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DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Roger Peyton Wallins, A.B., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1972

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before the Reform Bill of 1832 passed both houses of Parliament, it had been the primary topic for several years in the periodicals. Once it became law, the conservative magazines prophesied chaos as a result of the increased franchise: "We are at this hour threatened with a revolution in England," Archibald Alison, a prolific writer for Blackwood's,¹ cried after asserting that "the triumph of the Revolutionists will be dimmed by the tears of the orphan, the cries of the destitute, the wailings of the dying."² Ironically, Alison would prove to be correct, but for a far different reason than he suspected in 1833. For, although England had no bloody revolution in the nineteenth century, terrible social injustices already existed in pre-Victorian times, some of which were specified in an 1833 Westminster Review article: "While the demand for labour is thus diminished, our poor-laws stimulate the increase of an uneducated, toilworn, and ignorant working class. We have a vindictive criminal code . . . ." Worse, Great Britain had provided her people with no system of national education, and many of these same people, especially factory workers, had to live in unsanitary hovels on streets that were "receptacles of the most disgusting offal." Thus, in 1841, a writer in Fraser's exclaimed, "We have got our new reform, but let there be social reform . . . ."³
The major intellectual periodicals in the 1830's, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, the Edinburgh Review, Fraser's Magazine, the Quarterly Review, and the Westminster Review, recognized the social problems, and all ran long articles (thirty to sixty pages were not uncommon) attacking abuses and recommending solutions. "Social questions are more important than political," Archibald Alison wrote to justify devoting fifty pages in the Edinburgh Review to "Trades' Unions and Strikes": "they are attended with far more enduring and wide-spreading effects; and the worst revolutions which have befallen the human race have arisen from the neglect of the deep-rooted seeds of evil which, unheeded by statesmen,—unnoticed by the common herd of observers,—had silently, and for a course of ages, been spreading suffering and immorality among the great body of the people." The "deep-rooted" social evil that statesmen did not heed and that observers did not notice had to be brought into the light. Before 1832, the periodicals had had few articles on factory reform, for example, and then only when a bill pertaining to it was before Parliament. In the sixteen years following the passage of the first Reform Bill, however, these five periodicals among them published over three hundred articles on social conditions. This quantity was evidence of their increased interest in social issues, and it reflected the Reformed Parliament's concern for the lower classes, a concern expressed by the fact that well over twice as many Parliamentary Committee and Royal Commission reports were published between 1833 and 1848 as had been published in the preceding sixteen years. In fact, in reviewing these "blue books,"
as they are usually called, and in initiating some discussions on
their own, the periodicals seemed to sense their own responsibility
to society. In 1834, for example, Charles Grey acknowledged in
the Edinburgh Review that "it is high time that the attention of the
legislature, and of the public, should be directed to those practical
measures which may be required for promoting the happiness of the
great body of the people. . . ."?

The need for social reform, recognized and discussed by the
major intellectual periodicals of the day, was also of primary
importance in those novels of the period which critics for over a
century have discussed as being socially oriented, Benjamin Disraeli's
Sybil (1845), Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848), and Charles
Kingsley's Yeast (1848) and Alton Locke (1850). Yet these novels,
exposing the working and living conditions of city and country
laborers, are often viewed as if they materialized suddenly, out of
nowhere, or at most out of the authors' personal experiences and
observations.

Certainly, this has been the underlying assumption of some critics
in the twentieth century. Louis Cazamian, for example, in Le Roman
Social en Angleterre, originally published in 1903, wrote: "Passioné,
inquiet, nourri par les graves problèmes qui intéressent la société
entière, Le roman social les discute dans leur ampleur, et suggère la
formule précise ou le désir vague d'une réforme totale dans les
relations humaines."8 Kathleen Tillotson, in Novels of the
Eighteen-Forties, published in 1954, reaffirmed the prevalent idea that
the 1840's were a period of increased social concern: the novelists often used evidence directly from Royal Commissions' Reports, and, by publicizing the conditions of the lower classes, helped bridge the chasm between the rich and the poor. She said nothing about the use other forms of contemporary literature might have made of the same reports, or specifically about the possibility that the novels of the 1840's might have been anticipated in their discussions of social issues by the periodicals. And more recently Arnold Kettle claimed that the "social problem" novels addressed themselves to "the conscience—not to mention the downright factual ignorance—of the middle class. . . ." 11

It is the purpose of this study to correct the received assumption that the novels led the attack on social injustice. The following investigation of the periodicals and novels will show that, in the overwhelming number of cases, writers for the periodicals preceded the novelists in discussing major social issues—specifically, the working and living conditions of laborers in cities and agricultural areas—sometimes by as much as ten to fifteen years. This study will further indicate wherever possible how much of the material, covered by the periodicals, the subsequent novels actually used, and it will examine how the novels incorporated such factual material into a fictional setting. It is not intended to determine the influence of one medium on the other. Certainly in the case of the published Committee and Commission Reports, vis-à-vis later novels it would be extremely difficult—perhaps impossible—to show a direct influence. But indirect influence
there must have been: the major intellectual periodicals discussed topics of social concern so much that, even years before the novels appeared, those topics were sufficiently "in the air" for our novelists to be aware of them. Chapters ii, iii, iv, and v will show what the topics were, and how thoroughly the selected periodicals—and later the novels—discussed them; chapter vi will demonstrate the artistic uses to which the social novelists put the material they had.

Eighteen thirty-three is the most appropriate date with which to begin because, with the Reform Bill safely passed, it marked the beginning of the periodicals' emphasis on social, rather than purely political, issues. The Edinburgh Review and Blackwood's, for example, published as many socially topical articles in that single year as they had in the previous four. We should not assume, of course, that the periodicals said nothing about events in Parliament or in Government. But there was a large increase in 1833 in the number of articles on social problems.

Eighteen forty-eight provides a good limit to our study of the periodicals. In that year cholera, which had struck in 1832, raged again, and reinforced the social concerns of the 1840's. As later novelists pointed out, it cut across social barriers: rich and poor alike suffered and infected each other. In addition, revolutions on the continent prompted a closer consideration in England of the plight of the lower classes. And Chartism, relatively quiet for several years, was awakened by increased unemployment in 1847 and early 1848. However, once the Chartist "uprising" failed to materialize on April 10, fear of the lower classes subsided. Although many evils remained,
and the social conscience was still active among individuals like Kingsley and Dickens, after 1848 the climate improved.

The periodicals' concerns from 1833 to 1848 were an accurate reflection of a developing climate of opinion and political activity in England generally, and in Parliament in particular. In the Reformed Parliament, the Whigs actively set out to institute social reforms. The Factory Act of 1833 extended previous reforms passed for the cotton industry to other textile trades, and provided for government inspection of such factories. However, the provisions of the law, especially those requiring inspection, could not be systematically enforced. In 1834, Parliament prohibited children under ten years of age from being apprenticed to chimney sweeps, and in 1840 it raised the age limit to sixteen while prohibiting apprentices from being forced to climb chimneys. Yet Parliament again provided no strong means of enforcing the provisions and, as a result, the outlawed practices continued into the second half of the century. The year 1834 is more important for the passage of the New Poor Law, which will be discussed in chapter iv. But for all the debate over its merits that it engendered in the periodicals and elsewhere, this law at least appeared to ease distress: the poor rate, £7 million in 1832, fell sharply to £4 million in 1837. In 1835 Parliament passed the Municipal Corporations Act, which in many cases transferred local power in towns and cities from long-vested interests, specifically Tory lawyers, churchmen, and landowners, to Dissenters and shopkeepers. This act gave the newly constituted local corporations the power to
modernize their structure and extend their functions, but, as was true of much other reform legislation, there was little possibility of immediate change or enforcement.  

These were the most significant attempts to improve living and working conditions in the years immediately preceding Victoria's accession. As the commercial and agricultural prosperity of 1833 and 1834 faded, especially as harvests failed, trade declined, and prices rose in 1836, Parliament concerned itself less with social reforms than with general economic conditions. The recession of 1837 was serious enough to put fifty thousand people on short hours or entirely out of work in Manchester alone. Conditions improved only slightly in 1838 and 1839, somewhat more in 1840. But in 1841 and 1842 England found itself in a severe depression: bread was expensive, labor cheap. England feared the possibility of revolution, especially from the Chartists, who were agitating from 1838 to 1848.

As economic conditions began to improve late in 1842, Parliament, under Sir Robert Peel's guidance, again pursued social reforms. In 1842 it passed the Coal Mines Act, which forbade underground employment to women and young children; two years later, Parliament reduced the number of hours children could work in factories, and ordered dangerous machinery to be fenced in order to decrease the appalling number of accidents; in 1845 the textile Print Works Act prohibited night work for women and children, but left other industries unregulated.

In 1846, in an about-face that left his staunchest supporters confused and enraged, Sir Robert allowed the Corn Laws, sacred to the
The agricultural interests of the country, to be repealed. The next year, Parliament, under Whig guidance, finally passed a Ten Hours' Bill. This bill, long discussed, had been proposed but defeated in 1846; its provisions, limiting workers to ten hours a day in a factory, were to become operative in one year. And in 1848 Parliament passed the first Public Health Act, providing for improved housing and sanitation in towns and cities. Its provisions were not effectively carried out for twenty years, however. This act was largely the work of one man, Edwin Chadwick, whose earlier influence on reform we shall see in later chapters. His report, The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes (1842), his work on the Royal Commission on the Health of Towns, whose findings and conclusions were published in 1845, and his other reports awakened members of Parliament to conditions they had not realized existed.

All of these blue books, Archibald Alison wrote in May 1845, "teem with authentic and decisive evidence of the vast increase, during the last thirty years, of crime and frequent destitution among the working classes in all parts of the empire." The major problem with them, however, was their size: consisting of hundreds of folio pages of evidence each, they did not commend themselves to easy perusal by members of Parliament or by their electors. Nor did they often reach that segment of society whose feelings might be most affected, women. One of the characters in Mrs. Tonna's Helen Fleetwood (1839-40) pointed this out: "You see, the facts are brought before Parliament, by having witnesses up to be examined on oath before the
committee; these reports . . . are printed, and sold too: but I don't think one lady in a thousand ever looks into them, to say nothing of other classes: and if they are not read, how can the statements be known? What we chiefly want is to have some public information given about it. . . ."28

Several of our novelists provided such information by using material from the blue books in their fiction. Benjamin Disraeli, for example, had seen several Parliamentary Reports, particularly the First Report of the Children's Employment Commission (1842) and the Appendix to the Commissioner's Second Report (1842). From these, he freely incorporated key phrases and clauses verbatim into *Sybil* (1845), and relied heavily on the evidence of witnesses for his picture of the manufacturing town of Wodgate and its inhabitants. Thus, the social novelists often succeeded, if not in breaking down the barriers between social classes, at least in illuminating for the upper class the conditions of the lower. As Charles Egremont in *Sybil* and Lancelot Smith in *Yeast*, both members of the upper class, discovered for themselves the conditions in which the lower orders had to live, so the readers also learned from current fiction.29 Charlotte Brontë omitted the process of discovery in *Shirley*, but clearly and pointedly showed the result on the mill-owner Robert Moore.

In addition, by discussing the purpose behind the novels published, reviewers gave currency to the subject among the many people who had not read the novels themselves: "We presume, therefore, that it is to the people of England that Mr. Disraeli is addressing himself, more
especially to the landowners, the mill-owners, and the great capitalists generally, and that he seeks to impress upon them the moral truth, that their own happiness will be increased in exact proportion as they endeavor to promote the happiness of their dependents. If so, the purpose is a righteous one . . . .\textsuperscript{30}

If in general the novels of the 1840's can be said to have shaken the Victorian social conscience awake, that conscience had nevertheless been slowly emerging from its long sleep in the 1830's when the intellectual periodicals recognized the need for improvement and reported to their readers both private observations and reviews of blue books and Parliamentary proceedings. The periodicals appealed primarily to the upper classes, the "drawing-room in town and country," who obtained them from booksellers, and to that section of the middle class which was educated and fairly sophisticated but which had to resort to the subscription reading-rooms to peruse the latest issues. For most periodicals, especially in the 1830's, were more expensive than many middle-class pockets could afford to buy: in 1834, for example, the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review cost 6s.; the New Monthly Magazine was 3s. 6d.; and Blackwood's and Fraser's were 2s. 6d.\textsuperscript{31} The intellectual periodicals therefore were available, by one means or another, to the same reading public which bought new fiction or--more likely, because new fiction was even more expensive than the periodicals--obtained it from guinea-a-year subscription libraries.\textsuperscript{32}

Of the many periodicals that existed between 1833 and 1848, the
most important to our study are the major quality ones. They had relatively large circulations, regularly discussed social conditions, occasionally reviewed new novels, and reflected a wide diversity of viewpoints. The *Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, was the journal of the Whig party and thus generally adopted the cause of the manufacturing interests: it was generally satisfied with the working conditions that other periodicals attacked. Founded in 1809 as the Tory opponent to the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly Review* was conservative, and defended the old order while insisting that the landed aristocracy, along with inherent rights, also had inherent responsibilities. Lord Ashley (Anthony Ashley Cooper), a prime mover in Parliament for factory and child labor reform, developed his ideas on these subjects in the pages of the *Quarterly* throughout our period. *Blackwood's*, begun in 1817, was another Tory counter to the *Edinburgh*, and constantly harped on the Whigs' "revolutionary" tactics which, *Blackwood's* claimed, were destroying the very fabric of society. While it was more politically oriented than the other periodicals, it often turned such discussions to social issues: its articles on the factories, as we shall see, were extremely detailed. The fourth of our journals, the *Westminster Review*, was founded in 1824 as the organ of the utilitarians. Not surprisingly, it was anti-Corn Law, anti-landed aristocracy, and pro-manufacturers (since most were Benthamites at least in spirit); it advocated improvements in working and living conditions only to the extent that such changes would improve output and efficiency. More than the other periodicals, the *Westminster* contained many long passages quoted
directly from the blue books, and it often proposed very specific solutions, especially to problems of living conditions. Finally, in 1830 Fraser's appeared. William Maginn, the first editor of this literary miscellany which also treated political and social issues, clearly stated its political orientation: the labels "Whig" and "Tory" were no longer meaningful, but, he added, "We are not of liberal principles."  

In addition to these major periodicals, two literary magazines will be included in the study: Bentley's Miscellany and the New Monthly Magazine will enable us to see the primary social interests of periodicals which were less concerned with espousing a particular political ideology. We shall see, in fact, that both magazines were more active in presenting first-hand evidence than with quoting from already-published blue books.

Also important for our study, Thomas Carlyle, seeking a publisher for Sartor Resartus, a strange and difficult work, finally turned to Fraser's which published it in parts in 1833 and 1834. Carlyle's other works also had an effect comparable to that of the periodicals, because they too drew on the materials in the blue books and periodicals. Chartism, published in 1839, and Past and Present, published in 1843, influenced the novelists.  

Hard Times, in fact, was dedicated to Carlyle. Charles Kingsley cited and promoted Carlyle's views in Yeast and Alton Locke, through Paul Tregarva and Sandy Mackaye. Mrs. Gaskell built Mary Barton on the Carlylean assumptions in Chartism and Past and Present, and John Barton himself is an incarnation of the
"toilworn Craftsman" of Sartor, in whom "lay a god-created Form." Thus, Thomas Carlyle's works, Sartor Resartus as a serialized periodical piece and Chartism and Past and Present for their known influence on writers of the age, will necessarily be included in our discussion.

The social novels I have chosen include both well-known and little-known ones. Accepting Cazamian's belief that the social novel began with *Oliver Twist*, I too have begun there; but I do not end, as he did, with *Alton Locke*. Instead, I have included Mrs. Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) and three of Dickens' later novels. The complete list can be found in the Bibliography. By studying the periodicals between 1833 and 1848, and the novels between 1837 and 1857 (when *Little Dorrit* was completed), I hope to achieve a greater perspective on the relationship of the periodicals to the fiction. If, as Mrs. Tillotson argues, the social or "propaganda" novel really developed in the forties, then novels of the late thirties should foreshadow it by providing early discussions of the topics treated more fully in the next decade; novels of the fifties might show the ideas of the periodicals and the earlier novels brought to some kind of fruition.
Notes

1. George Croly, "The French Revolution," Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 33 (June, 1833), 88. Subsequent references will be to "Blackwood's."


4. "The Age We Live in," Fraser's Magazine, 24 (July, 1841), 15. Subsequent references will be to "Fraser's."

5. Archibald Alison, "Trades' Unions and Strikes," The Edinburgh Review, 67 (April, 1838), 209. Subsequent references will be to "Edinburgh."


10. Ibid., pp. 123-25.


13. Tillotson, pp. 81-82.


16. Ibid., p. 110.

17. Trevelyan, p. 64.


19. Ibid., p. 295.

20. Ibid., p. 335.


22. Ibid., p. 136.

23. Halévy, IV, 141-42.


29. Tillotson, pp. 76-79.

30. "Mr. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P." (anon. rev.), *Fraser's*, 31 (June, 1845), 737.


32. Ibid., pp. 260-261, 275-77.

33. "Our 'Confession of Faith,'" *Fraser's*, 1 (February, 1830), 5 and 7.

34. Tillotson, p. 150.

CHAPTER II

WORKING CONDITIONS IN TOWNS AND CITIES

Despite the legislation enacted between 1833 and 1848, factory workers and miners saw their working conditions improve only slowly, because the growing power of the manufacturers in government had taken the teeth out of many of the bills before they became law, and whatever strong provisions remained often were not enforced. The Factory Act of 1833, for example, was a compromise formulated by the government, which opposed Sadler's Ten-Hours' Bill. It applied to all textile factories and prohibited the employment of children younger than nine, except in silk mills. As Charlotte Tonna was to illustrate later, in Helen Fleetwood, this exception enabled many otherwise ineligible children to contribute to their families' purses, and also to be condemned to disease and early death. The Factory Act also established a twelve-hour day for children under thirteen. Most importantly, perhaps, it established a force of four inspectors. For the first time, it appeared that the provisions of a law regulating factory work would be enforced. However, punishment of offenders was up to the Justices of the Peace who themselves were often manufacturers or friends and relatives of the masters.

Adding to the workers' miseries were the recurrent economic recessions during the period, especially the depression between 1837 and 1842. Those firms that had not cut costs by introducing new
labor-saving machines either went out of business or overworked their laborers in order to compete. From 1843 to 1847, economic conditions improved because production increased and the railway "mania" created jobs.

Many people, such as the Greens in Helen Fleetwood, had been convinced that, should they move from their rural homes to the industrial cities, they would be sure to find jobs. Prior to and during these sixteen years, many families had so moved, only to find that the gold they had hoped to earn had turned to ashes by the time they arrived: the work that did exist would quickly rob them of health, even of life. Often, there was no work at all. The wages, barely enough to live on in the first place, were often decreased both in absolute amounts (as factories went on short hours) and in purchasing power (as the Corn Laws drove the price of bread up). Compounding this problem was the increasing Irish immigration, bringing into England hordes of starving families who, willing to work for less, naturally drove wages down.

Because of their preoccupation with politics, in the late '20's and early '30's the periodicals of our study rarely discussed living and working conditions of factory operatives and miners. But in 1833, the first year after the Reform Act, they had to accept the new law as a fait accompli. Thus, although they continued to discuss it, they turned much of their attention to social issues, especially the
living and working conditions of the masses of workers in cities and towns. The periodicals of that year contained eleven major discussions of working conditions, and described the ill-ventilated, unclean, and unsafe conditions in which men, women and children, indiscriminately, had to work. We can notice in these early articles a tempering of the descriptions by political considerations.

The Edinburgh Review, for example, said very little about specific working conditions, except to defend the actions (or, often, inaction) of the masters. One of its authors, J. R. McCulloch, concurred with Charles Babbage's views in Machinery and Manufactures, that England should be proud of its manufacturing eminence. Furthermore, McCulloch pointed out, female and child labor is necessary; it is uneconomical for a man to do what a child's strength can accomplish. Machinery had only a "salutary" effect on the conditions in which the laborers worked. In October, 1833, in his review of the "Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee appointed into the Present State of Manufacture, Trade, and Shipping," McCulloch proclaimed: "The statements as to the extraordinary prevalence of distress have been completely disproved. All the witnesses, most extensively engaged in manufactures and commerce, bear testimony to their flourishing condition . . . . All classes of workmen are in full employment, and with the exception of the hand-loom weavers, their wages as compared with the price of provisions, are decidedly higher than at any former period." The cotton workers were singled out as making the same wages in 1833 as they had made years before; but, because provisions cost
However, McCulloch selected that part of the total evidence which most supported his case. A more objective study of this Select Committee's reports, and of other contemporary evidence, clearly indicates that he exaggerated the benefits of factory life. The First Report of the Factory Commission, in 1833, for example, detailed the beatings that children were subjected to; the long hours that often caused them to doze at their work, only to be roughly awakened by an overseer's strap; and the immorality caused by a single water-closet serving children and adults, men and women, indiscriminately. In the previous year, Dr. James Kay, one of the leaders of the factory reform movement, had published an account of his first-hand observations of cotton mill workers in Manchester: he emphasized not the material that McCulloch had selected, but the physical hardships of labor.

We can easily see, however, how an apologist for the manufacturing interests could find ample material to cite, from a report or allegedly from personal observation. In 1835 Dr. Andrew Ure published an account of his own observations in cotton, woollen, and other factories. While admitting that occasional beatings did take place, Ure emphasized that they were the exception. More often, he had seen workers of both sexes and of all ages working in clean, well-lighted, and well-ventilated factories, earning high wages, and protected by the benevolence of their masters from the vicissitudes of fate; the "benignant power of steam" allowed such workers an easy task, requiring little exertion.
Throughout his book, Ure praises "the gentle docility of this moving force" and the men who use it. But Ure's mostly one-sided view was the result of the few mills he selected to visit, the large ones of Lancashire. The size of the mill often determined the working conditions within, because the large mill owners could afford to improve them. Besides, the greater use of machinery in the large mills reduced the overseers' powers to speed up work, and their ability to beat alleged sluggards. Small manufacturers with less mechanized operations, on the other hand, in order to remain competitive had to sacrifice safety. Ure, then, in 1835 was merely calling attention to the relatively good working conditions that existed in some factories, but he was generalizing from those few cases to include the whole factory system.

The Westminster Review, true to Benthamism, maintained in January 1833 that "at any and all times a considerable portion of suffering must exist in a manufacturing community dependent on the uncertainties and irregularities of demand, and pressed with a quantity of superfluous labor . . . ." For most of these sixteen years, writers for the Westminster ignored much of the suffering of the working classes. Furthermore, they did not endorse the factory bills placed before Parliament. In April 1833, in fact, one author strongly opposed Sadler's bill to restrict the number of hours people could work in a factory: such a measure would reduce their wages, and thus make them poorer than they already were.

Blackwood's was another story entirely. In April 1833, John Wilson, who contributed several articles on social issues early in our
period, favored a law regulating the harsh conditions in factories, especially for children. 17 Politically, this position is understandable. The Whigs, supporting and supported by the manufacturing interests, opposed such a law: Blackwood's, anti-Whig, naturally favored it. Wilson showed that children as young as four were employed, and railed against this "waste of infants." 18 Explaining how Arkwright's invention took manufactures out of cottages and created factories and cities, he demonstrated that it was cheaper to run the machines with children, a point that Ure was to make two years later. But, while Ure favored child labor, 19 Wilson opposed it. "Posterity will not believe it true," he wrote, "that a generation of Englishmen could exist that would labour lisping infants, of a few summers old, regardless alike of its /sic/ smiles or tears, and unmoved by its /sic/ unresisting weakness, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen, hours a-day, and through the weary night also. . . ." 20

Despite deploring the advantage manufacturers took of the children, Wilson admitted that some of the evils could not be remedied, even by pending legislation. He was still quite upset, however:

The atmosphere must be hot, and dusty, and polluted.... Sickness and sorrow enough, and too much, will there be under a Ten Hours' Bill--but many will then escape death, who now wither away out of languid life, old-looking dwarfs though not yet in their teens. The engine will, under any bill, clutch up boy or girl, and dash out their brains against the ceiling, or crush them into pancakes by pressure against the walls, or seem to be devouring them, as, in horrid entangle-
ment, mutilated body and deformed limbs choke the
steam-fed giant, till, for a few moments he coughs—
rather than clanks—over his bloody meal....21

This was, by far, the most horrifying description of factory accidents
to appear in any of our periodicals. The novels occasionally described
the results of accidents, but avoided the more gruesome details. The
solution, of course, was to fence off dangerous machinery, but neither
fiction nor non-fiction would suggest such action for seven years, when,
almost simultaneously, Helen Fleetwood and Bentley's Miscellany did
so. 22 By that time, however, the precaution had been strongly urged
in the blue books, and was already in effect in the better mills.

For his Blackwood's article, John Wilson used evidence from the
Sadler Committee Report and from Parliamentary debates on the proposed
Factory Bill. Citing details on the number and length of rest and
refreshment periods, he showed how some workers once worked for
thirty-three out of thirty-nine consecutive hours, with no time to
sleep, and pointed out that normally the workers were at the job for
twelve, fourteen, often sixteen hours, especially during busy seasons.
Wilson also showed that beatings, especially of children, were not
uncommon in many factories: the overlookers, known for their often
sadistic natures, thus insured that young workers did their jobs
quickly and efficiently. 23 Because of the abuses heaped on the workers—
long hours, short rest periods, beatings—"about as many have died
before their twentieth year, where the Factory system exclusively
prevails, as before their fortieth year elsewhere." 24
During the next few years, Blackwood's authors reiterated how terrible were the conditions in the factories, and how necessary it was to help the "infant" laborers especially. By the middle of 1836, in fact, Alfred Mallalieu described the evils of the factory system as "the grand problem of the day." 25

The evils that the Westminster Review generally ignored, the Edinburgh Review defended, and Blackwood's deplored, Fraser's Magazine also attacked. In its March 1833 issue, one writer decried the "cupidity of manufacturers" who had replaced many of their adult laborers with "infants," in this case children of six or seven. As a result, the parents, though willing and able to work, were often forced to depend on their children's labor, at much lower wages, for their own subsistence. The children themselves were forced to work for fourteen or fifteen hours a day. 26 These ideas were repeated in an article the following month when, discussing several Parliamentary Committee Reports, the author concluded that "a large portion of the people are worked far beyond their physical powers; and are thus tortured, in a majority of cases, into a premature death." 27 Those who survived often became crippled. 28

Observers not closely connected with Royal Commissions, Parliamentary Committees, or the periodicals made the same points. Peter Gaskell, for example, in The Manufacturing Population in England (1833), noted that workers generally had bowed legs and flat feet, and walked lamely. The primary damning evidence, however, did
come from Commissions and Committees. The Second Report of the
Central Board on the Employment of Children in Manufactories, also
in 1833, described factory children standing on one leg in order to
reach the threads on the machines. As a result, they often became
crippled. 30

The dramatic increase in the number of periodical articles on
working conditions, that began in 1833, continued until 1844. In
his July 1836 article in Blackwood's, Alfred Mallalieu showed what
the factories outside Lancashire were like, and this picture was less
dreadful than the magazine's earlier picture only because it was less
specific:

Far different is it, especially in the more isolated
districts, with mill-owners of inferior note and wealth
less abundant -- and these constitute the great mass of
this branch of industry -- where inferiority of machinery
is sought to be compensated by the exaction of longer
hours of labor; where, as the speed of the ruder and
more ancient engines cannot be accelerated to an equality
with those of more finished and recent construction, the
difference in the power of production is mercilessly
wrung out of the blood and bones of the factory -- the
infant factory -- slave, by toil prolonged beyond the
faculty of human endurance for any moderate term of life. 31

Mallalieu was discussing here the woollen and linen industries of
Yorkshire, industries not covered by the Factory Acts of 1819, 1825,
1831 or 1833, and was pointing out that "infant labor" was bad for the
children themselves and put adults out of work. 32

Three months later, in October 1836, a writer for the Westminster
Review, discussing the Commissioners' Reports on the Employment of
Children in Factories, clearly explained what could happen to these
young workers. The Reports, he said, documented cases of sick children going to the factories to work, often carried there by their parents, even though doctors had said they would die if they continued. If they did not work, the parents stated, the whole family would starve. The daily number of hours that the children had to work—normally twelve in Manchester and Scotland, often more in northeastern England, and as low as ten in western England—could do an already sick child no good. Furthermore, in all districts existed some factories which operated twenty-four hours a day, using two shifts of workers. Workers on the job for twelve hours were allowed half an hour each for breakfast and dinner, although occasionally they had to forfeit their breakfast time to clean the machines. In carpet factories, in particular, children were often called to work in the middle of the night and were kept working for sixteen to eighteen hours. Some of the children observed were five years old, not uncommonly they were six, but the majority began at nine. Because "infant labor" was so much cheaper than adult labor, the Lancashire cotton factories—which even Blackwood's authors had admitted were humanely run—overwhelmingly employed workers under twenty-one, many of whom were under sixteen.

What Blackwood's, Fraser's, and eventually the Westminster Review in these four years attacked as the evils of the factory system, they reiterated in 1837, with the additional aid of the Quarterly Review at the end of 1836. Content heretofore with a brief look at the silk-weavers of the Spitalfields section of London, the Quarterly
finally discussed the several Factory Commission Reports, some of which
dated back to 1831 and 1832, and The Curse of the Factory System, a
newly published book by John Fielden, a radical manufacturer who had
already introduced the ten hour day into his factories. The article
is significant not only for the material it discussed, but for its
author, Lord Ashley, who had unsuccessfully sponsored a Ten Hours' Bill
in 1833. Lord Ashley continued his fight for a ten-hour working day
for all factory workers, and finally succeeded in 1847 with the passage
of the Ten Hours' Bill (effective 1848). Throughout the period of our
study, he was one of the Parliamentary leaders in reform, being a
prime mover of the 1842 act prohibiting infant and female labor in
coal mines.

