourishing business, and thought to myself, perhaps you might not be able to do without it. But I held my peace...

What had happened by this time was that the beginner was competing not only with the hosts of novelists published by reputable firms such as Sampson Low but also with

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28 Edward Marston, After Work, Fragments from the Workshop of an Old Publisher (London, 1904), 143-44.
29 Mumby, House of Routledge, pp. 190-91.
30 Marston, After Work, pp. 143-44.
an army of writers who wrote but should not have done so—let alone been published. Such authors, according to one study in the 1880's, found out a publisher with no particular reputation . . . The bargain is struck; a first issue of, say, two hundred and fifty copies is to be made, on the author paying down a sum to guarantee the publisher against loss. A few copies are bought for the libraries, tentatively at a large reduction on the nominal price. These copies, having been purchased cheap, may come in useful as padding for country boxes. Should there be any demand for the book, more copies will be bought; but in the meantime the librarian is well within the limits of his rights . . . It is the vice of the system. But the up-shot is, that works of genuine merit by novices or by writers but little known are swamped in masses of superficial or sentimental rubbish, and it makes all the difference of sufficient profit, or the reverse, to the author, who might have given pleasure to many thousands had he met with encouragement to persevere.

This observer thought "it would be a long step in the right direction were it possible to suppress the alluring publishers, who tempt authors—whose books are weak or worthless—to try their fortunes in the novel market at their personal risk." 31

By the 1880's the practice of producing novels at the author's own expense had become widespread. The Author estimated that of the 828 new novels issued in 1889, between two-thirds and three-fourths were books paid for by the writer, that is between five and six hundred in one

year. Such vanity publishing of course had existed as early as the 1830's. But because its attractions were so slight, it was not then very important. What the vanity business needed was just the sort of arrangement that developed between the publishers and the circulating libraries. Since the author paid a fee which either partially or wholly covered manufacturing costs, and the publisher received a commission on every copy sold, an agreement to supply some library with out-rate country-box stuffers guaranteed the vanity publisher an income. Such publishers naturally solicited the trade of the beginner, and the beginners who responded were generally those who had been rejected by the regular publishers. While some of these writers may have been talented, most were totally incompetent.

The years after mid-century saw the birth of the Author's Guides—books that were ostensibly designed to spare the beginner the pitfalls of publishing into which he might tumble unaware, but that, like the vanity publishers themselves, usually and actually had as their purpose the extraction of the ambitious beginner's cash. "Would you have every scribbler print?" Judd and Glass' Counsels to Authors asked itself. "Certainly," came its

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32 "On Paying for Publication," The Author, I (1890-1891), 75-76.
Let all who have thoughts utter them; and let those who only think they have be tested by the voice of public opinion. The trashy pamphlet or the silly volume will not obtain purchasers; and he who wrote it will find his level, and be made aware of his true position. Should you keep him in check by financial difficulties, artificially created, then do you likewise discourage true genius, and stifle many invaluable compositions. ABSOLUTE FREE TRADE IN BOOKS, so far as the removal of commercial objects can secure it, is our motto. 35

After mid-century, commission publishing helped to fill the marketplace with books and thus to cut the value of first novels by writers whose work had some commercial merit. Before that date such publishing was not very important, and, at least as far as the novelists studied in this dissertation are concerned, a much more popular method of negotiating the first novel was the outright sale of copyright.

The sale of the copyright in first novels was popular because it provided advantages to both publisher and author. Since the publisher gained all the profits, the copyright purchase encouraged him to sell as many copies as possible and thus to further the author's fame and reputation. To offset the author's loss of any future financial interest in his work, he had the security of a cash settlement at the start. This was of real signifi-

35 *Counsels to Authors and Hints to Advertisers*, p. 3.
sance since none of the other schemes available at the time—there was as yet no royalty system—could guarantee the author some reward for his work, and, as it turned out, those authors who did sell their copyrights were generally the ones who received the largest sums for their first novels. Thus practically all of the authors I have studied who received sums over £100 for their first novels were ones who sold their copyrights. The list must include Disraeli, G. P. R. James, Captain Marryat, Charles Dickens, Charles Lever, Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Gaskell, and Wilkie Collins. 34

Illustrative of the kind of contracts involved in such sales—if a contract was involved at all—is that which was concluded between Henry Colburn and Captain Marryat for *Frank Mildmay; or, The Naval Officer*, January 5, 1829:

Captain Marryat agrees to dispose of, and Henry Colburn to purchase a work in three volumes called the Naval Officer at the price of Four Hundred Pounds to be settled for in the following manner namely Three Hundred Pounds to be payable on the first edition and One Hundred Pounds on the second edition being

printed and published. For which sum of Four Hundred Pounds Mr. Colburn is to be entitled to publish the book entirely for his own use and benefit. 35

What profit the publishers who bought these works made over the years it is impossible to say. Most of the novels had a long life, however, being reprinted frequently as their authors gained in reputation. 36 Some brought returns more rapidly. Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton, for instance, went through four editions in its first two years; Jane Eyre, published October, 1847, had reached its third edition by the following March. 37 Furthermore, the introduction of cheap fiction reprints about midcentury also meant a longer life for many titles. 38 All in all, it is obvious that when a publisher paid "to publish the book entirely for his

35 Warner, Marryat, p. 79.

36 Marryat's Frank Mildmay was still being reprinted in 1859. Disraeli's Vivian Grey was constantly reprinted by Colburn. James' Midsummer Night was included in the Parlour Library in 1856. Lever's Lorrequer, which came under Chapman and Hall's control in 1849 ran through three price ranges between then and 1862. Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton came out in four price formats between 1849 and 1875, and Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre was constantly reprinted by Smith, Elder.


38 To see the kind of durability and value of the reprints, consider that in 1837 Bentley purchased seven Marryat titles for his Standard Novels for £1500-1600. Twenty years later, having made a profit of thousands of pounds, he sold them to Routledge for about double his original cost. Gutmann, A Victorian Publisher, p. 151.
own use and benefit," he had much more to gain than he was likely to lose, and particularly was this so once he could depend upon the libraries for a basic, minimum sale.

While authors who sold their copyright at least received hard cash, those who became involved in the profit-sharing plan usually were not so lucky. Carried out honestly, this system appeared to be quite fair: the publisher agreed to pay all expenses on the condition that he would receive half of whatever profits accrued. Unfortunately, however, the formula was reserved for those novels which the astute publisher felt would probably bring in expenses but not much more. Thus he protected himself by buying the book without giving the author anything except hope. And too often hope was all the author did get, even when profits were made.

The half-profits system, Charles Reade said, was really a "half-profit swindle . . . This term has been applied to it," he explained, because, "though it is a mere partnership agreement between the author and publisher, upon terms ridiculously favourable to the latter, the accounts rendered by the trading partner to the other partner, the creator of the copyright, are seldom bona fide accounts as between partner and partner, being generally adulterated with secret and disloyal profits on the paper,
the printing, and the advertisements.\(^3\)\(^9\) Other authors agreed, and their suspicions were increased when their questions about the figures they were given were met with the explanation that "the matter cannot be made intelligible without the knowledge of particulars which the custom of the trade does not permit to be revealed."\(^4\)\(^0\) Vouchers were not transmitted with statements; special printing discounts allowed to publishers because of their wholesale purchases allegedly were not passed on to the author's account. Publishers were rumored to place hidden interest charges of 10, 15, and even 20 per cent upon each expenditure they had made in putting a volume through the press. The money spent, it was argued, "was worth 20 per cent., and could not be afforded for less." Furthermore all books sold were customarily accounted for at the trade sale price, with every 25 being billed as 24. This was done regardless of the price the retailer had actually paid and regardless of the number of copies involved in each sale.\(^4\)\(^1\) All of this the beginning novelist did not know, of course, but it was one reason why those who sold their works on

\(^3\)\(^9\) Reade, *Eighth Commandment*, pp. 84, 85fn.


the profit-sharing system often found little to share.

Anthony Trollope, as we have seen, was one of the begin-
giners who were caught by this formula. Charles Reade,
having made a better choice of publisher, fared slightly
better than Trollope. The actual agreement drawn up be-
tween Reade and Bentley will illustrate the vagueness and
the one-sidedness of the half-profits contract as it was
used in 1852:

"It is agreed that the said Richard Bentley
shall publish at his own expense and risk a
work at present entitled Peg Woffington, and
after deducting from the produce of the sales
thereof the charges of printing, paper, adver-
sisements, embellishments if any, and other
incidental expenses, including the allowance
of 10 per cent. on the gross amount of the sale
for commission and risk of bad debts, the prof-
ts remaining of every edition that shall be
printed of the work are to be divided into two
equal parts, one moiety to be paid to the said
Charles Reade and the other moiety to be paid
to the said Richard Bentley. The books sold to
be accounted for at the trade sale price,
reckoning 25 copies as 24, unless it is thought
advisable to dispose of any copies, or of the
remainder at a lower price, which is left to the
judgment and discretion of the said Richard
Bentley. It is understood between the aforesaid
parties that twelve copies of the said work are
to be presented, free of charge, to the said
Charles Reade.

As one of Reade's biographers comments, "the last clause
of this curious document seems the only part in the author's
favour."42

42 Elwin, Reade, pp. 84-85.
Though Reade was later to go to law with Bentley over this contract, at the time he signed the agreement he was happy to get it. For years he had been writing plays, only to see them unacted. In October, 1852, a month before he signed with Bentley, he had made this bitter entry in one of his notebooks:

Charles Reade in account with literature—

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Reade thought he would meet the same fate with his novel. When, therefore, Bentley purchased the book, he was elated. He did not argue over the contract, for his chief aim was to get before the public. And it was just as well that he had no monetary ambitions at the time, for his share in the first edition profits of Peg Woffington was a little over ten pounds. 44

The best that can be said of the half-profits formula is that it put the author into print and gave him a con-

43 Elwin, Reade, pp. 73-74.
44 Ibid., p. 85.
continued interest in the copyright of his work. Obviously, however, neither this scheme nor the outright sale was quite satisfactory. It was George Eliot who found a fourth method for the sale of her first work—a method usually reserved for the established author. Eliot of course was not a novice when she sold her first fiction; moreover, she had the wide experience of G. H. Lewes, a novelist in his own right, to profit by.

When John Blackwood accepted *Scenes of Clerical Life* for *Blackwood's Magazine*, he wrote George Eliot that should the novel later be published as a book, "We would look upon [it] . . . as a joint property and would either give you a sum for your interest in it or publish on the terms of one half of the clear profits to be divided between author and publisher, as might be most agreeable to you."45 This was the standard offer, but in making it Blackwood ignored the letter initiating the correspondence, for in it Lewes, who was acting as Eliot's agent, had specifically reserved the book rights of "Amos Barton" and the rest of *Scenes* and had informed Blackwood that he was selling only the magazine rights.46 Eliot for her part now ignored the Blackwood letter and proceeded with her writing. When, however,

46 Ibid., p. 270.
the series was ended and the time for republication approached, Eliot accepted neither the lump sum sale of her interest nor the half-profits plan. "As to the terms," she wrote, "I wish to retain the copyright, according to the stipulation made for me by Lewes when he sent 'Amos Barton,' and whatever you can afford to give me for the first edition, I shall prefer having as a definite payment rather than half profits."47

This suggestion caught John Blackwood by surprise. "I wrote before publication commenced," he explained, "saying I should consider that we had an interest in it to the extent of one half, and as a general principle this is what I think we are entitled to unless in the case of authors of very firmly established reputation whose works are sure to command an audience and an extensive sale in whatever form they are published." Nevertheless, he added, while he did not "recollect that Lewes had mentioned your wish to retain the Copyright," he would agree to Eliot's request. Subsequently he offered £120 on the sale of 750 copies and another £60 which would be contingent upon the sale of an additional 250.48 When the £263 Eliot received for the serial run is added to this amount, it is evident

47 Ibid., p. 388.
48 Ibid., pp. 393-95, 411.
that she was paid well for a beginner.

The sale of publishing rights for a single edition only was, as Blackwood's letter suggests, extraordinary for a newcomer. The common experience of most Victorians was to begin publishing by either selling the copyright, sharing the profits, or, reluctantly, publishing on commission. Generally those who settled for a lump sum had the better of it. If they could not look forward to future earnings they could always console themselves with the fact that a bird in hand really is better than two in the bush.

But for some of these beginning novelists the birds in the bush which were at first fairly small began to grow very large before the first joys of authorship were quite worn off. Not many novelists could be as disinterested as Charlotte Brontë, who was happy to hear of Jane Eyre's rapid sales "for the sake of Messrs. Smith and Elder."\(^4^9\) Most beginners, if their works were successful, wanted all the money they felt their success entitled them to.

Occasionally publishers gave it to them, but this was more likely to happen when the sale was truly phenomenal. The point can be illustrated by the contrast between Chapman and Hall's treatment of Mrs. Gaskell and their treatment of Charles Dickens. To be sure, Dickens's *Pickwick*

\(^4^9\) Shorter, *Charlotte Brontë*, p. 163.
was much the more popular of the two first novels, but *Mary Barton*, as we have remarked, reached four editions within two years—so that the £100 Chapman and Hall paid Mrs. Gaskell could hardly be called an equitable amount. One might fairly ask, as Charlotte Brontë did when she learned of *Mary Barton*'s fourth edition, "Is that unconscionable Mr. Chapman satisfied yet?" 50

Chapman's treatment of Dickens was in wide contrast. When the firm first suggested to Dickens that he write the text of a new monthly number venture, they proposed paying him nine guineas per sheet or about fourteen pounds a number, since the letterpress was planned to fill about one and a half sheets. 51 Had the agreement been carried out on the original terms, Dickens would have received for the twenty complete issues approximately £280—which, in itself, was a good sum for a first novel. But Chapman and Hall also promised the young author to increase the payments should the work prove to be very successful. Actually, therefore, Dickens's wages turned out to be flexible. The first change in payment came during the first month of publication when, *Pickwick* having fallen flat before an apathetic public, the publishers decided to enlarge the

50 Hopkins, Gaskell, p. 99.
51 Waugh, *A Hundred Years*, pp. 18-19, 55.
text to two full sheets. Dickens, who felt such an extension entitled him to a raise of eighteen guineas anyhow, promptly asked the firm to pay twenty guineas for the two sheets at once, adding that no doubt the firm would be willing to go higher still if Pickwick should prove very successful after the fourth or fifth issue. During the summer, Pickwick caught fire with the public, and by autumn the sales reached 40,000. Chapman and Hall kept their golden author happy by offering to pay him £25 per month after the November issue. As a result of these changing terms, the twenty issues that originally were to bring Dickens £280, now were to produce almost £500.

But there were other payments to Dickens during the course of Pickwick Triumphant, payments which the publishing firm was not at all legally bound to make. At the end of the first year of publication, for example, Chapman and Hall presented Dickens with a check for £500 to show their gratitude. In November, 1837, at a dinner celebrating Pickwick's conclusion, the publishers gave him another check for £750. All in all, according to Chapman and

52 Dickens, Letters, I, 69.
53 Waugh, A Hundred Years, p. 25.
54 Dickens, Letters, I, 78.
55 Ibid., p. 104.
Hall's estimate, the firm paid Dickens something like £2000 for his first novel; John Forster set the figure at an only slightly more sobering £2500. 56 It does not detract from Chapman and Hall's credit to observe that the firm could well afford the £2000 to keep such a money maker as Dickens had proved to be. They made a great deal more than Dickens did on Pickwick. Dickens told his solicitor, Thomas Mitton, that the amount the firm cleared on the numbers sale alone was £14,000. 57

Other aspects of the beginning novelist's experience can be summarized briefly. Generally the beginner was amenable to criticism and willing to follow the publisher's lead. Some writers—Disraeli, Charlotte Brontë, and Charles Lever—extended their novels to satisfy the publishers' demand for length. Charlotte Brontë did her best to make Jane Eyre sensational as Smith, Elder had suggested. Mrs. Gaskell, at Chapman and Hall's request, changed the title of Mary Barton and reproporioned its elements to avoid presenting the circulating library reader with a murderer for a hero. 58 Most of the changes and extensions that resulted from the publisher's and

56 Waugh, A Hundred Years, pp. 34, 37.
58 Hopkins, Gaskell, p. 77.
author's desire to make the novel saleable damaged its artistic qualities. Jane Eyre's experiences grew to rather bizarre heights. The extension of *Vivian Gray* to a bloated four volumes was hack work. Lever himself felt the difficulties of stretching to meet a plan. Of those who were subject to such interference, Kingsley, Eliot, and Dickens resisted—Kingsley permitting the serial version to be cut short but including the offensive ending in the volume production, Eliot having her own way, but cutting her series short too, Dickens quarrelling with and vanquishing the artist Seymour, whose talents *Pickwick* originally had been intended to display.

One or two other points remain to be mentioned. Contracts, as our few examples have shown, were so vaguely worded that the publishers could interpret them almost as they pleased. Sometimes there was no contract at all, as in the case of the innocent Kingsley, who did not know what he had sold. As for such subsidiary rights as the disposal of early sheets to American publishers and continental reprinters, none of the agreements for first novels

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59. Yeast appeared anonymously in *Fraser's* in 1848. In January, 1851, Kingsley wrote Maurice: "Here am I wanting to republish it . . . and here is Parker shilly shallying, still letting I dare not wait upon I would . . . now am I bound if he still hangs off and on, to publish it with him, because he publishes the magazine, or in the event of his refusing to refuse, which is as bad, can I take it to whom I like?" Thorp, *Kingsley*, p. 51.
mentioned these. As later evidence will show, publishers considered that whatever monies came from these sources rightly belonged to them. But of course this depended upon the publisher and his relation to his author. Blackwood, for example, turned over to George Eliot £30 which Tauchnitz had paid for the right to bring out an English reprint of Clerical Scenes on the continent. In thus passing on to Eliot the returns from foreign parts, Blackwood exhibited a generosity that was exceptional among Victorian publishers in their dealings with beginning novelists.

Publishing the Established Novelist

The Rights Bought and Sold

Admittedly, the fate of the beginning novelist is a special case. Of broader significance in any survey of author-publisher relationships are the negotiations between publishers and the novelists who have already broken into print. We must, therefore, now turn to a study of what was involved in these transactions, examining first the various rights that were bought and sold, and then the sums of money that changed hands. It is one thing to know how much a publisher paid for a novel; it is another to know what rights his purchase gave him.

As we have already indicated, three mediums of publication became available to novelists during the Victorian era. Whereas in the 1830's, novels were published almost exclusively in volumes, by the 1850's they also could appear serially either in a magazine or in numbers. The development of serial forms naturally complicated the relations of authors and publishers. In 1830 authors sold only book rights; in 1860 they were selling volume, magazine, and number rights, separately or in combination. To make matters yet more complex it was during these fifty years, 1830-1880, that there developed ancillary rights for translations, colonial and continental English reprints, and advance sheets to America. As a result, any attempt to
systematically describe what was involved in the sale of Victorian novels becomes quite difficult. Nevertheless fairly characteristic patterns can be seen, and it is these that we shall now attempt to identify.

