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The Political Views of Dickens

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THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF DICKENS

by

Aloysius P. Dehnert

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VITA

Aloysius Paul Dehnert was born in Chicago on May 30, 1909. He attended Holy Name Parochial School and upon graduation in 1923 entered Quigley Preparatory Seminary.

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CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS IN DICKENS'S LIFE

While it may seem unnecessarily repetitious to begin a study of the political element in Dickens with an account of his life, nevertheless a more embracing knowledge of the early influences in his childhood, of his background, of his ambitions and occupations, of his friends, of his travels, of his dramatic and theatrical connections, of his marital rift and its consequences, of his journalistic connections, is necessary to make the logical connection between the writer, his times, and his topics. If his books sparkle at times with social and political satire, it was his life and his times that influenced him to write with a penchant for laughing to scorn the evils and abuses of mid-Victorian England. Frequently his books are autobiographical accounts of his experiences; his characterizations in many recognizable instances are drawn from acquaintances, friends, and even from his parents. In general, his writings represent his imaginatively vivid reactions to life, particularly English life in the middle and lower classes of society. If he required any incentive to bring the political and social abuses of his native land to the attention of the British public, he found that incentive in his unhappy youth. In fact, it was especially his unhappy childhood and the difficult hard-working, low-salaried years of his youth that spurred Dickens to take up his pen as a cudgel
in the interest of innocent, underprivileged, victimized children. He wept with his victimized child creations shamelessly; he badgered their persecutors relentlessly; he exposed the weaknesses and hypocrisies of the body social and politic in the kleig-light brilliance of his satirical exposes—all because he could identify emotionally the sufferings of his imaginary world with his own real childhood.

The grandfather of Charles, William Dickens, was a footman; after marrying Elizabeth Ball, Lady Blandford's housemaid, William became head butler at Crewe Hall. The master of the house was John Crewe, later Lord Crewe, Member of Parliament for Chester. After her marriage Mrs. Dickens became housekeeper at Crewe Hall. While serving in this capacity, the Dickens couple had two sons, William and John; in the year of John's birth, 1785, the father died. Mrs. Dickens then remained at Crewe Hall for thirty-five years as housekeeper. There in her room she was visited by her grand-children whom she delighted to entertain with stories. One of these grand-sons was Charles, the novelist, who was to make her lively personality bubble as a fountain of youth through his portrait of Mrs. Rouncewell, the kindly housekeeper of Lady Dedlock in _Bleak House_.

After being pensioned by the Crewes in 1820, Mrs. William Dickens took lodgings in Oxford Street. The Crewes took a personal interest in her sons, sent them to school, and got them started in the world. Through their patronage John received in 1805 a clerkship in the Navy Pay Office, the equivalent of a Civil Service Post, starting at £70 a year. At about the same time Thomas Barrow was also made a clerk in the same office, through
the influence of his father Charles, a department supervisor. Through their positions in the Navy Office, John and Thomas Barrow grew friendly; through Thomas, John was introduced to the Barrow family, and in time proceeded to fall in love with Elizabeth Barrow, whom he married in 1809. Since Mr. Barrow considered himself a member of England's bureaucracy, he probably felt that his daughter had married somewhat below her family station.¹

In the Barrow genealogy is Sir John Barrow, second secretary of the Admiralty, 1804-1845, a possible reason for the family's pride. But this pride must have been clouded by the revelations of fraudulent activities carried on by Charles Barrow, the father-in-law of John Dickens. Mr. Barrow, a £350-a-year clerk in the Navy Pay Office, had the title of 'Chief Conductor of Money in Town'; part of this responsible appointment was to dispatch money to the outports, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheerness, and Chatham. This money was obtained by means of imprest bills for £900 each; the bills were given on an account signed by himself and endorsed by the Paymaster of the Navy Board. Over a period of seven years Mr. Barrow had systematically, through false balances, been embezzling funds. One day in 1811 a Writ ofExtent came explaining that the fraud had been discovered and the Chief Conductor was suspected of having money in hand. In the first

check up a debit of nearly £4000 was found (Edmund Wilson says the total was £5689 3s. 3d.). Barrow resigned his office, pleading in self-defense that he had ten children and was in bad health. After criminal proceedings against him were instituted, Barrow left England.