In his 1836 Quarterly article, however, he was concerned with
factory conditions only, and used much of the information from the
blue books that the other periodicals had already printed or abstracted.
Factory children, often separated from their parents, succumbed to
physical and moral ills; death became merciful; the working day
began at six in the morning, mothers waking their children at five to
be sure to get them ready in time; as machines were improved, more
children and fewer adults were needed. But Ashley introduced one
idea that the other periodicals had not mentioned: he emphasized that,
when the factories had first been established and needed thousands of
workers in a short time, children from seven to fourteen were often
sent from orphanages and workhouses in the south to the newly-established
manufacturing centers in the north as so-called apprentices; they were
clothed, fed, and lodged by the master, who generally abused them with poor living conditions and long hard work. Ashley admitted that this example was from the past, but, he maintained, the same effects were produced by current conditions. In fact, in the 1830's, and even into the 1840's, factory owners continued to import labor from the rural areas; as we shall see in chapter iv, they did so with the cooperation of the local Boards of Guardians established by the New Poor Law. The "apprentice system" that Ashley discussed, however, lasted into the 1820's. In Mrs. Trollope's Michael Armstrong, we shall see it in operation.

II

Thus, between 1832 and 1837, the periodicals were very active in publicizing the many evils of the factory system. After 1837, however, they changed their tone, perhaps because they had exhausted the topic, or because they believed some improvements in working conditions had been made, especially in Lancashire's cotton mills. Certainly, in the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission, published early in 1843, the Commissioners maintained that factory work "is seldom in itself oppressive, or even laborious," and is rarely injurious; furthermore, they stated, although some overseers did occasionally treat the children harshly, they were the exceptions. The Commissioners added that machinery needed to be fenced off, but, for the most part, they acknowledged that working conditions had generally improved "in recent
years. 39 That statement, appearing in a report compiled in 1842, indicates that the improvements they saw were in process in the late 1830's.

Because of the periodicals' articles in the previous six years, middle- and upper-class readers probably were not surprised by the details about factory working conditions in Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong, both published in 1839-40. Nonetheless, Mrs. Tonna and Mrs. Trollope emphasized that the stories they told, "however needfully disguised as to persons and places, we can assure our readers [are] substantially correct in [their] leading particulars." 40

In Helen Fleetwood, Charlotte Tonna described how the factory system could cause the moral and physical degeneration of its workers and their families that we have seen discussed in the periodicals. The Widow Green, her grandchildren, and Helen Fleetwood lived together happily, albeit barely above the poverty level, in an agricultural district. Mary Green and Helen milked cows and tended to other chores on nearby farms; the oldest boy, Richard, was learning to farm from a poor but benevolent master; the widow cared for the children and maintained a respectable home; James, only thirteen years old, had been helping his older brother but, having become ill, could no longer contribute to the family's income. The Board of Guardians, recognizing that the entire family except Richard would soon need relief, arranged for the rest of the Greens and Helen to move to Manchester where they could survive by working in the factories. There, Helen Fleetwood and Mary Green worked in a cotton mill, the kind of establishment which
Blackwood's claimed in 1836 had been vastly improved since the 1833 Factory Act had been passed. Yet we see a deadly factory in which machines were more important than the children who ran them. Those children had stooped heads, sunken chests, disproportionately long arms, and vacant expressions (iv, 519); they worked in rooms whose heat, steam, stench, and dust gradually sapped their lives (x, 552), if indeed the very machines did not cripple or kill them (v, 526); and, as the periodicals had mentioned, the young workers were often beaten by a "ruffian overlooker," as Helen herself was beaten relatively early in her factory career. The mill itself was a picture of constant activity: "Move, move, everything moves. The wheels and the frames are always going, and the little reels twirl round as fast as ever they can; and the pulleys, and chains, and great iron works overhead, are all moving; and the cotton moves so fast that it is hard to piece it quick enough; and there is a great dust, and such a noise of whirr, whirr, whirr..." (vii, 537). It was a dangerous job for each child, especially since none of the machinery in this factory was enclosed. Mrs. Tonna also described what the periodicals would have called a safe mill, one in which the machinery was boxed off, providing the children with at least some protection. But on a trip to Manchester to visit his family, Richard thought otherwise. He saw dirty, bare-footed, gloomy girls mechanically performing the same operation countless times; he breathed the oppressive, sickening, "rank oil" air in rooms whose temperature was "dreadfully high"; he feared the pounding of the upright shaft, which inflicted "dreadful injury..."
and often instant death to the poor children who are caught passing it"; in another room, he choked on the fine particles of cotton which permeated the air (xix, 616-617). Nowhere did he see working conditions that he would have considered acceptable. Instead, he saw everywhere the signs of disease in the foul air and in the exhausted and vacant looks of the laborers.

For page upon page, Mrs. Tonna carefully and precisely described the machines, the air, the people. In chapter after chapter, she showed the insidious effects such conditions had on the workers, Helen Fleetwood and Mary Green in particular. And she explained all these problems through various thinly-veiled personae, as we shall see in chapter vi. "Machinery yields an immense profit; therefore machinery must be first cared for," one of these characters told Richard (xix, 619), in anticipation of Bentley's in 1840 and Fraser's in 1844. Besides, the children did not have to work, he continued, unless, of course, they wished to eat (xix, 619).

But the picture Mrs. Tonna painted, the periodicals had already examined from 1833 to 1837. As far as her descriptions are concerned, then, Mrs. Tonna was following a well-worn path: while such conditions as she described did still exist, they had already been thoroughly exposed by the blue books and discussed by the major intellectual periodicals which had by then turned much of their attention to other subjects, such as conditions in coal mines.

Like Mrs. Tonna, Frances Trollope also described in great detail the horrible working conditions in the factories; and like
Mrs. Tonna, Frances Trollope was beating what was for the periodicals a dead horse. Nonetheless, the conditions she described in *Michael Armstrong* either still existed at the time she wrote or had existed within the memories of those people she interviewed. For she traveled to Manchester in February, 1839, to observe factories first-hand. She was apparently surprised that they were not worse than she found; in her novel she described some conditions as they had been ten years earlier. As W. H. Chaloner points out, Mrs. Trollope was looking for a subject that would sell novels. Although the periodicals from 1833 to 1837 had pretty thoroughly discussed factory working conditions, the public was still intensely interested, especially in the movement for short hours: *Michael Armstrong* apparently sold well.

In the novel the sadistic Sir Matthew Dowling, who lived outside the Lancashire manufacturing town of Ashleigh, owned many factories there, in one of which young Michael and his lame brother Edward worked. When Sir Matthew, wishing to impress a noblewoman with his self-stated benevolence, was pressured by her into taking Michael out of the factory and into his home, the boy's first reaction was: "I should very much like never to go to work at the factory any more" (ii, 16). Michael thus expressed the desire held by every factory child in the book. From the many specific descriptions of factory life that Mrs. Trollope provided, one will suffice to explain why:
The ceaseless whirring of a million hissing wheels, seizes on the tortured ear; and while threatening to destroy the delicate sense, seems bent on proving first, with a sort of mocking mercy, of how much suffering it can be the cause. The scents that reek around, from oil, tainted water, and human filth, with that last worst nausea, arising from the hot refuse of atmospheric air, left by some hundred pairs of labouring lungs, render the art of breathing a process of difficulty, disgust, and pain. All this is terrible. But what the eye brings home to the heart of those, who look round upon the horrid earthly hell, is enough to make it all forgotten; for who can think of villainous \textit{sic}/ smells, or heed the suffering of the ear-racking sounds, while they look upon hundreds of helpless children, divested of every trace of health, of joyousness, and even of youth! Assuredly there is no exaggeration in this; for except only in their diminutive size, these suffering infants have no trace of it. Lean and distorted limbs --sallow and sunken cheeks -- dim hollow eyes, that speak unrest and most unnatural carefulness, give to each tiny, trembling, unelastic form, a look of hideous premature old age. . . . The dirty, ragged, miserable crew, were all in active performance of their various tasks: the overlookers, strap in hand, on the alert; the whirling spindles urging the little slaves who waited on them. . . . (viii, 80)

Sir Matthew looked proudly on this scene, and plotted how to rob these children of the little humanity still left them. In Michael Armstrong, then, the condemnation for existing abuses fell solidly on the owners.

Much of the novel is employed in describing precisely what those abuses were. They did not differ from those that Helen Fleetwood pointed out or that the periodicals had discussed earlier. Mrs. Trollope shows us, for example, as Mrs. Tonna and Blackwood's in particular had done, how accidents could happen: one little girl, seven years old, was a "scavenger," whose office was to collect from the machinery and the floor pieces of cotton that might impede the work.
In the performance of this duty, the child was obliged, from time to time, to stretch itself with sudden quickness on the ground, while the hissing machinery passed over her; and when this is skillfully done, and the head, body, and outstretched limbs carefully glued to the floor, the steady-moving, but threatening mass, may pass and repass over the dizzy head and trembling body without touching it. But accidents frequently occur; and many are the flaxen locks, rudely torn from infant heads, in the process. (viii, 80-81)

In Michael Armstrong, Mrs. Trollope established a prototype of the vicious mill. Hidden in "such a hole that I don't believe the sunshine was ever known to get to the bottom of it" was Deep Valley Mill, owned by Elgood Sharpton. Its workers were apprenticed, actually legally bound slaves until the age of twenty-one. Sharpton got most of his workers from parishes that wished either to find a good trade for pauper children or simply to be rid of a burden, and so was able to treat the children as brutally as he wished; there were no parents or authorities to check on him (xi, 120). Michael was a pauper's son whose innate goodness had often irritated Sir Matthew Dowling. Sensing a way in which to rid himself of Michael's presence, Dowling planned to apprentice the boy to Sharpton's mill. In order to do so, he had to convince Michael's mother that such an apprenticeship would prepare her son for a trade at which he could become financially independent. Once successful in deluding Mrs. Armstrong, the factory owner sent Michael to Deep Valley.

Lord Ashley's article in the December 1836 Quarterly Review and John Fielden's 1836 book had discussed the factory apprentice system as
having been a means in the late eighteenth century of furnishing factories with large numbers of hands quickly. Mrs. Trollope's account was based on a more recent model. During her trip to Manchester, she had learned about—though she had never seen—Litton Mill, owned by Ellice Needham. She adopted what she had heard and included the material in her novel.

Frances Trollope did in Michael Armstrong what Charlotte Tonna did in Helen Fleetwood: she provided many examples of particular abuses in factory working conditions. As the periodicals had done earlier, Mrs. Trollope also portrayed the oppressive atmosphere and dangerous duties in the factories, the brutal overlookers and the callous owners, the necessity for the "infant labourers" to rise from insufficient sleep long before the sun appeared in order to arrive at work on time, the sick children carried to the mills by parents long since made indifferent by constant suffering, and the long hours and the job insecurity all the workers had to endure.

After 1840, the novels either dealt with working conditions in other industries, such as mining, or condemned factory conditions with much less precise detail. The Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission (1843) showed that Blackwood's in 1836 was correct: many of the abuses in the cotton mills in particular were in the process of being corrected. It would be many years, of course, before the mills became really safe.

In the same year in which Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong were beginning publication (1839), Blackwood's contained articles by
John Willes and Archibald Alison which referred to conditions in the factories. In de-emphasizing the physical damage done to workers, these articles set the tone for the magazine's treatment of factory working conditions for the rest of the period of our study. Willes' article, in fact, virtually ignored the evils that still existed, and Alison's emphasized the benefits of factory employment. "Except during periods of commercial distress," such employment is very steady, Alison wrote; furthermore, large families are an advantage since even the children can work in the mills.

Echoing Blackwood's new attitude to working conditions in factories, Bentley's Miscellany in 1840 began a series of articles, "Moral Economy of Large Towns," by W. C. Taylor, a contributor to several periodicals of the time. In this series, Taylor dealt both with particular cities and with problems common to many cities. In his June discussion of Manchester, for example, he pointed out the care with which factory owners had "boxed" their machinery; the most dangerous parts of the machines were sealed off to avoid accidents to the workers. The workers themselves were healthy and cheerful, and their labor was "not unwholesome." Factory children were larger and stronger than their rural counterparts, and their employers appeared especially interested in protecting the morality of the young workers. The indiscriminate mixing of sexes in factory work that earlier periodical articles, Helen Fleetwood, and Michael Armstrong had deplored became in Taylor's eyes a blessing: each sex acted as a moral restraint on the other. And, in contrast to Michael
Armstrong who, in 1839, wished never to have to go to work in a factory again, the children whom Taylor saw looked upon admission into the mills as "a boon and a favour." Taylor attempted to balance this obviously one-sided report when, in October, he discussed "Juvenile Labour." Generally, he said, juvenile employment was in itself good, if the work involved was not so hard as to be physically injurious. Suitable work could train children for future occupations and could induce orderly, moral behavior. Thus, he claimed, a total prohibition of juvenile labor (desired by some Members of Parliament) would merely substitute starvation for the existing abuses.

Infant labor remained a topic of interest for the periodicals throughout our period because the Ten Hours' Bill continued to be a prime topic for discussion. The Factory Act of 1844, for example, was, like the one in 1833, Government-sponsored. It restricted all female employment to twelve hours and established hours for mandatory education of children under thirteen years. But it was passed as an alternative to Lord Ashley's proposal of a Ten Hours' Bill for workers under eighteen years old. Mill-owners still were sufficiently strong in Parliament to beat back Ashley's legislation. By 1847, however, opposition to a ten-hour day for women and young persons finally receded sufficiently for the bill, introduced this time by John Fielden, to pass.

Despite the general concern among reformers during these years for a Ten Hours' Bill, a concern occasionally reflected in the non-fiction,
the periodicals seemed fairly satisfied with the progress that had been made in improving working conditions in factories, and seemed content to exert more gentle pressure, if any at all, for further reforms. The Westminster Review in August 1843 spoke in glowing terms of "The beautifully-lighted, and often well-ventilated rooms, ... [the] strict cleanliness, and ... equable temperature" of the factories, and cautioned its readers against being misled by "lamentable pictures of the poor children trudging to their work through dirty streets, in the cold darkness of a winter's morning." Early in 1844, W. R. Greg, in the Edinburgh Review, always the defender of the factory owners, discussed the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission. Repeating much of what the Report had stated, Greg concluded that factory labor, of all the work that children might do, was "the most gentle in amount, the most moderate in duration, the best regulated, the best remunerated, and the least injurious to either health or morals." This was a bias that, from 1839 on, had been increasingly shared by Blackwood's and Fraser's, the two periodicals which had most frequently attacked working conditions. Favoring a Ten Hours' Bill in 1842, for example, an author for Fraser's said merely, "The justice of the demands of the labourers had been abundantly established by the reports of the Factory Commissioners." Then, in May 1844, Fraser's suddenly returned to the attack. Factory workers were "in a state of bondage," the author proclaimed. "Day by day, and month by month, the wretched creatures shall make their appearance in the mills, and abide there at their
tasks, for twelve, or fifteen, or eighteen hours out of every four-and-twenty, on pain of being cast adrift. . . . And the cause of this remarkable contrariety between their case and the cases of other persons is, that . . . in the mills and factories human industry is but a subsidiary to machinery." Here we have the old claims, the evidence of early Factory Commission Reports, the 1833 to 1837 information dredged up in 1844, when, we have seen, it was no longer completely accurate. Fraser's had a motive in resurrecting the old Reports; it was discussing Sir James Graham's Twelve Hours' Bill and feared that the debate in Parliament over whether hours should be restricted even further might imperil the possibility of any bill passing. Thus, although previously recognizing that working conditions had improved, here Fraser's wished to emphasize that further improvements were necessary.

By 1845, contemporary fiction, following the lead of the periodicals, no longer emphasized the unsafe and unhealthy conditions in factories and mills. In Sybil, we see factory workers rising early to get to work on time; we learn that minor accidents still occurred (II, ix, 91); we hear of a factory that lowered wages by a strict system of fines (II, ix, 88); but we never enter the factory, we never see the conditions in which people work, we get none of the details that Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong had provided in 1839 and 1840. Instead, as we shall see in chapter vi, Disraeli emphasized other kinds of material from the blue books he used as sources.
In October, 1845, Fraser's once again acknowledged that conditions were good: "Every body, be his vocation what it may, is in full employment, and in the receipt of good wages." Certainly, Fraser's reflected the growing confidence in the economy. The severe depression of 1837-42 had passed; foreign trade had revived; and, by 1845, relative prosperity warmed the pockets of manufacturer and operative alike. But crop failures and a slowdown in trade, beginning in 1846 and lasting until late in 1849, again caused financial unrest and, for factory workers in particular, unemployment. In these final three years of our study, however, the periodicals were silent on factory conditions.

During this time and for several years following, the novels said little more. In Mary Barton (1848), power-loom weavers suffered from low wages, short hours, and job insecurity, but Mrs. Gaskell did not attack working conditions. Even in Shirley (1849), Charlotte Brontë showed the wool trade to be glutted, a fact which caused hardships among the workers at home. The action of the novel ostensibly took place in the second decade of the nineteenth century, and Charlotte Brontë did refer to the Luddites' agitation and machine-breaking. Nonetheless, the conflict of capital and labor was also a contemporary topic in the year after Chartism's demise. Shirley was, as Kathleen Tillotson points out, "about the past," but "for the present."

That the novelist chose to depict a mill-owner, Robert Moore, who learned that he had to take an active interest in his workers, rather than one who sadistically beat his operatives and forced them to work
faster and harder, further showed her contemporary concerns. The blue books of the 1840's had many reports of masters who did not relinquish authority within their factories to brutal overseers; where the employees were directly responsible to the owners, they were treated more humanely.68

Hard Times (1854) and North and South (1855), both of which dealt with factories and, to some extent, factory workers, added little about the actual working conditions. Dickens did lament the apparently total lack of concern masters had for workers, and also portrayed Stephen Blackpool over "the crashing, smashing, tearing piece of mechanism at which he laboured";69 but nowhere did author or character complain about working conditions more than to say that the factories opened before dawn. Mrs. Gaskell said little more. We learn, in a brief passage, that Bessy Higgins was dying of consumption, caused by her inhaling the fine cotton dust in the carding-room in which she worked. "They say it winds round the lungs, and tightens them up," she told Margaret Hale; many workers, in fact, wasted away, coughed, and spat blood. Some mills had installed large fans to blow the dust out, but these were expensive and brought in no profit, so few masters were still using them.70

III

After 1840, this is all the information the social novels provided on working conditions in factories and mills; after 1837, the
periodicals of our study, we have seen, had few major complaints. They did recognize, however, that laborers outside factories and mills also were working in unsafe and unhealthy environments. Articles on the working conditions of hand-loom weavers, miners, tailors, calico-printers, and milliners began to appear in the periodicals, but provided little detail.

Of the new subjects, the colliers and mines received the greatest publicity in the periodicals. Prior to 1842, the year in which the First Report of the Children's Employment Commissioners: Mines and Collieries was published, the periodicals contained only scattered minor references. This fact should not surprise us, however. The Report was the first document to publicize conditions in the mines. Appearing at the beginning of the year, it immediately horrified the British public and prompted Lord Ashley to introduce a bill to protect boys in coal mines and to prohibit female labor there. It was passed as the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1842.

In the June 1842 Quarterly, Robert Ferguson reviewed the newly published report, and supported legislation to regulate the age and sex of children employed in mines and collieries. Children as young as five years had to rise early, work at dangerous jobs in the mines, and return home late at night. At work they were entrusted with important jobs down in the mines, such as maintaining ventilation. Or they were given physically deforming jobs, such as dragging heavy loads of coal while on their hands and knees, a process which, because the tunnel was often only twenty inches high, caused curved spines and
severe cuts and bruises. Ferguson cited copious details from the blue book: often there was no light; the shafts were overcrowded with people, both men and women sometimes partially nude; hot, noxious gases created constant danger. In addition to being poisoned by gases, the miners also died from cave-ins, explosions, fires, and floods in the mines; from ropes breaking; and from being "wound over" on the way up. This last accident was directly traceable to the five-to-ten-year-olds who, while running the machinery, dozed or let their minds wander, and thus allowed the "basket" in which the miners were being lifted out of the pit to "wind over" the pulley and eject its occupants back down the shaft. Accidents also occurred because the pit mouths themselves were occasionally left unguarded at night or left uncovered when the shaft was no longer in use; a careless wanderer could easily fall down one, as Stephen Blackpool did in Hard Times (III, vi, 271). The Commissioners' Report concluded that, although "the work in a well-regulated coal-mine is not only not injurious but healthful," most mines were not well-regulated.

A Westminster Review article discussed the Commissioners' Report a month later, and approved of their call for legislation. The Westminster author noted as had Taylor in Bentley's that, as a result of legislation affecting the age at which children could begin work in factories, these young laborers began in coal pits until they were old enough to enter factory work. In fact, the author continued, in one district of northern England, half of the four hundred workers...
were under twenty years old, fifty were younger than thirteen years, and some were "mere infants." All had to work in the mines from 4 A.M. to 4 P.M., had little if any time for recreation, and generally returned home only to go to bed and rise early again.

W. E. Hickson, a Hand-loom Commissioner who had heard about such children and had visited some mines in the course of his own investigations into the hand-loom industry, was quoted at length:

"I was much struck with the enormity of this evil; I could not conceive of circumstances more prejudicial to animal existence than shutting up a little child throughout the day in subterraneous confinement, at the very period when air and light are so necessary to its growth as to a young and tender plant." In a pit near Newcastle, the youngsters used a candle until they could get accustomed to the gloom; then they sat in the dark, their sensibilities blunted, their faculties deadened. In this way, Hickson said, "The mind may be rendered callous to a lot which would otherwise be too bitter for human endurance."

Some of the children were apprentices, who, like the apprentices to Deep Valley Mill in Michael Armstrong, and to Litton Mill in reality, had been paupers or orphans taken from workhouses. They received no pay, but worked long hours and were subject to brutal masters in the mines. The Westminster's author quoted the blue book's reports of the severe beatings they received and of the work they had to do even with broken arms and other injuries.

All the people in the mines were subject to injury, as we have
seen. In addition, water perpetually dripped down the shafts, keeping the bottom muddy. Often, because of competition to get the coal out, the owners spent no more on their mines than was absolutely necessary to overcome the most obvious physical difficulties. Hence, many pits had "imperfect drainage and ventilation; often with ill-constructed shafts ... and ill-propped bays and roadways; causing a destruction of life, and limb, and health, the statistics of which would present an appalling picture ... ." Yet, the laboring colliers would willingly undergo dangers -- and have their children do so too -- for the additional money they made. Even where steam engines were used, children were employed to tend them and to stop them at the proper time; and the Westminster Review pointed out, as the Quarterly had done in the previous month, that accidents could occur through the youths' negligence. 82

Disraeli included in Sybil much of the information the blue books detailed and the periodicals discussed. 83 At twilight, the laborers came from the mine, youths of both sexes, though an observer could not tell which were male and which female, the workers being all in male attire and uttering oaths. Of the females, Disraeli wrote:

Yet these are to be -- some are -- the mothers of England! But can we wonder at the hideous coarseness of their language, when we remember the savage rudeness of their lives? Naked to the waist, an iron chain fastened to a belt of leather runs between their legs clad in canvas trousers, while on hands and feet an English girl, for twelve, sometimes for sixteen hours a day, hauls and hurries tubs of coals up subterranean roads, dark, precipitous, and plashy. . . . Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls,
pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the fulfillment of most responsible duties, and the nature of which entails on them the necessity of being the earliest to enter the mine and the latest to leave it. Their labour indeed is not severe, for that would be impossible, but it is passed in darkness and solitude. . . . Hour after hour elapses, and all that reminds the infant trappers of the world they have quit and that which they have joined, is the passage of the coal-wagons for which they open the air-doors of the galleries, and on keeping which doors constantly closed, except at this moment of passage, the safety of the mine and the lives of the persons employed in it entirely depend. (III, i, 142-143)

If there is any exaggeration in this passage, it is in Disraeli's reference to the possibility of four-year-olds working in the mines; the periodicals consistently stated five. But that is obviously a minor point. The periodicals had discussed everything else that Disraeli described, three years earlier when the Commissioners' Report was published.

The only other novel of the period that said anything about colliers' working conditions was Yeast (1848). There, Paul Tregarva told Lancelot Smith of his former job; before he had become a game-keeper for a wealthy squire, Tregarva had been a miner. In a brief summary of the worst of the conditions in the mines, Tregarva said: "Work in the levels, up to our knees in warm water, with the thermometer at 85°, and then up a thousand-foot ladder to grass, reeking wet with heat. . . . We miners have a short lease of life; consumption and strains break us down before we're fifty."

No other novel mentioned the dangers of working in coal mines. The periodicals also remained silent after Fraser's October 1845 article on "The General Policy of the Government," which very briefly
stated that miners "earn so much that in many places you cannot
exact from them more than five, or even four days' work in the
week . . . ." 85

IV

The periodicals and the novels said even less about working
conditions in other fields, despite the publicity given them in the
blue books. Of these occupations, hand-loom weaving received the most
attention, though it was slight compared even with mining. Articles on
weavers' conditions were scattered throughout the sixteen years of
our study.

In October 1833, J. R. McCulloch in the Edinburgh Review, singing
the praises of England's manufacturing eminence while discussing a
recently published Parliamentary Committee report, maintained that
hand-weavers had not been hurt by the introduction of power-loom.
After all, he argued, they had been in a bad way before, and they
still were. 86 The logic of such a statement is questionable, of
course, but at least McCulloch attempted to explain why hand-loom
weavers suffered: their wages were low because "the easy nature of
their employment" enabled children to become weavers; as a result,
everyone got paid children's wages. 87

Silk weavers were the "worst-paid and worst-fed class of artizans,"
J. G. Lockhart wrote in the September 1836 Quarterly Review, and,
talking about the Spitalfields section of London, added that "the
young men of this dismal region of distress and excessive labour have, at the age of twenty, the apparent wear of thirty." They were physically deformed; their spines were crooked, their shoulders rounded, their heads drooping forward. Conditions of weavers had been as bad in Scotland, Archibald Alison informed readers of Blackwood's in 1837, but there the weavers received some relief "by an united effort of royal bounty and fashionable expenditure: twenty thousand workmen are idle at Paisley and its vicinity, of whom nine thousand are daily maintained solely by the bounty of the higher classes ... ." But, throughout this period, such relief was only temporary and localized. In Chartism (1839), Carlyle wrote that "Half-a-million handloom weavers, working fifteen hours a-day, lived in perpetual inability to procure thereby enough of the coarsest food." And in 1841, the Westminster Review discussed the Report of the "Hand-Loom Inquiry Commission" published that year. The Commissioners discovered that silk weavers had the best working conditions, cotton hand-loom weavers the worst because their work was done in damp cellars. The article pointed out that the power loom had its own sufficient market and so did not detract from the fairly large demand for hand-loom cotton. But wages were low because women and children could easily learn the hand-loom weaving trade. Adding to the weavers' difficulties were the problems pointed out by Francis Head in his 1843 Quarterly Review discussion of the Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes: their workrooms were poorly ventilated, and were generally dirty.
Only Sybil referred to the conditions of hand-loom weavers, and then but briefly. Disraeli told of the plight of one weaver in particular: "Twelve hours of daily labour, at the rate of one penny each hour . . . ." Thus, he had no way to support his family, even though he was willing and able to work. But Disraeli described the conditions in which Phillip Warner worked only to the extent that he described Warner's home, for his home was his shop. The picture of that home was pitiful enough, a "squalid lair . . . without even the common necessaries of existence; first the ordinary conveniences of life, then raiment, and, at length, food vanishing from us" (II, xiii, 117).

Tailors' working conditions were no better than those of hand-loom weavers. In June 1834, the New Monthly Magazine asked for a Parliamentary investigation to determine why their wages were so low and their hours so long. Six shillings a day was the absolute maximum a tailor received, but very few actually got that much. More usually, tailors worked for twelve to fourteen hours a day and received only 2s. or 3s. In the same article which had discussed working conditions of hand-loom weavers, Francis Head also described the very close quarters in which tailors worked. The heat rose, many of the men fainted or drank gin as a stimulant, and many eventually died of consumption brought on by these working conditions.

In Alton Locke, Charles Kingsley vividly described such tailors, the "poor wretches who sit stifled in reeking garrets and workrooms, drinking in disease with every breath -- bound in their prison-house
of brick and iron, with their own funeral pall hanging over them, in that canopy of fog and poisonous smoke . . . .”

The workroom was a disgusting sight, far worse than Head's brief description had indicated. It was a low lean-to, stifling with human odors and stale beer and gin. Dust and dirt covered everything, including the haggard workers. There was no ventilation, the windows being kept closed to keep out the cold.

The top floor of the house in which the tailors worked accumulated the odors from the rest of the house. As one old hand explained to young Alton, arriving for his first day of work: "Concentrated essence of man's flesh, is this here as you're a breathing. Cellar workroom we calls Rheumatic Ward, because of the damp. Ground-floor's Fever Ward . . . First Floor's Ashmy Asthma Ward . . . . And this here . . . is the Conscriptive Hospital." Not surprisingly, the men around Alton spat and coughed throughout the day. (ii, 19-20).

One of the main points Kingsley made in Alton Locke was the difference between the "honorable" trade and the "dishonorable," between the fast-dying West End trade, in which workers were paid well and took pride in their work, and the ever-increasing East End "show-shops" and "slop-shops," in which were sold the products of starvation labor. Because wages were so low, "dishonorable" shops could force the "honorable" ones out of business. This was, in fact, happening; and Alton Locke lamented the process and proposed a remedy.97

Much of Kingsley's information, especially his description of the workrooms and their inhabitants, was derived from Henry Mayhew's articles in The Morning Chronicle (1849-50), however, and not from the periodicals
The periodicals gave surprisingly little information about other occupations. Three articles discussed or mentioned the Sheffield grinders; two discussed women's work as milliners; and two briefly referred to the lace trade and calico-printing. The novels similarly said very little, if anything, about working conditions in these fields. What happened was that both the periodicals and, slightly later, the novels turned their attention away from working conditions as those conditions improved or lost their topical interest. Instead, the fiction and the non-fiction began to concentrate on the workers' living conditions. In the next chapter, we shall see why.
Notes


2. Halévy, III, 284.


5. [J. R. McCulloch], "Babbage on Machinery and Manufactures," *Edinburgh*, 56 (January, 1833), 327.