Of the various formulas that were employed in the sale of rights during these fifty years, one which was in common use in the 1830's was the sale of the entire copyright. After the development of the joint serial-volume publication, however, and with certain clear exceptions, an outright sale was generally resorted to only by writers whose bargaining position was weak and whose novel was to be published first in volume form. Occasionally an author might lose his copyright in material produced serially, but most often such an author was naive. Thus the youthful Dickens signed away the reprint rights in Pickwick and in Oliver Twist, but in none of his later serials. Other authors lost their reprint rights in magazine work through oversight. Mrs. Oliphant, for example, neglected to read the

1 The exceptions were Anthony Trollope, for whom outright sale was a matter of policy; Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, who were lured by Smith, Elder's high fees to sell Cornhill the whole copyright of their respective novels, Armadale and Put Yourself in His Place; and Disraeli, whom Longman paid $10,000 for Andromion. Robinson, Collins, pp. 178-79; Elwin, Read, pp. 201-02; Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, VI, 1428.

2 I have in mind such ineffectual bargainers as Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë, Shirley Brooks, and George Meredith.
fine print on a supplementary receipt she signed for a long article in the Graphic and later discovered she had sold the book rights to the magazine's owners. To stop the volume publication she had to buy back the copyright for £30. 3 Her experience parallels one recorded by Reade:

Dined with me to-day—Editor of a good journal, who says they never send in an honest account to an author. Day Clowes [?] foreman says the same. My editor F. G. [Frederick Greenwood] contributed a tale to a periodical went for his money. Pub. drew a small cheque & asked author to sign the counterfoil with his initials. Pub's. hand was on the counterfoil. Take off your hand. I'm only keeping it steady for you my boy. Take off your hand. He did [?] Tana manifesta fides. He had written on the upper part of the counterfoil 'and copyright.' 4

If an author was astute, however, and if he had a following, he could avoid the outright sale, unless like Trollope he made such sale a matter of personal policy.

An alternative formula available to the novelist was that of profit sharing. Under this arrangement the publishers assumed the right to reprint as often as they wished, and, unless the contract specifically reserved the point to the author, the right to reprint at whatever price they pleased. Use of this plan among established authors


varied considerably. While some, like Reade and Trollope, avoided it after they became popular, others used the formula repeatedly. When they did so, however, they did not, like the beginning novelists, have to await a successful sale before they saw any money. When established writers such as Disraeli and Thackeray agreed to produce a three-decker for a share of the profits, they were guaranteed an advance.\footnote{Disraeli sold Colburn three novels on this basis: Conversay (1844), Sybil (1845), and Tancred (1847) (Money-penny and Buckle, Disraeli, II, 597; III, 848, 865). Thackeray's only novel to be produced first in volumes, Esmond, was guaranteed by an advance from Smith, Elder (Lionel Stevenson, The Showman of Vanity Fair. The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray (New York, 1947), p. 243).} In the case of serialized novels whose copyrights were shared with the publisher, nothing extra was paid upon publication in volumes until profits actually materialized; the payments the authors received month by month as the novels were first being issued stood as the total advance. So far as I have been able to determine, however, the only Victorian serialists who regularly sold their work on a profit-sharing basis were
Dickens and Thackeray, the practice of other novelists varying from novel to novel. 6

As with authors, so use of the profit-sharing plan varied among publishers. While Longman, for example, favored the half profits contract over any other, 7 Bentley resorted to it chiefly when his resources were so scanty he could not afford a more direct purchase. 8 As a matter of fact, it was because Longman preferred the half profits purchase that the firm lost Trollope to Bentley when, having received a total of £120. 2s. 9d. as his share of the proceeds for both The Warden and Barchester Towers in two years time, the author insisted on getting £250 for the

6 Dickens used the half-profits formula for his Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge, both published with Chapman and Hall, and a three-quarters profits changing to one-half after six months of volume publication for Martin Chuzzlewit, also published with Chapman and Hall. With his shift to Bradbury and Evans after Chuzzlewit, the terms of his agreement called for a three-quarter share of all profits in his novels. After he returned to Chapman and Hall in the 60's, he sold both Our Mutual Friend and The Mystery of Edwin Drood on a straight half-profits formula. See Dickens, Letters, I, 598-600; C. G. Grabb, "Dickens and Chapman and Hall," Boston University Studies in English, I (1955), 120-23, 125-26. I base the Thackeray statement on the fact that when Thackeray died Smith, Elder bought up the half interest Bradbury and Evans held in Thackeray's novels. We know that Thackeray retained a share in the cheap editions of the serials he published in Cornhill. See Stevenson, Showman, p. 357; Huxley, House of Smith, Elder, p. 54.

7 Copyright Commission Report (1878)

8 Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, pp. 26, 105.
whole copyright of *The Three Clerks.* Nor did magazine publishers have a settled policy regarding the half-profits plan. While Bentley claimed, in 1853, that he automatically acquired one-half interest in the subsequent publication of all articles appearing in his *Miscellany,* and while Blackwood also considered that publication in "Maga" gave the firm a half interest in a work's book rights, most other magazine owners either tended to leave book rights alone—as did the author-proprietors Dickens and Ainsworth—or made it a policy to negotiate for them on separate terms.

Neither the copyright sale nor half-profits was entirely satisfactory to the author, as we saw in our study of the beginning author's experiences. In the first instance, the sale of copyright deprived the author of all further financial reward from his works; in the second there always lurked the possibility that the publisher's accounts, as rendered to the author, were not accurate. As a result, Victorian authors who were in a strong bargaining position explored other formulas. The first of these alternatives to develop was the sale of edition rights only; that is, a publisher would give a lump sum

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down for the right to publish a specified number of copies. The second alternative was the sale of the right to produce a work in volume form for a given number of years. In both cases, after fulfilment of this limited agreement the whole copyright returned to the author. One or the other of these formulas was used by successful authors throughout these fifty years. They became increasingly popular as the defects in copyright and half-profits sales became more widely known.

As early as 1830 the sale by edition was employed by that astute negotiator Captain Marryat in the sale of his second novel, *The King's Own*, to Colburn and Bentley, and in 1832 the veteran novelist Maria Edgeworth sold Bentley the three-volume rights only in her *Helen*. In the 1840's, while evidence of the formula's use is scanty, we do know that it served as the basis for a sort of permanent contract between Smith, Elder and G. P. R. James. William Smith, in a move that anticipated the kind of monopoly he secured on Thackeray's works in the 60's, contracted to publish a first edition of between 1000 and 1500 copies of all the novels James might produce. The agree-

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11 Bentley subsequently paid Marryat £150 and Miss Edgeworth £100 for the use of these works in his Standard Novels series. See Royal A. Gettman, "Colburn-Bentley and the March of Intellect," *Studies in Bibliography*, IX (1957), 213.
ment lasted three or four years before Smith, Elder had to end it. 12

After midcentury examples of the formula's use increase. It was the basis for Mrs. Gaskell's sale of the volume rights of North and South (Household Words) to Chapman and Hall, and for Kingsley's sale of Westward Ho! to Macmillan. 13 Wilkie Collins' Moonstone was bought by Tinsley on the same basis; and Chapman and Hall purchased first edition rights only in Reade's Terrible Temptation. 14 Mrs. Wood sold many of her thirty-seven novels by the edition, 15 and James Payn made the formula the basis for

12 The difficulty was that James took the contract too literally. He understood that it meant that Smith, Elder would not only take all of his novels but as many of them as he could produce. James, who was said to employ several amanuenses, started producing. (In the period 1845-1848 Smith, Elder published nine three-deckers by his hand.) Finally when Smith had three or four manuscripts in his safe before the last James novel had moved off, Smith called a halt. James, thinking that the agreement had been violated, called in ainsworth to assist him in arguing with Smith's solicitor. The result was a compromise. James no longer had an outlet for everything he could write and Smith, Elder's freedom to produce other authors was restored. The next time Smith monopolised an author he chose the greater, and less energetic, Thackeray. Huxley, House of Smith, Elder, pp. 28-29.


15 Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, p. 111.
most of his agreements with William Tinsley. 16

The advantage to the author of the edition sale formula lay in the control it gave him over subsequent reprints. But the author's meat was the publisher's poison, for such control by the author prevented the publisher from exploiting a work as fully as he wished. Consequently another method of buying book rights was developed which gave the publisher the kind of control he desired and yet finally returned the copyright to the author. This formula, that of paying a given sum for the right to publish a book for a specified length of time, was first employed, so far as I know, by Captain Marryat and Richard Bentley when Bentley purchased the three-year use of The King's Own and Newton Forster for his Standard Novels series in 1837. The next year Chapman and Hall bought both numbers and five-year book rights in Nicholas Nickleby. 17 Dickens made other arrangements for his next novels, however, and, at least so far as the novelists I have studied are con-

16. Tinsley cited the following letter as typical of the way the negotiations went: "Dear Mr. Tinsley,—I offer you the right to publish in three volumes — copies of my novel, for the sum of $_____; you to have the right to print another edition in three volumes for the sum of $_____, unless we agree about the absolute copyright of the one-volume edition during the time. —Yours Truly, James Payn." My answer as a rule was: —'Dear Mr. Payn, —Very well'" (Tinsley, Random Recollections, I, 106-109).

cerned, it was not until Blackwood bought Bulwer's Caxton in 1847 that the limited time sale was again brought into use. Here too, as with the Dickens experiment, it was employed in the purchase of serial and book rights combined, Blackwood giving a lump sum for the right to print in their magazine first. On this basis they brought out the two other novels which make up the Caxton series, My Novel and What Will He Do With It? 18 By the date of this last novel, the limited time contract began to be more widely used for novels which had appeared as magazine serials. In the 1860's we find it employed by such other publishers as Smith, Elder, Bradbury and Evans, Sampson Low, and Chapman and Hall, and by such other popular authors as George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, and Charles Reade. 19

While the limited-term sale of volume rights had thus become fairly popular for works first published in serial form, it was used much less frequently for novels which were produced in volumes only. The explanation undoubtedly is that at the time the formula became popular most of the successful authors were appearing in serial form first, and it was only the works of popular authors that were worth


19 Eliot, Letters, IV, 313; Hopkins, Mrs. Gaskell, p. 156; Marston, After Work, pp. 57-59; Elwin, Reade, pp. 219-221.
purchasing in this way. Moreover, two of the authors whose volume productions were bought on these terms had decidedly unpleasant experiences. Charles Reade felt that Richard Bentley's thorough exploitation of his two-year monopoly in *It's Never Too Late to Mend* (1858) would make the copyright worthless when it was returned to him. 20 And George Eliot, whose *Adam Bede* was published under a four-year arrangement with Blackwood, felt that the sum she had received was so inadequate compared with the profits Blackwood made that when John Blackwood proposed a limited-term purchase of her next novel, she simply could not be interested. When she did sell another volume novel (*Felix Holt*, 1866) to Blackwood on this basis, she placed the figure so high (£5000) as to set a record for a novel issued only in volume form. 21

None of the formulas that we have mentioned entirely satisfied both novelist and publisher. The profit-sharing system was subject to abuse, the copyright sale gave the publisher more financial interest in a work than it gave the author, the edition sale left the author with the task of guessing what a fair price for his edition was (and the publisher uncertain that the book would continue to be

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issued from his house), and the time-purchase plan gave the unscrupulous publisher the chance to exploit the book so thoroughly that its sales value might be exhausted before it again became the author's property. Dissatisfied with such formulas, authors could, of course, fall back upon the commission system of publishing. But in actuality, as we have indicated in our discussion of the beginning author, the commission arrangement was of little use either to successful authors or to their publishers. In the first place, publishers did not like to use the formula for works which were sure to sell; they gained nothing from such an arrangement except the ten per cent allowed as their commission. Even the ancillary rights—American proofs, Colonial and continental reprints, and foreign translations—were denied them under such a scheme. On the author's side, there was little to recommend the arrangement. The commission was not enough to encourage his publisher to push his novel hard; there was no reason for his publisher to keep production expenses down, and the ordinary channels of distribution might be closed to his work. Charles Reade, for example, who brought out five books on a commission basis after his break with Bentley, found the doors of Mudie's shut against him. The reason for this boycott, The Critic declared, was simply that the publishing industry could not tolerate any venture that
might, if it succeeded, deprive it of its usual profits, although another contributing factor to the boycott may have been the trade's general anger at Reade's victorious legal action which allowed him to recover his copyrights in his first two novels from Bentley. All in all, commission publishing was not a desirable alternative to the regular agreements during the Victorian period, and was only rarely used.

The arrangement which we today feel gives the author and the publisher an equitable share in a novel's success—the royalty system—did not come upon the Victorian scene until late in these fifty years, and even then it was used sparingly, and almost solely in behalf of those writers who could command their own arrangements. Victorian publishers as a whole did nothing to encourage the adoption of the royalty system, although it is hard to see why. That system, taking the guesswork out of the negotiations and insuring the author a certain return for each copy sold, would have eliminated many of the grievances Victorian novelists held against their publishers.

22 Reade seems to have done fairly well in spite of the obstacles placed in his path; after he had successfully overcome "the cabal" with his popular Cloister and the Hearth, he turned down an offer of £250 for a limited-term copyright made by Sampson Low in favor of publishing with that company on a commission basis. With that last effort, however, he did return to the regular method of publishing. See Elwin, Reade, pp. 132, 137, 153, 175-76.
The general resistance with which the trade met any royalty proposals would indicate that they normally gained a greater share of a book's profits than the royalty system would allow. For example a royalty of 17 per cent on the retail price of the first edition alone of Trollope's *Three Clerks* would have more than covered the sum Trollope received for the entire copyright of that novel, and of course Bentley paid nothing on further editions. Similarly a royalty of about 16 per cent on the retail price of first editions alone (averaging 1000 copies) would have provided the usual payment Bentley gave to authors (about £250) during the period 1830-1850.23

In any event, before the 1860's few Victorian novelists seem to have been aware of the royalty formula and none used it in selling a novel.24 It is true that Thackeray received 7½d. on each of the very few copies sold of *The Second Funeral of Napoleon* (Cunningham, 1841), but the

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23 On the other hand, when editions did not sell out, a royalty could have saved the publisher money. For example 16 per cent of the retail price of the number of copies sold of Mrs. Linton's *Christopher Kirkland* (1855) would have given the author £163 instead of the £250 Bentley actually paid her. See Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher*, pp. 125-26, 139.

24 Muir reports that the earliest record he has discovered of anything like royalty payments in England was on Charles Knight's *British Almanack*, 1826ff. P. H. Muir, "Ignoring the Flag," *New Paths in Book-Collecting*, pp. 87-92.
work was not a novel.\textsuperscript{25} Beginning in 1856 Reade was paid a ten per cent royalty by Ticknor & Fields for \textit{It Is Never Too Late To Mend}, but this was payment from an American publisher for early sheets.\textsuperscript{26} In 1857 Bentley, probably because he knew of Reade's preference for the royalty scheme, proposed to use it as the basis for extending his rights in three of Reade's novels,\textsuperscript{27} but that was the year Reade had gone to the courts to free himself from Bentley, and he was not ready to return. So far as I have been able to determine, the first Victorian novel to be purchased originally on a royalty basis was George Eliot's \textit{Mill on The Floss}, which Blackwood published in 1860. The arrangement was a compromise settlement arrived at after weeks of negotiations which had led to an estrangement of the author and publisher and almost ended their relationship. In the end, Eliot was able to secure the royalty precisely because she was too valuable a property to lose. The arrangement (£1000 for every 2000 of the three-volume edition) so pleased her that she also placed \textit{Adam Bede} and \textit{Clerical Sacraments} on a royalty basis, and later sold \textit{Silas Marner},

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[25]{Stevenson, \textit{Showman}, pp. 97-98.}
\footnotetext[26]{Elwin, \textit{Reade}, p. 109.}
\footnotetext[27]{Gettmann, \textit{A Victorian Publisher}, p. 116.}
\end{footnotes}
Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda on the same scheme.28 Besides Eliot, the only other Victorian novelist, so far as I know, to receive a royalty originally was Disraeli. Longman published Lothair in 1870 on terms similar to those Blackwood gave Eliot for The Mill.29

Obviously, therefore, the royalty formula was not very popular during these fifty years.30 Perhaps one of the reasons why this was so was that English authors generally did not know about the formula. Indeed, it did not come to public notice in England until 1867, when James Spedding, the biographer and editor of Bacon, published at his own expense a little pamphlet called Publishers and Authors. Spedding had discovered the royalty system as a result of negotiations with an American company, Hurd and Houghton, over his latest book. When Spedding proposed to announce


29 Eliot received an advance of £2000 on the first 4000; Disraeli £1000 on the first 2000. On sales above these numbers Eliot's share was proportioned on the £1000 for 2000 basis; Disraeli's was a straight 10¢ per copy on all copies sold. Eliot, Letters, III, 235-36; Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, V, 489, 509; VI, 1141.

30 In the 1870's it began to catch on as a basis for negotiating collected editions. Thus Longman brought out a new edition of Disraeli (minus Lothair) in 1870, and in 1873 Macmillan issued Kingsley's works on this basis. In 1876 Blackwood, renewing their copyright in the collected works of George Eliot, offered a royalty which Eliot accepted. Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, V, 509; Morgan, House of Macmillan, pp. 42-44; Eliot, Letters, IV, 509.
his discovery in an article, he also discovered that English publishers, who must have known about royalties from their contacts with American firms, did not want the news spread. He was advised not to write his article because of his ignorance of "the general nature of the arrangements between authors and booksellers." He was not deterred, however, for, he said, "it is but reasonable to suppose that the same causes which have kept me in ignorance... have kept in equal ignorance others who are like me." Further, he added, if this royalty system "be an ordinary one between authors and publishers in England, the fact is not generally known to persons in my situation; though there are perhaps none whom it more concerns."

However, not only had Spedding been (unsuccesfully) discouraged from writing the pamphlet; an attempt had also been made to suppress the finished work. Originally the pamphlet's contents were meant to appear as magazine articles, but when they were read by editors of two periodicals they were refused:

not that the subject was (in the editor's judgment) likely to prove uninteresting to his readers, or that the treatment of it was unfair, ineffective, or otherwise discreditable; but that they would offend the Powers upon whom the sale of books depends, and might materially damage the value (as property) of the publication which admitted them.

31 Spedding, Publishers and Authors, p. 4.
In one case I was told of the hostility which such an article would necessarily provoke, and which would fall upon the proprietor; in the other, that it would inevitably create a deep offence in the minds of all the publishers, and thereby injure the property.