John Dickens had married Elizabeth Barrow in 1809 on £200 a year; they were at home at 387 Commercial Road, Portsmouth in Landport. The following year Fanny was born, and on February 7, 1812 Charles. He was the eldest son of his parents' eight children, two of whom died in infancy. When Charles was two years old, Dickens Sr. was recalled to London where the family took residence in 10 Norfolk Street, Middlesex Hospital. As an example of the unusual powers of observation and memory of Charles even as a two-year-old, Forster mentions that "it lived also in the child's memory that they had come away from Portsea in the snow."²

Since navy pay clerks were liable to be changed from one town to another, on short notice, we find the Dickens family moving again in 1817. This time they lived in Chatham, in a house on the borderline between Chatham and Rochester. Here they stayed till Charles was nine (Lady Day, 1821), and it was here that the future novelist received the most durable of his early impressions. As an example of his youthful ambition Forster mentions the following anecdote about Gadshill Place, a large imposing house which stands on the highest strip of ground in the main road between Rochester and Gravesend. One day while Charles and his father were passing

the Gadshill Place, the boy with admiration in his eyes and hope in his voice asked his father if he might one day own a mansion like that. And John Dickens replied with a Micawber flourish that if Charles worked hard enough, he might, when he became a man, live in that very house. Many years later Charles did buy the Gadshill Place; it was there that he entertained his friends.3

As a child Charles was very sickly, subject to violent spasms which made it impossible for him to engage in active exertions. Consequently, he never played the rougher or livelier sports, although it would not be accurate to say that he did not care for them because he derived great pleasure from watching the older boys, officers' sons usually, play. Later in young manhood after he had overcome his sickly tendency and after fortune had smiled on him, he did find time to engage in sports. As Mamie Dickens, his daughter tells us

> With manhood, however, came the strength and activity which enabled him to take part in all kinds of outdoor exercise and sports, and it seemed that in his passionate enjoyment and participation in those later years he was re-compensed for the weary childhood years of suffering and inability.

In 1839 he rented a cottage at Petersham whose extensive gardens admitted of athletic competition; bar leaping, bowling, and quoits were favorite pastimes; and in sustained energy Charles distanced every competitor.4

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3 Ibid., 24-25
4 Dickens, Mammie, My Father As I Recall Him, E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1898, 75-76
John Dickens's salary increased with the years; and when Charles was eight years old, his father was receiving £350 a year. Charles and Fanny attended a preparatory day school at Chatham, for their father's salary was able to sustain his still small family in decent comfort. Besides, he was able to provide a collection of popular novels, of which Charles made excellent use. Since as a child he was prevented by sickness from participating in athletics, Charles took refuge in the fairy-land and imaginative world of books. In this way he turned even a liability into an asset, for his poor health fostered in him a strong inclination to read. According to Forster, Dickens was frequently heard to say that his mother wakened in him his first desire for knowledge and his early passion for reading. Besides, she taught him the alphabet and the rudiments of both English and Latin. There in a little room upstairs, where the books were stored away, Charles received his first instructions in the art of storytelling. We even know the names of the books which he read, for in David Copperfield, Charles gives us the list in one of the many passages in the book which are literally true:

My father had left a small collection of books in a little room upstairs to which I had access (for it adjoined my own), and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy and my hope of something beyond that place and time, — they and the Arabian Nights and the Tales of the Genii, — and did me no harm.5

5 David Copperfield, XI; Cf. Forster, I, 26–29
Later on Dickens wrote that the imaginations of the young need nourishment just as much as their bodies need food and clothing. In time of trouble he would impersonate one of his favorite characters and thus console himself by stealing away in imagination to a dream world. "I have been Tom Jones for a week together, I have sustained my own idea of Roderick Random for a month at a stretch."

His education during this period of his childhood was first in the hands of his mother, then of a day school in Rome Lane, and, during the last two years of his residence at Chatham, of a school in Clover Lane conducted by a young Baptist minister, William Giles, a tutor from Oxford. Of the day school all we know is that at the time he attended he seems to have been under six years of age. But for two years at Clover Lane Charles was under the encouraging and stimulating influence of Giles who recognized in Charles a boy of unusual ability. In training Charles, Giles took pains to hold up Goldsmith as an example of flowing English. When Charles was forced to leave this school and tutor, in 1823, Giles gave him a set of The Bee, a miscellany of articles written by Goldsmith. Perhaps it was the thrilling influence of this gift that gave Dickens the desire to experiment with a miscellany of his own at different times in his literary career, under the titles of Master Humphrey's Clock, Household Words, and All the Year Round.6

6 Pope-Hennessy, 5-6
At the end of the winter term in 1823, Charles was recalled by his parents to London. Because of debts, John Dickens and his family were forced to move into a back garret in Bayham Street, one of the poorest streets in Camden Town. This drop in social status was a shock to the sensitive Charles, who had expected to continue his schooling and found that he had to clean boots, brush clothes, and do housework. Trouble was beginning thus early in life to brew its witches' cauldron for the boy. Though his father had the salary of a clerk, he always had the taste of a gentleman. Like Micawber or even Dorrit, John Dickens was amiable in spirit, flourishing in gesture, elegant in manner, and flowery in speech. He liked to entertain friends and, consciously or not, created an impression of a way of life far beyond his means. Because he ran up bigger bills than his salary could bear, he was always being trailed by creditors. In 1821, however, as a result of an early effort at economic reform in the Navy Pay Office his salary of £350 a year was sharply decreased. But since he was a jovial fellow with no sense of the value of money and little desire to learn, Dickens Sr. failed to curtail his living tastes to the bounds set by his decreased wages. The result was hopeless debt, poorer quarters, and the hounding debt collector.