6. Ibid., 323.

7. Ibid., 331.


9. Ibid., 43.

10. Pike, pp. 139-42.

11. Ibid., p. 72.

12. Ibid., p. 45.


18. Ibid., 424.


21. Ibid., 426.

22. Helen Fleetwood, xix, 616; W. C. Taylor, "Moral Economy of Large Towns. Manchester," *Bentley's Miscellany*, 7 (June, 1840), 599. Subsequent references will be to "Bentley's."


24. Ibid., 450.


28. Ibid., 381.

29. Pike, p. 46.

30. Ibid., p. 80.


32. Ibid., 118.


34. Ibid., 181-82.

35. Ibid., 184-85.

36. [Anthony Ashley Cooper], "The Factory System," *Quarterly Review*, 57 (December, 1836), 398-436, passim. Subsequent references will be to "Quarterly."
37. Ibid., 399; Pike, p. 78, quotes from Fielden's book.
38. Walker, p. 188.
40. Helen Fleetwood, xx, 627; see also Frances Trollope, The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, The Factory Boy (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), ch. xvii, p. 186. Subsequent references will be included in the text.
42. "The Factory-Bill," Fraser's, 29 (May, 1844), 623.
44. Ibid., 159.
45. Ibid., 164.
47. Chaloner, 161.
49. Archibald Alison, "The Chartists and Universal Suffrage," Blackwood's, 46 (September, 1839), 297.
52. Ibid., 600.
53. Ibid., 602.
55. Halfwy, IV, 96.
56. Walker, p. 199.
57. Halévy, IV, 95.
58. Ibid., 171; Chambers, p. 137; Walker, p. 199.
63. Benjamin Disraeli, Sybil, or The Two Nations (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), Book II, ch. ix, p. 89, and ch. xiii, p. 115. Subsequent references will be included in the text.
64. "Ourselves, our Critics, and the general Policy of the Government," Fraser's, 32 (October, 1845), 498.
67. Tillotson, p. 98.
68. Pike, p. 182.
69. Charles Dickens, Hard Times for These Times (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), Book I, ch. xi, p. 69. Subsequent references will be included in the text.
70. Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South (London: Oxford University Press, 1908), ch. xiii, pp. 119-20. Subsequent references will be included in the text.
72. Pike, p. 156.
73. Ibid., pp. 246-47; Halévy, IV, 28.
74. Robert Ferguson, "Colliers and Collieries," Quarterly, 70 (June, 1842), 164-74, passim.

75. Ibid., 161-63.

76. Ibid., 182-87.

77. Ibid., 187.


79. Ibid., 89 note.

80. Ibid., 89 note.

81. Ibid., 98-100.

82. Ibid., 102.


84. Charles Kingsley, Yeast: A Problem (London: Macmillan and Co., 1881), ch. xiii, p. 216. Subsequent references will be included in the text.


87. Ibid., 46.

88. J. G. Lockhart, "Glances at Life in City and Suburb," Quarterly, 57 (September, 1836), 224.


92. Ibid., 101.

93. Ibid., 107.
94. "The Trades Unions," *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 41 (June, 1834), 207. Subsequent references will be to "New Monthly."


100. "A Few Words of Advice to Clerks, Shopmen, and Apprentices," *Fraser's*, 12 (September, 1835), 277-78; "Milliners' Apprentices," *Fraser's*, 33 (March, 1846), 308-16.

CHAPTER III

LIVING CONDITIONS IN TOWNS AND CITIES

If the conditions under which factory workers, colliers, hand-weavers, and other artisans labored in 1833 were abominable, those in which they lived were no less so. The novelists and the periodical writers described the streets on which workers lived and the condition of their tenements, in order to show how such physical filth infected and demoralized them.

In their articles on living conditions in towns and cities, the periodicals generally concentrated on English factory workers' conditions, with only a rare article on those of the sailors of Liverpool, the workers of Glasgow, the miners of South Wales, and the hand-loom weavers throughout the United Kingdom. The novels discussed living conditions of workers in a greater number of city and town occupations; Michael Armstrong showed how apprentices to a trade (in this case, stocking-weaving) lived in a house provided for them next to the factory; Sybil described the home lives not only of miners and hand-loom weavers, but also of "master workmen in their own houses"; and Alton Locke provided many details on the home lives of tailors in both the "honorable" and "dishonorable" trades. But the living conditions
that existed for apprentices, miners, weavers, and tailors were little different from those of the factory workers.

Before the appearance of the first of our "social novels," Oliver Twist, the periodicals had already begun to recognize the deplorable state of the workers' domestic lives. In 1833, an author in Fraser's acknowledged "the absolute privation, the stern negation of life and enjoyment of millions; the denial of comfort and happiness to tens of thousands; and that leaden barrier against all improvement, -- that hopeless, endless, irremediable poverty . . . ."7

In 1836, William Alison took the (for Blackwood's) surprisingly Malthusian viewpoint that "the-poor-we-shall-always-have-with-us":

That much vice, misery, and destitution must exist in every large community, and particularly in the large towns of every community where the state of society is complex, if not a necessity of human nature, is at least a consequence of such a state of society, so general and permanent, that we should only abuse the reason which Heaven has given us, if we were to look for their disappearance from the earth. All that the philanthropist can reasonably expect is to see a gradual approximation to a state of things, in which the sufferings resulting from vice, or from destitution, may be so far reduced in amount, that what remains may be fairly regarded as the natural consequences of the sins or errors of the sufferers themselves . . . .8

However, not all the periodicals agreed that workers' living conditions were as poor as these articles in Fraser's and Blackwood's indicated. In 1835, J. R. McCulloch maintained in the Edinburgh
Review that any statistical "evidence" that workers were badly off—or well off, for that matter—was inconclusive. "There are no authentic accounts of the qualities and current prices of articles in any great market, the rent of houses and lodgings, the rate of wages in proportion to the work done." In addition, the manufacturers themselves did not know, could not be expected to know, the living conditions of thousands of their laborers. 9

In Chartism, published in 1839, Thomas Carlyle took a position opposite to McCulloch's and Alison's. Without referring to either article specifically, Carlyle attacked the apparently prevalent ideas each contained. As we shall see in chapter v, Carlyle maintained that the poor could be greatly helped. But he did agree with one point that McCulloch had made: we cannot trust statistics; even had we statistics that would "prove" workers' wages were high and living conditions good, such numbers could never represent workers' desires, hopes, or feelings. 10

In fact, the available statistics often indicated that many people lived in filth. By 1840, 15,000 people lived in Manchester cellars; 39,000 in Liverpool cellars; 86,000 in 2400 crowded Liverpool courts. 11 Such statistics were repeated for other manufacturing centers, indicating that the newly-emerging cities were ill-prepared for the tremendous increase of population that the factories brought in. Even Peter Gaskell, whose Artisans and Machinery (1836) was primarily a defense of manufactures, reported that the houses of most factory workers in Manchester were filthy,
unfurnished, and devoid of decency or comfort. Blankets and sheets, for example, were unknown.  

Adding to the miseries of many of the town dwellers was the smoke. W. C. Taylor recognized this fact when, in an 1840 Bentley's Miscellany article, he wrote that Manchester "is ever enveloped in clouds of smoke, the din of engines is incessant, and people hurry through its streets." But Taylor's description of Manchester came after two of the novels in our study had already referred to the atmosphere in industrial centers. In Helen Fleetwood, Charlotte Tonna commented that the Widow Green, her family, and Helen found the air of Manchester generally "oppressive." Simultaneously, Frances Trollope was explaining in Michael Armstrong that, while clean pure air blew through the rural areas, in the manufacturing towns smoke pervaded everything, coloring walls, fences, and window-panes "when there are any."

The two fictional descriptions which most closely approximated Taylor's appeared in Hard Times and North and South. Dickens described Coketown as "a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it . . . a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled." Mrs. Gaskell had the Hales move from the rural South to the manufacturing North, to the town of Milton in, appropriately enough, Darkshire. "The colours looked greyer" there; everything was overcast with a "deep lead-coloured cloud . . . The air had a faint taste and smell
of smoke; and huge factories belched black smoke." 

II

Because the dirty atmosphere of the manufacturing towns was common knowledge—any visitor bore witness to it—we cannot claim here that one genre influenced the other. However, the periodicals may have influenced the novels in their descriptions of actual streets and buildings in the working-class districts because, except for Dickens, the novelists likely did not have personal knowledge of slums. From 1833 through 1843, the periodicals preceded the novels, often by several years, in these discussions and descriptions.

The Westminster Review, in particular, provided early specific information, including statistics. In a discussion of the Factory Bill then before Parliament (a bill it opposed) and a review of The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class in Manchester (by Dr. James Phillips Kay, a sanitary reformer), Westminster authors in 1833 and 1834 explained that the houses built for the great influx of factory workers into Manchester were small, dirty, crowded, and unventilated. The streets "became the receptacles of the most disgusting offal." Of 687 streets in Manchester, 112 were ill-ventilated; 352 had heaps of refuse, stagnant pools, and ordure; of 6,951 houses inspected, 1135 were damp, 452 were ill-ventilated, 2221 were "destitute of privies." In 1836 a Westminster writer maintained that, although "the crowded lanes, courts, and alleys of a large town, whose every house is one unseemly den of squalid..."
hunger, strife, envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness" still existed, many such areas in London had been cleaned up.19

Nonetheless, in 1837, when young Oliver Twist, apprenticed to a coffin-maker, visited the worst part of an unidentified town, he saw decaying tenements, stagnant and filthy streets, and rats which "lay putrefying in the rottenness."20 When he got to London, he saw the slums there too: "A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours" (viii, 55). Near the end of the novel Dickens portrayed "the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London," a "maze of close, narrow, and muddy streets," in which people actually lived.

Dickens' descriptions reflected no significant sanitary improvement, and were thus more accurate than the Westminster's, because whatever improvement in London sanitary conditions might have occurred by that date had been minor. At least that was the impression given by the more objective reports of the period. In 1839 Southwood Smith, a major force in sanitary reform along with Edwin Chadwick and J. P. Kay, had reported to the Poor Law Commissioners that fever in London was at least partly attributable to the poor drainage and the night-soil in many streets, and the inadequate—often non-existent—ventilation in many houses. Smith noted that, as a result of a brief stay in certain parts of East London, the relieving officers and the medical men had died.21

The 1840 Select Committee Report on the Health of Towns exposed
further unsanitary conditions, both in London and the industrial north. In 1842 Edwin Chadwick published his report, *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes*, and had 10,000 copies circulated free of charge in order to achieve the publicity he believed it needed. As a result of Chadwick's findings, a Royal Commission was appointed in 1843, and made its first report in 1833 and its second in 1845. These reports, which resulted in the Public Health Act of 1848, revealed the same basic conditions: in working-class districts and in slums, ventilation of houses and courts was extremely poor, drainage was almost non-existent, the water supply was foul, and disease thrived. The cess-pools of London, the reports showed, drained into the Thames. By 1840, this river was itself a large cesspool. In Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and Nottingham, dung-heaps drained into the water supply.

In *Michael Armstrong* we find the first extended fictional descriptions of the living conditions of factory workers that the periodicals had been discussing since 1833, and that the blue books were to discuss. Hoxley-lane, in a suburb of the manufacturing town of Ashleigh, was "the most deplorable hole in the parish . . . a long, closely-packed double row of miserable dwellings, crowded to excess by the population drawn together by the neighbouring factories." Filth accumulated; and "crawling infants" made the dust their natural element (iv, 35). The town of Ashleigh was no better. The workers who lived there often had only one room:
On one side of the small bare chamber, and in some degree sheltered by the door which opened against it, stood a rickety machine once intended for a bedstead. Two of the legs had given place to brickbats, and instead of a bed the unsteady frame now supported only a thin layer of very dirty straw. . . . The only other article of furniture in the room was an old deal box without a cover, but having a couple of planks, each about three feet long, laid across it; serving either for table or chairs as occasion might require. The walls, the floor, the ceiling, and the remnant of a window, were all alike begrimed with smoke and dirt. (xii, 127)

Of all our periodical authors only Thomas Spring-Rice, in the February 1843 Edinburgh Review, presented information that was as specific as Mrs. Trollope's. He quoted witnesses who told of many workers destitute of furniture, using stones for chairs, and eating oatmeal and water three times a day.25 The other periodical authors were less explicit, and were content instead with general statements and occasional statistics, as was Robert Ferguson in the Quarterly Review of June, 1840. Homes were often devoid of ventilation; the people lived in "dark, damp, dirty" cellars:

In Manchester, of 123,232 workers, 14,960 live in cellars. At Bury, one-third of the working classes are so badly off, that in 773 houses, one bed served four persons; in 207, there was one bed for five; and in 78, one bed for six persons . . . . In the northeast ward of Leeds, containing 15,400 of the working classes, or about a fifth of the whole population, three streets have sewers; twelve have them partly; thirty-eight have none; and the state of forty is unknown.26

Similarly, in the manufacturing section of Mowbray, in Sybil, the factory workers lived in "dank and dismal cellars" (II, ix, 88). Later
in the novel Disraeli showed the inside of the home of a hand-loom weaver, which was like the factory workers' room in Michael Armstrong: "It was a single chamber . . . In two corners of the room were mattresses placed on the floor, a check curtain, hung upon a string if necessary, concealing them. In one was his [the weaver's] sick wife; in the other, three young children . . . In a farther part, close to the wall, was a heavy table or dresser." The room was otherwise bare (II, xiii, 116-117). Sybil also presented a picture of the living conditions of home artisans, "manufacturers of ironmongery" they were called, a picture that was the same as the periodicals' descriptions of factory workers' homes:

Wodgate had the appearance of a vast squalid suburb. As you advanced, leaving behind you long lines of little dingy tenements, with infants lying about the road . . . at every fourth or fifth house, alleys seldom above a yard wide, and streaming with filth, opened out of the street. These were crowded with dwellings of various size, while from the principal court often branched out a number of smaller alleys, or rather narrow passages, than which nothing can be conceived more close and squalid and obscure. /There were/ gutters of abomination, and piles of foulness, and stagnant pools of filth . . . . (III, iv, 167)

III

Food — or the lack of it — was another main problem that workers had to face at home. In several articles early in our period, Blackwood's and the Westminster Review reported that "operatives in the
manufacturing districts were . . . dying on twopence-halfpenny a-day" because they could not afford bread. In addition, London drinking water was not fit for animals. In a series of Blackwood's articles in 1841 and 1842 about "The World of London," J. F. Murray mentioned a newspaper account of a woman who had starved to death, unaided by "any of the [other] persons who occupied the same room," and referred to the starving wretches who were "compelled to pick from dunghills the refuse vegetables of the markets."

The novels also provided information about the quantity and quality of food that workers could afford. In Michael Armstrong, Mrs. Trollope showed individual families without money enough for bread (xii, 129). Young children had to work in factories or else "they must just starve, ma'am, if they didn't" (xiv, 154); in fact, many "filthy, half-starved wretches" were working, in the Deep Valley mill (xvii, 182); and we learn, by two examples, that improving a factory worker's diet would improve his health. Michael Armstrong himself received good food in order to help him recover from a fever; as a result, while his companions grew up deformed, he grew tall and straight (xxv, 285). His brother Edward, too, saved from further factory work by the benevolent Mary Brotherton, grew well, even his lameness disappearing in the process (xxvi, 296).

Sybil presented, what only one article in the Westminster Review even implied, the "tommy-shop," a company-owned store whose provisions were lower in quality and higher in price than other shops. The miners, forced to spend their wages in such a place, bought from the
shop on credit, and settled their debt when they got paid. If they refused to spend the required proportion of their wages at the shop, they were discharged "and if a butty turns you away because you won't take no tommy, you're a marked man in every field about" (III, i, 145-46). Mary Barton briefly referred to the difficulties that factory workers had getting food, especially if work was scarce: as we have noted, John Barton's son had starved. In 1849, Shirley revealed "the starving poor of Yorkshire," many of them workers in Moore's and other masters' mills. These men were moved to violence because they, their wives, and their children had no food (ii, 27-28, and 30).

The tailors of Alton Locke were poorly fed, and Sandy Mackaye, Alton's bookseller-mentor, found that what food they could get was adulterated: "Bread full o' alum and bones, and sic filth -- meat over-driven till it was a' braxy -- water sopped wi' dead men's juice" (vi, 56). But Mackaye did not realize how lucky he was even to be able to consider such food. Because they could afford no food at all, many of the workers in North and South were becoming savages (xix, 178).

IV

Another problem, initially not so obvious, nonetheless became a topic of concern during our period. In the previous chapter we noted that the workers often sickened, even died, from breathing the contaminated air of the factories in which they worked. The air around their homes was also unhealthy. One reason was the presence of overstuffed
graveyards.

The first reference to such burial grounds during our period of concern, however, was not in the periodicals. When Oliver Twist accompanied Mr. Sowerberry to a funeral, he noticed that the dead woman was buried in the corner of the graveyard used for paupers, and that it was already bulging: "The grave was so full, that the uppermost coffin was within a few feet of the surface" (v, 38). Dickens made no comment here on the potential pestilence but, we will see later, he was not unaware of the dangers. The first attention that our selected periodicals gave to this problem occurred in W. C. Taylor's 1840 series of articles in Bentley's Miscellany, "The Moral Economy of Large Towns." In London, where Broad-Street and High-Street join, Taylor wrote, was the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. The graves were densely populated. Opening them for new bodies caused great fevers from the gases released, and the vaults under the church itself infected people in the church.\(^{31}\)

At the end of this year, Henry King quoted Dickens' description of "a poor mean burial-ground" and then told his Blackwood's readers of one in "that most hateful of streets, Drury-Lane," which fitted it. It was one of the "churchless metropolitan dead-pits, . . . an admirable specimen of the art of packing, on a large scale." Bodies were constantly being added to this hell-hole in the heart of London, already "crowded and crammed to within a few inches of the surface with the ghastly contributions of years . . . ." Unfortunately, he added, many of the new bodies were those of children "of misery and
toil, who found perhaps in their extremity a melancholy shadow of consolation, from the thought that their dead bones would at last find in the grave that peace and quietness which were denied on earth to the living spirit.”

Early in 1842, the Westminster Review discussed Gatherings from Grave Yards (1839), by G. A. Walker, a surgeon whose experience made him aware of this menace to society's health. The reviewer stated that everyone was being slowly poisoned "with the deadly poisonous emanations of burial-grounds and charnel-houses," whose gases saturated the air in churches and schools. These gases eventually entered "streets, alleys, houses, and finally into the lungs of the people," where they caused "disease, decrepitude, and death." Even a short exposure to a diluted form of these gases could cause typhus fever. The churchyard at St. Botolph's, Aldgate, had some pauper's graves, perhaps like the one in Oliver Twist, commonly kept open until seventeen or eighteen bodies were available. The stench arising in hot weather caused nearly all nearby inhabitants to close their windows, "thus shutting in, and again and again breathing air, poisoned by their own lungs, that they may escape a stronger and more malignant poison lurking outside their windows, emitting from the rottenness of a crammed-full ground in the very heart of the city . . . ."

After Chadwick's Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes was published, Francis Head reviewed it in the Quarterly and cited statistics: 50,000 corpses were annually interred in London;
one burial-ground in particular contained, under one acre of surface, 60,000 corpses. In August, the Westminster pointed out that, in poor sections of town, graves were often dug thirty feet down, left uncovered until full of bodies, and then reopened in rotation at the end of a year. Apparently, then, in these burial grounds, Judgment Day, at which time the graves give up their dead, was an annual event. Actually, from what the Westminster further said, it occurred more often.

This Westminster article quoted at length from the 1840 Report of the Select Committee on Improvement of the Health of Towns. One part of the testimony given by various surgeons and diggers is particularly interesting for its possible relevance to a social novel. A doctor who had captured some of the gas in order to experiment with it, and had become ill for a week as a result, determined that it had "animal matter suspended in it" and left "a greasy pellicle" on surfaces. Less than ten years later, Krook, in Bleak House, died by spontaneous combustion. The gases apparently released left an oily residue everywhere. What Charles Dickens described there was the process of decomposition, but speeded up immeasurably. In view of all that the Westminster had said, Mr. Snagsby's, Tony Jolting's, and William Guppy's reactions were not surprising. We know that Dickens had read the Health of Towns Committee's Report and other blue books on sanitation, specifically in 1842 and 1848. The results he described were the same as those the 1840 Committee had reported and the Westminster repeated.

Several people in the early novels of our period had perished of
overwork and undernourishment. Except for the brief reference in Oliver Twist, however, the social novels had generally ignored the conditions of graveyards, until in 1848 Mrs. Gaskell showed one in Mary Barton. A dead man, formerly a co-worker of John Barton, was buried in a pauper's grave: "below was the grave in which the pauper bodies were piled until within a foot or two of the surface; when the soil was shovelled over, and stamped down . . ." (vi, 67). Mrs. Gaskell thus provided only a glimpse of the great detail of the periodicals. And not until Bleak House, four years later, did any of our novelists provide another graveyard. It was, however, as vile a place as any described in the periodicals, and was based on Dickens' own explorations into London's seamier districts. The "hemmed-in churchyard, pestiferous and obscene, whence malignant diseases are communicated to the bodies of our dear brothers and sisters who have not departed," was a "beastly scrap of ground, a savage abomination." Houses on every side reeking of the grave, the mysterious Nemo was buried "a foot or two" down, "an avenging ghost at many a sick-bedside" (xi, 151). Thus, Dickens, alone of our novelists, appeared as concerned with the effects of the dead upon the living as were the writers in the periodicals.

V

The writers in periodicals recognized that there was no need to place the blame for disease exclusively on churchyards when stagnant
pools of putrid water, piles of filth, and unventilated air existed around and in the very homes of the operatives. Dr. Kay had already established, in The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class in Manchester, that such conditions led to typhus epidemics. In January, 1834, the New Monthly Magazine maintained that window taxes deterred builders from including enough windows in buildings, and the resulting poor ventilation injured the "health and morals" of the inhabitants. Later that year, the Westminster Review attacked conditions leading to disease, especially the poor sewer systems in the alleys and courts of the working population; disease "stalks through many of the streets."

In the meantime, the early novels of our study were only slightly concerned with disease. Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong mentioned filth in the streets and portrayed sick workers, but both novels were more concerned with working conditions and their effects on the people. The rapid advance of a fever through Deep Valley Mill, in Mrs. Trollope's novel, however, was primarily the result of the living conditions of the apprentices there, "the congregated effluvia of fifty uncleaned sleepers in one chamber" (xx, 212), the poor food they received, and the oppressive atmosphere of the factory itself.
While Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong were being published, with their meager references to disease in the workers' homes, the periodicals were attacking both the conditions that allowed disease often to run rampant, and the complacency that allowed many Britons to ignore them. J. F. Murray, for example, recognized the general apathy over public health other than at plague time. "The danger never is at a distance," he wrote in Blackwood's. "There exists, in great cities, an under-current of pestilence at all times and in all seasons -- typhus, for example, is ever at work among us -- it is true, at work obscurely, because its ravages are among the obscure -- among those who live precariously from day to day, in low, unventilated, and densely populated neighbourhoods, where bad drainage, bad air, bad water, and bad smells, perpetuate the epidemics they originate ... ." 46

Robert Ferguson made this same point in the June 1840 Quarterly Review and included statistics: "In 1837, 21,800 persons had fever in Glasgow ... . In London, the mortality in some parishes is four times that of others ... . Want of food is not the sole cause ... . It is the impurity of the dwelling, and the contamination which ensues where vice is allowed to herd with want, that fills our towns with misery and disease." 47 Even worse than these causes were the "habits of the poor," especially the fact that sick and well people often slept in the same bed. 48 Ferguson added a warning to his readers against complacency, as Murray had done in Blackwood's. But Ferguson's was more frightening: "Once generated in a severe form among the hovels of the paupers, fever spreads to the best-housed and best-fed."
It usually moved from the centers of cities, the unhealthiest areas, to outlying districts. "On this score alone," he wrote ominously, "if man will not be linked to man by sympathy of feeling, most assuredly he shall be by the bonds of suffering and disease." Thomas Carlyle had made this point in Chartism, "By infallible contagion . . . the misery of the lowest spreads upwards," and he repeated it in Past and Present: a poor Irish widow, refused help by those around her when she was dying of fever, fatally infected seventeen of them. "She proves her sisterhood," Carlyle commented, "they were actually her brothers, though denying it."

While Carlyle and the periodical authors were discussing disease, the latter often producing statistics culled from the Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes (1842) and from the Reports on the Health of Towns Commission (1844, 1845), the novelists said little. Near the end of Dombey and Son, however, Charles Dickens showed that he was greatly concerned with the living conditions that propagated disease, and was aware that disease cut across social boundaries. He pointed out that the air in the heart of the districts where the lower classes lived was polluted, "foul with every impurity that is poisonous to health and life"; no child could grow normally in such an atmosphere. Furthermore, he maintained, the physical health of man was a primary determinant of his moral health:

Those who study the physical sciences, and bring them to bear upon the health of Man, tell us that if the noxious particles that rise from vitiated
air were palpable to the sight, we should see them lowering in a dense black cloud above such haunts, and rolling on to corrupt the better portions of town. But if the moral pestilence that rises with them, and in the eternal laws of outraged Nature, is inseparable from them, could be made discernible too, how terrible the revelation!53

Dickens' point, then, was that the physical diseases, and the moral diseases caused by them, were very contagious: such diseases, physical and moral, had no respect for class.

Aside from Dickens, only one other novelist discussed this "leveller": in Alton Locke, Charles Kingsley showed how Alton's wealthy cousin died of a fever contracted from clothing made for him by Jemmy Downes, an impoverished tailor who had covered his dying wife with it (xxxix, 347). The most famous fictional treatment of the progress of a fever from lower class to upper class, of course, was in Bleak House. There, the fever traveled from Jo to Esther Summerson's maid to Esther herself, who was left physically scarred (xxxii, 433-40).

VI

When we realize how the working classes were crowded together in slums, easy prey to disease, we should not be surprised that they sought to forget their squalor, often by debauchery. The immorality of the lower classes was notorious, for both the periodicals and the fiction teemed with examples of workers' vices, particularly drinking.
The Westminster Review began the long catalogue of discussions early in 1833. The English laboring population, its author claimed, had learned from the Irish immigrants to desire drink. But this was to be expected, the article continued, if no alternatives were offered, if workers had no amusements or cultural activities to turn to. In the same year, an author for the New Monthly Magazine maintained that, among the lower classes, vice was rampant, drinking in particular. Worse yet, some good people among them were becoming tainted, along with their children, by association with the "dregs." Fraser's and Blackwood's published articles which excluded sympathy for the workers. In the July 1837 Blackwood's, for example, George Croly explained: "That men who will save nothing when they have work, and will drink everything whether they have or not, are likely to be poor, we feel ourselves under no necessity to deny . . . Thus the poverty of England, if it should please to give up misery and mortality in the shape of dram-drinking, and add to what is saved from the gin-shop, what it is palpably able to lay by from its daily expenditure, would be enough to pay off the national debt any Easter of its existence. So much for poverty." And so much for the problem of morality.

Apparently, the opportunities for a worker to relax and amuse himself except in a gin shop did not improve during the sixteen years covered by the periodicals studied here, nor did our novelists who wrote after that time find much cause for encouragement. In Helen Fleetwood, we see what actually did happen to workers' morality.
Phoebe Wright, the Widow Green's granddaughter, had been corrupted by the conditions of her factory work. Working in close quarters with other children and some degenerate adults, she had acquired their bad habits, in particular lying, swearing, and drinking. "The system, the factory system, under which Phoebe Wright had imbibed the peculiar wickedness [her increasingly degenerate nature] that now pervaded her character, also fed the evil," Mrs. Tonna wrote (x, 554), and she later explained that factory work took members of the lower class at a time when their character was being formed: they had no resistance against the "flood of iniquity that always deepens and widens in proportion to the number of human beings congregated together" (xx, 628). Mrs. Tonna was talking of working conditions, but we have already seen how many people were often "congregated together" in the workers' homes; the "flood of iniquity" was present there too.

We can see one major temptation in the various gin shops that, opening early, provided even the children with a morning "dram" (xvii, 599). Mrs. Tonna believed that these shops caused greater domestic unhappiness than did the factories. One of the men Richard Green met while he was visiting Manchester explained how a worker might be tempted to start drinking: "Many a young man sees the desire of his eyes taken away, as with a stroke . . . . The bereaved bosom aches beneath the sense of a void that cannot be filled. Then comes the hour of sore temptation, when the gin-shop, the low gambling-house, the licentious revel proffer their treacherous solace, and the house that should have been a sanctuary of wedded love becomes the filthy
den of a heartless drunkard . . . " (xx, 627). This was certainly no unsympathetic portrait, but Mrs. Tonna was explaining, not excusing, the debauched nature of the workers. In the winter, Richard learned, the workers left the overheated factory for the chilling frost of evening, "without a rag of additional clothing, and probably knowing there is but a small share of a very poor fire, if any, for them at home; and little enough of bedding to cover their shivering limbs. Don't you see, the gin-shop is a temptation hardly to be resisted even by the careful father of a family, much less by the poor silly child that never troubles its head for a moment about consequences?" (xvi, 595). The Evangelical morality that Mrs. Tonna espoused, however, was untenable as the total solution, and she recognized that fact. While Helen's moral nature and Richard's moral influence helped Willy mend his ways, the ending was nonetheless tragic: James died, Helen died, and the Widow ended up in the workhouse, the one place the whole family had been trying to avoid.