For these reasons Spedding was compelled to publish his views at his own expense. The results must have been disappointing to him. The Publishers' Circular, taking notice of the pamphlet in January, 1867, gave Spedding's royalty proposal scant notice: "This, however, is not a matter of sufficient general interest to be discussed here, and we will simply commend it to the attention of persons about to publish."\(^{32}\)

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that publishers alone opposed royalty payments. Authors themselves first had to be sold on the scheme. Trollope certainly would have thought little of it, and Dickens, writing to Forster about the proposal late in 1866, astutely summed up the situation:

What does it come to? What is the worth of the remedy after all? You and I know very well that in nine cases out of ten the author is at a disadvantage with the publisher because the publisher has capital and the author has not. We know perfectly well that in nine cases out of ten money is advanced by the publisher before the book is producible—often, long before. No young or unsuccessful author (unless he were an amateur and

\(^{32}\)Spedding, Publishers and Authors, pp. v-vii.

an independent gentleman) would make a bargain for having that royalty, to-morrow, if he could have a certain sum of money, or an advance of money. The author who could command that bargain, could command it to-morrow, or command anything else. For the less fortunate or the less able, I make bold to say—with some knowledge of the subject, as a writer who made a publisher's fortune long before he began to share in the real profits of his books—that if the publishers met next week, and resolved henceforth to make this royalty bargain and no other, it would be an enormous hardship and misfortune because the authors could not live while they wrote. The pamphlet seems to me just another example of the old philosophical chess-playing, with human beings for pieces. 'Don't want money.' 'Be careful to be born with means, and have a banker's account.' 'Your publisher will settle with you, at such and such long periods according to the custom of his trade, and you will settle with your butcher and baker weekly, in the meantime, by drawing cheques as I do.' 'You must be sure not to want money, and then I have worked it out for you splendidly.'

Thus the slow development of the royalty system in Britain is understandable; men who need cash must have it.

While serial, volume and reprint rights were prime considerations in the negotiations over Victorian novels, lesser rights also became involved in those transactions. The development of the ancillary markets during these fifty years was, as we have pointed out earlier, a slow and haphazard process. Continental reprints did not begin to bring in fairly measurable payments until the 1840's, translations were not protected until the 50's, and the

34 Dickens, Letters, III, 490-91.
colonial markets—despite the Customs Act of 1842 and the Reprints Act of 1846—did not become truly significant until around 1870. The American market remained a "courtesy" one throughout the entire period. Consequently there was understandable confusion and uncertainty among both Victorian publishers and authors regarding these rights, and no systematic method of handling foreign proceeds existed in the trade.

As a result of this uncertainty none of the formulas for selling English copyright clearly settled questions concerning the ancillary markets. Even such a simple method as that of the copyright sale was open to ambiguous interpretation. Did such a sale automatically include all foreign rights, the Copyright Commission of 1875 asked the publishers who appeared before it, even if those rights were not mentioned in the contract? Was it the habit of the industry to mention the rights or not? Different publishers gave different answers. At first Edward Marston of Sampson Low thought no specific reference was needed for the foreign rights to go automatically to the publisher, but under further questioning, he changed his mind and said that a specific reservation probably was necessary. His own company's practice, in any event, was to include the phrase "all copyright at home and abroad" in its
agreements. 35 William Longman, on the other hand, asserted
that his firm did not bother to say "at home and abroad," and, furthermore, did not believe it needed to. He based
his opinion on the willingness of authors to give up their
foreign rights. Recently, he pointed out, his firm had re-
 fused to let an author sell advance sheets to Baron Tauch-
nitz for his continental reprint series and the author had
acquiesced. Therefore, Longman concluded, the author had
lost his ancillary rights when he sold his English copy-
right even though no reference to those rights had been
made. 36

If the publishers who testified before the Commission
were unsure of the subsidiary rights purchased with copy-
right, they were equally uncertain of what the half-profits
formula gave them. William Longman, for example, claimed
that although theoretically publishers and authors shared
ancillary rights under the half-profits arrangement, in
practice publishers often gave over their rights to the

35 Copyright Commission Report (1878), Qq. 193-98.
36 Ibid., Qq. 445ff. Against such hazy testimony as
this there can be placed a statement by William Tinsley in
his autobiography that "years ago there was a general un-
derstanding that, unless otherwise agreed, authors and pub-
lishers shared any sum of money received for books the
Baron Tauchnitz paid for the right to reprint ... " (Tin-
sley, Random Recollections, I, 105-06). I have been unable
to find corroborating evidence that such a "general under-
standing" ever did exist among the trade.
authors. \(^{37}\) But the evidence seems to show that whether or not an author benefited from ancillary rights usually depended upon whether he knew they existed. The point can be illustrated by the experience of Charles Reade. In 1855 Reade sold Bentley two-year volume rights in *It Is Never Too Late To Mend*. Later in discussion with Trübner, Ticknor and Fields' London agent, Reade discovered the existence of a paying American market, and happily arranged to sell the Boston firm his early sheets for a ten per cent royalty on American sales. When Reade disclosed the plan to Bentley, however, Bentley insisted that his purchase of the two-year volume rights automatically had given him the right to sell early proofs even though the agreement was silent on that point. Furthermore, Bentley apparently had a standing agreement with Appleton's to dispose of such sheets, and had already made arrangements for their sale in this instance. In order to maintain peace with Bentley and at the same time to give Ticknor the American rights in his book, Reade paid Bentley the sum (£20) Bentley declared he would lose by being deprived of his sale of the early sheets. \(^{38}\) After this experience, Reade habitually reserved foreign rights in his works to himself.

\(^{37}\) *Copyright Commission Report* (1878), Qqs. 454-57.  
\(^{38}\) *Elwin, Read*: pp. 107-110.
Publishers, of course, were not always as silent regarding the foreign markets as was Richard Bentley. Contrast the Blackwoods' conduct in the purchase of the four-year volume rights in Eliot's *Adam Bede*. This agreement also made no mention of subsidiary rights. Nevertheless when Blackwood approached Sampson Low about advance sheets to America, John Blackwood dutifully informed Eliot and inquired whether to seek £50 or £30. Eliot agreed to the lower figure, "American publishers being very narrow-necked jars indeed." 39 And when the £30 arrived, Blackwood sent it on to Eliot as he did the £50 he succeeded in obtaining from Tauchnitz. 40 Again, when Eliot returned to Blackwood after her single appearance under Smith, Elder's auspices (*Romola* in the *Cornhill*) and sold Blackwood the five-year rights in *Felix Holt* (1865), there was similar fair play by her publisher. This time also, Blackwood neglected to mention the foreign rights in the agreement. When the offers from America and the continent came in, John Blackwood wrote Eliot suggesting that she negotiate with the parties direct. Eliot, similarly motivated by a sense of justice, declined Blackwood's suggestion and returned the rights to him. She had meant them to be sold with the

five-year rights, she said, for which Blackwood had paid handsomely (£5000). 41

It would be stretching credulity too far, however, to suppose that Blackwood as dutifully informed other, less popular novelists of proceeds from subsidiary markets. As we shall see, one of the firm's most hard working authors, Mrs. Oliphant, remained woefully ignorant of sales to America. But, then, even such a magazine owner as Dickens did not always pass advanced sheet rights along to the author. If the writer was already aware of American pay, or if Dickens was very anxious to secure his work, Dickens would either arrange an American sale himself and turn the receipts over to the author, or he would reserve the author's right to negotiate with an American publisher on his own behalf. 42 On the other hand when such a needy author as Charles Lever was bargaining for the sale of A Day's Ride, Dickens agreed to terms which allowed Lever to retain book rights, "merely observing that All The Year Round is under engagement to send early proofs to America, and therefore reserves that point." 43 Dickens was not the only magazine proprietor to take advantage of Lever. I have found no

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41 Eliot, Letters, IV, 251-52.
42 Elwin, Reader, pp. 162-63, 165; Dickens, Letters, III, 278.
43 Dickens, Letters, III, 144, 146.
record of Lever's ever having been paid for advance sheets to America. 44

Most revealing, however, of the way English periodicals sold to American publishers behind the backs of uninformed Victorian novelists is the letter the Harpers sent to Mrs. Oliphant when, in 1873, she wrote to complain that Harpers had usurped the right to be her American publisher without giving her any pay. Harpers denied the charge, adding that her stories also had been printed by several other American houses including Appleton and Scribner. Further, they explained:

The early sheets of some of your novels have been sent to us, without our solicitation, at various prices—and you must acknowledge that our refusal of them would have been neither complimentary to you nor creditable to our judgment. Your last work, Ombra, [Chapman and Hall, 1872] was sent to us under these circumstances, our first knowledge of it being the receipt of the sheets and an invoice for twenty pounds. Our impression is that for some of your stories, we bought, either in London or New York, early sheets of the numbers of Blackwood containing the conclusion of the stories; of others we have bought stereotype plates of Messrs. Littell and Company, of Boston, after they had run the stories through their magazine, The Living Age. Of Innocent, your new story running in the London Graphic, our London agent [Sampson Low, who published the book in volume form in 1873] is now sending us the early sheets, for which he tells us the charge is one hundred pounds. If this arrangement for Innocent

44 However Lever did receive £52. 10s. in 1845 as his half-interest in the "Indian profits" of his work (Downey, Lever, I, 200).
be unsatisfactory to you, we will relinquish it, provided some other American publisher will pay as much or more for it. . . . We do not know exactly to whom this hundred pounds would go, whether to you, or to the publisher of the Graphic, in which the story is now running, or to the London publisher of the story in book form.

The Harpers further advised Mrs. Oliphant that customarily the English author "or his London agent" sent early sheets to some American publisher fixing a price at the time. 45

Certainly not all Victorian novelists, however, were ignorant of the possible returns from subsidiary rights. Captain Marryat and G. P. R. James sold their American rights separately in the 1830's and 40's. As far as his own novels were concerned Dickens habitually assumed that any incidental profits from American and continental sources were his own. Thackeray kept his continental and American rights in those novels he published in volumes or in numbers. Reade, Collins, Eliot, and Bulwer also usually negotiated their subsidiary rights separately from their British rights. In all this, an awareness of the existence of the subsidiary markets seems to have been the determining factor.

Publishing the Established Novelist

The Author Paid

In our discussion of the various formulas by which the beginning novelist sold his work we concluded that although the sale of copyright had its drawbacks it was probably the best bargain for the beginner. This was certainly not so for the established writer. For example, in 1830-1880, the highest sum given for the copyright in a novel published only in volume form and written by an author whose reputation was made by his literary activity ¹ was the £2500 Chapman and Hall paid to Trollope for his four-volume Prime Minister in 1874. ² This is exactly half the amount George Eliot received for five years' rights in her Felix Holt. The greatest fee paid for the whole copyright of a serialised novel was £5000, which Smith, Elder gave Wilkie Collins for his Armadale—£2000 short of the £7000 Smith, Elder paid for serial and limited book

¹I make this qualification in order to exclude the £10,000 paid Disraeli, then Lord Beaconsfield, for his Endymion—a sum which was certainly more dependent upon his political fame than on any reputation he had acquired as a writer.

²Trollope, Autobiography, p. 360.
rights in Homola. As these figures indicate, the very best prices were given for works whose copyrights were not sold away, and the combined serial and volume production brought the author more than did volume publication alone.

Even the half-profits scheme, which we have seen denounced with some justice, was not un rewarding when used by a popular writer, as the following figures show:


But unless Smith, Elder by 1852 had developed some exceptional method of cutting costs unknown to Colburn in 1847, these figures would suggest that there was good reason even for established writers to suspect the half-profits sale. In any event, that plan could easily be equalled by the edition sale or the limited-term sale. Indeed, of the formulas we have mentioned it was the limited-term scheme which brought the author the largest sums of ready money.

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3Despite the high payment he received for this novel, Collins was dissatisfied with the result. The two years he had spent on the novel netted him only £1500; "about as much saved from Armadale as Marshall and Snelgrove make in a quarter of an hour by the brains and industry of other people. If I live I will take a shop--and appeal to the backs or bellies (I have not decided which) instead of the brains of my fellow creatures" (Robinson, Collins, pp. 178-79, 190). For the Eliot figures see Eliot, Letters, II, 492-93; III, 190; IV, 243, 313.

4Stevenson, Showman, p. 243; Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, II, 597; III, 865.
Against the first edition fee of £1000 which Kingsley got from Macmillan in 1857 for Two Years Ago—a good fee for a single edition—can be placed not only the sums we have mentioned in this chapter's opening paragraph, but also the following:

Bulwer, Strange Story, Sampson Low, Volume rights for two years, four weeks. £1200.
Bulwer, Caxton series (three novels), Blackwood, Serial and volume rights, five years. £8000.
Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, Smith, Elder, Serial and volume rights, seven years. £8000.

Publishers could offer more for novels bought on these terms because they were free to exploit such novels fully. While occasionally they misjudged—Smith, Elder, for example, lost on its purchase of Romola—usually they did not, and when they chanced upon a best seller, the formula paid them handsomely. Not all the publishers applied the limited-term formula to the best seller in the same way, however, as a comparison of Bentley's handling of Oliver Twist and Blackwood's handling of Adam Bede will show.

When Richard Bentley first acquired rights in Oliver Twist he had bought the whole copyright for a scant £20 a month, the sum he had agreed to pay Dickens for his regular contribution to Bentley's Miscellany as its editor.

5 Morgan, House of Macmillan, p. 46.
6 Marston, After Work, pp. 57-59; Dickens, Letters, III, 194-95; Tredrey, Blackwood, pp. 97-98; Hopkings, Gaskell, p. 156.
When Dickens rebelled against this contract, Bentley, with great reluctance, consented to give him an additional £500 for the right to publish the novel exclusively during the three years following serial publication, and for the right to half of the profits subsequently. Bentley immediately set to work making the most of his term of exclusive control. He had the first edition of Oliver Twist out seven months before the serial run in his Miscellany was complete, and in the next two years produced two more editions, the last of which had three separate printings.

When Dickens bought up the copyright in August, 1840, Bentley had little more than one year of full control left. Nevertheless he charged Dickens £2250 for his remaining copyright and the stock on hand (1002 copies).  

In wide contrast was Blackwood's handling of Adam Bede. That book, too, was tremendously popular and profitable. Sixteen thousand copies of the 3ls. 6d. edition sold in the first year—a sale which, on the basis of what the firm paid Eliot for her next novel (£1000 on each 2000), must have produced a gross profit of around £10,000.  

Unlike Bentley, who demanded everything the letter of the law

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allowed him. Blackwood was willing to share their good fortune with the author. Blackwood not only voluntarily doubled the original price they had agreed to pay, from £800 to £1600, but at the end of the first year returned the copyright to Eliot. This they did even though their contract gave them a full four years' monopoly on the work.9

Though the edition sale formula was used by authors who could command large sums, it still was not very satisfactory to the author whose popularity turned out to be greater than he had anticipated. The royalty sale, as we have already indicated, remedied this in theory and in fact. Smarting under the realisation of Blackwood's great profits on Adam Bede, Eliot turned down the firm's offer of £3000 for four years' rights in The Mill On The Floss and instead negotiated a royalty agreement with the firm which paid her £3050 on the three-volume edition alone—a result which justified her preference for the royalty formula. That formula applied to the one-volume Silas Marner brought Eliot £1600 on the first edition (3000 12s. copies), and, as our discussion of the sale of novels in parts will show, the royalty produced her largest sums

9Eliot, Letters, III, 239.
ever when used for *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.  

While the royalty was the fairest method of deciding the novelist's pay, the half-profits plan as well as the edition and limited term sale had the same virtue of extending the author's financial interest in his work beyond the time of first publication. A few figures will reveal just how valuable that continuing interest could be. The first edition of Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* (2000 copies), was sold to Macmillan for £500. Before the work was put on a royalty basis in 1873, Kingsley had earned about £1700 for it—three times the amount he had received for the three-decker sales. The reprint rights on the works Dickens published with Chapman and Hall before 1844 brought him an average of from £500 to £300 a year during January, 1846, through June, 1852.  

Bulwer received £20,000 from Routledge for the ten years' right to issue cheap editions of his already published works in their Railway Library.  

Beside this latter sale, the £1000 Eliot received from

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Blackwood for the ten years' rights in five of her novels seems a little puny.\textsuperscript{14}

It was ironic, therefore, that of the various ways to sell a novel, the copyright sale, lowest paying of all, should have given the publisher the greatest control. Yet it did. The man who sold his copyright sold everything, as George Meredith discovered to his sorrow when he learned that Kegan Paul, who had bought \textit{The Egoist} for £400, had taken it upon himself to dispose of the novel's serial rights to the \textit{Glasgow Weekly Herald}.\textsuperscript{15}

To lose one's serial rights was to lose extremely valuable property, and it is what was involved in this property that I now wish to consider. Although we will not be able to determine what a fair magazine price was—it depended upon such variables as the magazine's circulation, the author's drawing power, his own need, and the publisher's negotiating habits—we will be able to assess broadly the significance of the magazine to the novelist's pocketbook.

The average contributor to English periodicals, said

\textsuperscript{14}But of course it was not. Routledge's purchase of Bulwer's many novels should not be compared to Blackwood's purchase of Eliot's few. Furthermore Routledge published Bulwer in the yellow-back form; Blackwood kept Eliot dignified—with resulting smaller sales. Eliot, \textit{Letters}, IV, 353-4, 372.

\textsuperscript{15}Stevenson, Meredith, p. 224.
Fraser's in 1847, was the highest paid magazine writer in Europe. Against the record price of 250 francs per sheet (£10) which George Sand received from the Revue des Deux Mondes, the ordinary contributor to English magazines was paid from sixteen to twenty guineas a sheet. Actually such sums were reserved for those who could command a market and were not otherwise in a weak bargaining position. Nevertheless if 250 francs per sheet was the record French price at this time, English pay was high in comparison.

The fee of sixteen to twenty guineas per sheet (the equivalent of around sixteen pages) was first given in England by Constable when, in 1802, he set out to bring the best writers to the Edinburgh Review by offering them such high pay that they could not resist. While the pay for contributors to the Edinburgh Review rose considerably, the top rate of sixteen to twenty guineas was still in effect for fiction at the beginning of the 1830's and did not increase significantly for a quarter of a century. In 1832-35, for example, Captain Marryat received sixteen guineas per sheet for the numbers of Newton Forster, Peter

16"Condition of Authors," Fraser's (1847), 286.

17 During Jeffrey's tenure the pay was sufficiently high as to average out at twenty to twenty-five guineas per sheet. See John Cline, Scotch Reviewers: The Edinburgh Review, 1802-1816 (Cambridge, 1967), p. 34ff.
Simple, Jacob Faithful, and Japhet in Search of a Father that appeared in the Metropolitan Magazine. At the same time, Colburn's New Monthly paid its best contributors, such as Bulwer and Disraeli, twenty guineas per sheet. Marryat felt like crowing over the rise from the sixteen guineas of the Metropolitan to the twenty guineas of Colburn's when he sold it his Phantom Ship in 1837. "Times are hard," he told his sister, "and I do not wish to break the backs of the publishers, although I ride over them roughshod." In the 1840's the Dublin University Magazine paid Charles Lever sixteen guineas per sheet for his serial novels, increasing the price to £20 after he left the magazine in 1845. He received the same rate for Maurice Tiernay in 1849-50, and for Sir Jasper Carew in 1853-54. Not until 1859 do the records indicate that Lever received £30 or £35 per sheet for his serial work.