This loss of social status was soon worsened by another degradation. Though perennially involved in pecuniary embarrassment, John Dickens was providentially blessed in compensation with an easy disposition; his debts rested lightly on his head. Unfortunately his creditors were not similarly blessed. On February 21, 1824, when Charles was twelve, the creditors
demanded payment, the money was not forthcoming, and John Dickens was taken to the Marshalsea Debtors' Prison, by suit of James Karr for £40.7. As he left the house he announced dolefully, "The sun has set upon me forever!"

We do not know the nature of this debt which landed him in prison, but according to Pope-Hennessy the debt which brought him to the Marshalsea for the second time (1834) was incurred to a wine merchant.

During this period of Charles's life --from nine to twelve-- his education was left to chance and to his own observation. Boylike he explored all the streets of the three little towns of Camden, Kentish, and Sovers which appear so often in his books; for example, Camden Town was the dwelling place of Bob Cratchit, Traddles, Micawber, Jemime Evans. But the long threatening shadow of hunger always hung over the home during these days. Since food was low and there was no means of income, Mrs. Dickens was forced to pawn the furniture until all but two rooms were bare. During this period Charles became acquainted with pawnshops and their clever proprietors. Almost everything had to go; even his books, the sunny companions of his lonely childhood, he had to sell; to his tortured mind they were almost symbols of better friends and happier days from which he had been rudely torn.

In her mad eagerness to provide food for her five children (Fanny was 14, Charles was 12, Laetitia 8, Frederick 4, and Alfred 2) Mrs. Dickens decided to open an establishment for the children of parents living in the Indies. For this purpose she rented No. 4 Gower Street, in her own name;
a large brass plate on the door announced 'Mrs. Dickens’s Establishment'.

Fortunately for the students, but unfortunately for the Dickenses, no girls came to inquire, despite the fact that Charles peddled circulars to letter boxes calling to the attention of neighbors the merits of the establishment. In the words of Charles:

Yet nobody ever came to school, nor do I recollect that anybody ever proposed to come, or that the least preparation was made to receive anybody. [Pope-Hennessy, page 8, mentions that Mrs. Dickens partly furnished the house that was intended to be the school.] But I know that we got on very badly with the butcher and baker; that very often we had not too much for dinner; and that at last my father was arrested. 8

Just two weeks before John Dickens was actually incarcerated, at the suggestion of James Lamert, a relative to Mrs. Dickens, Charles was sent to work in Warren's Blacking Factory (in which concern Lamert had recently bought a partnership) at the princely salary of twenty-five cents a day. Mrs. Dickens jumped at the opportunity, and even John, though he was loath to see the education of Charles end so abruptly, admitted that circumstances made acceptance of the job necessary. This happened on Charles's twelfth birthday, a cruel damper on his budding ambition. What made the blow worse was that his parents seemed so pleased to see him go, as if he had just qualified to go to Cambridge.

The weeks that Charles worked in the blacking factory proved a distressing and humiliating experience; yet he made use of it in his

8 Forster, 43 sq.
autobiographical novel, **David Copperfield**:

The blacking warehouse ... was a crazy tumbledown old house, abutting ... on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscotted rooms and its rotten floors and staircase, and the old gray rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me, as if I were there again ... My work was to cover the pots of paste-blacking; first with a piece of oil-paper; and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat all round; until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment in an apothecary's shop.9

In the company of river-side boys who called him "the little gentleman" Charles pasted labels for six months. All this time he was acutely sensitive about his degradation; to be sent into this lower class society, after having spent two years at school with the sons of officers and naval employees, certainly seemed a stigma. Among other things he never forgot that his mother wished him to remain in the warehouse; he could never bring himself to go near old Hungerford Market as long as the blacking factory remained standing; and to no one, not even to his wife, did he mention this sad chapter in his life, until he confided it to his trusted friend Forster. To make matters at the factory worse, his employers had Charles and some fellow-workers tie, paste, and label their bottles near a window in order to make use of the better light. But Charles, noticing with dismay the small crowds that gathered to watch his deft fingers at work, suffered from this publicity only more acute humiliation.

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship; compared these everyday associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more, cannot be written.  