In Michael Armstrong, Frances Trollope appeared to do more than just explain the causes of the workers' immorality. By presenting the workers as seen both by themselves and by the upper class, she enabled her readers to determine more accurately where the real immorality lay. When Mary Brotherton began to become interested in helping the young hero, Mrs. Tremlett, her nurse and companion, mentioned that she had heard that factory people were "about the worst set of creatures that burden God's earth. The men are vicious, and the women desolate, taking drams often, and often when they ought to buy food" (x, 96). And,
indeed, one factory family that Miss Brotherton visited had to retrieve the father from the gin shop in time to see his wife die (xii, 136). But for him the shop was an escape, a place where he could go and not see his children return from the factory, beaten and bruised by the billy-roller (xiv, 154). According to Mr. Bell, a local champion of the factory workers, whose prototype was an actual Anglican clergyman, in a typical factory family the father was often idle, his job taken by the children, on whom he became dependent for his very bread. "Nature recoils from the spectacle of their unnatural o'erlaboured aspect as they return from their thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, hours of toil. He has not nerve to look upon it, and creeps to the gin-shops till they are hid in bed" (xix, 204).

In these two novels, then, drink became an escape for workers who could not bear the reality of their lives. While these novels were being published, the periodicals said little about drinking, but instead concentrated on other working-class vices or the need for alternatives. In August 1839, J. F. Murray maintained in Blackwood's that workers in crowded cities needed open areas near their homes, in which they could breathe fresh air and "take exercise." England, he concluded, needs public walks, not "gentility-mongering places," "spaces thrown open freely and altogether to the lowest class of our labouring and manufacturing population, who need all the rational recreation we can afford them." 59

W. C. Taylor echoed the call for "rational recreation" in an 1840 Bentley's article, and approved particularly of Manchester's
experiment of providing places in which workers could learn to
read, hear music, and dance. The program seemed to be working, he
believed. Such a program would help to resolve more fruitfully the
dilemma that, later the same year, he noticed laborers solving
unwisely: on Sundays, workers had the choice of going either to church
or to the alehouse; they generally chose the latter as the only real
amusement available in their otherwise hard lives. Even a garden
would be better, for its "humanizing and moral effects," but the
article admitted that a reading room, or some educational pursuit,
would be better still.

The workers kept drinking, however. In November 1841, Archibald
Alison told Blackwood's readers that the working classes were still
purchasing liquor because they had enough money to do so; in July
1844, he again blamed high wages for the factory operatives' "grosser
and sensual enjoyments," especially "eating and drinking." We
must assume, of course, that Alison was talking about excessive
"eating and drinking," and that he was not indeed complaining that
workers needed any sustenance at all.

In the following year, Sybil took a more understandable, and
understanding, approach to workers' drinking habits, one not unlike
those taken by Murray in 1839 and Taylor in 1840. Although Disraeli
did not say that public walks were necessary as a means of keeping
workers out of taverns, he recognized that these men, women, and
children did not drink out of some inherent viciousness: "What
makes her drink but toil; working from five o'clock in the morning.
to seven o'clock at night," one youth said to another in *Sybil* (II, ix, 89), a point reiterated in the conduct of the miners who headed straight from the pit to the tavern, where they were obviously regular customers (III, i, 143). Walter Gerard drove home to Charles Egremont why the morality of workers was declining: they were worse off now than they ever had been in the past; they were nearer the state of brutes than ever since the Conquest (III, v, 175). This, of course, was a point that Carlyle had made in *Past and Present*: "I will venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us."65

But Disraeli also showed how living conditions affected the workers. The good vicar, St. Lys, explained: "What is a poor man to do after his day's work, if he returns to his own roof and finds no home: his fire extinguished, his food unprepared; the partner of his life, wearied with labour in the field or the factory, still absent, or perhaps in bed from exhaustion? ... we must not therefore be surprised that they seek solace or rather refuge in the beer-shop " (II, xii, 111). Precisely this point appeared in *Mary Barton* three years later: if a husband returned from the mill to find "no home," that is, a home which his wife had no time, strength, or desire to care for, it was only natural that he would find more comfort in a gin-shop (x, 113-14).

Two years after *Mary Barton*, Charles Kingsley showed workers again drinking in defense, this time against the crowded, dirty,
overheated workrooms of the tailor trade (ii, 19). These conditions need publicizing, Sandy Mackaye told Alton Locke; write about the gin-shops with their loose living, about babies being given gin to keep them quiet, about people pawning stolen goods to buy gin (viii, 80). And so Alton did. Like Kingsley himself, like the other novelists of our study, and like the periodicals that revealed the problems before the novels picked them up, Alton Locke wrote about the working conditions and the living conditions that had led fully-grown men and women, and little children, to seek an easy way out. They sought not just the eventual redress of grievances made possible by education, emigration, or improved understanding among classes, but the immediate release that only alcohol seemed to provide.

VII

On the basis of the material presented in this chapter, we may too easily assume that periodical authors and novelists viewed the lower and upper classes as so distinct, except where disease united them, that it was unnecessary even to show the contrast. Certainly both periodicals and novels (and, if they are representative, society generally) viewed Victorian England as composed of "Two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy . . . The Rich and the Poor" (Sybil, II, v, 67). However, in living conditions described in both the fiction and non-fiction of our study, we can see contrasts
drawn and developed. In this respect, in fact, some discussions in
the novels preceded those in the periodicals.

When the Widow Green went to the home of the factory owner in
Helen Fleetwood to complain about the abusive treatment Helen had
received, Mrs. Tonna carefully pointed out how different his house
was from the run-down tenement in which the workers lived: the
rooms were spacious and well-furnished (xi, 555-59). Furthermore,
the owner refused to help the widow and was angry with her for even
mentioning the factory in front of his daughter (xi, 560). In
Michael Armstrong, Dowling Lodge, the home of the owner of the factory
in which young Michael had worked, was contrasted with the home of
the factory boy himself. And when Michael was brought into Sir
Matthew's house, the servants there refused to go near him. The
housekeeper warned them "not to injure their characters, nor to
corrupt their morals" by having anything to do with the ragged urchin
(iii, 29). After both of these novels had appeared, J. F. Murray,
in Blackwood's, described the difference between the have and the
have-nots. On the north side of London's St. James' Park, the area
was beautiful, "but another moment, we have crossed the park—and
what an atmosphere of vice and misery surrounds us! . . . The aspect
of the population, their shops, their habitations, their neglected
children, with eyes bleared and elf-shot locks, would defy pen or
pencil to depict their filthiness and squalor . . . ."66

In Past and Present Thomas Carlyle announced, "England is full
of wealth . . . yet England is dying of inanition," and added, "in
Two years later, Benjamin Disraeli developed Carlyle's contrast. When Charles Egremont, younger brother of the wealthy Malthusian Lord Marney, stated that England was the greatest nation ever, he was talking from the still-ignorant position of the upper class. In the course of the novel, he learned the truth of Stephen Morley's contention that there were, in fact, two nations.

At the beginning of 1848 an author for Fraser's wrote that there was a tremendous difference between the classes: "One half of the world knows not how the other half lives." This theme was quite common in many of the novels that followed. In Shirley, Charlotte Brontë had the mill-owner, Robert Moore, explain that he had become sympathetic to the workers in his mill because he had seen the privations of their counterparts in Birmingham, who had neither food nor fuel nor hope (xxx, 555). In Alton Locke, Charles Kingsley implicitly contrasted the conditions in which many tailors had to live, in vile surroundings and eating insufficient food, with those of Alton's cousin at Cambridge, who often had meals delivered to his luxurious room (xiii, 123-39). Charles Dickens, in three of his novels, also indicated the differences in living conditions between the two classes. In Bleak House, the Dedlocks' mansion and Tom-all-alone's had nothing in common, although Lady Dedlock and Jo inadvertently—and fatally—found that they did. In Hard Times, the contrast was implicitly most evident when Stephen Blackpool went to see his master, Josiah Bounderby, and found that divorce laws
operated one way for the rich and another way for the poor. And in *Little Dorrit* Dickens presented a brief example to rival Murray's in *Blackwood's*: thinking of Covent Garden, through which she had just passed, Little Dorrit contrasted the beautiful ladies she had seen going to the theater with the "miserable children in rags . . . fed on offal . . . ." To her, Covent Garden was a paradox, "a place of past and present mystery, romance, abundance, want, beauty, ugliness, fair country gardens, and foul street gutters." Finally, Mrs. Gaskell in *North and South* explicitly showed not only the tremendous difference in living conditions between men and master, but also the wide separation in their philosophies. Before his regeneration, the mill-owner Robert Thornton carefully explained that the power of masters and men was evenly balanced, and the battle was fair (x, 96).

The concept of the "Two Nations," then, existed in the fiction of our study as early as the late 1830's, even before Disraeli gave the phrase wide publicity in *Sybil*. While the contrast between the rich and the poor existed in several spheres—political and economic as well as social—the novels emphasized it in the living conditions of the two groups.
Notes

2. W. C. Taylor, "Moral Economy of Large Towns. Glasgow," Bentley's, 8 (December, 1840), 558-68.
5. III, iv, 165.
6. Passim, and see pp. xlv-lix for Kingsley's "Cheap Clothes and Nasty."
8. William P. Alison, "Evils of the State of Ireland," Blackwood's, 40 (October, 1836), 495.
10. XXIX, ii, 124-27.
11. Gregg, pp. 192-93.
14. iii, 518.
15. xlii, 144-45.
17. vii, 67.


20. Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), ch. v, p. 35. Subsequent references will be included in the text.


23. Ibid., pp. 135 and 138.


29. F. Murray, "The World of London. Part III," Blackwood's, 50 (July, 1841), 61. See also Part XIII, Blackwood's, 52 (July, 1842), 93.


32. Henry King, "Post-Mortem Musings," Blackwood's, 48 (December, 1840), 829-30.

35. Ibid., 204-208.
36. Ibid., 210.
39. Ibid., 159.
42. Blount, RES, 370.
46. J. F. Murray, "The Lungs of London," Blackwood's, 46 (August, 1839), 212.
49. Ibid., 123.
50. vii, 168.

53. Charles Dickens, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), ch. xlvii, p. 647. Subsequent references will be included in the text.


57. [George Croly], "The World we Live in. No. IX," Blackwood's, 42 (July, 1837), 69.


60. Ibid., 227.


64. [Archibald Alison], "Causes of the Increase of Crime," Blackwood's, 56 (July, 1844), 7.


67. I, i, 7 and 11.

CHAPTER IV

LIFE AND LABOR IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS

While arguing in 1843 that overpopulation was a primary cause of poverty, an author for the *Westminster Review* briefly compared living conditions of manufacturing workers and agricultural laborers. On Sundays, the factory workers appeared on the streets in clean clothes the agricultural population could not afford. They made use of schools, libraries, and mechanics' institutes not available to rural inhabitants. "We do not mean to deny the existence of grievous and deplorable evils, both physical and moral, among the inhabitants of our great cities," the *Westminster* said. "We merely affirm that these evils are not greater than those which prevail in country districts, — that they are counterbalanced, or more than counter-balanced, by manifold advantages . . . ."¹ In fact, the article continued, factory workers were much better off than farm laborers: in a town, the poor could more easily procure "the substantial comforts of life," their wages were higher, their children could more easily find employment, and they could receive more "charitable assistance" and better medical care.²

The *Westminster's* article was based on the Report of the Special Assistant Poor-Law Commissioners on the Employment of Women and

92
Children in Agriculture earlier that year. This Report repeated what three earlier ones in 1836 had shown: that farmers and agricultural laborers suffered from high rents and low yields, high costs and low profits. Although twelve shillings was the normal wage, some farm laborers were paid as little as seven shillings a week.\(^3\) The 1843 Report also showed that the labor of women and children was more ruthlessly exploited in the southern counties than it was in the Lancashire mills.\(^4\) Thus, we should not be surprised at the Westminster's assertion that, while the distress in the manufacturing towns had never been "so severe, so penetrating, or so prolonged, as during the last two years," those laborers who had gone to the cities to work still would not return to their former homes: they found conditions better in town.\(^5\)

I

Aside from that one article in the Westminster, the other articles that discussed the movement from the country to the city appeared in Blackwood's which, representing the landed interests, naturally wished to divert attention from the impoverished conditions the farm laborers were escaping. Thus, in 1836, Alfred Mallalieu showed how the stream of laborers from the agricultural south to the manufacturing north diminished poor rates in the rural areas, but also increased such workers' hardships by causing conditions in the manufacturing towns to worsen.\(^6\) He maintained that the migration was directed by the Poor
Law Commissioners who sent their assistants "as apostles to preach to the innocent rustics of the South, the Garden of Eden — of high wages and pure morals — to be found in the steamed and gaseous workshops of the North." 7

Mallalieu was correct. Edwin Chadwick, whose report had become the guiding principle of the New Poor Law, had emphasized the need to move laborers from districts where the labor market was glutted to districts where labor was in demand. 8 The Poor Law Commissioners had put his idea into practice, but to a lesser extent than Mallalieu's tone would have had us believe. 9 George Croly, writing in the April 1842 Blackwood's, condemned the rustic's own greed in leaving his secure earnings in the country for possibly greater, but more speculative, earnings in the manufacturing towns. 10 Two years later, Archibald Alison blamed no one, passed no moral judgments, but merely informed his readers that, in the previous forty years, more than two million people had moved to the manufacturing counties of the north of England, mainly from the agricultural counties of the south. 11

The two novels which discussed the movement of rural laborers to towns and cities reflected the same change in attitude we have just noticed in Blackwood's. In 1839 Helen Fleetwood described the plight of its heroine and the Green family who, unable to support themselves in the South, moved from their rural home to seek constant employment and subsistence wages in Manchester. In commenting on factory life, Mrs. Tonna provided another reason for the movement North: "The waste of human life in the factories, like that in the plantations of the
west, occasions so depressing a demand for a supply of new labourers, that it gives rise to a traffic not very dissimilar from the slave trade." Parish officers supplied this market. Manufacturers willingly aided the migration by sending emissaries to the south in order to "allure the industrious countryman from his healthful sphere, to perish, with his little ones, amid the noxious exhalations of those 'unnatural dens" up north (iii, 516). Thus, in 1839-40, Helen Fleetwood adopted a point of view very similar to that expressed by the periodicals between 1836 and 1841.

The only other novel which discussed this migration was more objective than Helen Fleetwood: in 1845 Sybil twice briefly mentioned rural inhabitants who had moved to a large town. In his first reference, Disraeli merely stated that agricultural laborers who were hired into manufacturing work tended to bring down the level of wages by increasing the size of the labor pool (II, x, 91). Later, he described the living conditions of hand-loom weavers who, "driven from our innocent and happy homes, our country cottages that we loved," were slowly starving in a large town for want of work. But Disraeli made it clear that weavers were unable to survive by weaving: they had not attempted to work in a factory (II, xiii, 117).

II

The 1836 Select Committee's reports on agricultural distress and the 1843 Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture
drew some public attention to the hard lot of agricultural laborers, but it was not until the reports of 1867-69, long after the period of our study, that cottage accommodations were revealed as the horrors which indeed they were. Consequently, our periodicals and novels provided few pictures of the earthen floors on which whole families often had to sleep, the open rafters that substituted for ceilings in many cottages, and the poor sanitation that caused disease and inhibited personal cleanliness. Those articles which did discuss the poverty endured by agricultural laborers established a clear pattern. The novels did not.

In the first three and the last three years of our study, the periodical articles blamed the landlords for the extremely low standard of living of agricultural laborers. Condemning the enclosure system, they claimed that landlords charged their tenants high rents, did not allow all of their land to be cultivated, arbitrarily evicted tenants, and even had torn down cottages on their property or had let them fall into disrepair in order to decrease the number of potential paupers in their parish. Such practices enabled the landlords to lower the poor rates they had to pay.

In Past and Present, Thomas Carlyle also attacked the landed aristocracy, "no longer able to do its work, not in the least conscious that it has any work to do, ... careful only to clamour for the wages of doing its work, --nay for higher, and palpably undue wages, and corn-laws and increase of rents ..." This "Aristocracy," Carlyle maintained, should have improved its land and the conditions of
agricultural laborers. By contrast, he described a good landlord of the ninth century, Edmund: "His labourers did not think of burning his wheatstacks, breaking into his game-preserves; . . . on the contrary, they honoured, loved, admired this ancient Landlord . . . ." The few periodical articles between 1836 and 1840 that discussed agricultural conditions indicated that agricultural laborers were fairly well off. In July 1836, for example, the Edinburgh Review reported on the findings of the Poor Law Commissioners. The article, written by Edwin Chadwick, himself a member of the Commission and its prime mover, maintained that agricultural laborers were "greatly advanced in condition," their wages buying more than ever before. Three months later, William Alison happily announced to Blackwood's readers that "famine is only a matter of history," and that "agriculture is in the highest perfection." During these years, however, particularly bad winters forced many farm families into workhouses. Those agricultural workers who were able to remain outside had to depend on the labor of their wives and children to supplement their own meager wages. Even then, rural laborers rarely had meat or milk on the table, their chief foods being barley and potatoes.

From 1840 to 1845, Fraser's, the Westminster, and Blackwood's acknowledged these conditions, but in very general terms. Archibald Alison, for example, wrote that "While wealth was increasing to an unparalleled extent among the commercial classes, suffering and distress as generally ensued among the rural inhabitants . . . ."

The novels of our study which discussed rural life emphasized the
same ideas as the earlier non-fiction had done. Midway through Helen Fleetwood, Charlotte Tonna explained that "There are districts in the land still retaining much of the primitive character of English rusticity," where there existed a close relationship between the squire and his tenant farmers (xiv, 577-78). Mrs. Tonna emphasized the importance of such a relationship when she described a "festive occasion" on one squire's lands:

The owner of the field was the principal landed proprietor in this place; and the spot was chosen among many, just because it had, from time immemorial, been the scene of the annual celebration. This year was one of unusual abundance, and not a day of adverse weather had thwarted the harvestmen. The Squire was pleased at the diligence with which they had availed themselves of the favourable season; the men were gratified by his praises, and no less by his liberality; while the women and elder children, who had found plentiful employment too upon his extensive lands, had similar causes for gladness . . . . Each, both old and young, enjoyed that peculiar feeling, the value of which the poor are seldom aware of until they experience its absence. 'My employer knows me; I am not in his sight a mere piece of machinery, regarded only while it works in his service. There's a tie between us that he, though a rich man, would not disown.' (xiii, 578)

However, conditions were changing and, in many rural areas, the landlords were not Carlylean "heroes" who cared for their tenants. As a result, Mrs. Tonna said, the "independence of an English labourer . . . is becoming, through the money-loving greediness of the few, grinding down the poverty-stricken faces of the rapidly increasing many, a mere name without a reality . . . . An unnatural state of things . . . is transforming 'a bold peasantry, their country's pride,' into a degraded, discontented, restless, turbulent mob" (xx, 627).
At the beginning of Helen Fleetwood, in fact, Mrs. Tonna had shown how difficult it was to earn a living by farm work. All the members of the Green family had to work in order to live, but when young James became ill and could no longer go into the fields, the Widow knew that they would have to enter the Workhouse or leave their rural home, the friends they had made, and the area they loved in order to find work in a manufacturing town. Thus, agricultural conditions were "good" -- the Greens were happy in the country as long as they could survive -- if one could afford to live there. But everyone in a family had to work. Otherwise, poverty and the Workhouse -- or a long trip north -- ensued.

In Helen Fleetwood, the agricultural laborers were very sympathetically portrayed. Readers of the novel saw nothing of the immorality, thriftlessness, or laziness attributed to some unemployed agricultural workers by Francis Head in an 1835 Quarterly. Instead, Mrs. Tonna portrayed rural laborers who desired and were able to work, but who could not find enough work to support themselves. In so doing, she echoed the sentiments of several early periodical articles.

While Charlotte Tonna was publishing Helen Fleetwood, Frances Trollope was publishing Michael Armstrong which, though primarily about factory life, occasionally described agricultural conditions. Mrs. Trollope emphasized the good moral influence of rural life: children born outside manufacturing districts first opened their eyes "amidst scenes of less ignorance, degradation, and suffering, than those born within reach of the poisonous factory influence" (xvii,187).
In 1842-43, Mrs. Trollope published Jessie Phillips, which, more than any of our other novels, described living conditions in the country. But even these descriptions were, for the most part generalized. The novel stated immediately, for example, that the beautiful little village of Deepbrook seemed prosperous and that young people, thinking it easy to maintain a family, 'married too early and soon became impoverished.'\(^{31}\) Ellen Dalton hoped that "things may go on better for the poor people" (I, iii, 41). Mrs. Greenhill, whose son had been jailed as a debtor, was forced to live in a "vile-looking hovel" (I, vi, 107). A rural family lived in one room of a cottage and slept on the earthen floor (I, vi, 111). Nowhere did Mrs. Trollope give more than a fleeting glimpse of the living conditions of these people (except within the Workhouse), and nowhere at all did she provide a view of their working conditions.

Benjamin Disraeli, however, did. In Sybil, the rural town of Marney was quite similar to the manufacturing towns described in other novels. "Behind that laughing landscape, penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population," Disraeli wrote, and then described the narrow and crowded lanes, and the cottages that were falling apart. "Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease" or filling stagnant pools and permeating the walls and ground.
(II, iii, 53). Such conditions caused typhus to spread among the inhabitants because the walls "had neither windows nor doors sufficient to keep out the weather, or admit the sun, or supply the means of ventilation; the humid and putrid roof of thatch exhaling malaria like all other decaying vegetable matter" (II, iii, 54).

Although "there were few districts in the kingdom where the rate of wages was more depressed, those [laborers] who were fortunate enough to obtain the scant remuneration, had, in addition to their toil, to endure, each morn and even, a weary journey before they could reach the scene of their labour, or return to the squalid hovel which profaned the name of home" (II, iii, 55). Disraeli made it clear that the landlords attempted to force laborers to live in other parishes, in order to decrease their own poor rates: "the proprietors of the neighbourhood [had] for the last half-century acted on the system of destroying the cottages on their estates, in order to become exempted from the maintenance of the population . . ." (II, iii, 54). Although this same point was to reappear in later periodicals, we cannot claim that it originated with Sybil: landlords had been eliminating housing on their estates for years, and in fact the practice had been one of the causes of the distress that the Poor Law Commissioners had noted in their 1834 Report.

Despite the obviously pitiable conditions of his laborers, Lord
Marney maintained that wages were "good enough," that the eight
shillings they received each week was sufficient (II, xii, 111). Yet
the periodicals had clearly shown before Sybil was published that, even
earning a more typical 12s. weekly, agricultural laborers could hardly
subsist. Lord Marney's attitude toward his laborers was a primary
ingredient of the explosive mixture ignited later in the novel.

Three years later, Charles Kingsley also condemned those land-
owners, in the person of Squire Lavington, who had no concern for
their laborers. Paul Tregarva, Lavington's game-keeper and
Kingsley's mouthpiece, stated the problem early: the agricultural
laborers were poorly fed and poorly housed. "What a miserable state
of things," Tregarva told Lancelot Smith, "that an industrious
freeman cannot live without alms!" (iii, 44). Furthermore, as Kingsley
himself pointed out, instead of being "Arcadia among fertility,
loveliness, industry, and wealth . . . those picturesque villages are
generally the perennial hotbeds of fever and ague, of squalid penury,
sottish profligacy, dull discontent too stale for words" (iii, 36).

The initially naive Lancelot learned the truth of his mentor's
exclamation: "Before ever you can make them the agricultural workers/7
Christians, you must make them men and women . . . . How can a man be
a man in those crowded styes, sleeping packed together like Irish pigs
in a steamer . . . ." (iv, 71). Part of Lancelot's new-found wisdom was
imparted by Carlyle's Chartism, which he had reread early in the novel.
In this essay, Carlyle had blamed the poor living conditions on the
landlords, and had emphasized the responsibility of the upper classes
for the lower. But Carlyle had been discussing ideas that the periodicals from 1833 to 1835 had already mentioned, albeit briefly. *Yeast,* in other words, actually reflected a current of opinion present throughout the non-fiction of our study.

Nonetheless, *Yeast*’s descriptions of the living conditions of the rural poor were as generalized as were *Jessie Phillips*. And in fact there was little if any difference between Kingsley’s descriptions of farm laborers and the many descriptions of factory workers we have seen in chapters ii and iii. For example, Paul Tregarva told Lancelot Smith that the agricultural poor spent time in the beer shop as an escape from their sordid lives; that after a hard day’s farm work, they “tumble into bed at eight o’clock, hardly waiting to take [their] clothes off, knowing that [they] must turn up again at five o’clock the next morning”; that they had to work incessantly, or starve (xiii, 195-97). However, except for an occasional hump-shouldered girl carrying her baby (xiii, 203) or a brute of a laborer standing nearby as the two friends passed (xiii, 205), the laborers themselves rarely appeared in the novel, nor did Kingsley show their living and working conditions first-hand.

Most of the later novels in our study mentioned agricultural conditions, but only Alton Locke, primarily concerned with the tailoring trade, included a number of descriptions of rural laborers and their impoverished lives. These descriptions were far more specific than anything that had appeared in the periodicals of our study. On his walking tour to Cambridge, for example, Alton noted that the people
began to look more rural, toil-worn and ill-fed (xi, 105). One rural laborer explained why: the workers were starving because, despite a good harvest, they owed their crops for rent, and had hardly enough to feed their families (xi, 112). Later in the novel, Kingsley showed that one of their major complaints was the low wage they received. When prices were low, farmers lowered their wages; when prices went up, their wages did not rise accordingly. Thus, at high prices they could not afford to buy bread, and at low prices they could not get enough work (xxviii, 244). These difficulties were reflected in their appearance, the "wan, haggard" and miserable look of men and women just finished with their day's work (xxviii, 241).

In addition to these pictures of the starving agricultural laborers, Alton Locke also blamed landlords for exercising so little control over their tenant farmers who mistreated laborers. Alton came to believe, for example, that landlords wanted the rights of property but not the duties (xxiii, 202). More specifically, they rented their cottages with their farms, so that the laborer living in a cottage was bound, with the land, to the farmer. Furthermore, the cottages themselves were scarcely fit for humans (xxviii, 239).

Some landlords and farmers, however, did care for their workers. The blue books, the May 1835 New Monthly, and Alton Locke all showed that, where landlords permitted the allotment system, whereby laborers received small tracts of land to farm, the laborers lived comfortably, ate relatively well, looked healthy, and were content.
"I gets my ten shillings a week all the year round, and harvesting, and a pig, and a 'lotment,'" one "tall, powerful, well-fed" laborer explained (xxviii, 242). In the novel, the allotment system existed in modified form on Lord Ellerton's land. "A True Nobleman," Ellerton had sold one of his two estates in order to improve the other; he lowered rents, drained and cleared the land, improved cottages, and was transforming an unused house into an "associate farm" in which the laborers lived and ate. They all had an interest in this farm, and received a share of the profits (xxv, 217). Such a farm was Kingsley's Christian Socialist adaptation of the allotment system, and indicated Carlyle's influence. In *Past and Present*, Carlyle had emphasized that "land is the right basis of an Aristocracy," but had added that the land rightfully belonged to those who used it rightly (III, viii, 176).

Kingsley's was the last of our novels to present more than a cursory view of agricultural conditions. Thus, except for *Alton Locke*, the novels merely echoed the periodicals' generalized descriptions of rural living and working conditions. Even those novels which were solely or primarily set in agricultural districts, *Jessie Phillips* and *Yeast*, tended to point out generally how rural laborers were suffering rather than to offer very specific examples.

III

Such was not the case with the attacks on the old and new poor
laws and on the Union Workhouse. In these discussions, both genres often became very specific. The reason is not hard to discover. The Commissioners who studied the old poor law and recommended the changes that became the new one provided much precise information that the periodical authors and novelists used.

In 1833, three articles discussed the primary reason for revising the old poor law: the Speenhamland system was a failure. This system, inaugurated in 1795, had allowed parishes to supplement laborers' income so they could subsist without having to enter the workhouse. As a result, many farmers had lowered the wages they paid since the parishes would bring such wages up to subsistence level. Worse, the articles claimed, the "allowance system" destroyed the desire to work and improve one's lot: while the most indolent laborers were assured of subsistence wages, industrious workers could rarely earn more. In some parishes, the Speenhamland system penalized those laborers who had been able to save some money: as long as they had any independent means of survival, they could receive no parish help. Furthermore, a person with any means of his own often could not get work. Paupers were preferred for jobs since, otherwise, they would have been supported out of the poor rates.

Opposing the allowance system, an author in the April 1833 Westminster approved of the workhouse system, but decried the abuses and ill-management, and complained bitterly that the pauper in the workhouse was better fed and housed than was the independent agricultural laborer in his hovel. This article foreshadowed the dominant concern of the
periodicals in the following year. Of the six major articles on the poor laws and workhouses that appeared in 1834, only two were shorter than twenty pages. Certainly, such increased interest in the subject is not surprising. The Poor Law Commissioners had made a preliminary report the previous year, and made their full report in February. While the Poor Law Amendment Act (the New Poor Law), passed in August, affected both industrial workers and agricultural laborers, the periodicals—and, we shall see later, the novels too—seized upon the information about rural conditions provided by the report.

In January, the month before the full report was issued, a Quarterly Review author called for immediate reform of "the glaring abuses of the English poor-laws," and blamed Parliament for procrastinating. Quoting from the preliminary 1833 report, he approved of the theory behind the workhouses: "They should be made places of strict confinement and hard labour to the able-bodied, with moderate diet and a total denial of all indulgences, in order to render a residence within their walls as irksome and distasteful as possible, and the last resort of those only who cannot, by their utmost exertions, obtain a maintenance elsewhere." This author totally disregarded what some later ones could not ignore: that there was little sense, and great injustice, in punishing an able-bodied laborer who was willing but unable to find work.