While payments of £16 to £20 guineas per sheet were thus made during the period 1830-1855, these were not the rates given to "ordinary" contributors to the literary

18 Earl Lytton, Life of Bulwer, II, 325; Marryat, Life of Marryat. I, 256-57.

19 Lever didn't think much of this pay. He called Tiernay "a poor performance"—"skim-milky" and explained that result by saying, "I cannot be good for £20 a sheet!—just as I should revoke if I played whist for shilling points." Downey, Lever, I, 312-13.

20 Ibid., pp. 360-61.
magazines. Lever himself received much less even after his successful entry into the novel field with *Harry Lorrequer*. In 1841 he reported that *Bentley's Miscellany* was paying its contributors £2. 1s. per sheet, and this seemed a magnificent sum to him, for he had been getting only 57 for nearly twice as many pages in the *Dublin University Magazine*. But Lever was a young, aspiring doctor-author in Brussels; he could be had, and was.  

That his pay had been unusually low is proved by Dickens's remark in 1844 that the rate for beginners was six to eight guineas a sheet.  

Other magazines besides the *Dublin University* took advantage of their writers' ignorance and weak bargaining position. Thackeray, for instance, only by accident discovered that he was making less than other contributors to *Fraser's*, although even their rates must have been quite modest since, in attempting to redress the balance and to be paid more than his fellows, Thackeray's demand was for only twelve guineas. I quote the letter extensively:

> Now comes another, and not a very pleasant point, on which I must speak. I hereby give you notice that I shall strike for wages. You pay more to others, I find, than to me, and so I intend to make some fresh conditions about Yellowplash. I

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shall write no more of that gentleman's remarks, except at the rate of twelve guineas a sheet, and with a drawing for each number in which his story appears—the drawing two guineas. Pray do not be angry at this decision on my part; it is simply a bargain which it is my duty to make. Bad as he is, Mr. Yellowplush is the most popular contributor to your magazine, and ought to be paid accordingly; if he does not deserve more than the Monthly Nurse or the Blue Friars, I am a Dutchman. I have been at work upon his adventures to-day, and will send them to you or not, as you like; but in common regard for myself I won't work under price. Well, I dare say you will be very indignant, and swear I am the most mercenary of individuals. Not so. But I am a better workman than most in your crew, and deserve a better price. You must not, I repeat, be angry; or because we differ as tradesmen, break off our connection as friends. Believe me that, whether I write for you or not, I shall always be glad of your friendship and anxious to have your good opinion.  

Whether this letter had any real effect is doubtful, for Thackeray's account book does not show any significant change in the rate of pay he received. Fraser's gave him £20 in January, 1838, nothing in February, the month in which he asked for a raise, £20 again in March, £25 in  

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Even though he thought Fraser's pay was low, the magazine was his chief source of income during this period, and actually he had no place to turn from Fraser's for his higher pay (Thackeray, Letters, I, 513ff). In fact, the next year, 1839, he contracted to write for N. P. Willis's New York weekly The Corsair at the rate of a guinea a close column, "cheaper," said Willis, "than I ever did anything in my life" (Stevenson, Showmen, p. 86). And four years later, in 1843, he was so pleased with Visetelly's offer to pay him three guineas for two weekly columns for the Pictorial Times that he jokingly said he was willing to sign a contract for life on those terms (Visetelly, Glances, I, 250-51).
April and £20 again in May. Three years later when he first proposed to write Barry Lyndon, he was getting twelve guineas per sheet, and twelve to fifteen pounds per issue was what he received in 1843-44 when Lyndon was finally published. Until he made his connection with Punch, toward the end of 1843, his income from other magazines was no better than from Fraser's; indeed some periodicals paid him much less. For his Major Gahagan series, which ran in Colburn's New Monthly at the time Yellowplush was appearing in Fraser's, he received £9 in January, 1838, £7 in February and £4 in April. A story and a long ballad which appeared in the October and December, 1841, issues of George Cruikshank's Omnibus together brought him a single sovereign. His rate of pay from Chapman and Hall's Foreign Quarterly Review—at first about £1 per page for two articles—soon fell into the general pattern. Writing the publishers late in 1843 about a twenty-page article, "New Accounts of Paris," Thackeray signed, "When I think about the ten guineas it is with a sinking of the


25 He told his family, 17 December 1843, that his pay with Punch was "more than double of that I get anywhere else" (Ibid., p. 135).

26 Ibid., I, 613.

27 Stevenson, Showman, p. 103.
heart. It is too low; and for the sake of human-nature & your property, I would recommend you to put a couple of guineas more upon the value of the article."

That Thackeray's pay remained low during this period must have been the result of his weak bargaining position and his need for money. With the beginning of his wife's illness in 1840, his plight became desperate. Having broken into his last five pounds to pay the household bills—"we children were in one room crying," his daughter recalled, "and Mamma was raving in the other"—Thackeray applied to his publishers. The results were disappointing, Fraser "refusing me £15 who owes me £13.10 and the Times to which I apply for a little more than 5 guineas for a week's work, refusing to give me more." Relief finally came from Chapman and Hall. They advanced him £120 against an Irish travel book, but only after a friend, Mary Graham, came to his assistance by giving the publishers her bond as security and after Thackeray himself also met with their request that he leave his plate chest with them as a "kind of genteel pawn." It is not hard to understand why businessmen of this sort were not frightened by Thackeray's strikes for higher wages.

28Thackeray, Letters, II, 126.
29Ibid., I, 254.
Be that as it may, figures much smaller than Fraser's average of 16 to 20 guineas are easily found not only in the period 1830-1840, but also in the 50's and 60's. For example, Mrs. Gaskell received £10 from Dickens's Household Words for her 12-page "Lizzie Leigh" (1850), or a little more than £1.3 per sheet; and Dickens paid approximately £1.0 for each number of her Cranford papers. For her essays in the Westminster Review, 1855-56, George Eliot was paid from £10 to 12 guineas per sheet. In 1859 Once A Week, which surely did not have to skimp, paid George Meredith a mere £1.0 for four brief stories he contributed to the Christmas number. More than a year later his "Parish Clerk Story" (February, 1861) brought him five guineas, the same rate per page that he had received for "A Story-Telling Party" in 1859. About this

30 Hopkins, Mrs. Gaskell, p. 219; Dickens, Letters, II, 372.
31 Haight, George Eliot and John Chapman, p. 36 fn.
32 Meredith's biographer, Stevenson, says that it was probably financial stress which caused Meredith to "purloin" the plots of these stories from a friend, Frank Burnand, who recognized them as developments of anecdotes he had told Meredith during a visit. Burnand asked Meredith "as a set off against the 'honorarium'" to recommend a story of his to Once A Week. Meredith did, the story was published, and the connection led to Burnand's becoming editor of Punch, and that "earned him a knighthood." Stevenson, Ordeal of George Meredith, p. 75.
33 Ibid., pp. 87-88.
same date Colburn's New Monthly and Bentley's Miscellany, both now owned by W. H. Ainsworth, were paying their contributors very, very little. Mrs. Henry Wood wrote short stories anonymously for both magazines. For these Ainsworth at first gave nothing; later he paid at the rate of £60 annually. It was probably at this last rate that her East Lynne, a Victorian best seller in its subsequent book form, ran in the New Monthly in 1860-61, and £60 was all Ainsworth gave Mrs. Wood for her Shadows of Ashbylott.\footnote{Ellis, Ainsworth, II, 236-37.}

But by the 1860's the circulations of Bentley's and the New Monthly had probably declined—a sort of habit with magazines Ainsworth purchased—and he undoubtedly could not afford to pay the regular rates.

The prices Meredith and Mrs. Wood received demonstrate the difficulty surrounding any attempt to assign a given rate of pay as typical for "ordinary" contributors. Too much is left undefined in the term "ordinary," and, furthermore, the writer's fee depended upon the magazine he contributed to and his own bargaining power. An author like Meredith, who still lacked a following even after a decade of publishing, could not expect to be paid as much as very popular writers. In 1866, while other authors were getting much more for their serial rights, Meredith

\footnote{Ellis, Ainsworth, II, 236-37.}
received only £250 from the Fortnightly for his Vittoria. If we keep in mind that there were always authors in Meredith's position and always magazines which were dragging their way to the grave, we will not be led into thinking that as payments rose for the very popular writer they rose also for every literary laborer.

Thus far we have talked of serial pay in terms of pounds or guineas per sheet, and have seen that before 1855 the most popular writers received around twenty guineas per sheet. If we convert these payments into total serial receipts, figuring sixteen magazine pages to the sheet, we find that a very long serial such as Charles Lever's Sir Jasper Carse (281 magazine pages) would bring the author about £350 if paid for at the top rate. Such a sum would have been about the most that popular authors could expect to receive for their magazine rights before midcentury.

Thereafter, however, the total pay rose considerably.

35Stevenson, Ordeal of George Meredith, p. 150.

36The single instance I have discovered in which a Victorian novelist was paid more than this sum for serial rights alone involved newspaper serialisation and not magazine issue. As I have reported earlier on page 56, Ainsworth received £1000 from The Sunday Times for the right to run his Old Saint Paul's through that newspaper. The £1000 was clearly exceptional, and was to stand as the highest pay a novelist was to get from a periodical for the next twenty years. In the meantime no magazine serialist (with the exception of Dickens, of course) even approached that figure.
Within the space of thirteen months, January, 1859, through January, 1860, four new periodicals—All The Year Round, Once A Week, Macmillan's, and Cornhill—crowded into the Victorian periodical market. The effect was to send serial prices skyward and to cause established magazine publishers like Blackwood to mutter about the wild sums speculative venturers were tossing out in order to launch their fly-by-night schemes. Practically, the effect of the competition can be demonstrated by two offers Dickens made to Mrs. Gaskell within a six-month period. In December, 1859, he proposed to give 200 guineas for the serial rights only of a new novel to run 22 weeks in issues of five pages each, with £50 more for transmission of early proofs to America. This offer amounted to around 29 guineas per sheet and was better than Dickens had yet paid her. Nevertheless Mrs. Gaskell did not accept, for she was then entertaining offers from Cornhill, whose first issue was dated January, 1860. Consequently, six months later Dickens wrote again, proposing this time a story to run for eight months. Dickens now offered £400 for serial rights, plus "at least" £100 more for early proofs to America. Figuring on the same number of pages per week as for the earlier proposal, this offer represented an increase to
about £40 per sheet. Mrs. Gaskell’s value had risen 33 per cent in half a year’s time. 37

From 1859 on, therefore, popular Victorian novelists could draw substantially more for their serial rights than they had been able to before. Prices soared, as the following payments show:

Wilkie Collins, Woman in White. All the Year Round (1859-60) .................................. £550.
Wilkie Collins, No Name. All the Year Round (1862) ........................................... £950.
Bulwer-Lytton, A Strange Story. All the Year Round (1862) .................................... £1500.
Charles Reade, Hard Cash. All the Year Round (1863) ............................................ £3000.
Charles Reade, Put Yourself in Her Place. Cornhill (1859) ...................................... £2615.

In 1876 Reade told John Blackwood that “for sixteen years I have received £5 per page of the monthly or weekly I have come out in.” 38 Five pounds per page is £80 per sheet—a significant advance from the 20 guineas of the years before midcentury.

Of course lower rates were more generally received than these. In 1859, for example, Dickens wrote a contributor, C. O. Felton, that “the general rate of payment is a Guinea a page, but it is sometimes more.” 39 Nevertheless,

37 Dickens, Letters, III, 139; Hopkins, Mrs. Gaskell, pp. 151, 154.
38 Marston, After Work, pp. 84-87; Elwin, Reade, pp. 163-63, 202fn., 292; Dickens, Letters, III, 194-95, 276-78.
39 Dickens, Letters, III, 134.
sums such as the £1300 Tillotson's Newspaper Syndicate paid for Collins's *Evil Genus* (1886), the £500 it gave for his *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880), and the £1080 it paid for his *Legacy of Cain* (1888) demonstrate the solid gains a very competitive magazine market brought to the Victorian novelist, and clearly explain why the novelist was likely to make more if he first serialized his novel than if he issued it immediately between boards.40

While the magazine serial boosted the novelist's income, it was the novel issued in parts which brought the writer his largest fees, and it was this form of serialization that, for economic reasons, the novelist preferred. Charles Lever, for example, whose *Jack Hinton* was published both in parts and as a magazine serial, complained that the novel's appearance in the *Dublin University Magazine* was "manifestly against my interest, as the sale was thus rendered by so much less than we might reasonably have looked for in the No. form."41 Dickens also asserted that his


41 Curry and Company originally agreed to publish the novel in monthly parts, but later asked to run it in the *D. & M.* also. Lever received no increase in payment for this additional use, but was paid £1300 and was to get one-half of the profits on all sales over 11,000. The magazine's circulation obviously out the number that were sold in parts, and thus delayed the sales reaching the 11,000 mark (Downey, *Lever*, I. 214, 273-80; Stevenson, *quick-silver*, p. 297).
issue of Great Expectations in All the Year Round represented a financial sacrifice, for a numbers publication would have been much more profitable, and this he felt was so even though he owned a three-quarter interest in the magazine.\footnote{42}

This itself speaks well for part issues, but more direct evidence is available from publishers' estimates. Bradbury and Evans told G. H. Lewes that the cost of producing 10,000 ls. numbers of The Mill on the Floss would be a mere \£100 per number, and the profits on the whole run would be \£5000.\footnote{43} A more conservative "Estimate of a Monthly Work Uniform with the Pickwick Papers, in 20 shilling Numbers, obtaining a sale of 10,000" is presented by Churton in the Author's Hand-Book.\footnote{44} Churton breaks down the cost and income as follows:

\footnote{42}\textit{All Year Round}'s circulation had been damaged by Lever's A Day's Ride, and though Dickens would have made more from Great Expectations immediately in the part issue, in the long run the magazine was much the more valuable continuing source of income. It thus had to be saved (Dickens, Letters, III, 183).

\footnote{43}John Blackwood looked over the estimate and thought that such a profit was "quite possible." Eliot, however, feared "the nervous excitement of the trial," and thought that the book would "tell better in a mass," and so the numbers run was abandoned. Unfortunately neither Lewes nor Blackwood mentions whether the estimated profits were for a run of 20 numbers or less (Eliot, Letters, III, 233-36).

\footnote{44}p. 42.
Printing & sheets at £12:12s. . . . 25 4 0
Corrections . . . . . . . . . . . . 1 0 0
40 reams of paper at £1:2s. . . . 44 0 0
Engraving & Steel. . . . . . . . . 10 10 0
Printing and paper for ditto. . . 35 0 0
Covers, stitching, &c . . . . . . 20 0 0
Publisher's Commission . . . . . 32 0 0

£167 14 0

Product of 10,000 . . . . . . . . 320 0 0
Expenses . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 167 14 0

152 6 0

Multiplied by 20 . . . . . . . . . . . 3040 0 0
Advertising on the whole work . . . 546 0 0
Author's Profit . . . . . . . . . . . 2500 0 0

Of course Churton's breakdown is for a novel published on the commission basis, with the author assuming all the risk and collecting all the profit after the publisher's percentage had been taken. Seldom were the number serials issued with such remarkable advantage to the author as Churton would suggest. Usually the author was paid a fixed amount for each number, with a share in the profits to come later. In any event, whether the fee was that of Churton or of Bradbury and Evans, these figures demonstrate, at least theoretically, that a successful part issue could be very rewarding. An examination of the income of such popular serialists as Dickens, Lever, Eliot, and Thackeray confirms that conclusion.

We have touched elsewhere (pp. 109-111) upon the publication of Dickens's first novel, Pickwick, and need only
mention here that the negotiations over his second novel in parts, *Nicholas Nickleby*, were also tied in with his rights in *Pickwick*. Chapman and Hall not only contracted to pay £150 per instalment of *Nickleby* so that they might have the publishing rights for five years, but they also agreed to return a one-third share of the copyright in *Pickwick* at the end of a similar period. 45 *Nickleby* was so successful, however, that Dickens became dissatisfied with these terms, and when he negotiated an agreement for the weekly periodical *Master Humphrey's Clock*, he asked for and got an additional £1500 for *Nickleby*, making the sum of £4500 for the five years' rights. For the *Clock*, he drove the hardest bargain he had yet made. He was to draw £50 every week, out of which he was to pay any contributors; Chapman and Hall were to pay all the costs of printing, advertising, and illustrating the work, and "then of all profits allow me one clear half—not *deducting the expenses*." "By this arrangement," Dickens wrote his solicitor friend Tom Mitton, "upon a sale of 20,000 copies they get nothing; upon a sale of 40,000 they get half the profit from the additional 20,000 and I add the other half to my £50—you understand? If the work went on for two years and were to sell 50,000 ... my profits would be between ten and

eleven thousand pounds, and theirs five thousand."46 This was a good contract; it was achieved by the threat that Dickens would leave the Chapman and Hall lists if the publishers did not "do something handsome, even handsomer perhaps than they dreamt of doing."47

Master Humphrey’s Clock of course became The Old Curiosity Shop and Barnaby Rudge, and under these terms the two novels were published. Writing an installment per week, however, turned out to be a difficult pace to maintain, and for his next novel, Martin Chuzzlewit, Dickens made new and rather complicated arrangements which it would be fruitless to recount in detail here. All in all the contract brought him an advance of at least £1500, by which he sustained himself on his first trip to America, and another £350 during the course of the serial’s actual publication.48 What is more, he received a further sum of

46Dickens, Letters, I, 222.

47Waugh, A Hundred Years, p. 44.

48Chapman and Hall agreed to pay an advance of £150 per month throughout 1842 to finance his journey. The advance was to be repaid from Dickens’s share of the profits. If those profits were not enough to substantially reduce the debt by the time the fifth number was issued, the publishers could reduce Dickens's regular monthly stipend of £800 per month during the numbers run to £150 until the advance was made up. During the serial’s publication, Dickens received £200 regularly for the first seven numbers, but, thereafter, at his own insistence, the stipend was reduced to £150 (Dickens, Letters, I, 348, 527, 597-600; Waugh, A Hundred Years, pp. 60-1; Johnson, Dickens, I, 456).
K611 12s. 4d., as his share in the profits from April through December, 1844. Hence, he made at least £5450 on *Chuzzlewit* within six months of the close of its serial run.