But he added one vital point to the discussion that the earlier periodical authors had neglected. The old and the infirm should be spared the rigors of the workhouse: "Such paupers can be maintained
more cheaply in their own cottages, or those of their relatives than in the workhouse; nor are they fit subjects for the necessarily severe, and almost penal, discipline of that establishment, whose terrors should be reserved as a test of doubtful cases only."  

In April, in the first article to discuss in detail some of the suggestions made by the Poor Law Commissioners, an author for the Westminster Review strongly approved of the Commissioners' basic premise that "the condition of the pauper shall in no case by made so eligible as that of the independent labourer of the lowest class." Where this principle had already been applied, he stated, it had resulted in depauperization of the able-bodied, reduction of the poor rates, and elevation of the independent laborer's wages, morality, and self-respect. Because the old system had not achieved such results, the author opposed outdoor relief. Furthermore, because they were often uneducated, the local overseers of the old system were unable to distinguish true pleas for relief from false ones. He thus approved of the Commissioners' proposal to "divest the local authorities of all discretionary power in the administration of relief." In other words, he approved the principle of centralization, which became one of the most hotly-contested provisions of the New Poor Law.

The Commissioners proposed, and Parliament passed into law, the abolition of outdoor relief and the imposition of the "workhouse test" on applicants for public alms: if a person wanted relief, he would have to enter the workhouse. The Commissioners thus applied utilitarian logic to an increasingly severe social problem. Their
major mistake was to treat the allowance system as the source of the
ervils, and not as what it was—the incorrect solution to existing
problems. Nonetheless, outdoor relief was neither scarce nor
hard to get: by 1847, Halévy writes, "as many as seven-eighths
of those relieved under the new Poor Law were in receipt of outdoor
relief."\footnote{\textsuperscript{47}}

As the Westminster article indicated, the Poor Law Report also
proposed establishing a central agency, composed of three commissioners,
to create and enforce the rules necessary for proper administration of
the new law. Each Union of parishes was to elect a local Board of
Guardians whose members were responsible to the ratepayers of the
district for properly running the Union's workhouse. The local Boards
were ultimately responsible to the central agency, and had to obey the
provisions of the New Poor Law and the directives from the Commissioners.
The new law, by its provision for centralized authority, was intended
to provide a more objective basis for relief, one not dependent on such
subjective considerations as emotions or personal knowledge of applicants
for aid. The law also forced separation of families inside workhouses.
And its stated goal—to make paupers' lives more miserable than
independent laborers'—often resulted in decreased quantities of food
available to inmates. Not surprisingly, then, both periodicals and
novels generally attacked the new law's provisions and their results.

In May 1834, for example, Fraser's referred to the report on the
Poor Laws as an "unsatisfactory performance" by the Commissioners.\footnote{\textsuperscript{48}}
The article pinpointed the disadvantage of abolishing outdoor relief:
an able-bodied laborer who legitimately needed relief -- because of illness, or because of unemployment caused by lack of jobs -- had to enter the workhouse where, however, his labor was not needed. Had he instead been lent the money, he would have been able to stay out of the workhouse, eventually find a job to support himself and his family, and repay the loan. Thus, while Fraser's maintained that outdoor relief as a routine supplement to low wages should be abolished, such relief was necessary and even beneficial as occasional assistance in times of stress. The laborer, not imprisoned in the workhouse, would be able to improve his own condition.

None of the 1834 articles, however, mentioned the Law of Settlement, a section of the New Poor Law that the Westminster discussed in January, 1835. In order to receive poor-law payment, the unemployed laborer had to remain in his home parish. One of the poor law commissioners, William Hickson, admitted that "The general effect of the present system is, to stop the circulation of labour, and to prevent forethought. I find that whenever workmen are out of work, they will not shift to places where work may be got, for fear of losing their parishes." While one district was loaded with unemployed laborers, another parish nearby needed workers. Free movement, then, would help to eliminate agricultural distress. We shall see in Helen Fleetwood how local authorities used "Settlement" to decrease the poor rates in their district.

In March 1835, in the first article of our study which discussed even in general terms the conditions to be found in the massive,
impersonal structures that became the very heart — cold and stony — of the newly-created Unions, a New Monthly Magazine author argued that, although the new law might indeed reduce the rates, it did nothing to reduce the suffering. He found particularly offensive and demoralizing the provision to separate a man from his wife, and children from their parents. Because of this enforced isolation many families in real need preferred virtually to starve than to ask for relief.  

More than any of the other periodicals of our study, the Quarterly Review provided an early view of the transitional period between the old and the new Poor Laws. In April 1835, in a sixty-six page article on "English Charity," Francis Head approved of the principles of the new law but regretted that there was a need for a poor law at all. Head had visited workhouses in East Kent and nearby counties, and described in some detail what life was like inside them. Of the workhouses described, some were still enforcing mostly the old law, but the newer ones were beginning to carry out the provisions of the new law. He intentionally examined this transitional state in order "to review the old condemned law in its full operation, as well as the first strife, struggle, or conflict between it and its infant protagonist."  

In the larger workhouses, Head noted a feature of the new law: inmates were segregated at least by sex, and if possible by age. Where he saw this system in operation, he found no adverse effect on the inmates, and thus could not understand why people opposed it. In fact, he reported, separation was necessary because the poor law had to assure rate-payers that their burden would not be increased by any
conceptions within the workhouse. This was an example of the new law's Malthusian approach, and Head fully agreed with it.

Inside the workhouses the inmates generally did nothing. To the twentieth century, such inaction would appear to be a waste of available labor, but Head was more concerned that paupers were not being punished properly. The inmates of the poor-houses, "falsely called work-houses," should be "forced" to work, he believed. He thus ignored the myopia of the New Poor Law, which treated the symptoms, not the disease. Most of the able-bodied laborers who applied for relief were willing to work, but could find no work to do. The new law provided no help for such people.

One aspect of workhouse life that Head condemned was the diet: he claimed that it was too good, and that the paupers ate so well they lost the desire to leave. At least three times a week in all the workhouses that he visited, the inmates ate meat; their bread was better than that soldiers received; they often had fresh vegetables to eat; and, in fact, some Unions boasted that the paupers got "as much victuals as ever they can eat." One Assistant Commissioner admitted that, while workhouse food was not too good, it was indeed better than many people outside were eating. Often, the independent laborer had insufficient food even for his sabbath meal, while the pauper ate four hot meals a week, half a pound of butter a week, a pound of bread a day, as much as he could of assorted vegetables, a pint of beer a day, and pudding on Sundays. As a result, Head claimed, the laborer was encouraged to become a pauper, and the pauper was encouraged to remain so. If
workhouse food were less plentiful, the poor-house would become an unattractive alternative to work.\textsuperscript{61} Head's description of the paupers' diet indicated that the old system prevailed, even in the newly-built Unions, at least in this aspect of workhouse life. For, while food under the old law might have been of poor quality, there was generally plenty of it.\textsuperscript{62} It was only under a strict application of the new law that the quantity of food was severely decreased.\textsuperscript{63}

Head's discussion was easily the longest and most detailed in our periodicals during the sixteen years of our study. It portrayed a time of transition in workhouse conditions, as it had been intended to do, because less than one year after the New Poor Law had been passed the old system still prevailed in many districts. The article generally approved of the new law but Head admitted that his primary example, the Ashford Union in East Kent, was atypical. If every union of parishes cared for its poor as well as Ashford did, the new law could be repealed and its machinery disassembled.\textsuperscript{64} This was his ultimate hope.

In 1837, articles in Bentley's, Blackwood's, and Fraser's condemned centralization, the "workhouse test," and the "Settlement" provision.\textsuperscript{65} Only W. B. Wrightson, in the Edinburgh Review, approved of the new law.\textsuperscript{66} Our selected novels which treated the Poor Laws also opposed them: they knew of too many of the abuses of both laws to be satisfied with the results.

The early chapters of Oliver Twist, for example, were clearly attacks on the Malthusian-utilitarians whose theory of population underlay the New Poor Law. The theory was that, however much the general
food supply of the country grew, the population would always grow more quickly and, hence, an increasing number of people would always be below subsistence level. In other words, the poor-we-shall-always-have-with-us. Yet Dickens did not discuss the provisions of the new law or the principles behind them, as the periodicals had done. Instead, he concentrated mainly on "the bad workhouse feeding, the absurdity of such officers as Bumble and the utter failure to make any proper provision for the pauper children." The beadle, Mr. Bumble, was a carryover from the old system, in which such local officials did indeed have the power he apparently had. The workhouse described in chapter one could have existed under the old law, and the "baby farm" at which Oliver grew up also existed prior to 1834. That "branch workhouse," run by Mrs. Mann, enabled the parish to divest itself of responsibilities at the moderate price of 7½d. per week that it paid her for each child under her care. Such children were ill-fed and ill-clothed, many sickened, and some fell into the fire or met with other fatal accidents. The Board of Guardians took little notice (ii, 4-5).

When Oliver returned to the workhouse from Mrs. Mann's care, the new law had already gone into effect in his district. Some evils of the old law still existed, as seen in Bumble's very presence. However, new evils had arisen. Under the old law, for example, the food was poor in quality, but it was not typically scanty. When the newly-returned Oliver asked for "some more" gruel, then, Dickens was portraying one aspect of the 1834 law (ii, 12).
Dickens also commented briefly on another aspect of the New Poor Law when he showed the Board of Guardians ecstatic over an initial sharp drop in the number of relief cases (ii, 11). That the number of applicants had decreased should not surprise us. The New Monthly Magazine for March 1835 had already mentioned that some people preferred starvation to entering a workhouse.

In the same year in which the serialization of Oliver Twist ended, Helen Fleetwood pointed to yet another means of reducing the number of paupers within a district. As several periodicals had already shown, the Law of Settlement prevented a person from applying for relief outside his home parish. Charlotte Tomma portrayed a Workhouse Committee whose overriding concern was to save money, not to provide for the poor. As the author herself told her readers, "The result of a persevering plan to grind the faces of the poor . . . will be manifested but too plainly [in this book] . . . " (ii, 509). This Workhouse Committee persuaded the Greens to move out of the parish and to seek a better life in the industrial centers of the north. As a result, the Committee believed, the Greens would not become wards of the parish.

The Greens moved North because they wished to avoid the workhouse but would have been unable to do so in the South. Thus, they gave up their life in the country, the only life they had ever known, in order to find work in Manchester. In other words, Helen Fleetwood showed, as earlier periodicals had done, that starving agricultural laborers would do anything rather than enter the workhouse.

Many real families in agricultural districts had similar
difficulties: they could not find enough work to support themselves. Thomas Carlyle acknowledged this problem in Chartism. The new law said that he who would not work, would not be free. But, Carlyle asked, could a person always find work? Admittedly, the poor rates were diminished, as statistics indeed showed, but "statistic inquiry" provided no real answer, said nothing for example about deaths by starvation. Carlyle opposed the utilitarian notion that the poor would always exist, but he approved of the New Poor Law, at least in part. The old Poor Law, any law, however well meant, that paid for "unthrift, idleness, bastardy, and beer-drinking," had to be eliminated. The new law protected the thrifty laborer against the thriftless, and was a first step in a "general charge . . . taken of the lowest classes by the higher." In particular, Carlyle approved of the principle of centralization as a means of eliminating local variations in applying the law.

The periodicals said little more about the new law until, in 1842, J. F. Murray provided Blackwood's readers with a rare view of people inside workhouses. "Some of the workhouses, that of St. Marylebone, for example, will contain, at times, two thousand of the poor creatures . . . . A tour through the wards of a workhouse is a truly melancholy sight. You behold the wreck of toilworn men, who, having struggled through laborious lives, augmenting the stock of general and individual wealth, are left, in the evening of their days, to the homeless desolation of the workhouse." Murray was particularly appalled by the condition of the children: while Commissioners and Deputy
Commissioners received high salaries, "in many of the bastiles \[\text{sic}\] . . . upwards of sixty per cent per annum \[\text{sic}\] of the children admitted have perished miserably . . . . If we must have abuses in the administration of the Poor-Law, let us have those abuses that fill the bellies of the poor, not swell the already bloated pockets of the rich."

In general, the attitude of the articles published in 1842 reflected the concern expressed in the earlier non-fiction: that laborers could not always find work and that the workhouse was a distasteful alternative even to starvation. Simultaneously, Jessie Phillips began to appear. In everything Mrs. Trollope said about agricultural conditions generally or the workhouse specifically, she disapproved of the New Poor Law and, in particular, of its provision for centralized authority.

At the beginning of the novel, the new law was just going into effect in the village of Deepbrook, the center of a newly-formed Union of nineteen neighboring parishes and the Union Workhouse. Because the newly reconstituted Board of Guardians included members from some of the outlying parishes in the Union, most of the Guardians did not know the applicants for relief who appeared before the Board. Thus, Mrs. Trollope pointed out, centralizing the administration of the new law worked injustices on the local level by eliminating the possibility of personal considerations, forcing each Board instead to follow the law strictly. For example, Mrs. Greenhill, whose son was in jail for debt, appeared before the Deepbrook Board to request parish relief for herself and her son's family until her son could
declare bankruptcy, get out of jail, and find a job. Those members of the Board who knew the Greenhills vouched for their honesty, industry, and character. But the majority of the Guardians, not personally acquainted with the family, followed the letter of the law and denied them relief outside the workhouse. The parish thus had a greater burden on its hands as a result of the new law than it would have had under the old (I, iii-iv, 46-80 passim).

This example, repeated in slightly altered form in the case of Jessie Phillips herself, illustrated Mrs. Trollope's major complaints about centralization. By taking the discretionary power of providing outdoor relief away from local boards, the new law treated all paupers alike, those who tried but could not support themselves and those who did not even try. Here, Mrs. Trollope echoed the arguments of the March 1835 New Monthly Magazine. Furthermore, the new law forced local boards to consign to the workhouse people who needed only temporary parish help, a point made by authors for both Fraser's and the Quarterly Review in 1834. Those people, for their part, avoided requesting relief until absolutely necessary; the experience was an unpleasant one, and so, as both Mrs. Trollope and a number of the periodicals had shown, they were willing virtually to starve first. Jessie Phillips, then, followed a long line of periodical articles that had made the same basic points. The articles, however, had appeared as much as eight years earlier.

Certainly, the problems created and compounded by the New Poor Law had not been solved by 1842, when Mrs. Trollope began Jessie Phillips.
In fact, the law's bad effects were being increasingly felt in some parts of England, and were being felt for the first time in others.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, when Mrs. Trollope described the plight of an honest but destitute woman applying for relief, she was describing a situation that was no less real in 1842 than it had been in 1834. If anything, there were more Mrs. Greenhills when \textit{Jessie Phillips} was begun if only because more districts had come under the jurisdiction of the centralized Poor Law Commission as more parishes had been combined into Unions.

In her novel, Frances Trollope also portrayed what only one periodical article had shown: an actual Board of Guardians' meeting. Because they did not know the applicants personally, several Deepbrook Board members browbeat and terrorized the paupers who appeared before them. When Mrs. Greenhill asked for relief, for example, one of the Guardians who did not know her ridiculed her appearance and made fun of her plight (I, iv, 61-68). On the other hand, Francis Head, the author of the April 1835 \textit{Quarterly Review} article on "English Charity," provided many examples of the Ashford board's fair and efficient operation. Unlike Mrs. Trollope's example seven years later, the Ashford Guardians sincerely attempted to extract honest information from the applicants for relief, and to "administer justice with mercy." In fact, inmates of the workhouse were allowed to complain about conditions, but none did. Furthermore, the Ashford board had £30 a year at its disposal to encourage the poor, privately and judiciously, to remain independent.\textsuperscript{??} Mrs. Trollope's Board had no such power.

Which is the more accurate description? Head admitted that his
example was atypical. If every union of parishes took as good care of the poor as Ashford did, he noted, the New Poor Law could be repealed. Unfortunately, not many unions did. Yet, the period before the old law died and the new one became relatively dominant did provide for the kind of lenient and enlightened approach toward the poor that Head had described. By the early 1840's, however, "it was widely known that . . . the Poor Law had been more strictly administered." 78

Thus, between the Quarterly's article in 1835 and Jessie Phillips in 1842-43, local Boards became less concerned with the individual pauper. Centralization, then, did indeed cause hardships among the honest, deserving, and industrious poor.

In Jessie Phillips, Mrs. Trollope also presented the most precise descriptions of life within a Union. There, paupers were immediately separated from their families. The only seats they had were hard wooden benches barely wide enough to support them. Old people did nothing all day. If paupers found any outside work, even at starvation wages, they were turned out of the house. Generally, then, once people entered the workhouse they could not leave, except to wash up in the small courtyard at the pump used by both sexes. Inmates of the Deepbrook Union were indeed prisoners (I, xx, 223-31).

When Jessie Phillips herself entered, she had to give up her own clothes and wear the "strictly regulated dress of the Union." The food she received, often only gruel, was wretched. The room she slept in was crowded, and her bed was comfortless. Many of the inmates with whom she was "recklessly mingled" were "grossly vicious," and tormented
her about being pregnant. As a result, she found her greatest comfort among the oldest and most infirm paupers, generally near-blind and deaf (II, xxviii, 191-93).

Everything that Mrs. Trollope pointed out in Jessie Phillips showed that the workhouse did dehumanize its occupants. The inmates were allowed no fresh air, no exercise, no visitors, and no visiting privileges to see friends outside the house. When the door shut behind them, they were no longer part of human society. The Union thus had "the faculty of obliterating, from the minds of all without, the remembrance even of the names and the existence of those within it." The inmates became "absorbed into . . . the common sewer of misery" (I, vi, 108).

Nowhere did the periodicals portray so black a picture of life in a workhouse. Several of the articles we have examined did state that conditions were bad, but in often very general terms. Occasional articles had referred to specific provisions of the workhouse test—such as separation from one's family—but only Francis Head in the April 1835 Quarterly had presented details that even approximated those Mrs. Trollope presented. In addition to family separation, both the Quarterly article and Jessie Phillips emphasized the lack of privacy, the inability of the inmates to do anything constructive, the moral deterioration resulting from close association with degenerates, and the diet. But, whereas Head presented a view of workhouses in transition from the old poor law to the new, Jessie Phillips definitely portrayed a Union of the new law. For example, Mrs. Trollope concentrated
on the small amount of food available, a result of the new law.

Jessie Phillips further described the quality of the care given the inmates. Both the non-fiction and the fiction admitted that physical and moral deterioration occurred, but the novel revealed precisely how it did so in three cases. Whereas the Quarterly article had shown how fair the Ashford Board of Guardians was, Mrs. Trollope's novel emphasized the basic unfairness of a Board most of whose members were unacquainted with the people it interviewed. Mrs. Trollope's second example exposed the poor physical care given sick inmates. The apothecary called in had been hired because his rates were low, not because he was able to perform his duties. Furthermore, because he had friends on the Board of Guardians, he was not dismissed (II, xxvii, 176-80). Similarly, the moral education of the inmates was the responsibility of a clergyman who came every Sunday to read prayers. He too had been hired not for any ability he might have had, but because he was willing to work for the small amount the Board offered. Having to return to his own church immediately after his services at the Union, he could never help any individuals in the house who needed personal attention (II, xxxiii, 273-76). Thus the inmates received inadequate medical and spiritual aid, points which the periodicals did not mention.

It was well over a year after Jessie Phillips appeared before any
of our periodicals again said anything about the poor laws. The few articles that did appear generally discussed outdoor relief which, although allegedly abolished by the 1834 Act, nonetheless had continued in practice.\textsuperscript{80} Mortimer O'Sullivan, in the \textit{Quarterly Review} early in 1847, opposed such relief because it confounded "all distinctions between the honest and the vicious, the industrious few and the idle many." Instead, paupers should be forced into workhouses, the "main drain or great receptacle, into which elements unfavorable to the moral wholesomeness of rural life are discharged."\textsuperscript{81} This last comment is significant because O'Sullivan admitted -- with no apparent hesitation or shame -- that the workhouse should be a moral sewer. Yet this was one of the precise points that all other sources in our study, both fiction and non-fiction, had attacked.

O'Sullivan did discuss an idea that had real merit: workhouses should serve to eliminate some of the diseases that plagued families huddled together in unsanitary hovels. Clean air and rooms, good medical care, and good nourishment within the workhouses would alleviate many of the ills that, under less favorable conditions, would linger.\textsuperscript{82} Ironically, the very place in which moral disease was to be cultivated would also be the place for physical disease to be cured.

Few of our other novels referred to the New Poor Law, and none presented the detailed description of the Unions that Mrs. Trollope's did, but several did provide at least cursory glimpses of workhouse conditions. In 1845, without even showing a workhouse, Benjamin
Disraeli condemned it in *Sybil* by having Lord Marney praise it. Marney believed that the country was well off as long as the poor rates declined (II, xii, 110), and that, if agricultural laborers could not live on their salaries, they could always enter the workhouse, which "is heated . . . and has every comfort" (III, ii, 153). Nonetheless, as Carlyle had in *Chartism*, Walter Gerard, the natural and "heroic" leader of the workers, and the father of the novel's heroine, found hope in workhouses: they are, he said, "something for the people at last" (II, v, 65). His was as optimistic a view as we can see in any of the novels of our study.

In 1848, Charles Kingsley only briefly alluded in *Yeast* to the immorality bred in workhouses, an immorality which, according to O'Sullivan, was implicit in the nature of the Union. Paul Tregarva explained to Lancelot Smith that the new law could not counteract the effects of the old, which had "made them slaves and beggars at heart. It taught them not to be ashamed of parish pay -- to demand it as a right" (xiii, 197). In fact, the New Poor Law continued to "suck the independent spirit out of a man," for he knew that ultimately the parish had to care for him. Thus, he often spent his small wages frivolously (xiii, 198). Tregarva himself, however, had lived "for more than two months" the previous winter on bread and water in order to pay, out of his own wages, to keep a "poor labouring man" out of the workhouse, where he would have been separated from his wife and children (iii, 58-59). Nonetheless, the workhouse in Whitford Priors was filled every winter with able-bodied men who desired work but
could find no jobs (viii, 125), a complaint frequently made by earlier periodicals.

Two years later, in Alton Locke, Kingsley again mentioned the workhouse but, instead of emphasizing poor treatment within its walls, he illustrated how difficult it was just to be admitted, a point never expressed in the periodicals. When Alton, faint with hunger, was rescued by some surgical students, they abandoned the idea of placing him in a workhouse to recover: the red tape for admission was too cumbersome (v, 53). In Bleak House, Charles Dickens also showed how difficult it was to gain immediate admittance to a workhouse. Allan Woodcourt, recognizing that Jo needed prompt medical attention, dismissed the Union as a possibility because the red tape was prohibitive (xlvii, 639).

Thus, the early novels of the study, Jessie Phillips in particular, reflected the primary concern of those early periodical articles which discussed provisions of the New Poor Law: the horrors of life inside the workhouse. After Jessie Phillips, the periodicals and the novels contained relatively few references to the new law, but the fiction that did, especially between 1848 and 1853, discussed the difficulty of receiving indoor relief, a problem never brought out in the periodicals. However, the last novel of our study, Little Dorrit, returned to the concerns of the earlier fiction and non-fiction. Although the workhouses Dickens mentioned existed in cities, not in rural areas, the conditions he briefly alluded to and their effects upon potential inmates were the same. We see again that people would do anything to avoid
being incarcerated. Old people, however, were often forced by near-starvation to enter. Once in, they were treated worse than prisoners were (I, xii, 143); like Old Nandy, they had to wear the drab workhouse uniform, and had no privacy and no respect (I, xxxi, 363–65). Dickens thus emphasized at the very end what most periodical articles had discussed throughout the period of our study.
Notes


2. Ibid., lll.

3. Halévy, IV, 4. The same point is made by Checkland, p. 181.

4. Ibid., 107.


7. Ibid.


9. Walker, p. 188.


16. "Booth's Free Trade, as it affects the People," Westminster, 18 (April, 1833), 373.


19. III, i, 142.

20. IV, vi, 280.

21. II, iii, 57.


23. [William P. Alison], "Evils of the State of Ireland," Blackwood's, 40 (October, 1836), 496.

24. Dunlop, p. 96.


35. Chartism, iii, 133.


37. The New Monthly article did not refer to the reports of the Commons Select Committee on Agriculture in 1833 and of the Poor Law Commission in 1834, both of which had favored allotment schemes. In 1843, a Committee on Allotments was appointed and its report also enthusiastically reaffirmed the usefulness of allotments in relieving the agricultural poor. But the reports favored voluntary action by the landlords rather than compulsory enactment. Little came of the system. In the mid-forties, some agricultural laborers, primarily in the southern counties, were able to farm their own lands, but the landlords did not allow the allotment system to gain momentum. They claimed that the laborers did not have enough time to work on the large tracts of land and on their own small farms. See Dunlop, pp. 112-14, and D. C. Barnett, "Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780-1840," in Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution: Essays Presented to J. D. Chambers, ed. E. L. Jones and G. E. Mingay (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 162-83.

38. Hammond, Village Labourer, p. 139.


41. The author may be G. Poulett Scrope.


43. Ibid., 364.


45. Ibid., 479-82.

47. Halfvy, IV, 170.
49. Ibid., 516* [The pages are misnumbered; 516* is a page of the article.]
50. Ibid., 516*-17.
52. Ibid., 66.
55. Ibid., 477.
56. Ibid., 493-97.
57. Ibid., 478.
60. Ibid., 488.
61. Ibid., 489-91.
63. Hammond, Age of Chartists, p. 68.
64. "English Charity," Quarterly, 517.
65. Alfred Mallalieu, "The Whigs—the Radicals—the Middle Classes—and the People," Blackwood's, 41 (April, 1837), 564; George Croly, "The World we Live in. No. VII," Blackwood's, 41 (May, 1837), 611; "The Portrait Gallery.—No. II," Bentley's, 1 (June, 1837), 442; "Principles of Police, and their application to the Metropolis," Fraser's, 16 (August, 1837), 176.

67. Oliver Twist, p. xii.

68. House, p. 96.

69. Ibid., p. 95.


71. Chartism, iii, 130.

72. Ibid., 132-33.

73. J. F. Murray, "World of London. Part IX. Homeless People," Blackwood's, 51 (February, 1842), 190.

74. Ibid., 191.


76. Halfwy, IV, 8.


80. Halfwy, IV, 170.


82. Ibid., 481.
CHAPTER V

REMEDIES

In addition to describing working and living conditions in manufacturing towns and rural areas, the periodicals and novels of our study also examined how such conditions could be improved. What could be done, they asked, for workers in the factories, in the mines, on the farms? What could be done to make their homes if not more sumptuous then at least more sanitary? What could be done to insure that no longer would "a moisty die before the age of five"? What could the men in power in England do to answer what Carlyle had termed the "riddle of the Sphinx": what was Justice, and how was it to be achieved for the laboring masses? Many articles in our selected periodicals between 1833 and 1848 and all the novels in our study discussed or exemplified possible solutions to the problems they were exposing.

One solution was to repeal the Corn Laws, which prohibited the importation of grain unless domestic prices were high. Agitation for free trade existed to a small extent early in our period, but gained great momentum with the formation of several Anti-Corn-Law Associations in 1838, which combined in 1839 to form the Anti-Corn-Law League. One of the League's spokesmen, the Manchester manufacturer Richard Cobden, maintained that abolition of the Corn Laws would help the
manufacturer prosper by providing him with foreign markets for his products, would decrease food costs and insure regular employment, and would make English agriculture more efficient by stimulating demand for its products in industrial areas. However, although the periodicals of our study contained over twenty articles on the subject between 1833 and 1846, when the Corn Laws were repealed, they said little about the laws' effects on social conditions. The articles were, with few exceptions, politically oriented, and examined the effects the Corn Laws were having on both the landowners and the manufacturers, and the possible effects repeal would have on the party in power. The novels of our study said even less than did the periodicals. Only Frances Trollope in Michael Armstrong mentioned the Corn Laws specifically, and then to condemn those manufacturers, such as Sir Matthew Dowling and Elgood Sharpton, who supported repeal for their own profit and base motives (xi, 118). Thus, neither the periodicals nor the novels viewed repeal of the Corn Laws as a remedy specifically for the distress in town and country.

Another possible remedy for the conditions in which laborers lived and worked was to be found in the objectives of Chartism, the working-class movement that grew out of the London Working Men's Association. On May 8, 1838, the People's Charter, drafted by three of the Association's leaders, was published, demanding universal male suffrage, secret ballot, payment of members of Parliament, abolition of the property qualification for members, equal electoral
districts, and annual elections. Parliament rejected the Charter in 1839, in 1842, and finally in 1848 when the Chartists' promised show of strength failed to materialize on Kennington Common. Over forty articles in our periodicals and half of our novels discussed Chartism, often viewing it as synonymous with agitation and violence. Generally, the non-fiction expressed fear that the movement would lead to revolution. Its most sympathetic non-fictional treatment occurred in Chartism, in which Thomas Carlyle maintained that the movement would exist as long as the conditions which engendered it. The novelists were more sympathetic than the periodical writers were. Mrs. Gaskell had originally intended her 1848 novel to be named John Barton, after her movingly-portrayed fictional Chartist. And Charles Kingsley's 1850 hero, Alton Locke, was also understandably converted to Chartism. However, neither genre viewed the movement as a remedy. Instead, both viewed it as a result of the intolerable conditions in which laborers had to work and live.

Indeed, Chartism was not a remedy. Nor, however, was it intended to be the violent movement which both genres portrayed it to be and which it often became. Its goal was to achieve greater political power in order to bring about social change, but it intended to use the political system, not overthrow it. To this end, it allied itself temporarily with the Anti-Corn-Law League in 1842, but the alliance soon dissolved.

Certainly, legislation could be viewed as a remedy. The Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844, for all their weaknesses, did provide for some
inspection of factory conditions and also kept the pressure on manufacturers to make improvements in their factories. In 1847 the Ten Hours' Bill finally passed, and in 1848 the first Public Health Act, short-lived though it was, helped to improve sanitary conditions.

Nonetheless, neither the periodical articles nor the fiction particularly emphasized the efficacy of legislation to solve social problems. John Wilson, in Blackwood's, maintained that factory legislation was ineffective because of the compromises reducing its enforceability, but that it was necessary for sanitary reform. John Stuart Mill, in the Edinburgh Review, saw legislation as a beginning, as "instalments of a great social reform" which would "extinguish, not indeed poverty—that was hardly desirable—but the more abject forms of vice, destitution, and physical wretchedness." And a Westminster Review author wrote, "Until the wants of the poor are made the standards of legislation, hopes of general and social welfare are vain and hollow."

The novels were slightly more interested in legislation. In Bleak House, Dickens recognized that new laws could not by themselves eliminate Tom-all-alone's, where Jo lived, or the pestilent churchyard to which Lady Dedlock was drawn. In Hard Times, however, he admitted that legislation was a means of improving workers' conditions at least slightly. Helen Fleetwood (vi, 529; xvii, 605) and Mary Barton (viii, 81) referred to factory laws whose purpose was to protect child laborers from being hired too young and worked long hours. But
the effectiveness of such laws was nullified either by weak provisions or by strong opposition to their enforcement. In fact, only Helen Fleetwood (xviii, 611; xxii, 644), Michael Armstrong and Sybil (I, vi, 42) of all our selected novels explicitly stated a need for "legal relief from the oppression of a system which has brought laborers to a lower state of degradation and misery than any to which human beings have ever been brought before" (Michael Armstrong, xxvii, 313).

What we see in both the periodicals and the fiction is a general recognition that some legislation was necessary: perhaps a Sanitation Act, perhaps an enforceable Factory Act. Such acts could provide immediate relief from existing conditions, but they could be only palliatives. What could Parliament do ultimately to prevent workers from squandering their wages, as factory laborers often did in good times? What could Parliament do to keep men, women, and children out of gin shops even if it passed laws improving the condition of their homes? What, in fact, could anyone do to prevent laborers from procreating boundlessly? Though he was by no means the first to do so, Thomas Carlyle arrived at two answers which had been and were to be supported -- though not unanimously -- by some of the periodicals and novels: "Two things, great things, dwell, for the last ten years, in all thinking heads in England . . .: Universal Education and general Emigration . . . ." Carlyle, the periodicals, and especially the fiction also emphasized a third: class responsibility.
Emigration was, of course, only a temporary solution, and the periodical writers and novelists discussed it less than they did either education or class responsibility. The non-fiction generally viewed it as a means of reducing overpopulation in England. The novels more often used it to allow characters to escape their pasts and begin life anew.

In the January 1833 Blackwood's, Archibald Alison examined the disastrous results of the flow of Ireland's "redundant" population into England, and suggested that the Irish should emigrate instead to Canada. Thomas Carlyle, who called for "general Emigration" in both Chartism and Past and Present, viewed it as a means of decreasing the number of surplus working people. The one article that echoed Carlyle's proposal for increased emigration and, in fact, an "emigration service," appeared in the Westminster Review of August 1843, four months after Past and Present was published. The Westminster's author saw no other solution if the population continued to increase, as it had been doing, at the rate of 230,000 annually. Like Carlyle, he also recognized the futility of voluntary abstinence as a means of limiting population. "Smart Sally in our alley proves all-too fascinating to brisk Tom in yours: can Tom be called on to make pause, and calculate the demand for labour in the British Empire first," Carlyle wrote in Chartism.

Only two of the novels of our study referred to emigration as a means of reducing the surplus population of workers, and then only very
briefly. In Sybil, the evil Lord Marney approved of the idea as he discussed recent rick-burnings on his property: "It is all an affair of population . . . . Nothing can put this country right but emigration on a great scale" (II, xii, 112). And in Bleak House, the practitioner of "Telescopie Philanthropy," Mrs. Jellyby, hoped to cultivate the coffee berry of Borrioboola-Gha, educate the natives, and establish a "happy settlement, on the banks of the African rivers, of our superabundant home population" (iv, 34). But Lord Marney and Mrs. Jellyby were being satirized by Disraeli and Dickens, and cannot be considered their spokesmen. Dickens, we shall see, did view emigration favorably in some of his other novels, but not for population control.

In the September 1835 Quarterly Review, John Barrow maintained that England could reduce the "redundancy of labour which weighs so heavily on our parish rates" if paupers were allowed to emigrate instead of being forced into the workhouse. The results would be completely beneficial: fewer people in England would need relief, and the poor-rates would decline. In addition, the paupers would be able to make new lives for themselves in Canada. Barrow provided specific illustrations of poor people who had found success by emigration.

No other periodical article emphasized emigration as a means of achieving a "new start in life." However, several of our novels did. In return for her information on young Oliver Twist, Mr. Brownlow tried to persuade Nancy to seek "asylum" either in a remote part of England or, preferably, in a foreign country where she would be unknown and could
safely make a new life for herself (xlvi, passim). Elizabeth Gaskell
used emigration as a means of "cancelling . . . the actual difficulties"
at the end of Mary Barton. 17 Mary, her husband Jem, and her mother-in-
law went to Canada at the end of the novel, and were joined there by
Job Legh, Margaret, and Will. These characters were thus able to put
thousands of miles between themselves and their tragic pasts (xxxviii,
passim). In a sense, so were Alton Locke and John Crossthwaite. While
Charles Kingsley sympathetically portrayed his hero's conversion to
Chartism, he nonetheless made clear that it was not the answer to the
difficulties Alton Locke had endured. En route to Texas, Alton
finished his memoirs and could more objectively review his life. Thus
he was able, if not to begin life anew, at least to die in peace (xli,
passim).

Perhaps the best known emigration in the novels of our study
occurred near the end of David Copperfield (1849-50). Mr. Micawber in
particular found Australia more suited to his abilities, and became
a famous magistrate. The others who journeyed with him -- Martha,
Mr. Peggotty, Mrs. Gummidge -- also found happiness in a new land. 18
Only Emily seemed excluded from the joy that pervaded the lives of her
friends. Or so, at least, it appeared to Mr. Peggotty. Yet here we
must step back from the story, and in particular from Mr. Peggotty's
brief narrative to David. While the old man believed that "the
solitude done her good," he could not be certain. Yet Dickens, I
believe, was indicating that Emily was at least becoming happy, was
feeling useful in her service to her friends and neighbors. Her
experience with Steerforth was past, had died in the storm with him, and had been purged from her being by the heroic Ham and her own wanderings. The people whom she met in Australia never learned of this part of her past, but knew only of some vague, tragic love in her life. She was free, in other words, of the Victorian stigma of the fallen woman. Thus, she was able to begin anew in Australia, and to reassert the basic human goodness and dignity which the younger David had so loved in her. Under such circumstances and with such a nature, she could only be happy.

For the most part, then, the periodicals said little about the efficacy of emigration as a remedy for the social ills that plagued England. Those that did, however, generally agreed with Carlyle that emigration could decrease the surplus working population. The novels, on the other hand, emphasized not what would be done for English society by such a remedy, but what could be done for the individuals who emigrated.

II

The periodicals and the novels discussed education as a possible remedy far more than they did emigration. The non-fiction in particular emphasized the need for a national system of education, one in which all people would be assured of learning to read, write, and reason. The call for such a system was heard throughout the sixteen years of our study.

In Sartor Resartus (1833-34), Thomas Carlyle introduced the ideas
that he was to repeat and more fully develop in Chartism. All people should have education, Carlyle maintained: "That there should one Man die ignorant who had capacity for knowledge, this I call a tragedy." In Chartism, Carlyle expanded his ideas to show that education was necessary to bring order to the chaos of laborers' lives, and to prevent revolution. Education was not only an "eternal" duty, but an "ephemeral" one as well, a moral imperative and a practical one. By 1843, Carlyle was able to make two proposals in Past and Present to educate Englishmen: England needed to establish universal education for the masses, and to create a "Teaching Service" in order to "contrive to get us taught."  

While Carlyle was developing his ideas on education, the periodicals also recognized the need for a national system. In 1833 and 1834, authors for the Edinburgh Review, Fraser's, Blackwood's and the Westminster Review all discussed ideas that were to be developed in nearly sixty articles in the following fourteen years, specifically, that education would make the lower classes more reasonable and better governed, that the poor needed a moral education in order to distinguish good from evil, and that national education would make people useful to society by teaching them political economy and utilitarian morality. The key term in their discussions was "morality": teaching the lower classes to avoid vice, to live "good lives," and, particularly emphasized, to be happy with the lot provided them by God. So large a
number of articles is evidence of the importance that the periodicals attached to education as a remedy for the social ills of the nation.25

The novels, too, viewed education of the lower classes as a means of instilling morality. In Jessie Phillips, for example, Mrs. Trollope informed her readers that Jessie was easily seduced because, "the awakening process of education being wanting, the finer faculties slept" (I, ix, 187). Of the workers in Hard Times who were unable to read, Charles Dickens commented that their inability would have been "half ludicrous, if any aspect of public ignorance could ever be otherwise than threatening and full of evil" (III, iv, 247). But the fiction attacked the idea, which appeared frequently in the periodicals, that education should teach the lower classes to "keep their place." There is little doubt what our reaction should be, for example, when we enter a factory-run Sunday School in Michael Armstrong and hear the owner telling the children in threatening terms that obedience to their earthly masters was the only means of salvation (xxii, 241).

We see similar ideas being attacked in Dombey and Son, Yeast, Alton Locke, and Bleak House. Upon placing Rob Toodle in a charity school, Mr. Dombey explained: "I am far from being friendly ... to what is called by persons of levelling sentiments, general education. But it is necessary that the inferior classes should continue to be
taught to know their position, and to conduct themselves properly. So far I approve of schools" (v, 59). Lancelot Smith listened as Lord Vieuxbois explained that the clergy should educate agricultural laborers, who in turn "were to take down thankfully as much as it was thought proper to give them" (vi, 100). Kingsley reiterated this idea in his next novel as John Crossthwaite told Alton Locke that the clergy taught the poor only enough to retain their obedience (iv, 42). And, in Bleak House, Sir Leicester Dedlock found it incomprehensible that people should desire "getting out of the station into which they are called ... and from that, to their educating other people out of their stations" (xxviii, 397).

The fiction and the non-fiction were reflecting, in their discussions of universal education, the belief of politicians and reformers both in Parliament and outside that current education for the working classes, where it existed at all, was ineffective. In rural areas in particular, education was still inadequate for laborers in the early 1840's. Some villages had schools in which to teach the three R's, but the children were often removed from the classroom as soon as they were old enough to earn money by field labor. The schools were inadequately supplied, the teaching was of poor quality, and the attendance was irregular.26

Only one article in our selected periodicals, however, referred to the state of education in agricultural areas. In the January 1844 Edinburgh Review, W. R. Greg discussed the two Reports of the Children's Employment Commission and indicated that the little information that
existed about rural education showed how ineffective it was: "It appears moreover, that, as far as could be ascertained, the state of education among the factory operatives, though far from what it ought to be, was, to say the least, less deplorable than that of rural districts..."27

Of the two novels which portrayed village schools, Jessie Phillips appeared before Greg's article and provided little information. We learn only that Jessie read better than anyone else while she attended (v, 88), but that she left too soon to have learned to avoid immorality (ix, 187). The other novel, Jane Eyre, provided many more details about a village school. To establish a school for poor village boys, Jane's cousin St. John Rivers had accepted financial help from the daughter of a factory owner in the district. Rivers was the teacher, had provided the school building and the books, and was in the process of finding similar facilities for girls. Jane Eyre was to be the schoolmistress,28 and was to teach the girls reading, writing, knitting, and sewing. Obviously, this school was not as "deplorable" as Greg had believed village schools to be. However, he had been more interested in drawing a comparison favorable to manufacturers than in presenting a completely accurate picture, and, I believe, Charlotte Brontë was less interested in factual description than in presenting another episode in her heroine's life.

She might also have been indicating that education, even of the lowest classes, was possible if conditions within the schools were good, if the students had time to spend on their education, and if the teachers
were qualified. For, although the students were generally illiterate at the beginning of their education, Jane Eyre recognized that "these coarsely clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy; and that the germs of native excellence, refinement, intelligence, kind feeling, are as likely to exist in their hearts as in those of the best born" (xxxix, 207-208). In fact, her little scholars did improve, and justified the faith she had had in their abilities.

For the children of town workers, there were three categories of schools: "dame schools," often run by men however, and common day schools; charity schools and Sunday schools (also available in rural areas); and voluntary schools supported by private subscription. Teachers in the dame schools needed no qualifications, and often could earn a living no other way. The 4d. to 6d. they charged each week was expensive for the results they achieved in their overcrowded, unventilated, and unequipped surroundings. When the children were slightly older, they attended a common day school at the same cost. However, the teachers there too were often no better qualified than those of the dame schools. The charity and Sunday schools were generally free to children, and were intended primarily to teach them to "keep their stations." They taught writing, reading (often only the Bible), and the Catechism. Existing from the 1780's, the Sunday schools in particular were intended for very poor children and for young workers whose labor prevented them from attending school on weekdays. By the early nineteenth century, however, there were still large pockets of
total illiteracy, a situation which seems to have become worse by the '30's and '40's. 

While the periodicals said little about Sunday schools in particular, two of the novels provided more information. We learn in Helen Fleetwood that Richard Green and Helen taught Sunday school and that the other Green children attended (ii, 512). Since Charlotte Tonna emphasized the moral nature of the whole family, we are expected to assume that the school reinforced that morality. In Michael Armstrong, a clergyman complained that hard factory labor sapped children of "strength and spirits," and prevented them from attending Sunday school (xix, 207). Most of the references to schools in this novel, in fact, were to factory-operated Sunday schools, and Mrs. Trollope emphasized their total ineffectiveness. Although many of the children had worked until midnight on Saturday, school began promptly at 7 a.m. Sunday with prayers. Naturally, the children were too tired to benefit from the harangue directed at them by the owner. And a harangue it was; the manufacturer began by calling them "wicked and ungrateful children" but changed his tone upon seeing visitors in the room (xxii, 240). Mrs. Trollope was concerned here with exposing the hypocrisy of such a master, but she was also emphasizing that, even had the school been better run, the children were unable to stay awake.

The periodicals and novels said only slightly more about charity schools than they did about Sunday schools. In October 1840, W. C. Taylor maintained in Bentley's Miscellany that charity schools were necessary to provide a moral education. Yet, the magazine recognized,
"The patrons of charity-schools too frequently endeavour to make their benevolence perform double duty; there is to be charity in the appointment of the teacher, as well as in the admission of the scholars..." 32

In 1846, Dombey and Son began to appear, with descriptions of the humiliations heaped upon charity-school students. Mr. Dombey had placed Rob Toodle in the school of the Charitable Grinders, "an ancient establishment... where not only is a wholesome education bestowed upon the scholars, but where a dress and badge are likewise provided for them." Poor Rob had to run through the streets, on his way to and from school, in a "blue baize tailed coat and cap, turned up with orange-coloured binding; red worsted stockings; and very strong leather small-clothes" (v, 59). The event his mother envisioned naturally occurred: Rob was taunted, jeered at, and finally attacked by the street urchins (vi, 68). But Dickens attacked more than the uniform. The schoolmaster was "a superannuated old Grinder of savage disposition, who had been appointed schoolmaster because he didn't know anything, and wasn't fit for anything," and, furthermore, was a sadist (vi, 68). While Dickens is known for his exaggerations and caricatures, too much of his description agrees with Taylor's comments for us not to accept what he said as generally the truth.

Lord Ashley discussed "Ragged Schools" in a December Quarterly Review article based on the Second Annual Report of the Ragged School Union. He pointed out that such schools accepted those children who could not afford the penny-a-week and clean clothes necessary for
subscription schools. The children were ragged not only in dress but in habits and morality also. However, "patience and principle have conquered them all [the bad habits]; and now we may see, on each evening of the week, hundreds of these young maniacs engaged in diligent study, clothed, and in their right mind."

Although Dickens and Lord Ashley were talking about two different kinds of schools, both kinds existed to teach children of impoverished backgrounds. The similarity ended there. Whereas the Charitable Grinders had done everything possible to make life miserable for their students, Lord Ashley clearly established that the Ragged Schools were succeeding: "Orderly and decent habits are of slow growth," he wrote near the end of the article, "and specially in those circumstances where the practice is inevitably separated from the theory," but good had been achieved. The teachers deserved and received respect, and the students were learning.

In 1847, Jane Eyre provided a detailed view of what Charlotte Brontë referred to as a charity school, even though relatives had to pay £15 a year for each student. In some ways it seemed to be a boarding-school version of the Charitable Grinders. The girls wore plain dresses, like uniforms, and were taught humility in their positions in life (iv, 49). The school was barren of comfort for the inmates -- such they were in reality -- and all its activities were regulated by bells (v, 65-67).

For six chapters Charlotte Brontë described the insufficient food and heat provided for the girls, the inability of the teachers to
overcome the horrible conditions, and the brutality of the man in charge. Finally, public indignation at the quantity of food, the quality of the water, and the wretched accommodations forced changes that enabled Jane to live there in reasonable security and comfort as a teacher for eight years (x, 135-36). In other words, Bronte seemed to be saying, charity-schools need not have been so horribly run, they could be beneficial, and students could profit from them. Certainly, Jane Eyre did.

The two school systems supported by private funds were the British and Foreign School Society, founded in 1807, and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, founded in 1811. The former was Whig- and Nonconformist-oriented, and provided a non-sectarian approach to education. The National Society, as its full title signified, was Anglican in intent and practice.

These two societies received little attention from the periodicals of our study, even though the Government viewed them as a handy means of providing a scheme of national education. The periodicals referred more often in general terms to the need for mass education, rather than to specific systems. In fact, very few of the articles in our study even mentioned the two societies by name. In the October 1833 Edinburgh Review, James Pillans wrote that they provided "meager" instruction, especially the National Society which gave a religious slant to everything that it taught. Fraser attacked the subscription schools in January 1834: they retarded intellectual growth and,
if they could not be improved, they should be abolished. They should be abolished. Near the end of our period, in October 1846, the Westminster Review gave a lengthy history of the two societies' quarrels in order to emphasize the need for a national system. And in August 1847, Fraser's provided a similar history, applauding the government's efforts to train teachers, but saying that such efforts were but a slow start to change "darkness" to "light."

None of the novels of our study discussed or referred to either society's schools. Instead, when specific schools were described, they were divested of most identifying characteristics, the novelists concentrating on their moral effects. One exception was the Sunday school we have already seen in Michael Armstrong. A picture in the original edition clearly showed a sign over the door, "Evangelical Sunday School" (xxii, opposite 241). Nonetheless, this identification was not developed, nor was it relevant to Mrs. Trollope's point there.

None of our novels, furthermore, alluded to the inability of the British and Foreign Society and the National Society to find some common ground of agreement. For neither society could tolerate the other's point of view. Thus, although the principle of popular education had been generally accepted by 1832 -- except by agriculturists who wanted a steady supply of cheap labor -- it was nearly forty years before a national system became law.

The Factory Act of 1833 had provided for compulsory education for every child whose employment in a factory was restricted to forty-eight hours a week, that is, for children under thirteen. However, it was
left to the manufacturers to provide the schools and to recover their costs out of the children's wages. As a result, many manufacturers did not provide schools for their young employees or at least found devious ways around the required two hours of education each day.

The periodicals of our study referred only occasionally to factory schools. The Edinburgh Review of July 1835 briefly mentioned that "Many factories have day schools, or Sunday schools, or both attached to them, which the children attend," but said nothing about their quality. In the following year, the Westminster Review discussed a Royal Commission Report which had shown what a "state of gross and barbarous ignorance" factory workers were in. Because of the great demand for child labor, the Commission had discovered, children were working during the day and so could attend school only in the evening. But after a full day's work, they were unable to concentrate on school work. Thus, the report had concluded and the Westminster concurred, factory schools were ineffective.

Of all our periodicals, the Westminster was the most concerned about education of workers, and it returned to the subject throughout the early 1840's. In September 1840, for example, one of its authors reviewed a pamphlet entitled "The Elevation of the Labouring Class of the Community," and agreed that the greatest hope for the future of society lay in education of masses of laborers even if after a hard day's work. In fact, the reviewer stated, "There is nothing in the manufacturing system which necessarily has a tendency to exclude the working classes from a much larger share of the means of enjoyment,"
and intellectual cultivation, than they have hitherto obtained."\(^{44}\)

But in December 1843 another Westminster article stated unequivocally that the Factory Schools were useless, the students were taught by rote, and the teachers themselves were poorly educated.\(^{45}\)

The novels also referred to the Education provision of the 1833 Factory Act only occasionally. But the early ones that did were usually more specific in their references to the ineffectiveness of that law. Both Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong indicated how easily manufacturers could avoid providing any education and how the education they might provide was useless. In Mrs. Tonna's novel, one of the minor characters explained that, although factory children were supposed to have a voucher from a teacher certifying that they had attended school for two hours daily, manufacturers forged such vouchers in order to keep the youngsters working (v, 526). Only a very few mill-owners had established well-conducted schools for their workers (xiii, 575). More often, even those children who did attend factory schools learned as little as had young Kay Malony:

> During school-hours she went to a place where as many children as could stand in it were crowded in a small room; the mistress was an old woman who kept some of the better dressed near her, and they seemed to be spelling and reading, and some had slates; but she with many other little girls, had never yet been called up to the table, except to receive their certificate; they had a few torn Primers, into which they looked if any chanced to come in; otherwise, they rested, talked and played among themselves, glad of the relaxation. She had been a year and one month going: in the course of that time the
mistress had been changed; but Katy had not yet
learned her alphabet. (xiii, 573)

Frances Trollope made clear that the slight education young
Michael had received while under Sir Matthew Dowling's roof was
nonetheless more than he would have had if he had remained in the
factory. He simply would not have had sufficient time to earn a
subsistence wage and attend school (xiii, 145). We have already
seen the factory Sunday school at which the young children were
too tired to learn anything. In fact, Sophy Drake told Mary Brotherton,
most of the children slept for the hour and a half of "instruction"
(xxii, 241).

The only other novel that mentioned factory schools maintained
that they could be well run. Sybil never showed the schools, but
merely referred to those established by the Traffords, in the novel
the epitome of beneficent mill-owners (II, ix, 90). The school
was reported to be excellent.

Certainly, as our examples have shown, education was considered
to be a major remedy for society's ills. It was discussed, however,
far more in the non-fiction than in the fiction. Furthermore,
whereas the periodicals emphasized the use of mass education to
eliminate the immorality of the lower classes, the novels concentrated
on the quality of the education being provided, not on the motives
behind it.

Both genres also contained many discussions of education of
middle- and upper-class children. For our study of the social conditions
of factory workers, artisans, and agricultural laborers, however, such discussions are not relevant.

III

Although the periodical writers and novelists believed education to be a more lasting remedy than emigration, even it was not sufficient to eliminate social inequities. Society needed to recognize that the "various orders ... are mutually dependent ...." Writers in the two genres believed that increased class responsibility, that is, a greater feeling of sympathy between classes, would be a major remedy for horrible living and working conditions. If the factory owners and landowners, for example, recognized their responsibility to their laborers, social conditions would improve.

This certainly was the burden of the argument offered by several articles early in our study. "Let us not fly away as on wings of aerial voyages of discovery, while disregarded miseries are lying thick around our feet!" wrote John Wilson in the April 1833 Blackwood's. The Westminster Review for the same month emphasized the "natural connexions" between classes by pointing out that "Evils which affect one class, poison the sources of well-being in another . . . . The true interest of each is the happiness of all." It was of course a utilitarian approach, but the main point was echoed by all the periodicals of our study which discussed the nature of class responsibility: relations between masters and workers have deteriorated to a cash rather than a moral basis; the masters should take a
"kindly interest" in their workers; the "impersonal relationship" between employer and employee, in which the masters in particular do not know about or even care to know about their workers, has given rise to socialism and other evils; and worker and master should know and respect each other so that each "will thus be gradually awakened to a sense of the mutual obligations of master and man."

Probably the most famous and influential indictments of the relationship between owner and worker appeared in Thomas Carlyle's works. In Chartism, for example, Carlyle maintained that "a genuine understanding by the upper classes of society" was needed of the "under classes." The problem with contemporary society, as he saw it and as several of our periodicals pointed out, was that "Cash Payment had become the universal sole nexus of man to man." No longer did the lower classes feel loyalty to the upper. No longer did the upper classes feel responsibility toward the lower.

He reiterated these points in Past and Present through his comparison of his time with Abbot Samson's. "Working Mammonism" could help England, but it had first to become aware of its "noble destinies," to recognize that money alone did not represent success, and then to reform itself. An "Industrial Aristocracy" of manufacturers who have recognized their responsibility to the other classes was "indispensable." Those vested interests who would
oppose improvements in the lives of workers and who would worry
instead about their own profits had to learn how much more important
were "health, and life, and a soul." 57

The need for more understanding between employer and employee,
discussed in several periodicals and in Carlyle, was emphasized even
more in the fiction of our study. Helen Fleetwood and Michael
Armstrong, appearing after half of our periodical articles on the sub-
ject as well as Chartism had appeared, portrayed "good" members of the
upper class, people who recognized their responsibility to the lower
classes and who willingly acted to fulfill that responsibility. At a
picnic in a large field in Helen Fleetwood, for example, Mrs. Tonna made
this very point about the Squire who owned the land. Each poor person
present acknowledged within himself that "My employer knows me; I
am not in his sight a mere piece of machinery, regarded only while it
works in his service. There's a tie between us that he, though a
rich man, would not disown" (xiv, 578). Later in the same novel,
Richard Green learned about a factory owner who differed from most of
his peers: "whereas they considered the personal interests of
master and labourer to be things not only irreconcilable, but diametrically
opposed to one another, he regarded them as identical . . . " (xx, 623).
The sentiment was Carlylean.

So too was much of what was said on the subject in Michael
Armstrong. In fact, the contrast between Mary Brotherton's desire to
learn about young Michael and Sir Matthew Dowling's obsession to
eliminate Michael from the scene was often couched in Carlylean terms.
For example, Miss Brotherton believed it was her "duty" to learn about the conditions of the factory workers (x, 95; xi, 114). She recognized a chasm between the Rich and the Poor, and wondered, "Is the division just? -- Oh, God! Is it holy?" (xii, 137). Such questions never occurred to the patently evil Sir Matthew. Instead, to him the workers were "brutes and beasts . . . and like brutes and beasts they should be treated " (xiii, 139).

Most of the other novels which discussed class responsibility also did so in Carlylean terms. The most frequent discussions were in Sybil, where Disraeli's debt to Carlyle was great. For example, Mr. Trafford, the Carlylean ideal of a factory owner, had a "correct conception of the relations which should subsist between the employer and the employed. He felt that between them there should be other ties than the payment and the receipt of wages." His factory was well lighted and well ventilated, his workers were healthy, and because they worked under the guidance of their parents, the children remained moral. Trafford also constructed a village for his workers, and insured that their children attended the schools that he built (III, viii, 184-85). Another Carlylean figure, the aristocrat Charles Egremont, compared his family's past with its present. He sensed that a greater class responsibility had existed centuries earlier (II, iv, 61), a view that echoed Carlyle's. And his conclusion was also Carlylean: in the present, as in the past, there are "natural leaders of the people" (IV, xv, 282).

When Egremont set out to learn about the lower classes, he took with him the recognition that "The new generation of the aristocracy of
England are not tyrants, not oppressors . . ." (IV, xv, 282). Here, Disraeli's "Young England" beliefs were evident. "Young England" was a group of men who reacted against the values that Industrialism and Benthamism were rapidly creating in Victorian England, and who wished to reform the Tory party. One of the group's beliefs was its "unrepentant feudalism," especially the sense that the upper classes were obligated to help the lower. We can see how important the beliefs of both Young England and Carlyle were to Disraeli if we accept a standard critical view of Sybil: to show that "the remedy for real abuses" is to be found in "a new and noble semi-feudalism."59

Mr. Dombey, in Dombey and Son, was the epitome of the kind of businessman Carlyle was attacking. Paying Polly Toodle to become nurse to Paul, Jr., he stated the conditions of the contract: "It is not at all in this bargain that you need become attached to my child, or that my child need become attached to you . . . . When you go away from here, you will have concluded what is a mere matter of bargain and sale . . . ." (ii, 16). The "bargain" was the embodiment of the cash-payment-nexus.

In Mary Barton, Job Legh desired a greater understanding between masters and their employees. Workers suffered, Job maintained, because the masters had failed in their responsibilities: "Them that is strong in any of God's gifts is meant to help the weak" (xxxvii, 373-74). Suffering, then, is God's way of testing the virtue of other people. Job's wish was finally realized when Mr. Carson, whose son had been murdered by John Barton, expressed a new-found desire "that a perfect
understanding, and complete confidence and love, might exist between masters and men that the truth might be recognized that the interests of one were the interests of all . . . " (xxxvii, 375).

We see similar changes of heart occur in Robert Moore, the mill-owner of Shirley, and in Robert Thornton, the factory-owner of North and South. Both were, in Carlyle's term, Hammonists. Both placed the value of machinery over the welfare of their workers. And both eventually learned the error of their ways. Moore saw how laborers lived in London, sympathized with them, and reformed himself. For, as he told a friend, "To respect himself, a man must believe he renders justice to his fellow-men" (xxx, 555). "What is Justice?" was the question of the Sphinx, Carlyle had told readers of Past and Present. Robert Moore apparently found an answer.