What Dickens received for his novels in parts issued by Bradbury and Evans it is impossible to say. More than likely it was greater than any of the sums he made from Chapman and Hall, for when he shifted his future work to Bradbury and Evans, he bargained for a full three-quarter share of the profits. At any rate, an idea of Dickens's proceeds from his first numbers serial with this firm (*Dombey and Son*, 1846-48) is suggested by the accounts for the half year ending June 30, 1847. Dickens described the profits as "brilliant. Deducting the hundred pounds a month paid six times, I have still to receive two thousand two hundred and twenty pounds . . ." "

We must use the reported circulation of the other serials in parts Dickens published with Bradbury and Evans.

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49 The terms called for Dickens to receive three-quarters of all profits made during the 20 part number sale and the first six months of volume publication. At the end of the six months period, Chapman and Hall, on payment to Dickens of one-fourth of the cost price of the stock then on hand, were to come into one-half of the copyright (Dickens, *Letters*, I, 348, 599-600, 671.

50 Although this accounting probably included the proceeds from *The Battle of Life* (December, 1846) and Dickens's continuing interest in *Pictures from Italy*, the greater share undoubtedly should be credited to *Dombey* (*ibid.*, II, 52).
to guess at the pay they brought him. Copperfield, we know, sold at least as well as Chuzzlewit, verging on a steady 25,000 by the fifth month. 51 Bleak House, nearing the end of its run in November, 1852, had sales which Dickens estimated were half again as large as those of Copperfield. 52 And Little Dorrit attained a circulation of 40,000 by its third number (February, 1856). 53 If Bleak House and Little Dorrit did average over 20,000 copies we can assume from the figures we have for Our Mutual Friend that Dickens's share of the profits must have brought him around £7500 on the number issue of each of these works.

With Dickens's return to Chapman and Hall in 1869, he returned to the practice of contracting for each novel separately. Thus he sold Chapman and Hall a half interest in Our Mutual Friend (1864-1865) for £6000. The number issue of that novel had the following results:

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<tr>
<td>Total copies produced</td>
<td>561,000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Average monthly issue</td>
<td>26,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production costs</td>
<td>£5378 4s. 1d.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>£868 7s. 0d.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gross receipts</td>
<td>£16,298 3s. 1d.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Profits</td>
<td>£9219 19s. 1d.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dickens's share</td>
<td>£4609 19s. 6½d.</td>
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51 Dickens's monthly stipend for this work was £100 (Dickens, Letters, II, 139, 173, 211).
52 Ibid., pp. 394, 430.
Had the work been issued under the old Bradbury and Evans arrangement, Dickens's three-quarter share would have been about £6,900. As it was, the Chapman and Hall agreement was much the better bargain, for Dickens not only received the half-profits but also the £6,000 his publishers paid for their interest. Thus on the numbers issue he received £10,609 19s. 6½d.54 As for the sale in volumes we can only guess at Dickens's proceeds, but some light may be cast on this point by considering the method Chapman and Hall used to pay the £6,000 they owed for their interest. According to Gerald Grubb, who has examined the accounts, the publishers paid this debt by turning over to Dickens their share of the continuing profits in Our Mutual Friend for the period January, 1868, to June, 1869. If during these two and a half years Chapman and Hall's share amounted to the £6,000 they owed, then Dickens's half interest was also £6,000. That would mean that by June, 1869, Dickens had made £16,609 19s. 6½d. on this novel—an enormous figure which makes the £24,000 Russell reported Dickens made for this book seem more like mere hyperbole than sheer invention.55

After these figures the terms for Dickens's Mystery

55 Ibid., pp. 121-22.
of Edwin Drood are anti-climactic. For it Dickens was content to accept £7500 against the sale of 25,000 copies, and half-profits on any sales above that number.\footnote{Dickens may have accepted less advantageous terms for Edwin Drood than he had for Our Mutual Friend because of his sense of approaching death. The agreement for Drood included a clause which was new to Dickens’s contracts, providing for an arbitrator to decide what Chapman and Hall should pay for the novel in the event Dickens died before completing it (Waugh, A Hundred Years, pp. 132-33).} Since Edwin Drood was selling better than any of his earlier novels at the time of his death, it seems likely that had he lived, this work would have produced a sum approaching that of Our Mutual Friend.\footnote{Grubb, “Some Unpublished Correspondence,” pp. 99-100.}

The prices which Dickens received for his numbers serials were, it goes without saying, higher than those of his contemporaries. The greatest sum that I have seen mentioned for a Lever serial in parts is the approximately £3000 he told Tauchnitz he had been paid for The Knights of Gwynne (Chapman and Hall, 1846-1847).\footnote{Downey, Lever, I, 239fn.} While the terms of most of Lever’s contracts are unclear, we know that he received £50 per number for the twenty issues of Charles O’Malley, which, like Jack Hinton, was produced simultaneously in the Dublin University Magazine (1840-41).

\footnote{Stevenson, Quicksilver, pp. 73-74.}
For Jack Hinton he received a slightly larger sum: £1300 and one-half of the profits on all sales over 11,000—a clause which, because of the publisher's duplicity, did not render much additional revenue for the author. Unfortunately, figures are not available for Lever's other serials in parts, but there is no reason to believe they exceeded the £3000 he made on Gwynne.

We are on much firmer ground with the number serials of Thackeray and Eliot, and although these writers were not as well paid as Dickens, their receipts help to illustrate the great value of a successful numbers venture. After a comparatively modest rate of pay for Vanity Fair, Thackeray's first novel in parts, Thackeray's earnings moved up from £720 to £1000 per year for Pendennis, and almost doubled with the issue of Newcomes in 1853-55. The cause of the increase lay in the popularity he had achieved with Henry Esmond (issued in 1852 in volumes only) and his first American lecture tour. Upon his return to England, the publishers bid against each other for his work, and he found himself in the enviable position of being able to turn away offers—one of which was better than the contract he accepted. Smith, Elder had bested Bradbury and Evans's

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60 Downey, Lever, I, 214, 273-74; 279-80.

61 Thackeray, Letters, II, 225, 392; IV, 155.
bid of £3600 for Newcomes, but Thackeray, out of a sense of loyalty, decided to stay with Bradbury and Evans. Even so, Thackeray said of the bargain, "It's coining money, isn't it?" The Virginians, his last serial in parts, brought him the best prices yet. For it, Bradbury and Evans agreed to pay £300 per issue for each of the 24 numbers. At this rate, the novel would have produced £7200. As it turned out, however, he received £6000. The novel had a poor start, and Thackeray accepted "the melancholy duty of disgorging," receiving £250 per month instead of the £300 agreed upon. "I like everybody who deals with me to make money by me," he wrote, "so I cede those £50 . . . until better times." While this £6000 was not the greatest sum he was to get for a novel—his arrangement with Cornhill was to bring him (probably as a result of his editorship) a monthly payment of £350 for the novels which appeared there—it certainly placed Thackeray among the highest paid of Victorian authors.

The numbers serial was also the source of great profit for George Eliot. The returns for both Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda exceeded any Eliot had previously received. Actually, however, the increase was owing more to the high

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63 Thackeray, Letters, IV, 65.
price of the parts and the stiff royalty Eliot exacted from the Blackwood firm than to a large circulation.

Whereas the numbers issues of works by Dickens, Thackeray, Lever, and Trollope sold at a top price of one shilling, Eliot's numbers were volumes selling at a full five shillings each. Her royalty was two shillings per copy. 64 On the sale of 42,907 numbers of Middlemarch (an average of 5488 per issue) Eliot received, as of January, 1874, £4343 5s. 10d. 65 On the reissue in four volumes at 2ls. (for which Eliot's royalty was 5s. per set) she made £872 5s. by the same date. 66 In the eight years between 1872 and Eliot's death, her returns from Blackwood alone amounted to approximately £6840, 67 and when the proceeds from the ancillary markets are added—markets which Eliot

64 Given the option of paying Eliot £6000 for four years English rights or no advance and the 2s. royalty, Blackwood wisely preferred to give the lordship (Eliot, Letters, V. 179).

65 The discrepancy between this amount and the £4390 that would have been Eliot's on the 2s. per copy basis is accounted for by a special ten per cent discount which Eliot agreed to give W. H. Smith and Sons. Blackwood originally deducted the full ten per cent from Eliot's account, but—after she then demanded the receipts for the advertisements appearing in Middlemarch—decided to split the difference and deduct only five per cent (Eliot, Letters, V. 298, 348-49, 364; VI. 9-10).

66 Ibid., V. 363-54; VI, 10.

67 This includes £143 1s. 1d. as her share of the advertising receipts (Ibid., V. 270; VI, 115, 204, 231; VII, 8, 252, 363-64).
did not keep in the £7000 Romola sale—the total came to at least £8450. But to Daniel Deronda must go the honors of being Eliot's most lucrative work. Issued on the same terms as Middlemarch, Deronda brought Eliot about £6800 for the English rights in the years 1876-1880. Her total receipts for the same period, subsidiary proceeds included, were about £9220—a sum which only Disraeli, Thackeray, and Dickens exceeded. Clearly, the numbers serial was the most lucrative form in which to bring out a novel.

The value of the subsidiary markets in the instances of Middlemarch and Deronda (from 23 to 35 per cent of the English proceeds) must not, of course, be taken as representative during this period, since both novels appeared toward the end of these fifty years and were by a very famous writer. Actually, the Victorian author's usual receipts from these sources were slight. Although there is evidence that Galiliani of Paris occasionally paid English authors for their work in the 1830's, not until Baron Tanémunts began his English reprint series in 1840 were Victorian writers paid appreciable sums for their conti-

However, evidence of the specific sums the Baron paid for novels is largely lacking, and in general the subject of pay from continental sources is one which needs further exploration. The only figures that I have found for Tauchnitz purchases are for payments to George Eliot in the period 1858 to 1860. If we accept these as fairly typical we can infer that in the late 1850’s Tauchnitz was offering around £15 per volume for the ordinary successful novel. In 1858, he agreed to pay Eliot £30 for the two-volume Clerical Scenes, and, in 1859, £50 for the three-volume Adam Bede. The £50 which Eliot received for the one-volume Silas Marner probably represents the highest rate of pay for a Tauchnitz reprint in the 1860’s. Projecting this rate to a three-decker, we can guess that in this decade a good Tauchnitz fee ranged somewhere between £100, his payment for The Mill on The Floss, and £150. In the 1870’s the fee evidently could go higher, for Tauchnitz paid £250 for the advance sheets of Daniel Deronda.

70 While an entry in Thackeray’s account book for 1828 shows that he was paid £9 by Calignani, such payments must have been rare, for he was a favorite target of complaint by English authors and publishers (Thackeray, Letters, I, 513-14.


72 Ibid., VI, 210, 213; VII, 129-30, 146-7, 361, 364.
In any event, the Tauchnitz firm was the most lucrative of the continental reprinting sources. Dutch reprinters, for example, paid considerably less. They gave £10 for reprint rights in *Silas Marner* and £25 and £40 for such rights in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* respectively. These sums compare favorably with the £8 to £9 which Wilkie Collins was able to force out of the Dutch publishers, Belinfaute Brothers, for *Man and Wife* after much public dispute in 1869-70. Slight though these amounts were, it should be remembered, they represent sources of income which were not available to authors in the 1830's.

The fees which English novelists received from translations were even less than those from continental reprints. For the German translations of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot received £25 each; for *Middlemarch* she was paid £30, and for *Daniel Deronda* £100. This last figure is clearly exceptional, and must mark the highest fee paid a Victorian author for translation rights. It was considerably higher than the sums Dickens

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75 Smaller countries than Germany naturally did not pay this much. For the Dutch translation of *The Mill*, Eliot received £10 (Eliot, *Letters*, VII, 360, 353-54).
received for the authorized French translation of his works. Shortly after the French-English treaty was concluded, Hachette et Cie. offered to pay him £440 for the right to translate all his published novels if he would give the company the French translation rights in his future novels. For each of these the French firm offered to pay £40. Dickens's comment on the transaction throws these small sums into the proper perspective: "Considering that I got so much for what is otherwise worth nothing, and get my books before so clever and important a people, I think this is not a bad move."76

The sums Victorian authors received for their translation and continental reprint rights did not equal or even approximate the fees they received from America, and it was to the latter market that, as these fifty years wore on, the successful Victorian novelist looked for substantial increases in his income. The story of American pay, therefore, is worthy of close examination, but is beyond the scope of the present study. Not only is the subject large, but to date much of the information required for its telling still remains unpublished. Such sums as I have encountered, however, include the following sizeable payments:

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76 £440 is the sum Dickens mentions to John Forster, 30 January 1856. A year later, however, he told Bulwer that he received £350 (Dickens, Letters, II, 722, 730, 737, 939).
Marryat, Midshipman Easy, Carey and Hart...$100. 77
    Diary in America and Phantom Ship, Carey and Hart...$2250. 78
Thackeray, Henry Esmond, Harper...$500. 79
    The Virginians, Harper...$480. 79
Dickens, Little Dorrit, Harper...$480.
    A Tale of Two Cities, Harper...$1000. 80
    Great Expectations, Harper...$1850. 80
Collins, Woman in White, Harper...$750.
    The Moonstone, Harper...$750. 81
    Man and Wife, Harper...$750. 81
    The New Magdalen, Harper...$560. 82
Reade, Griffith Gaunt, Fields...$645. 83
    A Woman Hater, Harper...$1000. 84
Bulwer, Kenelm Chillingly, Harper...$750. 85
    The Parisians, Harper...$800. 85
Eliot, Middlemarch, Harper...$1200.
    Daniel Deronda, Harper...$1700. 86

These amounts represent the very best that the American market gave Victorian writers during this period of

78 Marryat was to get another $250 if the works were not pirated (Marryat, Life of Marryat, II, 22-23).
80 Ibid.; Dickens, Letters, III, 95.
82 Harper reports the novel was paid for at the rate of five guineas per page. A check of Harper's New Monthly
    shows that the novel occupied about 112 pages (Ibid.).
83 This is a projected sum, figured on the basis of a report that Reade was paid 23 per page. The novel ran 215
    pages in the Monthly (Mott, Golden Multitudes, p. 90).
84 Harper, p. 114.
85 Ibid., p. 360.
86 Eliot, Letters, V, 217; VI, 188fn.
legal piracy. To them may be added the receipts the most popular novelists occasionally garnered when American publishers brought out authorized collected editions of their works. The receipts were usually slight. Thackeray, for example, called the pay Appleton gave him in 1857 for a preface to a new edition of his novels, but "a portion of a loaf," as indeed, considering the fact that Thackeray was always more popular in America than in England, it probably was. Eliot, whom Fields desired to bring out in an authorized edition in 1869, accepted a half-profits contract with the American firm, but she was not sanguine as to the results. Eliot expected Harper to reprint the Fields collection in toto and to sell their issues at a very low figure, thus cutting into the Fields profits considerably. How difficult the way of an authorized collection could be is illustrated by the circumstances surrounding the publication of the Charles Dickens Edition by Fields and Cagood in 1867-70. The Publishers' Circular

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87 So far as I know, Eliot's fee for Deronda was the largest an English author of this period actually won for early sheets to America. Dickens had been offered £2000 by Harpers for Edwin Drood and presumably a similar sum by Fields and Cagood who actually purchased the work, but Dickens did not live to complete the novel (Harper, House of Harper, p. 261).

88 Stevenson, Showman, p. 266; Mott, Golden Multitudes, p. 135.

reported in January, 1868, that there were about forty
different editions of Dickens's works simultaneously seek-
ing the American dollar, "an occurrence totally without
parallel, we believe, in any other country." One company,
Peterson brothers, who reportedly had already issued 24
different editions of his works, added a 25th, "Petersons'
Cheap Edition for the Million."\(^90\) What is surprising is
that Dickens's royalty on the authorized Fields edition
should have brought him anything at all; that it produced
an advance of £550 in January, 1868, is simply astonish-
ing.\(^91\) What Dickens's receipts would have been had he
enjoyed copyright protection in America it is impossible
to say.

It would be misleading, however, to end this discus-
sion of American pay with the ring of even such a sum as
£550 in our ears. A more accurate impression will be left
if we descend again to the level of the £30 and £100
Harper paid for Adam Bede and Silas Marner.\(^92\) George
Meredith was probably gauging the usual payments quite

\(^90\) Publishers' Circular, XXXI (1868), 4.

\(^91\) But that this sum should appear in its proper light;
consider that by the same date Dickens had received three
acceptances of £500 each from his English publishers
against the first accounting of the English edition (Grubb,

\(^92\) Eliot, Letters, II, 507-09; VII, 361.
accurately when he speculated on the possible American proceeds to be gained in 1850 from Even Harrington: "I'm horribly poor, and £30 or £40 is a windfall."93 In the late 1880's and early 1890's, the price for advance sheets of the ordinary novel still remained about where Meredith had placed it thirty years earlier. Waugh reports that around these dates his English branch of Lovell's paid top fees of from £100 to £150 and low ones of from £20 to £10 for early proofs.94

93 Stevenson, Meredith, p. 77.

94 Waugh, One Man's Road, p. 194. The system had not much longer to exist, however, for by the 1890's American publishers were no longer so dependent on British authors as they had been in midcentury. Against the 75 per cent of Harper's lists which English writers accounted for in 1860, they made up only 25 per cent in 1890. The Americans, consequently, were now ready to put their relationships with English authors on a fairer basis, and to give them protection by law.
The Pay of the Victorian Novelist

An Overview

We have now completed our examination of the typical ways in which Victorian novels were sold and of the prices involved in such sales. It remains to trace in more general lines what happened to the Victorian novelist’s pay during these fifty years. Such a view will show a spectacular climb in the receipts of the most popular novelists, an accompanying but less sharp rise for those whose books sold moderately well—so that in the latter half of the period these writers were making more than the best paid authors had at the beginning—and a flattening rate for the least successful. The increased pay of the most popular novelists is to be accounted for both by the enlarged reading public and by the author’s receipt of a bigger share in the profits of his work; the rise which the moderately successful achieved was owing almost solely to the enlarged reading public.

At the start of these fifty years the highest figure for a three-volume work ranged between £1000 and £1600. Thus when, in 1829, Colburn paid Bulwer £1500 for *Derveraux*, he was establishing a rate which seems to have remained about standard for most of Bulwer’s novels of the

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1830's. Other successful novelists in the same decade received payments hovering just below those of Bulwer. Maria Edgeworth got £1000 from Bentley on the sale of 2900 copies of her Helen and another £100 for its use in his Standard Novels. Marryat's regular fee in the mid-thirties ranged from £1100 to £1300 for the English book rights, with serial payments and American proceeds running extra. In 1837 Disraeli was estimating that he would receive between three and four thousand pounds from Colburn for three novels: Henrietta Temple, Venetia, and a projected but unwritten third. Leaving Dickens's payments out of the account temporarily, these were the highest prices paid to novelists in the 1830's.

The same general top levels were maintained well into the next decade. Although Lewes was somewhat behind the

2 I base this upon the Athenaeum's report (XII, 1838, 150-51) that Bulwer received £100 from America for an unspecified novel for which he was paid either £1500 or £1600 in England. Moreover Royal Gettmann, in his A Victorian Publisher (p. 139) suggests a figure of £1200 as the sum Bulwer may have received from Bentley in 1834 for The Last Days of Pompeii. So far as I have been able to determine, Bulwer's £1500 to £1600 upon first publication was not bettered by an unserialised novel until Eliot's Mill on the Floss was published in 1860.


4 Athenaeum, XII (1838), 150; Marryat; Life of Captain Marryat, I, 256; II, 238fn.

5 Monypenny and Buckle, Disraeli, I, 355.
times when he wrote in 1847 that only in "one or two instances" were novelists paid as much as £1500 for a work, 6 his estimate would have held true for the first half of the 1840's. In this decade the highest prices now went to those novels which were issued as serials before they were produced in volumes. Thus while Disraeli made but £1000 from Coningsby and £775 from Tancred, both of which were published only in volumes, Ainsworth was reported to have received £1500 for Guy Fawkes, first published in Bentley's Miscellany in 1840–41, and Lever made £1300 on Jack Hinton, published in parts and in the Dublin University Magazine in 1842. 7 In the latter half of the 1840's the new serial market really made itself felt, and the top prices—again with the exclusion of Dickens—now doubled those of the 1830's. Bulwer, for example, now received £3000 for serial and five year book rights in each of his Caxton novels when that series begun in Blackwood's in 1848. 8 In contrast a fee of at most £1400 may have been the sum Bentley paid for the unserialized Harold when he

6 "Condition of Authors," Fraser's, XXX (1847), 290.
7 Ellis, Ainsworth, I, 405; Downey, Lever, I, 160.
8 Tredrey, Blackwood, pp. 97–98.
published that novel for Bulwer during the same year. 9

The 1850's saw these new levels sustained and surpassed. While the Carton series was still appearing in Blackwood's, Thackeay's Newcomes and Virginians were producing £3600 and £6000 issued in parts by Bradbury and Evans. 10 By 1856 the serial market was pushing the price of some books beyond the reach of publishers who did not own periodicals. In that year Bulwer told Bentley that he expected to get more from his next novel than volume publication alone could bring. 11 And by 1859 the serial was having its effect on the prices of popular works issued in volumes alone. George Eliot turned down a Blackwood offer of £3000 for magazine and subsequent four years' volume rights in her Mill on the Floss because, she said, such payment could not adequately compensate for both magazine and volume production, as indeed it could not. Issued in volumes only on a royalty formula, the

9Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, pp. 155, 161. Although Gettmann does not specifically identify the price paid for Harold, he mentions figures of £1000 and £1400 in connection with a Bulwer novel Bentley negotiated for in the 1840's. Harold was the one new Bulwer work which Bentley brought out in that decade.

10To these sums may be added about £500 for American and continental rights in Newcomes, and £460 for the American rights in The Virginians (Stevenson, Showman, pp. 245, 277, 280, 339-40).

11Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, p. 143.
book brought her £3440 in four years—the greatest sum a Victorian had yet received for a novel issued solely in volume form.  

Beginning in 1859 the competition for serialists intensified with the rapid appearance of numerous periodicals which depended upon long fiction as a major attraction, and consequently prices soared. Smith, Elder agreed to pay Thackeray £350 per month for the serial and library edition rights of two novels, with the profits on the cheaper editions to be divided equally.  

At these terms in 1860 Smith, Elder paid Thackeray £2100 for the six Cornhill issues of *Lovel the Widower*, and in 1861-62, £7000 for the twenty numbers of *The Adventurous Life of Philip*. It was £7000 also that Smith, Elder gave for serial and limited volume rights in *Romola*, with the publishers keeping the further right to publish in a price range of their own choosing after the limited term had expired.  

Indeed high figures for popular works during the sixties crowd upon each other. In 1862, for instance, Wilkie Collins, selling his serial, *American* and book

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rights separately, received £850 from *All the Year Round*, £750 from Harper, and £5000 from Sampson Low for *No Name*. Sampson Low’s £5000, Collins told his mother, was the most "liberal price that has ever been given for the reprinting of a work already published periodically." The total fee of £4500, however, Collins bettered with his next novel, *Armadale* (*Cornhill*, 1864-66), whose complete copyright he sold to Smith, Elder for £6000. Actually £5000 seems to have been a favorite target figure throughout the decade. It was the total Reade expected to clear from all sources for his *Hard Cash*, and it was the sum he probably did make from *Put Yourself in His Place* (*Cornhill*, 1869-70). Five thousand pounds, which Eliot received from Blackwood for five-year volume rights in *Felix Holt*, was the greatest amount paid in the 60’s for a Victorian novel which was not serialized.16

The increased returns achieved by the most popular novelists in the 1860’s carried over into the 1870’s. Disraeli, taking to fiction between terms as Prime Minister, was able to put his fame to good account by selling *Lothair* to Longman for a royalty of 10s. per copy. In 1880, finding time on his hands as Leader of the Opposition in


the House of Lords, Disraeli wrote moodmion and sold Long-
man the whole copyright for £10,000.\(^\text{17}\) This figure at
once established the 1830-1880 record for a novel pub-
lished only in volume form as well as for an outright sale
of copyright. But the Disraeli figures, as we have said,
are exceptional. More truly indicative of the best that
was secured by a lifetime of literary activity—again to
the exclusion of Dickens—are the sums approximating £9000
which Eliot made from Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda.\(^\text{18}\)

Of course neither Eliot's nor Disraeli's payments
were the highest achieved by a Victorian author.\(^\text{19}\) I have
deliberately left out of account the sums Dickens received,
since his phenomenal popularity and his quickly developed
business sense early enabled him to claim fees far in ex-
cess of those paid to his fellows. The approximately
£3000 which Lever reported that Chapman and Hall had paid
him in 1846-47 for his Knight of Swynne merely matched the
sums that firm had given Dickens for Pickwick ten years
earlier; and the £3000 which Blackwood paid Bulwer for

\(^\text{17}\)oneyenny and Buckle, Disraeli, V, 509; VI, 1423.
\(^\text{19}\)The reader will not now have to re-evaluate the
earlier announcements of records in this chapter. In
those places where I have not qualified the announcements,
the records involve transactions of a type Dickens did not
use after he became successful.
serial and five years' volume rights in *The Caxtons* in 1848, was identical with the sum Chapman and Hall had agreed to pay for the same rights in *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1837—rights for which the publishers eventually gave another £1500. For *Martin Chuzzlewit*, as we have seen, Dickens made at least £5450 in the years 1843-44, a total unsurpassed by a fellow author until 1857-59 when Thackeray's *Virginians* produced £6000. We have already estimated that Dickens's receipts for *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit* must have amounted to £7500 for each work, and we have shown that in the five year period 1864-69, *Our Mutual Friend* brought Dickens a sum of between £10,600 and £16,600—either of which established the record for Victorian novels.

No age, however, can support more than a handful of Dickenses, Aliots, and Thackerays. In order not to distort our portrait of the fortunes of Victorian novelists, therefore, we must turn to a consideration of the fees paid writers who attained only a moderate popularity.

In the 1830's and early 40's, in contrast to the £1000 to £3000 obtained by the few who were in great demand, £400 was a very good price for the ordinary journeyman's effort. That was the sum Lady Blessington received for her copyrights; 20 it was only £100 less than Bentley

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offered Dickens for the copyright of each of two of his early novels, 21 and it was £50 more than Ainsworth received from Bentley for *Poolwood* in 1834 and for *Crichton* in 1837. 22 While occasionally Bentley, the chief publisher of novels in the 1830's, would give a moderately popular author such as James Morier a fee of £750, more often the figures were £350 or £100, with Bentley's average payment during the decade averaging a little over £250. 23

In the 1840's the same moderate to slight amounts were still being paid the ordinary writer. Bentley's average, for example, holding between £200 and £300. 24 While Mrs. Gore was reported to make £500 per novel, 25 actually she would have considered such a sum a small fortune. We know that Bentley paid her £300 for *Cecil*, her most popular tale, 26 and then demanded a refund of £90. For the volume rights in her *Money-Lender*, he gave her


22 It is possible that the payment for *Crichton* was for a first edition only. See Allis, *Ainsworth*, I, 218; Adrian Hoffman Joline, *At the Library Table* (Boston, 1910), p. 94.

23 Gettmann, *A Victorian Publisher*, pp. 78-9, 139.


26 Sadleir, *Strange Life of Lady Blessington*, p. 188.
and this was so even though Fraser's was currently claiming that novelists were being "caressed" by "generous booksellers."  

But female authors seem to have been the natural prey of Victorian publishers. Of those I have considered only George Eliot managed (with Lewes' assistance) to get prices equal to those received by male writers. The Brontë sisters were especial victims of shrewd publishers. Newby, for example, in 1848 secured Anne Brontë's Tenant of Wildfell Hall for £25 down and another £25 upon the sale of 250 copies. Charlotte Brontë, who thought George Smith of Smith, Elder to be the prince of publishers and who, anyhow, disdained the notion of writing for money rather than for art, was so delighted with the £500 Smith, Elder paid for her Jane Eyre that she sold the firm her Shirley (1849) for the same sum. This was a poor bargain for the author, who thus lost her copyrights: in the mid-forties Smith had paid G. P. R. James £700 to print only 1500 copies of that prolific writer's new works; Jane Eyre had been a publishing success; and Smith, before

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27 Oliphant, William Blackwood, p. 349.
28 Marryat, Life of Captain Marryat, II, 100.
30 Shorter, Charlotte Brontë, pp. 164-65; Sugden, Short History, p. 45.
making his offer for *Shirley*, had in his pocket an agreement from an American publisher to pay for the early sheets of the new novel. In 1852 Smith again took advantage of Charlotte Brontë by giving only £500 for the copyright of *Villette*. The same year he guaranteed Thackeray £1200 for the first 2500 of *Vesey*. Smith paid Mrs. Gaskell twice as much (£1000) to write the biography of Charlotte Brontë as he ever gave for one Brontë novel. While it is hard to reconcile these facts with the usual conception we have of George Smith as the most generous of Victorian publishers, the truth is that Smith was a businessman who knew his business—when a profit was to be made or a reputation was to be acquired by paying high wages, Smith made the necessary investment; when a chance occurred for a large and easy profit, he did not pass it by.

In the 1860's, as the pay for the most popular writers began to move upward, that for writers of limited popularity or weak bargaining power remained where it had been. Mrs. Oliphant, who published some sixteen novels in this

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31 Smith first offered Mrs. Gaskell £600; when she objected that the work on the biography had been double that involved in writing *North and South*, for which she had received £600 from *Household Words* and Chapman and Hall, Smith increased the payment to £800. When the biography had to be revised to stop libel actions, he paid her another £200 gratuitously (Hopkins, *Mrs. Gaskell*, pp. 217-18; Huxley, *House of Smith*, *Alder*, p. 73).
decade, estimated that she had averaged £400 per novel. Trollope, with four novels behind him, received an advance of £100 from Longman on the publication of *Barchester Towers* in 1857. His next four novels brought him the following sums:  

- *The Three Clerks* (1858), Bentley...£250  
- *Dr. Thorne* (1859), Chapman and Hall...£100  
- *The Bertrams* (1859), Chapman and Hall...£400  
- *Castle Richmond* (1859), Chapman and Hall...£600

Other novelists of moderate popularity received somewhat similar fees. Kingsley, for example, was paid £300 for the first 1250 copies of *Westward Ho!* in 1855. This formula the Macmillans bettered only slightly when the novel went into its second edition, for they then gave him £250 for 750 copies. They promised, however, to make the first edition of his next novel, *Two Years Ago* (1857), large enough to warrant a sure payment of £1000—although whether they were going to change the formula for arriving at this figure they did not say.  

By the 1860's and 70's the authors who had been receiving sums of £400 to £500 for a novel were now making sums which reached four figures. Mrs. Oliphant's fees,  

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32 Oliphant, *Autobiography*, p. 44.  
for instance, rose from £500 for *Salem Chapel* (Blackwood's, 1862-63), to £1500 for *The Perpetual Curate* (Blackwood's, 1863-64), and £2000 for *Innocent* (Graphic, 1873). Mrs. Gaskell's payments reached £1000 in 1863 when Smith, Elder bought her three-decker, *Sylvia's Lovers*, and a peak of £2000 when Smith purchased the seven-year copyright of *Wives and Daughters* (Cornhill, 1864-66). In the same period sums of £1050 and £2000 can be found for novels by Mrs. Wood, Rhoda Broughton, and Elizabeth Braddon, while figures of £500 to £700 become quite common.

Bridging the gap between payments to the average author and to the extremely popular stand Anthony Trollope's fees in the 60's and 70's. His receipts moved to £1000 for *Framley Parsonage* (Cornhill, 1860), to £600 for the one-volume *Brown, Jones, and Robinson* (Cornhill, 1861) and, making a tremendous leap, £3125 for *Can You Forgive Her?* issued in numbers by Chapman and Hall, 1861-62. Between 1861 and 1879 Trollope's novels in parts commanded sums ranging from £2500 to £3525. His full-length magazine serials during the same period were sold at prices ranging

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38 Ibid., p. 140.
from £3200 in the 1860's to £1600 in the late 1870's, and his novels published first in volumes averaged £1800 in the same span of years. Trollope's average pay per full length novel in the years of his greatest success was £2276.39 Although his receipts never approached the heights of Eliot, Thackeray, and Dickens, his fees were two to three times as great as they would have been had he attained his success in the second quarter of the century.

While the fees for moderately popular works rose in the sixties,40 the pay earned by those writers whose works sold in very limited numbers did not change much. In 1834 Bentley gave James Morier £100 for his Man of Honour; in 1865 the same publisher gave Florence Marryat £100 for Too Good for Him, and in 1877 the publisher offered to pay Charles Gibbon £100 upon the sale of 550 copies of one of

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39 Trollope, Autobiography, pp. 363-64.

40 Not all authors experienced ever increasing rewards, of course. Authors whose appeal was dwindling found their pay dropping too. Lever dropped from £3000 in the 1840's to £1000 in 1863-64. As early as 1862 he had told his son that Chapman and Hall were paying him at less than half his former rate. What seems odd in this connection is that W. H. Smith and Son considered the cheap reprints of his works so valuable that they would not resell him his copyrights. When, in 1870, a wealthy friend offered to help him repurchase his works, W. H. Smith & Son openly declared "that they would part with all their copyrights rather than mine, and so the project failing, I must put up with the flattery" (Stevenson, Quicksilver, pp. 246, 292; Downey, Lever, II, 61-63; Tredray, The House of Blackwood, pp. 129-30).
his stories. It is not difficult to find fees of £75 to £450 in every decade of these fifty years, and certainly not in the 1860's and 1870's. The simple truth is the great majority of Victorian writers were not paid much.

One further interesting example will point up the modest payments that were a writer's who had little personal following. Mrs. Cashel Hoey, one of Tinsley's authors, wrote novels which Tinsley published variously under her own name and under that of the established Edmund Yates. According to Tinsley "nearly double the number of copies were sold" when a novel had Yates' name on it than when its true authorship was identified: "as a matter of fact," Tinsley recorded, "for some years I was paying Yates four hundred pounds each for the novels with his name to them, and Mrs. Hoey's novels with her own name to them were not worth half that sum; this is a fact, curious as it may seem." Evidently, therefore, a novelist of Mrs. Hoey's reputation could achieve only sums approximating £200 for "original" work, while a person such as

41 Gettmann, A Victorian Publisher, pp. 78, 85-6, 126.
42 Ibid., pp. 78-9, 83, 85-6, 125-26, 140.
43 Tinsley lists the following books as partly or wholly written by Mrs. Hoey though credited to Yates: Hook Ahead, Forlorn Hope, Land at Last, A Righted Wrong, and Black Sheep (first issued in All the Year Round and in volumes by Chapman and Hall before it was bought up by Tinsley). See Tinsley, Random Recollections, I, 138-42.
Yates could receive twice as much for the loan of his name. But even a Hoey could make more from her scribbling than a "legitimate" author who had lost the public's eye. After forty years of ceaseless production, Ainsworth for his sins was reduced to selling novels to Routledge and to Tinsley on those publishers' less generous terms. For the book rights in Boscobel (1872) Routledge agreed to pay £150 on condition that Ainsworth would turn over the New Monthly plates from which Routledge would print the book. 44 For Ainsworth's Manchester Rebels (1874) Tinsley paid a like £150, and for the three-volume edition of Preston's Fight (1875) and Beatrice Tyldesley (1878) Tinsley gave £125. 45

To summarize: at the end of these fifty years novels were paid for in three price categories ranging from excellent (around £5000 per novel), to moderate (averaging from £1000 to £2500), to poor (£400 and below). The gains in pay are to be ascribed to two principal conditions. In the early 1830's the book market alone generally supplied the outlet for a novelist's work. With the growth of the huge circulating libraries in midcentury, that market certainly remained the one of greatest importance to the

44 Mumby, House of Routledge, p. 93.
45 Ellis, Ainsworth, II, 289, 296, 305.
average writer, but other outlets had meanwhile appeared, and by the period's end other sources of income were available to the successful novelist. Among those which developed during this period were the markets for magazine serials, parts publications, and cheap reprint productions. In addition, by the 1860's some novelists were receiving money from foreign lands. But the enlarged markets account for only part of the increase in the author's income. The popular author also received a greater share of the profits in his work at the period's end than he had received at its beginning. From the scale of £1000 for 2900 copies which Maria Edgeworth received from Bentley in 1834, the top rate of pay moved to £700 for 1500 in the midforties, £1000 per 2100 copies in 1852—Smith, Elder, Thackeray's Esmond—£1000 for 2000 in 1860—Blackwood, Eliot's Mill on the Floss—and £1740 for 2900 in the 1870's—this last, record-establishing rate being projected from the royalty scale Blackwood used in paying Eliot for Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda. In the course of these fifty years, by dint of the hard bargaining of such authors as Collins, Reade, Dickens, and Eliot, the pay scale for the most popular novels was bettered 74 per cent. To put it another way, whereas Maria Edgeworth had received approximately 22 per cent of the retail value of 2900 copies of Helen, George
Eliot received 40 per cent of the retail price of _Middle-
march_ and _Veronica_.