So did Robert Thornton in Mrs. Gaskell's novel, but as a result of experiences with his own workers. Furthermore, we see in North and South, as we did not in Shirley, one of the major forces operating upon the master. In his several discussions with Margaret Hale, eventually to be his wife, Thornton was exposed to Carlylean ideas about the relationship that should exist between employer and employee. "I see two classes dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own" (xv, 139), she told him one day, and added soon after, "God has made us so that we must be mutually dependent. We may ignore our own dependence, or refuse to acknowledge that others depend upon us in more respects than the payment of weekly wages; but the thing must
be, nevertheless" (xv, 146). The ideas expressed have their bases in passages from both Chartism and Past and Present.

Thornton's initial response placed him far from Carlyle's ideal: "I choose to be the unquestioned and irresponsible master of my hands" (xv, 146). However, as a result of his discussions with Margaret, and even more as a result of his growing acquaintance with Nicholas Higgins, one of his workers, Robert Thornton changed. He and Higgins recognized each other's humanity, and hence modified their respective views. When Thornton's mill failed, he sought a position as manager of another mill. "My only wish," he declared, "is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere 'cash nexus' . . . . Such intercourse is the very breath of life" (li, 521-22).

Perhaps Thornton's desire and Carlyle's belief were best expressed in the fiction by Stephen Blackpool, the tragic figure of Hard Times. His dying prayer was "that aw th' world may on'y co'om togeth' more, an' get a better unnerstan' in' o' one another" (III, ix, 273).

We have in a sense returned to the beginning of this chapter. For this "better unnerstan' in'" might result in legislation to eliminate the worst abuses of the poor, such as the Corn Laws, the deadly conditions of factory work, and the unsanitary conditions of home life. It might also provide funds for habitual unfortunates like Jem Wilson to emigrate and begin a new life. But that "better unnerstan' in'" would have to be achieved by education, not only of the lower classes, but also of the upper. They too would have to learn the lessons that
Egremont, Carson, Moore, and Thornton learned, the ideas espoused by several periodicals, Thomas Carlyle, Job Legh, and Stephen Blackpool.
Notes

1. Sybil, III, iv, 176.
5. Chartism, i, 119.
7. Ibid., p. 271.
14. Chartism, x, 200; Past and Present, IV, iii, 263.
15. Chartism, x, 201.
18. Charles Dickens, David Copperfield (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), ch. lxiii, passim. Subsequent references will be included in the text.

20. Chartism, x, 194.

21. Past and Present, IV, i1i, 262-63.

22. [James Pillans], "National Education in England and France," Edinburgh, 58 (October, 1833), 2; "Present Condition of the People, Labourers in Cities and Towns," Fraser's, 9 (January, 1834), 72-87 passim.


28. Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1924), xxx, 200-201. Subsequent references will be included in the text.

29. Gregg, p. 228; Altick, English Common Reader, p. 147.

30. Hammond, Age of Chartists, p. 169; Altick, English Common Reader, p. 150.


33. Anthony Ashley Cooper, "The Ragged Schools," Quarterly, 35 (December, 1846), 131.

34. Ibid., 139.


37. "Present Condition of the People. Labourers in Cities and Towns," Fraser's, 76.


49. "A few Words of Advice to Clerks, Shopmen, and Apprentices," Fraser's, 12 (September, 1835), 267.


53. Chartism, i, 122.

54. Ibid., vi, 162.


56. Ibid., IV, i, 248.

57. Ibid., IV, iii, 262.


60. I, ii, 18-19.

61. Ibid., I, vi, 38; III, ii, 148, and ix, 186; IV, vi, 293; Chartism, vi, 162.
CHAPTER V I

ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES OF THE SOCIAL NOVELISTS

The previous chapters have shown that the living and working conditions "exposed" by the social novels from *Oliver Twist* to *Little Dorrit* had already been discussed by the periodicals beginning in 1833. In presenting this social material under the guise of fiction, the novelists had to adapt it to their literary ends. Several of our selected novels have been dismissed as artistic achievements, and discussed—if at all—only for their social content. Of *Helen Fleetwood*, for example, Cazamian has said, "C'est une dissertation, non une oeuvre d'art"; critics have agreed that *Michael Armstrong* is an inartistic "moral satire"; *Yeast* is a "pamphlet plutôt qu'un roman"; and *Alton Locke* is a tract that "preaches" too much. On the other hand, *Hard Times* has been called a "creative examination of the dominant philosophy of industrialism," and recently, in *The Captain of Industry in English Fiction*, Ivan Melada praised Dickens for creating "art out of the materials of polemic." In particular, this critic continued, "the characterization of Bounderby has an artistic quality that is generally absent from the industrial novel with a purpose." This last comment can serve to summarize the relatively few critical discussions of Victorian social novels in the past hundred years: "artistic quality"
has rarely been discovered in them. Instead, as P. J. Keating has recently claimed, the discursive material has been emphasized at the expense of "art."\(^3\)

In this chapter we shall examine the art of the social concern novelists: the techniques they used to incorporate the material they derived from the blue books, the periodicals, and personal experience. For when they chose fiction as their medium to portray certain social conditions, they implicitly also chose to conform to contemporary popular expectations by telling a "good story." Where that desire conflicted with their social purpose, we must ask if they did violence to the one in order to do justice to the other. Did they, for example, include digressive plot strands merely to provide descriptions of social conditions? Did their social thesis stand in the way of attempts to create developed characters? Did they find it necessary to emphasize social ideas by entering their pages in their own voices?

I

If the social concern is a novel's sole raison d'être, the novelist will likely eliminate any plot strands which do not contribute directly to the social comment. For the simpler the plot, the more easily the message can be seen. So it is that Helen Fleetwood, a propaganda novel whose point is accentuated by repeated illustration and discussion, can be summarized in a mere sentence or two, as Cazamian and others have done: Helen and the Greens, having moved to Manchester to escape the poverty of rural life, found the north
worse, and those family members who survived returned south.

One incident, Richard Green's visit to his family, enabled Mrs. Tonna to emphasize more strongly how unsafe working conditions really were. While in Manchester, Richard examined a "model" factory whose owner had shortened his workers' hours, installed ventilation, and provided periodic medical examinations of the working children. Vital to the novel's propaganda effect, his visit occurred after several long descriptions of the inhuman conditions in the mill in which Mary Green and Helen were working. Against this background, the reader might have uncritically accepted the mill shown to Richard as being indeed a model. But Richard's horrified reaction indicated that conditions even in the so-called model mill were horrible: the noise was deafening; the machines were unfenced, their parts moving quickly and dangerously (xix, 615-19). By presenting concrete details, Mrs. Tonna was able to create a more intense experience for her readers than abstract discussions could have done. And when Richard subsequently attended a meeting about the need for effective legislation to eliminate those factory conditions, Mrs. Tonna reinforced the social message of the novel.

In the simplicity of her plot and the single-mindedness of her social comment, she was certainly an exception. The other novelists of our study had more complex goals. In Yeast, originally published in Fraser's, Charles Kingsley vacillated among several themes—Lancelot Smith's desire to learn about living conditions of rural laborers, his
gradual acceptance of Roman Catholicism, and his growing love for
Argemone Lavington. Kingsley attempted to include too much diverse
material and, as a result, obscured his primary purpose. The emphasis
initially was on the social descriptions, especially as Lancelot read
about rural life and examined it in his walking tours with Paul
Tregarva. In these tours, Kingsley described some conditions with
which he had become familiar through evidence given by his brother-in-
law for the 1843 Report on the Employment of Women and Children in
Agriculture, and apparently intended to provide more information
later when Lancelot, his fortune gone, resolved to work for a living.
But, harried by illness and by his editor, Kingsley had to complete
*Yeast* quickly, and nothing came of this intention. He included no
further specific information on rural conditions.

_Yeast* exemplifies how the plot of a social novel, though unified
by a central character who is the focus of all the action, can be
digressive if the author attempts to include more issues than he
comfortably can. Kingsley had a similar difficulty in *Alton Locke*.
Like his earlier novel, it was unified by its concentration on one
character, in this case the narrator, and was episodic, one event
succeeding another without an always evident logical progression. In
fact, the episodes created confusion about Kingsley's ultimate purposes
in the novel. The early episodes showed the working conditions which
Alton, as a tailor, had to endure. Such conditions, described in
great detail, appeared to be the dominant social issue, even though
Kingsley also introduced Alton's desire for education, his Chartist
indoctrination by John Crossthwaite, and a love story. After the first nine chapters, however, Kingsley's emphasis shifted and, for most of the remainder of the novel, Alton's conversion to Chartism became the main social topic.

With that movement's failure on April 10, 1848, late in the novel, Alton went into a fevered sleep, in Victorian fiction often the means by which a character was purged of his past. Kingsley also used it to present symbolic dreams in which Alton saw the workingmen's need for association and loss of self-interest. It was a Christian Socialist message, to be repeated and emphasized in the last four chapters of the novel. Thus, Kingsley again confused the reader about the direction of the novel. Certainly, some early events can be viewed as contributing to the final "thesis" of the story: the Chartists, Alton finally recognized, mistook their political goals as ends in themselves rather than as the means to improve their lot. But how can we justify the long descriptions of sweatshops, effective because so precisely described by the sensitive Alton Locke, except as a means of publicizing those conditions? Kingsley's several goals in this novel—to expose tailors' working conditions, to explain why men became Chartists, to emphasize the Christian Socialist solution to society's problems, and least importantly, by the undeveloped love interest between Alton and a Rector's daughter, to entertain his readers—were not sufficiently integrated to create a convincing reinforcement of his thesis. He had to resort to the long dream sequence in order to force the plot in a preconceived direction.
Kingsley was not alone in abruptly changing the direction of a novel to fit his purposes. In Shirley, Charlotte Brontë suddenly shifted from Caroline Helstone to Shirley Keeldar, and in so doing shifted her emphasis from the relationship between a mill-owner and his workers to the role of women in society. The earlier social concern remained subordinate for the rest of the novel. And with the introduction of Shirley's suitor, the love interest—originally centering on Robert Moore and Caroline—absolutely dominated the second half of the book.

The dilemma Charlotte Brontë faced is inherent in the nature of the social novel. If an author has a thesis to propound or a social issue to expose, either he must relinquish his responsibility to entertain his reader, as Charlotte Tonna seemed to relinquish it in Helen Fleetwood, or he must integrate his social theme with the "good story" he wishes to tell. If he fails to relate the two, he risks creating a novel which pulls the reader's interest in different directions, as Shirley did, and as Frances Trollope's Jessie Phillips did even more.

Mrs. Trollope began her "Tale of the Present Day" as an attack on the New Poor Law's provisions for centralization, elimination of outdoor relief, and harsher conditions within workhouses, but changed the message midway in order to state her opposition to the social stigma placed on unwed mothers alone and to create a more exciting plot. Certainly, the two early episodes in which kindly Mrs. Greenhill appeared before the Board of Guardians had no bearing on the later plot involving Jessie Phillips. In fact, Jessie had a very minor role in the first
volume, much of which was taken up with debates among the Guardians about centralization. When in the second volume Jessie became pregnant, the debates ended, Mrs. Greenhill — formerly so vital to Mrs. Trollope's social comment — disappeared from the novel, and the emphasis shifted to the young heroine.

Jessie's stay in the workhouse enabled the author to expose the living conditions there, but her escape was apparently more important, for Mrs. Trollope could then emphasize the melodramatic elements for which her novels were known. The events, however, were irrelevant to social criticism: the new-born baby, initially cared for by the village idiot, was murdered by its villainous father, Frederic Dalton; Jessie, arrested for the crime, was acquitted by reason of insanity, and died on the spot, of no apparent cause; young Dalton, pursued by his conscience, fell into a stream and drowned. The horror of this final volume, especially of the murder scene, violated the calm of the earlier, reasoned approach to the social issues and subordinated those issues. We can thus accuse Mrs. Trollope of failing to emphasize in her plot the true agony caused by provisions of the new Poor Law.

In the novels of Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, and Dickens, the social and "entertainment" strands were more fully integrated. Plot was not reduced to mere reinforcement of theme, as it was throughout Helen Fleetwood and in parts of the other novels we have examined. Disraeli's two plot strands in Sybil, for example (Walter Gerard's determination to regain title to Mowbray, his family's land, and Charles Egremont's love for Sybil which necessitated his learning about the working classes),
operated simultaneously and were complementary. To fulfill Disraeli's purpose—to show that remedies for social abuses were to be found in a "new and noble semi-feudalism"—Gerard had to succeed so that his daughter would be socially eligible to marry Egremont. The two lands, Mowbray and Marney, were united at the end of the novel, and the "new and noble semi-feudalism" became reality.

Because, as both Louis Cazamian and Sheila Smith have shown, Disraeli incorporated much social material that he had extracted from several blue books, he failed artistically to a degree in constructing Sybil's plot: he devoted more space to some social conditions than their function in the story merited, and he created some episodes that had no relevance to either plot strand. He devoted an entire chapter (III, iv) to exposing conditions that were not significant to the rest of his story: that the master workmen, for example, were a "real aristocracy" (III, iv, 166-67). Furthermore, in order to include additional material from the blue books, he provided an extensive description of a "tommy-shop" at which miners were forced to buy poor quality food at exorbitant prices (III, iii), and a long discussion about wages between Mrs. Carey and Dandy Mick (II, ix, 88-90). This discussion and others later in the novel provided information that the characters already knew (II, xiii, 117-18; III, i, 144-46; VI, iii, 359-64). They were included only to inform the readers, and were irrelevant to the plot.

Elizabeth Gaskell was more successful in Mary Barton, one of the other works in our study with both a dominant social message and
genuine artistic merit. Because Chapman and Hall, her publishers, wanted a love story, Mary was—in intent at least—the main character. But it is obvious upon reading the novel that John Barton, "the person with whom all my sympathies went," was central to Mrs. Gaskell's thoughts, and that the love interest was secondary to her social concerns. Low wages, starvation and death of employees (especially of Ben Davenport), and the failure of Chartism were determining factors in the crucial event of the novel, John Barton's murder of Harry Carson, which in turn was the means by which the two plot strands converged: Harry Carson was one of Mary's suitors, and Jem Wilson, the other, was charged with the crime.

Although the love story dominated the second half of the novel, Mrs. Gaskell maintained interest in John Barton, whom we see deteriorating, his conscience tortured by his deed. And in fact the denouement occurred not with Jem's acquittal but in Barton's final interview with Mr. Carson, during which each man recognized the other's humanity (xxxv, 351-60), as Carlyle would have all men do. *Mary Barton* was thus ultimately a thesis novel: it contained a definite statement, in very Christian terms, about man's dependence on his fellow man. But it did not emphasize its thesis at the expense of its story, as Kingsley's novels did, and individual social episodes contributed to the plot more fundamentally than did similar ones in Disraeli's novel.

In the novels of Charles Dickens we can see the most effective integration of social material with imaginative concerns. The result perhaps should not even be called "social" fiction for fear of
excessively emphasizing but one of its qualities. The primary
function of Oliver Twist, for example, whose early chapters have been
relevant to our concerns, was to serve as a moral fable, to teach "a
lesson of the purest good . . . from the vilest evil." But because
Dickens wanted to expose conditions in workhouses, previously discussed
by the New Monthly and the Quarterly in 1835, he began the novel in
such a locale. These early scenes fit the story well by establishing
Oliver as a victim: by his request for "more gruel," which affected
all Victorian hearts but the Board of Guardians, the Poor Laws were
regarded as the means by which evil was perpetrated against the
innocents of society.

Bleak House and Hard Times were more obviously concerned with the
social issues we have discussed. Dickens' descriptions early in the
novel (xi, 151; xvi, 220-25; xxii, 310-13) enabled him to expose
unhealthy conditions in Tom-all-alone's and their effects both on
the lower-class residents and on other classes in other neighborhoods.
After his burial in the slum's graveyard, for example, Nemo became "an
avenging ghost at many a sick-bedside" (xi, 151). And "even the winds
are Tom's messengers . . . . There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted
blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere" (xlvi, 627).
Dickens' descriptions also provided a factual background on which he
was able to draw later in the novel when Jo died. Having seen Jo's
struggles in Tom-all-alone's, and having in fact spent some time in
that "pestiferous" slum, the reader knew how foul the air was and how
it tainted everyone. By the time Jo died, Dickens had established that
he was the victim of his neighborhood. Thus, instead of directing our attention inward toward the slum conditions, Dickens directed it outward to the rest of society whose fault those conditions were, as indicated by his authorial comment: "Dead, your Majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with Heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day" (xlvii, 649).

Tom-all-alone's and the graveyard, the focus of one plot in the novel, were also important to the others. Esther Summerson, ward of an unwilling participant in a Chancery case, befriended Jo, who became ill, was treated by a doctor with whom she was in love, and infected her. Jo was also a link between Esther and Lady Dedlock, really her mother. Through Jo, Lady Dedlock found the grave in which Nemo, Esther's father, was buried; through Jo, Esther learned of her interest in the burial ground; and at that graveyard, Lady Dedlock died, to be discovered by her daughter.

In Hard Times, Dickens was also successful in integrating plot strands. All of them developed the theme that the "dominant philosophy of industrialism" did not value the individual. The social issues relevant to our study occurred in the sections about Stephen Blackpool. Dickens did not include precise descriptions of Stephen at work, perhaps because they might have distracted his readers from his basic theme. However, he did show how Stephen was dehumanized: Bounderby, for example, viewed Stephen as a "Hand," not an individual, when dismissing his questions about divorce.
Dickens had difficulty, however, controlling his criticism of society. In "The Key-Note" (I, v), in which he acknowledged that the inhabitants of Coketown lacked imagination, he asked, "Is it possible, I wonder, that there was any analogy between the case of the Coketown population and the case of the little Gradgrinds?" (I, v, 25). Here he implied a relationship, between Gradgrind's school and Bounderby's Factory, that would have supported his theme. Yet he never developed this suggestion. Except for Stephen Blackpool, we see none of the residents in detail, and Stephen's characteristics did not reflect those ascribed to other Coketowners.

For much of the novel, the social issues with which we have been concerned were subordinated, but at Stephen's death Dickens reiterated a social message. The abandoned pit mouth into which Stephen fell was one of several dangers of mining areas that the First Report of the Children's Employment Commission: Mines and Collieries (1842) had exposed, and the Quarterly had discussed. Stephen explained:

I ha' fell into th' pit, my dear, as have cost wi'in the knowledge o' old fok [sic] now livin', hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives—fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands an' thousands, an' keeping 'em fro' want and hunger. I ha' fell into a pit that ha' been wi' th' Fire-damp crueller than battle. I ha' read on't in the public petition, as onny one may read, fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha' pray'n and pray'n the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefok [sic] loves theirs. When it were in work, it killed wi'out need; when 'tis let alone, it kills wi'out need. See how we die an' no need, one way an' another—in a muddle—every day! (III, vi, 272)
The last sentence of this speech expanded the discussion beyond the dangers of mining that Stephen detailed. The "pit" was the society which dehumanized the individual, and included the factories in which the Stephen Blackpools of Coketown had to work. Thus, Dickens used his social material to reinforce a theme. As Stephen died, his "prayer" was "that aw th' world may on'y coom toogther more, an' get a better unnerstan'in o' one another . . . ." (III, vi, 274).

The social novels of our study illustrate, then, that as plot complexity increases, it is more difficult for an author to emphasize the social issue. Where the novelist is torn between a social concern and an artistic desire, as Mrs. Trollope apparently was, or has more than one thesis to expound, as Kingsley had, he will need the ability of a Dickens, a Mrs. Gaskell, or at least a Disraeli, to integrate his plot strands into a coherent whole.

II

Similarly, the more dominant the social ideas, the less important were our novelists' characters except as vehicles of exposition. The reader is concerned with Charlotte Tonna's characters, for example, not as living individuals but as representatives of the masses of displaced agricultural laborers who sickened and often died in the factories of the north. By Helen's death, Mrs. Tonna exemplified how industrial life overpowered even the most moral individual. The beatings Helen received and the
coarse language directed at her in the mill were natural outgrowths, Mrs. Tonna made clear, of the factory system. Because such atrocities were committed against characters about whom the readers were concerned, Helen Fleetwood was more moving a document than were Blackwood's 1836 articles which also had discussed the migration north.

In our social novels generally, characters tended to become representative types, rather than realistically complex individuals. We cannot condemn a novelist for such creations, however, unless the characterization is inconsistent within the novel or irrelevant to it.

Frances Trollope's characters generally fitted her purposes in Michael Armstrong. For in addition to exposing factory conditions, she also wanted to interest her readers in her story. Michael was the innocent young hero whose destruction was planned by the consummate villain, Sir Matthew Dowling. In creating such characters, Mrs. Trollope was appealing to a known Victorian taste for melodrama. However, she also used the characterizations for her social purposes. Michael became a means for Mrs. Trollope to convey social criticism because he had the audience's complete sympathy, evoked partly by his good nature and partly by the evil that Sir Matthew did to him.

Sir Matthew Dowling's totally evil nature was intended to thrill the audience into a cathartic hate; and Mrs. Trollope provided an explicit catharsis at his death as visions of children, mutilated in his factories, passed before his eyes. The reader
recognized that, whatever Sir Matthew approved of, Mrs. Trollope opposed. So it was with her attack on the ineffectiveness of factory legislation, an attack the periodicals began as early as 1833. Sir Matthew boasted that "old Sir Robert Peel's bill was to all intents and purposes a dead letter within two years after it was passed," a statement which would merely have shown its ineffectiveness. However, he added that it was an "absurd bill for the protection of infant paupers," and that "it was the easiest thing in the world to keep the creatures so ignorant about the bill, after the first talk was over, that they might have been made to believe any thing and submit to any thing. . . . They must either do what the masters would have them, or STARVE. That fact is worth all the bills that ever were passed . . ." (xi, 121).

Nonetheless, Sir Matthew Dowling's character may have weakened Frances Trollope's claim that her picture of factory life was true (xvii, 186). He owned many mills, was the wealthiest man in the vicinity, and forced his employees to work long hours. Yet, according to both the compilers of the blue books and the apologists for the manufacturers such as Charles Babbage and Andrew Ure, it was the large manufacturers who were most careful to protect the well-being of their workers. The smaller employers, those who owned few mills, had to squeeze work out of their men in order to realize what they considered a decent profit. In
giving Sir Matthew the wealth and position of a large master but the anti-social drives of a small one, Mrs. Trollope created an atypical owner. But only those readers already familiar with the early blue books on factory conditions or the periodicals' discussions would have been aware of this fact. For other readers, Sir Matthew's vicious nature had a powerful effect on their views of manufacturers. Indeed, his characterization led one contemporary reviewer to charge that Michael Armstrong was "an exaggerated statement of the vices of a class, and a mischievous attempt to excite the worst and bitterest feelings against men who are, like other men, creatures of circumstances, in which their lot has been cast..."  

Like Mrs. Tonna and Mrs. Trollope, Charles Kingsley was less interested in realistic characterization than in espousing certain ideas, in his case the ideas of Christian Socialism. Thus, his characters reflect points of view: Paul Tregarva in Yeast and Sandy Mackaye in Alton Locke were Carlylean figures; John Crossthwaite, one of Alton's mentors, was a Chartist; Alton himself developed into one before finally accepting Eleanor's Christian Socialist views; and Lancelot Smith was a "muscular Christian" with too great an emphasis on the "muscular" and not enough on the "Christian."

The only development that occurred in Lancelot's character was a change in his attitudes toward the poor, from general interest to
specific concern about agricultural laborers. Early in the novel
Lancelot's interest in living conditions seemed solely intellectual:
to learn about "the living wonderful present," he investigated
"existing relations between poor and rich" by reading
Carlyle (vi, 85-86). Deciding that a sanitary reformer was "the only
ture soldier who would conquer those real devils and 'natural
enemies' of Englishmen, carbonic acid and sulphuretted hydrogen"
(vi, 87), which were the results of bad drainage and overstuffed graves,
he reflected the concern of periodicals, especially the Quarterly
Review and the Westminster Review, of blue books, and of publications
such as G. A. Walker's Gatherings from Grave-yards. In this way,
Lancelot's musings, reflecting Kingsley's point of view, could have
been influential in determining the subsequent action of the novel.
Initially, however, Lancelot mocked the very profession he had
praised: he could write a Chadwickiad, he laughed, and begin, "Smells
and the Man I Sing" (vi, 87). Then, after reading blue books about
sanitary conditions and mine and factory work, he turned his attention
to rural problems, and traveled to farms and hamlets to see conditions
for himself. In this sense, Kingsley did make use of Lancelot's
earlier intellectual interest, for it led to a practical concern:
listening to a poacher, for example, Lancelot recognized that "that
wretch, too, was a man and a brother" (viii, 124), and thus adopted
a more sympathetic attitude toward the poor.

Alton Locke was a far more interesting character than was Lancelot
Smith because, narrating his own story, he could easily convey his emotional states. And indeed in several places, Alton spoke out strongly against the conditions and injustices he had observed. His descriptions of the working conditions of tailors and his justified reactions of horror and disgust (ii, 19-20) exposed those conditions for readers and provided reasons for his conversion to Chartism.

Kingsley thus suggested to his readers that although Chartism—with its connotations of violence reinforced by events within the novel (xxviii, 251-52) —was not a legitimate means of curing social ills, it was an understandable phenomenon. That John Crossthwaite was so respectable an individual reinforced this idea. We are to admire him as Alton did: "He alone had shown me any kindness; and he, too, alone was untainted with the sin around him ..." (ii, 24).

Yet, in attempting to use Alton Locke's character as a means of social comment, Kingsley violated the nature of his narrator by trying to show his readers how like them even the lower classes were: Alton Locke, although ostensibly a working-class author, was really an image of his audience, and hence middle-class himself. His reaction to Cambridge's boat races, for example, certainly was middle-class enough, the pride of an Englishman in his country's institutions. Furthermore, Alton often digressed from his narration to make a social point, certainly a practice consistent with his character. But the extent and tone of his digressions sounded very much like Kingsley, entering in his own aggrieved Carlylean voice to take advantage of a situation he had placed his character in. When Alton attempted to preach
Chartist views to agricultural laborers, for example, he created imagined conversations for nearly two pages between abstractions such as "the insulted respectabilities," about utilitarian economy: "What! have we not paid him his wages weekly . . . ?" This section, achieving an emotional intensity similar to that in Chartism and Past and Present, was expository, and reflected Kingsley's Carlylean beliefs more strongly than Sandy Mackaye could do.

Later, Alton provided a four-page account of the causes and hopes of Chartism. If Alton is indeed considered to be the speaker, he was suddenly more knowledgeable than at any other time in the novel. The tone of the passage, furthermore, was not that of a dying man (which Alton was) but of an author very much aware of his audience: "One word more, even at the risk of offending many whom I should be very sorry to offend, and I leave this hateful discussion. Let it ever be remembered that the working classes considered themselves deceived, cajoled, by the passers of the Reform Bill . . . " (xxxii, 279). Thus, Kingsley dropped the mask of his character and addressed his reader directly.

What we see in Kingsley's use of Alton Locke is a failing peculiar to thesis novels, works in which the overriding concern is the idea and not the artistic integrity of the characterization. For the authors naturally chose to develop their ideas fully rather than to portray their characters consistently. Kingsley was trapped by his purposes in Alton Locke. Alton attempted to provide a view of Chartism that only a narrator with chronological perspective could provide. But such
perspective is not desirable in a novel attempting to expose specific working and living conditions. Instead, the narrator has to provide a sense not of reflection, but of immediacy, as Alton did when he described the sweatshops.

Despite his failures, Charles Kingsley at least attempted to combine social criticism with techniques common to all fiction, such as the use of characterization to reinforce the purpose or theme of the novel. The less constrained a novelist feels to state his theme, the more emphasis he can place on his craft. The two goals, "message" and "art," thus can be complementary.

In *Sybil*, for example, Disraeli clearly related characterization to the social conditions he wished to expose. Early in the novel Charles Egremont, concerned about the conditions of the poor, contrasted tranquillity in the past with the turmoil of the present. Such thoughts indicated his Carlylean nature, particularly when he found the present wanting. By contrast, his brother, Lord Marney, despised his tenant farmers and laborers, and disagreed with Egremont about the condition of the poor. Marney was the epitome of the "idle dilettante," a man of "arbitrary will and unreasonable caprice...[and] iron selfishness" (II, vi, 73). Twice he referred to his laborers' wages: when he boasted that they received eight shillings weekly, a minor character objected that no family could live on so little (II, xii, 111); later, he told his brother that they received "eight shillings a week, always at least seven...for at least nine months in the year" (III, ii, 153). The 1843
Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, with which Disraeli was familiar, clearly showed eight shillings to be a low wage; seven shillings would have been insufficient to subsist on. For those readers familiar with the blue books or with the periodicals' discussions, Marney had further damned himself by his own statements. For those unfamiliar with either source, Marney's earlier characterization would have influenced their attitude toward such information and made them understand, as Egremont desired, the need for more humane treatment of agricultural laborers.

The same theme was an important means of characterization in social novels concentrating on industrial areas. In both Shirley and North and South mill-owners underwent an illumination which made them recognize that masters and men were inextricably bound by more than a cash-payment nexus.

Certainly, Robert Moore was initially quite unCarlylean a master in Shirley, an arrogant individual who refused to listen to reason (viii, 141). But he was also portrayed sympathetically: when his mill was attacked, his first thought was to help the wounded attackers (xx, 356-57). Some change had occurred in Moore's attitude toward his workers, as Shirley herself recognized (xxi, 375), but it was poorly defined, and appeared unmotivated. Much later, Charlotte Brontë provided a reason: Moore, returned from London where he had seen workers starving, stated, "To respect himself, a man must believe he renders justice to his fellow-men" (xxx, 555). The weakness in this Carlylean resolution to the social problem of the novel was that
it occurred off-stage: we saw changes in Moore's character before there was any justification for them, and the justification ultimately provided was described in the vaguest terms. For Charlotte Brontë had already begun to de-emphasize social issues in favor of the love story.