It is doubtful that authors have ever been awarded so
great a share of the proceeds of their work as the best
paid Victorians received at the end of this fifty year
period. One other fact stands out. The highest pay among
the Victorian authors went to those novelists whom we to-
day consider to be the artistic giants of their age. To
us, living in a day when art seems the concern of the few,
this is remarkable, but it is nevertheless so. Dickens,
Eliot, Thackeray are still the Victorian novelists; their
fees were the highest of their generation. As we know,
this happy correlation between artistic merit and material
reward was not destined to last; indeed in the eyes of
many Victorian writers themselves that relationship had
already ceased to exist. But in thus touching directly
upon the connection between art and the marketplace we
have opened up a fascinating and complex subject which we
must, in conclusion, explore with care.
Money and art

We have seen the market for novels greatly expanded by the policies of Victorian publishers, and the income of Victorian novelists rise as a result. We must now consider the effect the enlarged market and the potentially large income had upon the novelist. Just what was the Victorian novelist's attitude toward the economics of his profession? Was making money important to him? And what was his attitude toward the public? Did he feel that the enlarged market was worthy of his best efforts, that its taste, in effect, was essentially correct; or did he reason that to give the more democratic public his best would be to cast pearls before swine? If he concluded that the public could appreciate only his worst, did he also conclude that earning the public's money was more important than anything else? Or was there a way of reconciling the differences between his taste and the public's; was it possible to educate the public and help develop its taste? What, further, was the attitude of the Victorian age toward these matters, and how did that attitude affect the novelist who was, after all, a Victorian man or woman?

In broaching these questions we are taking a point of view quite out of the ordinary, for the traditional assumption is that questions relating to an artist's livelihood are largely irrelevant. It is enough for readers
usually that they have the artist's work and that he has his fame, or at least he has his work. Out of this basic attitude has come a related one. It is assumed that since readers are not interested in the artist's rewards, he shouldn't be either.

Although this attitude had existed at least since the Renaissance, in 1774 it found a very articulate spokesman in Lord Camden, who, in the case of Donaldson v. Becket, wrote the famous argument against all copyright, an argument that was to find supporters one hundred years later when the Royal Commission on Copyright met to consider ways of improving the existing laws. As Lord Camden put it:

If there be anything in the world common to all mankind, science and learning are in their nature publici juris, and they ought to be as free and general as air and water . . . Those great men, those favoured mortals, those sublime spirits who share that ray of divinity which we call genius, are entrusted by Providence with the delegated power of imparting to their fellow-creatures that instruction which Heaven meant for universal benefit; they must not be niggard to the world, or hoard up for themselves the common stock. . . . Knowledge to be enjoyed must be communicated. Glory is the reward of science, and those who deserve it scorn all meaner views. I speak not of the scribblers for bread, who tease the press with their wretched productions; fourteen years is too long a privilege for their perishable trash. It was not for gain that Bacon, Newton, Milton, Locke, instructed and delighted the world; it would be unworthy such men to traffic with a dirty bookseller. . . .

—Marston, Copyright, p. 6.
While this view strikes us as extreme, it is not unrelated to the modern attitude which assumes that the man who writes for popularity's sake—hence for money—cannot produce great works. And indeed our own "traffic with the dirty booksellers" is about as profitable as was Milton's, who sold the first edition rights of Paradise Lost for £10 (an agreement, incidentally, which was not too dreadful a bargain in Milton's time). But then, albeit unhappily, we do not write "for gain" either. We avoid the necessity of scribbling for our bread by joining university staffs and scribbling for little magazines. Between the pronouncements of Lord Camden and the creative writing courses of two hundred years later lies the nineteenth century, an era when novelists wrote "for bread," "for gain," for the "dirty bookseller." They wrote to be read by the largest number of readers possible. They had to. With the exception of the female writers who were supported by husbands or fathers, and of such bachelors as Charles Reade, Victorian novelists, usually with large and expensive families, needed the money authorship brought. One could run down the Victorian roster and find only a few novelists like Captain Marryat, who, enjoying his pension and raising his rents, did not absolutely depend upon his royalties—but who bargained hard for them just the same. When we consider that Bulwer had to write to support his young wife
in the way he had always lived; that Disraeli started his career with a debt of several thousand pounds; that the patrimonies of G. P. R. James, Ainsworth, and Thackeray were wiped out by one means or another; that neither Trollope nor Lever could provide himself with a gentleman’s life as civil servant or doctor; that for Dickens as for Collins and Meredith the pen was from the start the way to financial success, that even for Charlotte Brontë authorship was insurance against having to be a governess, and that the widowed Mrs. Gwilliam became of necessity one of the saddest overworked hearts in Victorian letters—when we consider these facts we can see that for the Victorian novelist authorship was no private passion to be indulged in at one’s leisure: it was his livelihood.

That Victorian authors, like Victorian publishers, should have sought to make this livelihood as remunerative as possible is only natural. They did not despise, as Eliot put it, "the money fruit" of their labors. Rather, in the case of the very popular writers at least, they bargained hard for what they received, and forced for themselves a bigger share of the harvest. Dickens’s quarrels with Bentley are well known; extracting what he considered to be a fair wage from that publisher was sufficient training to make Dickens a shrewd negotiator.
throughout his career. Charles Reade was schooled under the same master, and with similar results. George Eliot, though she was later to sacrifice several thousand pounds rather than cut *Homola* into small chapters, came near to breaking with Blackwood—certainly not a niggardly firm—over the terms for her *Mill on the Floss*. The inter-office memos on the transaction often burn with scandalous remarks about Eliot's "avaricious soul" and the numerous attempts by other publishers "to seduce George Eliot"—which, said one memo, was "no wonder when Mr. Lewes has shown them the way."3

Victorian novelists, in practice at least, did not share Lord Camden's disdain of "scribblers for bread." This does not mean, however, that the voice of the Camdenites was silenced. Indeed, for a people who produced such a wealth of literature the Victorians had a singularly ambivalent attitude toward the written word. While on the

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2 The story is told in many places, but is best summarized in Edgar Johnson, "Dickens Clashes With His Publisher," *Dickensian* (1949), XLVII (1950), *passim*.

3 It must be pointed out that these derisive remarks were made by the Blackwood's Edinburgh office manager, George Simpson, and not by either of the two principals of the firm. John Blackwood was made furious by Eliot's conduct—as she was by his—but he would never permit more than a growl to pass his pen. The whole interesting episode may be traced in the *Eliot Letters*, III, 92, 94, 151-2, 160-2, 188, 192-4, 206-9, 217-23, 232-33, 235-6; 240.
one hand they venerated it, elevating the literary man to a position of public esteem and setting their hopes for the improvement of society upon teaching more and more artisans to read, on the other they had very realistic doubts about the inevitable efficacy of print. Even a man who made his living by selling books, Alexander Macmillan, could write that when the "good time comes" the heavenly souls will express themselves in actions, not words. But the abuse poured out on novel writing was of a special sort, since the novel was the literary form most easily made palatable to the thoughtless elements of the mass public and most likely to turn a lass from virtue or cause the romantic stripling to neglect his duties. In the brisk utilitarian air of the nineteenth century, the charge of frivolity alone was enough to damn the novel, and with it the creators of this "perishable trash." From Evangelicals, who at the century's start rated novel-reading as only slightly better conduct than drunkenness or adultery, from Utilitarians, like the Mills and their followers who dismissed novels as useless distortions of reality, from popular magazines like Fraser's, which called novels "that most superfluous of luxuries," from transcen-

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4 Graves, Macmillan, pp. 193-94. This attitude, of course, was a Victorian commonplace; cf. Carlyle's elevation of action over words.
dentalists like Carlyle and Hegelians like T. H. Green came attacks upon fiction which, although they diminished after midcentury, kept novelists on the defensive through much of the Victorian era. As late as 1880 even such a cultivated literary figure as Arnold could say that novels were "the least profitable sort of book." 5

And the novelists themselves often agreed. Thackeray (who certainly did not object to writing for money) explained to Trollope that one of "our chief objects" in planning the *Cornhill Magazine* was "the getting out of novel spinning, and back into the world." 6 The notion of being merely "an artist" was an idea Kingsley loathed "from the bottom of my heart," 7 and Charles Lever felt that he had expressed the ultimate in derision when he explained an artistic blunder in one of his works by saying: "all that comes of . . . novel-writing for a d----d public that likes novels,--and novels are--novels." 8

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Novels may have been "novels," but Victorian writers—providing a classic case of artistic schizophrenia—felt that there were really novels and novels. Sharing the attitude of their age, they condemned the kind of novel that merely enabled an empty head to while away its empty hours. They themselves wrote what they felt were useful and moral books. The Victorian novel made headway against the age's hostile attitude because, breathing the century's evangelical and utilitarian air, Victorian writers chose to excite their readers delicately and to teach them lessons they did not mind learning. The serious author would have nothing to do with what Charles Kingsley called, "your back-writer of no creed, your bigot Polyphemus, whose one eye just helps him to see to eat men..."\(^9\)

The serious writer took willingly his task of improving the moral tone of mankind: he wanted his work to be respectable.

Of course the novelists were backed up in this effort by the practical attitudes of the Victorian publishers and the commercial librarians, who realized, as they sought out new ways of reaching more people, that if the English novel (in contrast to the French, for example) were to be sanctioned at all, it would have to have the reputation of

being fit for the English Matron and her daughter and her maid. While some authors, such as George Meredith, who had a liking for the "indecent double entendre," felt seriously constrained as a result, most wrote without any real discomfort. And in general the novelist's attitude toward prudery in literature was an ambivalent one. Even Thackeray, who in one mood could lament the fact that he was not "permitted to depict to his power a MAN," in another could praise Charles Lever for his "almost woman-like delicacy," for never writing a sentence "that is not entirely pure."¹¹

But if the decorous purposefulness of Victorian writers helped soften the age's anti-novel prejudices, more was needed if the novelist was to win his fellow's acclaim. He had to make it appear that he sought the public's praise and not its money. Thackeray might cry that the writer has "a duty, much more imperative upon him than the preparation of questionable great works.--

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¹⁰ Stevenson, Meredith, p. 128.

¹¹ Thackeray, Pendennis (Preface). Works, II, xlviii; "A Box of Novels," Works, XIII, 404. It should be pointed out, however, that later, in a letter to Edward Chapman, Thackeray said that he could never bring himself "to consider Lever seriously as an author" (Ray, Letters, II, 455). For a discussion of Thackeray's ambivalence on the subject of prudery see Stang, The Theory of the Novel, pp. 192-96.
to get his family their dinner,"^12 but few cared to agree with him openly. We have already seen (pp. 57-69) the scorn heaped upon Captain Marryat when it appeared that he had sold a novel to the newspaper for the sake of a few extra pounds. This the age decried. The respectable novelist could be separated from the scribbler if he wrote not because he had to but because he wanted to, as Lord Camden might have it, out of the superabundance of his genius. It is in this environment that we should see the seemingly contradictory behavior of such writers as Bulwer and Disraeli, who, following in the tradition of Scott and Byron, affected a disdain for literature as a livelihood at the very moment they were using it to secure great incomes. A Lord or a Lady might write a novel and not lose place, for such action was the apparent indulgence of a private whim. Gentlemen wrote out of choice. It followed, also, that gentlemen who wrote out of choice wrote what

Stevenson, *Showman of Vanity Fair*, p. 141. To realize how much the attitude of literary men has come to agree with those Camdenites who place glory above gain, and who place the artist's art supreme, consider the reported statement of William Faulkner: "The writer's only responsibility is to his art. He will be completely ruthless if he is a good one. . . . Everything goes by the board: honor, pride, decency, security, happiness, all, to get the book written. If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Cde to a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies." Thackeray, had it been his fate to hear it, would have thought the notion romantic and, were it not so capable of harm, silly (Malcolm Cowley, ed., *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews*, New York, 1958, p. 124).
they pleased and not what others would necessarily pay for or want. Conversely, writers became literary gentlemen—respectable—if they wrote not to please an audience but to please themselves. "Literary production," Matthew Arnold said in 1880, "wherever it is sound, is its own exceeding great reward."13 What helped to separate the artist from the hack and the artistic novel from the trash everybody said novels were, was just the author's presumed devotion to art. The hack did whatever the publisher thought best in their mutual aim to win money from an ever enlarging public. The artist wrote whatever he thought best regardless of the financial consequences.

The Victorian age glorified the artist, not the mere writer of tales. It praised the artistic novel as an end in itself, and, as this dissertation has shown, made the novel a means to an occasional small fortune. The Victorian novelist, as a result, was caught between two pressures. At whose shrine was he to worship—Apollo’s or Mammon’s—or could he worship at both? For the most part, the public of the twentieth century, even more than that of the nineteenth, has held the belief that Apollo and Mammon cannot be reconciled, and, whether accurate or not, the notion is widespread that the artist today must be the

13 Arnold, "Copyright." p. 322.
self-sacrificing priest of a few highbrows while the hack ministers to millions. In the period 1830-1880, among working writers at least, things were not yet quite so settled, and many novelists hoped that the emerging democratic reading public would appreciate their best efforts. Even Matthew Arnold, in his statement that artistic work is its "own exceeding great reward," hastened to add: "but that does not destroy or diminish the author's desire and claim to be allowed to have at his disposal, like other people, that which he produces, and to be free to turn it to account."14 The implication here is that though the writer must first please Apollo, he can also at least hope to please the publisher.

Some Victorian novelists were much more optimistic about the relation of Apollo and the marketplace. "Money is to the arts what manure is to soil," said Charles Reade, and Trollope argued: "Brains that are unbought will not serve the public much."15 These Victorians felt that there was not a necessary conflict between the interests of the public and those of art, that somehow a writer could serve his pocketbook and his artistic conscience simultaneously, that he could do serious work and

14 Arnold, "Copyright," p. 322.
15 Reade, Eighth Commandment, p. 17; Trollope, autobiography, p. 106.
still seek to reach the mass. The great Victorians held these opposites successfully in union; as a result they are still read by critics and laymen alike although a century has passed since their heyday.

It will be well to underscore the desire the great Victorians had for popularity. We have only to recall Dickens's violent reaction to Hall's remark about the disappointing sales of _Dombey_ to understand how much public approval meant to him. And, while he was pleased to hear his work praised as of an order aesthetically superior to that of Dickens, Thackeray certainly envied Dickens his popular appeal. George Eliot, perhaps, had the greatest sense of a gulf between her taste and the public's; the consequence, however, was not an attitude of rejection but of ambivalence; she both deplored the public's taste and desired its sanction. Though she exhibited signs of "alarm" lest the popularity of _Adam Bede_ should indicate that the book lacked artistic merits, she had not always been so chary of its success. When Blackwood warned her as she was writing the story that "Adam Bede can certainly never come under the class of popular agreeable stories," she accepted the judgment with regret: "I perceive that I have not the characteristics of the 'popular author."

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and yet I am much in need of the warmly expressed sympathy which only popularity can win."\textsuperscript{17} Nor did Eliot ever lose this concern for the approval of a broad audience. As she explained to Edward Burne-Jones in 1873, "It would be narrowness to suppose that an artist can only care for the impressions of those who know the methods of his art as well as feel its effects. Art works for all whom it can touch."\textsuperscript{18}

That these writers sought popularity is demonstrable; indeed some of them, like Wilkie Collins, came to consider "popularity and merit as more or less synonymous."\textsuperscript{19} Reacting to the severe criticism his very popular \textit{The Woman in White} received, a work which had gone through seven impressions in six months, Collins told Hall Gaine, "Either the public is right and the press is wrong, or the press is right and the public is wrong. Time will tell. If the public turns out to be right, I shall never trust the press again."\textsuperscript{20} Of course the press proved wrong, and thus when, in 1878-79, his \textit{Fallen Leaves} failed with the circulating library readers, Collins wrote that he was

\textsuperscript{17} Eliot, \textit{Letters}, III, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., V, 390.
\textsuperscript{19} Robinson, \textit{Wilkie Collins}, p. 147.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., pp. 146-47.
"waiting (with some confidence, inspired by previous experience), for the Verdict of the People." Moreover, he explained, not until the book had been reprinted in its cheapest form would it find its proper reception among "the great audience of the English people." For Collins, to write what the mass audience would buy was to write the best that was in him. Only after the public began to turn away from his work, as it turned from even the 2s. edition of *Fallen Leaves*, did he begin to distrust its judgment, so that toward the end of his career he could say of his *Legacy of Cain*, "Five and twenty years ago I should have felt tolerably sure of the reception of *The Legacy of Cain*. Today, I don't know that I may not have aimed over the heads of the present generation of novel readers." 

The shift in Collins's esteem for the public after that public stopped praising his work was one that comes naturally to a man who wants to approve of himself. The same cause undoubtedly explains many a disappointed novelist's criticism of the public taste. The more absolutely the writer fails, observed Trollope, "the higher, it is probable, he will reckon his own merits . . ." Certainly

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the volatile Reade's changing pronouncements upon his public originated in its varying response to his work. While he could claim with pride that his novels had more readers in America than the Times had English subscribers, as soon as his books ceased to sell he would growl: "The public is an ass . . . ." When the writer discovers that the "public is an ass," the question of his artistic integrity ceases to be abstract and becomes a highly personal, ethical issue. The discovery, of course, can come in different ways. The writer may make it by comparing his own unsuccessful works with those of a highly successful competitor. Like George Eliot, he may simply read the ordinary novel of the day. Or he may be led to the discovery by the importunities of voracious publishers and the ease with which he can dispose of whatever he writes. The discovery is the important thing. It is when the writer thinks that the public may be beneath his highest standard of performance that the struggle begins in his heart.

The Victorian who faced this issue could respond in several ways. He might, like Captain Marryat and Charles Dickens, attempt to elevate the public's taste by giving it fiction he approved at a price the public could afford. He might, like George Eliot, write novels which pleased

24Win, Reade, p. 332.
himself and which he hoped would please the public, without doing overmuch to see that the cost of his work was within the common man's reach. He could deliberately write over the heads of the mass market, or he could abandon his own feeling of what his work should be, sacrifice his art that is, and write as he thought the public wanted him to. Broadly, Victorian novelists divided into two groups, those who gave the public work they themselves approved, and those who wrote down to the reader.

To the Victorian novelist what was involved in "writing down" was not so much—as we would imagine—writing on subjects the author would otherwise ignore or treating his subjects in a superficial way. To many Victorians, rather, compromising one's work meant primarily writing carelessly and with haste. When Anthony Trollope, for example, thought about the evils attending writing for gain, these were the terms in which he conceived the problem:

If indeed a man writes his books badly . . . because he can make his money faster in that fashion than by doing them well, and at the same time proclaims them to be the best he can do,—if in fact he sells shoddy for broadcloth,—he is dishonest, as is any other fraudulent dealer. . . . No doubt the author . . . may have a difficulty which will not occur to the seller of cloth, in settling within himself what is good work and what bad,—when labour enough has been given, and when the task has been scamped. It is a danger as to which he is bound to be severe with himself—in which he should feel that his conscience should be set fairly in the balance against the natural bias of his interest. If he
do not do so, sooner or later his dishonesty will be discovered, and he will be estimated accordingly. But in this he is to be bound only by the plain rules of honesty which govern us all.  

In terms of such a concept of scribbling for money, the Victorian novelists whom we still consider great stand up well. "No amount of horse-power," George Eliot wrote, "would make me hurry over my book, so as not to do my best. If it is written fast, it will be because I can't help writing it fast." And Charles Dickens, who certainly wrote a great deal, said that "so far as I know the art . . . it cannot be reasonably pursued" by rapid production. In terms which modern critics generally have in mind, however, when they think of the "bad" effects a money market can have upon an artist, that is, the adjusting of a work to fit the reader's desires, it must be pointed out that many of the great Victorians do not fare so well. Thackeray, for example, accounted for the marriage of Clive and Ethel in the _Newcomes_ by saying, "But then, you see, what could a fellow do? So many people wanted 'em married. To be sure, I had to kill off poor

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25 Trollope, _Autobiography_, pp. 105-08.
26 Eliot, _Letters_, III, 249.
27 Dickens, _Letters_, III, 766.
little Rosey rather suddenly, but shall not a man do what he will with his own?"  

While it is usual to decry such compromises as deplorable evidence of a writer's spinelessness, there is little evidence that the great Victorian writers felt that compromise meant abandonment of their control in their work—"as Thackeray said, "shall not a man do what he will with his own?"  Further, there is some evidence that the writers themselves approved the alterations. Butt and Tillotson have shown that the changes Jeffrey got Dickens to make in his characterization of Edith in Dombey and Son were in accord with Dickens's own changing concept of his creation. And the ending which Bulwer suggested for Great Expectations, while it did not fit the drift of the book, was not foreign to Dickens's basically hopeful nature. The point here is not that these changes—often made for the highbrow, incidentally—were artistically sound, but that while Dickens created a world his readers would enjoy, he also satisfied himself. For Dickens, it

28 Stevenson, Showman of Vanity Fair, p. 301.

29 Faulkner, certainly not a spineless writer, seems to have some such acceptable compromise in mind when he speaks approvingly of movie-writing—which he describes as a series of compromises (Cowley, Writers at Work, p. 125).

is true, Arnold's dictum that the artistic work is its own sufficient reward was impossible. For him the pleasure of creation lay as much in the joy given to others as in the pleasure tasted in private. The ability to build what others will like is, of course, the secret of popularity. It becomes literary prostitution only when the author gives up his attempt to please himself also. For writers like Dickens and Thackeray popularity involved accommodating oneself to one's audience, but it meant accommodating oneself as well as the audience.

No doubt, as I have suggested, the Victorian writer found it easier to effect a meeting of his views with those of his audience than does today's culture-ridden author; the Victorian intellectual had not advanced so far in front of the populace as to feel that he was marching by himself. Nevertheless there was some distance between the writer and the reader and there were indeed Victorians who could not please both themselves and the public. Not all could say with Trollope: "My novels, whether good or bad, have been as good as I could make them." If we are to settle matters of artistic integrity on the terms most Victorians would apply, that is, on the willingness of an author to write his books badly

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Trollope, *Autobiography*, p. 120.
"because he can make his money faster in that fashion than by doing them well," and upon the additional terms of the abandonment of the author's will, then we will have to admit with the Camdenites that economic necessity—"scribbling for bread"—played a large part in debauching the consciences of several Victorian novelists. For while such writers as Eliot, Dickens, Collins, and Trollope usually wrote carefully, and while they usually satisfied themselves, other writers plainly did not.

These unhappy writers were the ones who permitted themselves cynically to be guided by a desire for money, a contempt for the public taste, and a despair of its possible improvement. The contempt for the public and the curious notion that it actually preferred bad writing are easily demonstrated in Ainsworth's remarks about the sale of Dickens's Nicholas Nickleby:

I feared it was not so well adapted for general popularity as the Pickwick—though, in reality, far better. But the truth is, to write for the mob, we must not write too well. The newspaper level is the true line to take. In proportion as Dickens departs from this, he will decline in popular favour—of this I am certain. I think, however, he has so much tact that he will yet retrieve himself—and become bad enough to suit all tastes. 32

Ainsworth himself did more than his share of careless,

32 Ellis, Ainsworth, 1, 336-37.
"bad" writing in his effort to increase his income, but the career of Charles Lever—because of the abundance of the evidence—allows us the best look at the moderately successful Victorian novelist who elected to make a living at all costs. He was caught in the dilemma of his age: seeking means of making more and more money while aspiring to write priceless art. The convolutions of attitude and aspiration are not pleasant to behold, nor can we consider that they were any the less painful for the Victorian novelist to endure.

Lever began his literary career solely in an effort to supplement his income as a provincial doctor. The success of his first book, however, quickly stimulated a desire for literary acclaim, a desire he hoped to satisfy in the writing of Charles O'Malley. No sooner was this ambition stimulated than it was tested, for with the increasing popularity of O'Malley, its publishers, the Dublin firm of Curry and Company, urged Lever to extend the novel from a planned twelve to a more profitable twenty numbers—"a project," Lever said, "my pocket, but not my brains [sic], consurs in." Lever's pocket won out. "Damn the unities," he shouted; "ye Gods, annihilate both time and space and make O'Malley twenty!" Within four or five

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34 Stevenson, Quicksilver, pp. 83-86.
years, he was capable of telling his publisher:

You may have O'Donoghue warm with love or cold without, as may seem best to befit the temper and taste of our readers. I can wind up with Demosthenic abruptness in eleven numbers, the curtain falling amid the blue lightning and thunder that scattered the French fleet; or I can go on to a more Colburn and Bentley ending, with love and marriage licences... You have paid your money, and you may take your choice.

Lever added that he thought the tragic ending best, but his publisher objected—"the ladies wouldn't like it"—and Lever dutifully responded. 35

If at this point in his career, Lever apparently had chosen to sacrifice his desires for the publishers, he was still capable of recovering his artistic pride. In 1846, for example, he conceived that the public could be educated and that he had a mission to help improve its taste. "One thing I can answer for," he told a friend, "no popularity I ever had, or shall have, will make me trifle with the public by fast writing and careless composition. Dickens's last book [Dombey and Son] has set the gravestone on his fame, and the warning shall not be thrown away." 36 Lever believed what he said, and this is true inspite of the fact

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35 Downey, Lever, I, 182-83; Stevenson, Quicksilver, pp. 149-50.
36 Downey, Lever, I, 204.
that he stretched his very next novel, *The Knight of Gwynne*, to twenty numbers, again "at the publisher's request rather than of my own convictions..." He could square this action with his sense of a higher purpose by pointing to his method of composition. He judged a writer to be a panderer if he failed to write "pure" English and to espouse "sound" morals:

> while I perceive many and grave faults in its construction and development, I still would fain hope that the writing (as writing) is pure, and the tone throughout such as a gentleman might write and a lady read... You will see by the papers that Dickens, as well as Bulwer, has fallen under the lash of 'The Times.' It matters little however; the [?]love] for low verbiage and coarse pictures of unreality is a widespread--and a spreading--taste. People will buy and read what requires no effort of mean capacities to follow, and what satisfies low-bred tastes by a standard of morality to which they can, with as little difficulty, attain. I have suffered--I am suffering--from the endeavour to supply a healthier, more manly, and more English sustenance, but it may be that before I succeed--if I do succeed at all--the hand will be cold and the heart still, and that I may be only a pioneer to clear the way for the breaching party.

That such a taste must rot of its own corruption is clear enough, but, meanwhile, literature is an unattractive career for those who would use it for a higher purpose.

The glow was destined to end, however, for within a few months Lever was to turn to "irresponsible labour."

37 Downey, Lever, I, 206.

that is writing novels anonymously. What had happened to
destroy his dreams was simply that the publisher who issued
his Knight in parts had botched the job as a result of "bad
habits of business," and the book had not produced the in-
come he had expected. 39 In the second place Lever was dis-
appointed in his efforts to secure £600 from his old pub-
lishers for his share in three novels they had produced for
him on a half-profits basis. Indeed, when the Curry firm
went bankrupt in mid 1847 Lever was to learn that he had
no claim at all to the novels since he had sold them with-
out a written contract. That Lever was swindled there can
be little doubt—Chapman and Hall told him he had been
"rogued and robbed throughout"—but there was nothing he
could do about it. 40 A man of Lever's expensive habits
could not absorb such setbacks. From 1848 on, he was
usually writing two novels at once—but wishing to acknowl-
edge only one.

In his anonymous works he sought to give the public
what he thought it wanted, badly written stories. His
 correspondence abounds with bitter comments upon the pub-
lic's taste: "Con Cregan" . . . is atrodiously careless
and ill-written, but its success depending on what I know

39 Downey, Lever, I, 221.

40 Stevenson, Quicksilver, pp. 153-71.
to be its badness, my whole aim has been to write down to my public."

"The Hide! I write as carelessly as a common letter, but I'd not be the least astonished to find the success in the reverse ratio to the trouble." "I like the notion you suggest of my cancelling," he told a Dr. Burbridge, who went over his proofs for him:

Did you ever see an Irishman throw out a pint of his chalk mixture because he saw a bluebottle in the measure? Or, rather, didn't he daintily pick out the beastie, aye, if it was a cockroach, with finger and thumb, and serve his customer? I tell you I couldn't afford to be careful. I'm not rich enough to write creditably.---a pol? I never could bring myself yet, nor do I hope to arrive at the point hereafter, to respect my Public; and I often hug myself, in the not very profitable consolation, that they never thought meaner of me nor do I of them. I know that the very worst things I ever did were instant successes, and some one or two---as 'The Dodds,' for instance, which had a certain stamp of originality---were total and lamentable failures. Now, mind, I do not say this in any spirit of misanthropic invective. I do not want, like poor Haydn, to slang the world that refuses to appreciate me---and, for this reason, that they have taken carrion from me and eaten it for good wholesome ox beef; but I say that for such consumers the trouble of selection is clean thrown away, and I feel that if I were to write for Fame, I might finish my book in the Fleet.

"I am decidedly sick of my readers and critics," Lever told John Blackwood a few years later. "It is very little short of an indignity for a man to write for a public who can gloat over ______ or the stupid drolleries of ______, so flauntingly proclaimed by 'The Times,' as most utter
trash." "W-- their souls," he shouted, and more damn followed.41

Lever was sick of his public; he became sick of his profession, and the cause lay in his constant need for money. "It is not very easy to write amidst the anxieties which money occasions--I mean the want of money . . . It is in the precariousness of a life of literature is its real deterrent."42

The story of Charles Lever, as I indicated earlier, is not an isolated one. Other Victorians came to think little of their publics, to write with haste because of need, and to feel the pain of having produced novels they themselves could not respect. In the ultimate depreciation of their copyrights they illustrate the element of truth in Charlotte Brontë's remarks about the two kinds of writers, "the author and the bookmaker." The latter is the more prolific:

Is he not, indeed, wonderfully fertile; but does the public, or the publisher even, make much account of his productions? Do not both tire of him in time? Is it not because authors aim at a style of living better suited to merchants, professed gain-seekers, that they are often compelled to degenerate to mere bookmakers, and to find the great stimulus of their pen in the

42 Ibid., I, 154-55.
necessity of earning money? If they were not ashamed to be frugal, might they not be more independent? 43

Unrealistic or not, and certainly objectionable in the implication that artistic work is almost necessarily unprofitable, this statement applies with great force to such breadwinning writers as Lever, Ainsworth, Mrs. Oliphant, G. P. R. James, and even Bulwer-Lytton.

Thus among a substantial number of Victorian novelists the answer to the problem of earning a living seemed to lie not only in writing the kind of thing the public would buy—for this, after all, must be the object of any novelist who lives by his pen—but in writing what the novelist could not approve and in writing it as quickly as possible. Only rarely, as with Trollope, was this rapid flow of ink accompanied by a sense that the writer must do his best. More often there was a feeling that the popular author was entitled to be careless. Crucial to this notion was the writer's attitude toward his readers. Generally the author who was driven by need lost the taut ambivalence present in the attitude of an Eliot and pronounced art and popularity irreconcilable. In those instances we have been considering, the practice was to let the writer's contempt for novel readers influence his method of composition, so that

he would, like Lever and Ainsworth, consciously write without care as well as with haste. Such a writer had his day and ceased to be. The great Victorians, the ones who are with us still, are those who, no matter how low they knew the taste of the broad public could sink, nevertheless wrote with care and respect for that public.

These, then, were the two chief attitudes of Victorian novelists toward their work and their audience produced by the commercialization of literature. But while this is most of the story, it is not quite all. The experience of George Meredith provides us with a minority report which, though we do not have space to explore it in detail, we cannot overlook, since Meredith's response to the conflict between his own standards and those of the public was a response which foreshadows that of many writers working today. While the well paid Victorians could maintain a healthy tension between the interests of their public and their art, and while most of those who felt compelled to choose between the two abandoned art, Meredith abandoned the public.

Meredith, of course, did not begin his literary career as a novelist. The Ordeal of Richard Feveral was written only after he had failed to achieve popularity as a poet and allegorist. Having indulged his own whims for a decade, he had begun to look realistically around him and
determined to write what the public would buy. The Ordeal was meant to be popular; unfortunately it did not sell. It touched upon indelicate matters in what the libraries took to be an indelicate way, and of course the libraries shunned the work. The result was disastrous to Meredith's relations with the general public. Had his first novel been allowed to find its way like other, less powerful, first novels, he might have developed a communion between himself and the ordinary reader. As it was, no sooner than he had put out of port he was faced with the problem of recharting his course. He became a novelist who was unsure in his direction—at one moment seeking to write in language all could understand and imitating the themes of more popular authors, at another moment exploring his subject with little concern for the buyer's approval.

The unsettled direction of Meredith's labors is evident in his work in the decade following The Ordeal. His second novel, Evan Harrington, was an attempt to right himself with the British matron—"I am horribly poor"—and he vowed he would "never again offend young maids." In bidding for the approval of the public, however, he felt he had to avoid most of the topics which might really enliven his tale. The result was a dull story which brought him more hisses than shillings.44

44Stevenson, Meredith, pp. 77-78.
With this failure he turned to other employment, working at several tasks which together brought him an annual £700, a sum which allowed him to write according to his inclination, and which bore excellent fruit in the publication in 1862 of his masterly but unpopular poem Modern Love. Not until 1864 did he make another attempt to reach the novel-reading public. On this occasion, Emilia Belloni sold modestly and raised his hopes. When a publisher mentioned four figures as a price for one of his novels, he was elated: "Am I rising? The market speaks! . . . I shall be a MILLIONAIRE next year." The hopes were premature, however, for his next three-decker, Rhoda Fleming, brought him only £400, and its successor, Vittoria, was unpopular. As a result, in March, 1867, he was writing Swinburne, "I suppose I shall have to give up and take to journalism, as I am now partly doing . . . I am being carried off from the singing. I stand on an inexorable current." In October, 1868, he explained a year's lapse in letter writing by saying that he had "had to buckle to newspaper work to pay debts, and this has gone on ever since, with now and then a dash at work." In December he was writing his son: "My novels have been kept back by

45 It would be a mistake to imply that Meredith never wrote trash. As late as 1860 he was still doing anonymous hackwork. Meredith differed from Lever, et al., in that he never wrote hack novels (Stevenson, Meredith, pp. 87-8).
having had to write for the newspapers—the only thing that paid. So take this as a moral: don't think of literature as a profession. I believe you to have too much good sense."46 When, in 1870, he began publication of Harry Richmond, he had brought out only five novels in eleven years, a cautious pace certainly.

By 1890 he had produced but four more novels. These, like the first, had been written by an alternately hopeful and despondent author whose bitterness toward the public gradually deepened as his disappointments increased. "... when I thrust myself into the Pillory by publishing," he said of Harry Richmond, "the smack in the face and the pat on the shoulder are things in the day's order." By 1889 he no longer expected the approving "pat": "I am hopeless of our public. The English have hardened me outside, and there has been a consequent process within. I do my work to the best of my ability, expecting the small result for the same, which I get." Now he gave up all attempts to be readable; in shaping One of Our Conquerors, he deliberately set out to "serve these critics a strong dose of my most indigestible production." The style he adopted was his most cryptic worst.47

46 Stevenson, Meredith. pp. 139-43, 164, 170-73.
47 Ibid., pp. 188-89, 284.
Meredith's hardened attitude signalled the end of the period when serious authors would hope to be as popularly received and as well paid as the Gildas and the Elizabeth Braddons. Replacing the healthy tension which formerly had prevailed between the artist and the public was the sterility of impasse. As Meredith said of Beauchamp's Career in 1875:

"The world is too much with me" when I write. I cannot go on with a story and not feel that to treat of flesh and blood is to touch the sacredest; and so it usually ends in my knitting the destinies of the world about it—like an atmosphere, out of which it cannot subsist. So my work fails. I see it. But the pressure is on me with every new work. I fear that Beauchamp is worse than the foregoing in this respect. The centre idea catches hold of the ring of the Universe; the dialogues are the delivery of creatures of this world, and the writing goodish. But altogether it will only appeal (so I feared) to them that have a taste for me; it won't catch the gudgeon world, and I, though I never write for money, want it—and there is a state of stultification for you. 48

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In summary we can make these comments. The publishing trade of 1830—1880, working to increase its profits, established the novel as an extremely lucrative form of writing, and attracted to that literary form writers whose natural talents lay elsewhere. By maintaining high prices on "respectable" fiction, moreover, publishers tended to leave

48 Ibid., p. 194.
the shaping of the taste of the newly emerging readers of the lower classes to the kind of novelist who was cheap in every sense. Furthermore, the taste of those people who could afford the circulating library fee was influenced greatly by those literary works which it was most profitable to the librarian to push, and these for various reasons were likely to be the most inept products of the Victorian pen. As the decades passed and the reading public enlarged, the advantage in writing what the majority would buy became more and more apparent. Some writers aspired to reach this mass public with novels which satisfied their own artistic sense; these were the authors who could reconcile their reverence for art with their ability to drive a hard bargain. Others, discovering by one means or another that the public would buy shoddy goods, sought to gain in rapid production what they could not get slowly; these were the men who were paid very modest fees on individual novels and hence, in order to live comfortably, wrote many of them. One or two exceptional novelists, though they wanted money, and though they attempted to find the formula which would make them popular, eventually despaired of writing what many would buy. The writers who made the most money, it turns out, were those who did not despair of the public, who neither
wrote down to it nor wrote above it, but respected it and themselves. These are the novelists who still stand as the great Victorians.
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Autobiography

I, Conrad Eugene Tanzy, was born in Akron, Ohio, February 10, 1924. I received my secondary-school education in the public schools of Akron, Ohio, and my undergraduate training at The University of South Dakota, The University of Miami (Florida), and The Ohio State University, which granted me the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1949. From The Ohio State University, I received the Master of Arts degree in 1952. While in residence there (1950-58) I served as a graduate and research assistant and as a temporary instructor, part time. During this period I served as grading assistant for Professors Simpson, Pearce, Marks, and Dumble, and as research assistant for Professors Altick, Charvat, and Pearce. Since 1958 I have been an instructor in the Department of English at Florida State University.