In North and South the change in Robert Thornton's attitude was more evident, and was important both for Mrs. Gaskell's social concerns and for the love interest between the mill owner and Margaret Hale. Initially, Thornton was a Carlylean Mammonist: he had worked hard to achieve material success and international fame (1, 506); in Past and Present, Carlyle had defined an Englishman's idea of "success" as "making money, fame, or some other figure in the world," and had claimed that Hell was the "terror of 'Not succeeding." Thornton had expressed Mammonist ideals early in the novel: "I choose to be the unquestioned and irresponsible master of my hands, during the hours that they labour for me. But those hours past, our relation ceases . . ." (xv, 142 and 146). Margaret Hale, however, believed that masters and workers were mutually dependent in ways more significant than the mere payment of wages indicated (xv, 146). This was the lesson Robert Thornton learned, both from his discussions with Margaret and from his growing knowledge of Nicholas Higgins, a sympathetically portrayed worker. Because Mrs. Gaskell emphasized the manufacturer's point of view in North and South, however, she concentrated on the change brought about in Thornton's character.

In the earlier Mary Barton, she developed a working-class figure
who engaged the reader's emotions and hence increased the effectiveness of both the social material and the social message. John Barton was one of the "earnest men . . . who have endured wrongs without complaining, but without ever forgetting or forgiving those whom [sic] (they believe) have caused all this woe" (iii, 20). We see him thinking about the class differences he observed, about his son dying because he could not provide adequate food and medical help, and about his hopes for the Charter. In each case, he concluded that in some way the employers were to blame. Mrs. Gaskell indicated that he was wrong in so believing, and told her readers that "the thoughts of his heart were touched by sin, by bitter hatred of the happy, whom he, for the time, confounded with the selfish" (vi, 58; also iii, 20; x, 108). These thoughts were contributing factors in the murder he committed.

Nonetheless, John Barton was a sympathetic character who wanted no more than was due him. "I want work, and it is my right" (x, 108), he exclaimed, echoing Carlyle's warning in Chartism: "All men are justified in demanding and searching for their rights," even by "Chartisms, Radicalisms, French Revolutions" if necessary.26 When that work was no longer available, when John Barton could no longer have the human dignity of providing for his family, he struck back violently at the masters.

His visit to the Davenports, which enabled Mrs. Gaskell to portray vividly the conditions in which some workers had to live, was a key incident in his conversion to Chartism. When he arrived at the cellar in which Ben Davenport lay dying, he saw "household slops of every
description "thrown into the gutter," he stepped over stagnant pools of filth, and he smelled the "footed" air of the home (xi, 54). The periodicals had contained many such descriptions, often in greater detail. But Mrs. Gaskell was not merely documenting unsanitary living conditions. She was using them to throw light on John Barton's character. For the contrast between the Davenport home and the clean, well-lighted shops catering to the wealthy made Barton "moody" and increasingly aware of the callousness of the masters (vi, 57). Eventually he believed that violence was the only recourse open to him.

The social material that Mrs. Gaskell was exposing in Mary Barton, then, was used to develop the character of one of the major figures. It was emphasized not at the expense of the novel's artistic technique but in support of it. With Charles Dickens, the novels of our study reached a level of artistry which only Mrs. Gaskell even approached. Dickens used his characters to help make his social points but, as with other authors, the more he was emphasizing a particular idea, the less important was the character's development.

Certainly more than any other novelist of our study, Dickens created characters who lived both real lives and symbolic ones. In Bleak House, Jo was the living embodiment of Tom-all-alone's, and illustrated in a pathetic portrait the need for public health improvements. As the agent of the slum's revenge, he passed his fever on to Charley Neckett and Esther. Like Carlyle's Irish widow, he proved his brotherhood.

Stephen Blackpool in Hard Times was barely a more balanced portrait.
Stephen did have a private life as Jo had not, and we saw it touchingly portrayed in his relationships with Rachel and with his drunken spouse, but ultimately he too became symbolic. He was not, what Dickens perhaps at first intended, "an individual industrial worker." For we rarely saw him at work; that he was poor was the result of low wages, obviously not limited to industrial work; that he was saddled with a wife from whom he could not be legally separated could have been true of any poor man; that he was duped by young Tom Gradgrind was a sign of his ignorance. He was ultimately, in Raymond Williams' term, "little more than a diagrammatic figure." His primary comment on the difficulties he faced, "aw a muddle," repeated often in the book, became the representative view not only of Industrialism, in whose gears he happened to be caught, but of the entire philosophy that fostered it, of Gradgrindery in every sphere. Stephen Blackpool, then, was the symbol of oppressed man, the meek who shall not inherit the earth. Dickens' "comprehensive vision" of Victorian civilization was emphasized through Stephen's vision at the bottom of the pit: "See how we die an' no need, one way an' another—in a muddle—every day!" (III, vi, 272).

Josiah Bounderby also had symbolic significance in *Hard Times*: Dickens satirized the "simplistic, laissez-faire assumptions" of the manufacturers about factory legislation and employer-employee relationships. Bounderby was a factory owner as Mrs. Trollope's Matthew Dowling was; but instead of creating a melodramatic villain out of him, which would have removed him to an obviously imaginary world,
Dickens used him to attack the very social ethos which was the subject of the book. Bounderby's entire moral position in *Hard Times* was based on a lie, that he was a self-made man. Dickens' careful development of this one fact exposed as false the manufacturer and the philosophy he represented (I, xv, xvi; II, ii, v, vii, viii; III, iii, v; passim).

Bounderby was not the first businessman whom Dickens had portrayed. In the earlier *Dombey and Son*, he had identified the slums and pestilence, both physical and moral, with Dombey, whose most conspicuous characteristic was pride, as if Dombey's very nature was in some way responsible for the conditions.

Prior to his train ride to Birmingham, for example, Dombey had met Mr. Toodle, wearing black crepe in mourning for little Paul. Dombey clearly disapproved of Toodle's interest, and his trip was through "a wilderness of blighted plans and gnawing jealousies" (xx, 279). Dickens was identifying Dombey's internal feelings with the external scenery, an identification which helps to explain why, as he rode past slums, "it is never in his thoughts that the monster [the railroad] who has brought him there has let the light of day in on these things: not made or caused them" (xx, 282). Dombey did not see the slums, because he did not see his own spiritual decay. The "want and fever . . . in many wretched shapes" (xx, 282), the distortions and deformities of the slums, were also in Dombey's character. Dickens was not merely implying in this chapter what the periodicals had stated explicitly in their discussions of blue books: that poor living conditions in
cities had to be improved. His point was Carlylean, that the upper classes had to recognize a bond with the lower. It was in keeping with Dombey's nature that he did not see that bond.

In another major scene, Dickens expanded his discussion from Dombey's "master-vice," pride, to the evil inherent in any person's being bound by a single idea or emotion, then to physical boundaries, and finally to slums and the diseases fostered therein. Even the alert reader is caught up in Dickens' two-page description of slum conditions before he realizes that Dickens has left his story to make a point (xlvii, 647-48). This scene followed a discussion of Dombey and his new wife Edith: their individual pride "burned up everything within their mutual reach, and made their marriage a road of ashes" (xlvii, 646). Once more, then, the physical slum to be described had its spiritual equivalent in Dombey's character. But Dickens expanded the slum description even beyond the physical to the moral, and it was here ultimately that Dombey's pride-pestilence had its most tragic effect. In this chapter, Dickens was asking for a revelation to expose the relationship between Vice and Fever so that men might see that relationship and reform themselves. Such reform, through a purging fever later in the book, was ultimately Dombey's salvation.

III

A third means of providing the reader with necessary information or opinion is authorial intrusion, by which a reliable narrator comments
directly on events and characters or reports discussions between characters. Social novelists use their narrators for these purposes, and also for providing expository descriptions of the living and working conditions which are their subjects. In such cases, we must examine the effect that such intrusions have on the work and on the reader.

When the narrator speaks directly to the reader, he usually is attempting to establish some factual background or to comment on it. If his intrusions occur too often, are too long, or are not immediately relevant to the context, the readers could lose sight of the more general social theme in the mass of information presented or discussed. This is certainly one problem in reading several novels of our study.

In Yeast, for example, Charles Kingsley inserted social comments in inappropriate places. Discussing Argemone Lavington's selfishness at length, he shifted not very subtly to the living conditions of the agricultural poor: "yet her fastidious delicacy revolted at sitting ... beside the bed of the ploughman's consumptive daughter, in a reeling, stifling, lean-to garret, in which had slept the night before, the father, mother, and two grown-up boys, not to mention a new-married couple, the sick girl, and, alas! her baby. And of such bedchambers there were too many in Whitford Priors" (ii, 22). But he said no more. Thus he inserted a significant comment about rural living conditions in a position which subordinated it to other ideas and in a context in which it was irrelevant. In fact, most of Kingsley's intrusions in
Yeast were irrelevant to the rest of the narrative, for he never showed specific living conditions of characters we knew and cared about, and, as we have seen, the plot was digressive and hence obscured the social references.

Similarly, Mrs. Trollope intruded her beliefs into Michael Armstrong. Praising her young hero's moral character, she addressed the reader at length about the deleterious moral effects of factory work. What she said was not relevant to Michael, however (xxv, 282-83). More organic to her story were some other intrusions. As a character approached Hoxley-lane, the slum in which the Widow Armstrong lived, Mrs. Trollope described it in detail (iv, 35). Later, describing the inside of a mill, she emphasized her basic social theme: "All this [noise and impure air] is terrible. But what the eye brings home to the heart of those, who look round upon the horrid earthly hell, is enough to make it all forgotten; for who can think of villanous [sic] smells, or heed the suffering of the ear-racking sounds, while they look upon hundreds of helpless children, divested of every trace of health, of joyousness, and even of youth" (viii, 80). The reference to children here was guaranteed to gain the reader's sympathy.

Pictures of suffering children did not have to be relevant to the rest of the novel to be emotionally effective, however. In Sybil, Benjamin Disraeli portrayed very young miners in a long passage that was only peripherally significant to the story: "See, too, these emerge from the bowels of the earth! Infants of four and five years of age, many of them girls, pretty and still soft and timid; entrusted with the
fulfillment of most responsible duties . . . " (III, i, 142). All of the information came from the First Report of the Children's Employment Commission (1842), which had been thoroughly discussed in both the Quarterly and the Westminster of that same year. The effect of the passage on the reader was one of horror that such conditions existed. But that horror was also to be felt by reading the original Report. In other words, Disraeli added nothing to the effectiveness of the expository description by including it in his imaginative work.

Disraeli's description of the town of Marney was less effective. Most of the chapter was devoted to the "Beautiful illusion" of the "laughing landscape behind which penury and disease fed upon the vitals of a miserable population" (II, iii, 53), judgments which were relevant because Lord Marney, owner of all the property, played a significant role in the book. Disraeli owed the precise details of this early chapter to the 1843 Report on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture, parts of which, Sheila Smith has shown, he quoted directly. But, instead of using the Report's descriptions of children suffering, he concentrated on the physical conditions themselves:

Marney mainly consisted of a variety of narrow and crowded lanes formed by cottages built of rubble, or unhewn stones without cement, and, from age or badness of the material, looking as if they could scarcely hold together. The gaping chinks admitted every blast; the leaning chimneys had lost half their original height; the rotten rafters were evidently misplaced . . . . Before the doors of these dwellings, and often surrounding them, ran open drains full of animal and vegetable refuse, decomposing into disease, or sometimes in their imperfect course filling foul pits or spreading...
into stagnant pools, while a concentrated solution
of every species of dissolving filth was allowed to
soak through, and thoroughly impregnate, the walls and
ground adjoining. (II, iii, 53)

When Disraeli did refer to the inhabitants, he spoke generally of
them rather than specifically of characters with whom his readers were
familiar, and he ignored the children completely:

To that squalid hovel which profaned the name of home, over which malaria hovered, and round whose shivering hearth were clustered other guests besides the exhausted family of toil—Fever, in every form, pale Consumption, exhausting Synochus, and trembling Ague,—returned after cultivating the broad fields of merry England, the bold British peasant, returned to encounter the worst of diseases, with a frame the least qualified to oppose them . . . . (II, iii, 55)

Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens were more successful in
integrating their judgments about social conditions into their narratives.
Describing John Barton, for example, Mrs. Gaskell indicated that "he
was below the middle size and slightly made; there was almost a stunted
look about him; and his wan, colourless face, gave you the idea, that
in his childhood he had suffered from the scanty living consequent
upon bad times, and improvident habits." Barton was, then, the factory
boy of several of our early periodical articles, Blackwood's in partic-
ular, grown up. Not surprisingly, he was influenced by that childhood,
his features "resolute either for good or evil" (i, 3). In this
intrusion, Mrs. Gaskell found her character good but capable of evil
because of his earlier experiences. That capacity was the seed from
which much of the story grew.
Mrs. Gaskell often intruded in *Mary Barton*, and even her long comments, unlike some by Kingsley in *Yeast* and Mrs. Trollope in *Michael Armstrong*, were relevant to her story. When, after having visited the dying Ben Davenport, John Barton was alone with "his pipe and his politics," she gave a two-page summary of the rise of Chartism, perhaps taking her cue from Barton's thoughts:

For three years past /1839-1841/ trade had been getting worse and worse, and the price of provisions higher and higher. This disparity between the amount of the earnings of the working classes and the price of their food, occasioned, in more cases than could well be imagined, disease and death. Whole families went through a gradual starvation . . . . It need excite no surprise, then, to learn that a bad feeling between working men and the upper classes became very strong in this season of privation . . . . The most deplorable and enduring evil that arose out of the period of commercial depression to which I refer, was this feeling of alienation between the different classes of society . . . . In many instances the sufferers wept first, and then they cursed. Their vindictive feelings exhibited themselves in rabid politics. And when I hear, as I have heard, of the sufferings and privations of the poor, . . . of parents sitting in their clothes by the fireside during the whole night for seven weeks together, in order that their only bed and bedding might be reserved for the use of their large family — of others sleeping upon the cold hearthstone for weeks in succession, without adequate means of providing themselves with food or fuel (and this in the depth of winter), — of others being compelled to fast for days together, uncheered by any hope of better fortune, living, moreover, or rather starving, in a crowded garret, or damp cellar, and gradually sinking under the pressure of want and despair into a premature grave . . . . — can I wonder that many of them, in such times of misery and destitution, spoke and acted with ferocious precipitation? (viii, 78-79)
Chartism's rise thus became an understandable if not excusable phenomenon. "Life-worn, gaunt, anxious, hunger-stamped men, were those delegates," she added of the men who left Manchester to accompany the Charter to Parliament. Although heavily infused with her own beliefs, the passage was also integrated well into the novel; closing her long discussion by emphasizing the single reason for the intrusion, she narrowed her vision back to its starting point: "One of them was John Barton" (viii, 80). But in addition to the immediate relationship, the "sufferings and privations of the poor" marshalled in this selection had been or soon were to be exemplified. Many of them, in fact, were restatements of the most recently included picture of suffering, in the Davenport home.

Dickens too accomplished far more with his intruded social comments than merely exposing living and working conditions and their possible remedies. We have already seen how his discussion of Dombey's pride enabled him to attack slum conditions while simultaneously reinforcing the main character's moral limitations (xlvii, 647-48), and how Jo's death enabled him to blame society for being blind to "the ordinary home-made article of native ignorance" (xlvii, 641). In Hard Times, the theme of dehumanization, developed both by plot and characterization, was reinforced by several of Dickens' comments in his narrator's voice.

For three consecutive paragraphs of his major description of Coketown, "a triumph of fact" (I, v, 22), every main clause began with "it," an emphasis that indicated Coketown's impersonality. More precisely, "it"
was a jungle, a town of "brick that would have been red if the
smoke and ashes had allowed it" but instead was "unnatural red and
black like the painted face of a savage." It was, furthermore, a town
whose "serpents of smoke . . . never got uncoiled," a jungle of factories
"where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down,
like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness" (I, v,
22). Reinforcing this image later, Dickens briefly pictured Stephen
Blackpool at work over a "crashing, smashing, tearing piece of
mechanism" (I, xi, 69). The view of Coketown as a jungle helped to
explain Stephen's fate, not as a victim of an open pit mouth, but as a
sensitive human being in an insensitive world. Dickens' early authorial
intrusion, then, was vital to a major theme of the novel, and in fact
indicated how far he surpassed the other novelists of our study in his
use of this rhetorical device. For as readers became involved in his
story and saw the relationships he established, his authorial comments
became less easily recognizable as those of a narrator who set his
story aside to make a point (e.g., I, xiv, 90; II, i, 110; II, ii, 128;
II, iv, 138-39). By the end of Hard Times, when Louisa Gradgrind was
"trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their
lives of machinery and reality with . . . imaginative graces and
delights," Dickens was able to address the reader directly with a plea
to change the direction in which society was moving (III, ix, 299).
Other novelists had also addressed their readers but in those cases the
novels themselves had been too unconvincing as literary works, and the
social comments had stood naked to the reader's scrutiny.

Dickens thus intruded his social comments more effectively than did the other novelists of our study. He was also adept at inserting social material indirectly, by discussions among his characters. In the most socially oriented discussion in *Hard Times*, Stephen Blackpool and Josiah Bounderby disagreed about the reasons for the existence of 'Trades' Unions. For most of the chapter Stephen was unwilling to explain his beliefs, and that fact in itself was important. He was characterized as a meek individual who finally expounded his ideas with the "rugged earnestness of his place and character." Stephen maintained that Unions represented the workers' reaction against the dehumanizing tendency of the age: "Look how we live, ... and wi' what sameness ... Most o' aw, rating [workers] as so much Power, and reg'latin' 'em as if they was figures in a soom, or machines ... wi' out souls to weary and souls to hope" (II, v, 148-51). Bounderby's frequent interruptions relieved the potential monotony of a four-page harangue against industrialism, and also helped Dickens characterize one of the villains. The social comment, made through this discussion between master and worker, thus was effective because the reader, having witnessed the internal struggles that gave rise to Blackpool's oration, could accept it emotionally as well as intellectually.

Elizabeth Gaskell's use of the discussion technique was not as
sophisticated as Dickens', but she also conveyed more than just social information to the readers. In a three-page discussion between John Barton and some friends prior to his departure as a member of the Chartist delegation, Mrs. Gaskell effected a fine balance between the matters Barton is to bring up to Parliament — "Tell 'em our minds; how we're thinking we'n been clemmed long enough . . . . Do ask 'em to make th' masters to break the machines" — and Mary's apparently trivial comments — "See, father, what a dandy you'll be in London! Mrs. Davenport has brought you this; made new cut, all after the fashion" (viii, 80-83). Because she juxtaposed important social issues and more trivial matters, her readers were aware of the Chartists as individual human beings, and were concerned about their fate.

In contrast to Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell, the other novelists of our study used discussions between characters solely to convey information, both to the reader and, often, to one of the characters. However, the social novelist who used such a technique faced a major artistic problem: the tedium incumbent upon pages of dialogue asserting the author's viewpoints or several viewpoints on a social issue. Generally, the novelists of our study failed to solve this problem.

Charlotte Tonna in particular employed this technique in Helen Fleetwood to provide the reader with information from early blue books, such as the Sadler Committee Report on Factory Working Conditions (1832), and from pamphlets and speeches by James Kay and other opponents of the existing factory system. At one point, Mr. South told Richard
Green that workers were hungry and thirsty but had little food at home: "Don't you see, the gin-shop is a temptation hardly to be resisted even by the careful father of a family, much less by the poor silly child that never troubles its head for a moment about consequences" (xvii, 595; see also vi, 529-31; vii, 536-38; x, 551-52; xii, 565-66; xvii, 594-97; xviii, 607-612). This was precisely Dr. Kay's point in The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester (1832), as quoted by the Quarterly Review: "He \[the worker\] becomes reckless... he lives in squalid wretchedness, on meagre food, and expends his superfluous gains in debauchery... Home has no other relation to him than that of shelter -- few pleasures are there -- it chiefly presents to him a scene of physical exhaustion... He\[\text{he}\] falls the victim of dissipation.\(^{32}\) Similar explanations of workers' debauchery had been reported in Fraser's and the Westminster Review.\(^{33}\)

In Jessie Phillips, Frances Trollope included discussions which occasionally extended for ten to twenty pages (I, iv, 68-80; I, vii, 129-48; I, xiv, 314-23). Although she used such discussions to characterize some of the individuals, those people played no role in the basic plot. Squire Dalton, for example, concerned about the rural poor, was a totally unnecessary character, even though his daughter Ellen was the major force for good in the novel, and his son Frederic the major force for evil. The squire himself almost entirely disappeared from the story after the discussions about the New Poor Law.

In the earlier Michael Armstrong, Mrs. Trollope varied the discus-
sion technique sufficiently to eliminate some of the boredom and to reinforce her own views indirectly. For Mary Brotherton sought answers from some poorly informed people who echoed arguments proposed by Andrew Ure and other apologists for the manufacturers: that factories provided employment for many people who otherwise would be unable to do any work (x, 96). One of her acquaintances told her that factory work, "such a blessing as it is to the poor," should not be considered unhealthy, for "There's numbers of medical men that declare it's quite impossible to tell in any way satisfactory that it can do 'em any harm at all" (xviii, 197). This idea was taken from the Sadler Committee Report, as quoted by both Blackwood's in 1833 and the Quarterly Review in 1836. The official reports had made no moral judgments about doctors who, asked if injury would result from a child's standing for twenty-three hours in a hot and dusty room, replied, "I have no fact to direct me to any conclusion" or "I really cannot tell." But the periodicals disapproved of those answers, and maintained that such working conditions obviously would harm children. Frances Trollope showed her beliefs through Mary Brotherton's experiences later in the novel: Edward Armstrong, lame when Miss Brotherton removed him from the mill, grew strong and healthy under her care (xxviii, 325). Mrs. Trollope thus added a complexity missing from many of our other novels. By exposing false points of view, she made her own more immediately acceptable to her readers.

Charles Kingsley used the discussion technique more simply. In Yeast, for example, when Paul Tregarva corrected Lancelot's miscon-
ceptions about an apparently beautiful river, the reader also learned
that "Fever, and ague, and rheumatism spread wherever the white fog
spreads," and understood that "The river-damps are God's sending; and
so they are not too bad to bear. But there's more of man's sending, that
is too bad to bear" (iii, 41). Even in such generalized terms, the
reader recognized that moral diseases infected man's spirit. It was one
of the lessons of the novel, but, because of Kingsley's confused goals,
it was not developed. Indeed, most of the discussions in Yeast con-
sisted of abstract theorizing rather than detailed pictures. As a
result, the reader was not as emotionally involved as he was, for
example, with Mrs. Tonna's specific pictures of children suffering
in the mills. In addition, Yeast's social and religious "messages"
were conveyed by the question-and-answer method so often that the book
has been justly accused of being a pamphlet more than a novel.36

Benjamin Disraeli was similarly guilty in Sybil. Early in the
novel Charles Egremont began to learn about living conditions in the
cities by asking questions of Walter Gerard and Stephen Morley, yet
their responses were vague generalizations (II, v, 66) reflecting
Disraeli's own lack of information. The discussions became more
specific only when Disraeli took his material from the blue books.
Then, however, he had difficulty including it in the novel; as we
have noted, several times his characters repeated information they
already possessed.

The novelists of our study, then, used the discussion technique
to convey information and ideas about social conditions to their
readers. Only Mrs. Gaskell and Dickens used this technique also for characterization and were able to avoid the dullness inherent in such a presentation of ideas.
Notes


5. Williams, Culture and Society, p. 93.


7. Ibid.


10. Sichel, p. v.

11. Melada, p. 131.


13. Cazamian, II, 94, n. 3; from the Report from the Select Committee on Payment of Wages.


16. Ibid., p. 74.
17. From the "Preface to the Third Edition."
18. Williams, Culture and Society, p. 93.
21. Quoted by Chaloner, 165.
27. House, p. 205.
28. Williams, Culture and Society, p. 93.
30. Melada, p. 110.
32. \[\text{Anthony Ashley Cooper}\], "The Factory System," Quarterly, 57 (December, 1836), 421.

34. Ure, I, i, 17-18.


Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

Chapter vii has indicated that most of our novelists failed to overcome the difficulties inherent in the social novel: in particular, how to integrate the "message" into an entertaining story, how to create characters who reinforce the social theme while being developed consistently, and how to provide factual information or commentary without obviously intruding into the story. The earlier chapters implicitly showed that the social novels of the late thirties foreshadowed the concerns of the novels of the 1840's. Oliver Twist briefly portrayed workhouse conditions under both the old and new Poor Laws; Jessie Phillips developed them under the new law more fully five years later. Michael Armstrong described some working conditions in factories, but emphasized, in strongly melodramatic terms, the relationship between employer and employee; such a relationship, although not always between factory owner and worker, was developed further in Sybil, Dombey and Son, Mary Barton, Shirley, Hard Times, and North and South. In its long and specific descriptions of factory work, Helen Fleetwood was more detailed than were the later novels, but in its discussions of the effects on workers and the conditions in which they had to live it anticipated Mary Barton, Shirley and North and South.
The novels of the 1850's reflected a shift in the concerns of social fiction. The issues were emphasized less by themselves and more in conjunction with larger societal concerns: in *Bleak House*, for example, Tom-all-alone's was described precisely and its graveyard was clearly unhealthy, but that plot strand was closely related to the others and was but a part of Dickens' social concern. In *Hard Times*, too, factory work was obliquely condemned but was not actually described. Instead, Dickens used the relationship between Stephen Blackpool and Josiah Bounderby to reinforce his larger view of society. In *Little Dorrit*, Dickens did not refer to working, and rarely referred to living, conditions. The social novels of the 1850's, then, attacked more general conditions than the specific ones discussed in the earlier periodicals and fiction.

Nonetheless, the novels of our study presented more effective pictures of the suffering caused by social problems than did the periodicals, which often discussed them abstractly, in terms of the theoretical principles behind impending legislation. To be sure, some periodical articles did include very precise descriptions, but those were also applied to the "working classes" in general. By contrast, the novels directed their attention not merely to the conditions themselves but primarily to the effect that they had on the individual. Even *Helen Fleetwood*, which included more precise descriptions than the other novels, described the effects on the Greens and on Helen in order to emphasize the need for change. Although Mrs. Tonna made no attempt to remove the characters from their roles as
representative displaced agricultural laborers thrown into the wheels of northern industrialism, because they were individuals they were more emotionally effective agents of social criticism than were the more generalized discussions of theory in the periodicals.

The difference in emphasis between the periodicals and the novels is most obvious in their treatments of the New Poor Law. The early 'periodical articles on the subject discussed the basic premise of the law, "that the condition of the pauper shall in no case be made so eligible as that of the independent labourer of the lowest class," and rarely portrayed individual inmates of workhouses. These articles also discussed the theory behind centralization; to prevent subjective considerations from influencing decisions about relief. Except for Jessie Phillips, the novels rarely alluded to the theory behind the new law. Instead, in Oliver Twist Dickens portrayed those workhouse conditions to which he most strongly objected, especially the inadequate diet; without providing any details about the workhouse, Charlotte Tonna showed that agricultural laborers would leave their homes in the south to avoid entering the Union; and even Frances Trollope dispensed with the long discussions early in Jessie Phillips in favor of more precise pictures of the suffering endured by individuals; Mrs. Greenhill in anticipation of having to enter and Jessie herself already in the house.

Similarly, the periodicals discussed other social conditions in generalized terms. Although details about working conditions appeared in Blackwood's in 1833, they were applied to "boy or girl." The
fiction applied the same information to specific people in whom the reader was interested: Helen Fleetwood and Michael Armstrong early in our study, Bessy Higgins of North and South later. Even the remedies we have examined fit this pattern. The periodicals overwhelmingly viewed emigration, for example, as a means of decreasing the number of unemployed workers. The novels emphasized instead the human effect of emigration: characters such as Nancy (Oliver Twist), Micawber and Emily (David Copperfield), and Mary and Jem Wilson (Mary Barton) could escape their pasts and begin a new life.

By relating their descriptions of social conditions to specific characters, then, the novelists more effectively appealed to the emotions of their audience. But that audience was already aware of the conditions. The evidence of this study overwhelmingly indicates that the social novels normally followed the periodicals, sometimes at considerable distance, in such discussions. The dangers of factory work were exposed in Blackwood's, Fraser's, and the Quarterly Review years before the novelists portrayed them. Sybil provided information about mines three years after the Quarterly and Westminster had quoted at length from the First Report of the Children's Employment Commissioners. Blackwood's, Fraser's, and the Westminster in particular acknowledged the poverty of workers' lives six years before Helen Fleetwood portrayed it. In some cases, in fact, the novels described problems that were already in the process of being eliminated. As we noted in chapter ii, after 1837 few articles in our periodicals attacked factory working conditions which, according to the blue books, were slowly improving.
Yet the severest criticism in our fiction of the factories appeared in 1839 and 1840. Thus, it should be clear from this study that the novels did not lead in the fight for social reform.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, we can see that fiction played only a small role in educating the reading public about contemporary social issues. That public, basically the same as had read the periodicals, learned more from the non-fiction than it did from the novels. Certainly, the upper class and the educated part of the middle class—the people with political power—read both the intellectual periodicals and the fiction. They learned the facts, often colored by a political bias, from the former. Thus, long before Charles Dickens, Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli and others expressed their concern in fiction about the social conditions that they saw firsthand and that they read about, these very conditions had been exposed in publications that caught the reading public's eyes. Factory workers, miners, and rural laborers were suffering, but their travail was not unknown to other classes. The periodicals saw to that. The social conscience of England, which flourished in the fiction of the 1840's, had been alive in the 1830's as well.
Notes

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