Despite all the last minute pawning and scrimping the inevitable disaster came, John was jailed for a £40 debt. About a month later on March 25, he was joined in the Marshalsea by Mrs. Dickens and the other members of the family, only Charles excepted, who moved in to keep the family together. During his stay in prison, John Dickens received more than £6 a week income; yet he made no attempt to clear himself of debt. Here in prison he lacked no bodily comfort and was free of the dogged creditors; in fact, he did not care for release with its attendant financial worries; here he had peace. The well known and oft quoted prison scenes from Little Dorrit and from David Copperfield commemorate this searing experience.

During the first weeks of the Dickenses' incarceration Charles, whose lodgings were some distance from the jail, was able to be with his loved ones only on Sunday. Here in Little College Street, Camden Town, he stayed with Mrs. Roylance, now known as Mrs. Pinchin from Dombey and Son. There was precious little for the boy to do on his small salary. He walked daily to and from work. When hungry, he would just stare at the pineapples on sale in

\[10\text{ David Copperfield, Chapter XI; Cf. Forster, 44}\]
Covent Garden. On Sundays he would walk to the Royal College of Music, call for his sister Fanny, and then both would continue to the Marshalsea in Southwark. This arrangement soon proved unbearably lonely, and Charles begged his father to allow him to change his lodging to an address near the Marshalsea to enable him to be with the family daily. After this was arranged, Charles was able to have breakfast and supper with his folks daily in the prison. Here surely was exemplified that "Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage." Little Charles shed many tears in his father's company, Mr. Dickens no doubt regarding the tears as a tribute to his eloquence, "though heaven knows, there were other things to cry about during his sonorous periods."

Mr. Micawber, who represents Mr. Dickens, was waiting for me within the gate, and we went up to his room (top story but one), and cried very much. He solemnly conjured me, I remember, to take warning by his fate; and to observe that if a man had twenty pounds a year for his income, and spent nineteen pounds, nineteen shillings and six pence, he would be happy, but that if he spent twenty pounds one he would be miserable. After which he borrowed a shilling of me for porter, gave me a written order on Mrs. Micawber for the amount, and put away his pocket-handkerchief, and cheered up.11

While John Dickens was making no attempt to shorten his stay in prison, outside agencies were conspiring to throw him again into the maelstrom of this vale of tears. His mother, who had been living quietly on the interest of her savings and the pension allowed her by the Crewes, died, leaving £500 to her son William and £250 to John. By paying his brother's debt of £40 to Karr, William effected the release of John, May 28, 1824.

11 Ibid., 160
Despite his absence of three months, John returned to work at the Navy Pay Office; previously while still in prison he had asked for a retirement allowance because of an urinary organ infection. When his case came up for consideration, the investigator Mr. Huskinsson said that since John Dickens had taken advantage of the Insolvent Debtors Act, he could not continue employment in the Navy Pay Office. In view of his twenty years of service and six children, he was allowed a retired pension of £145 a year.

According to Wilson, Dickens was deeply influenced by the Marshalsea experience. These trying days seared their way into his memory and found their way into his early writings. Though he spent only six months in the blacking bottle factory, yet this degrading work induced in Dickens a trauma.

Even after his father had been released from Debtors' prison, Charles had continued to work at the blacking factory. For some time Charles had been importuning his father to release him from the bondage of a work-drudge and to send him to school. One day John Dickens came to the factory and saw his son working at the window. Shortly after this visit to the warehouse and perhaps as a result of what he had seen there, John quarreled (by letter, it seems) with James Lamert, the employer of Charles, took the boy out of the factory, and sent him to school. Dickens never forgot that his own mother tried to patch up this quarrel and to get Lamert to take Charles back.

12 Storey, 53
13 Pope-Hennessy, 11-12
at the factory; but John Dickens, who could be firm at times, would not hear of it.15

To bolster his reduction in income John Dickens sought a job as political reporter. By January, 1825 he was an established parliamentary reporter for the British Press, a newspaper. His skill at shorthand in so short a time is perplexing; perhaps he had practised in prison. This position enabled him to continue the fees for the school at which he had enrolled Charles six months before.

Despite the fact that he loved and admired his father, Charles always felt that Mr. Dickens had been derelict in his duty of educating him.

I know my father to be as kind-hearted and generous a man as ever lived in this world. Everything that I can remember of his conduct to his wife, or children, or friends, in sickness or affliction is beyond all praise ... But, in the case of his temper, and the straitness of his means, he appeared to have lost utterly at this time the idea of educating me at all, and to have utterly put from him the notion that I had any claim upon him, in this regard, whatever.16

After quitting the blacking factory, Charles went to the Wellington House Academy, a school in Hampstead kept by Mr. Jones, a Welshman. At this establishment he remained for about two years as a day boy, or until he was just past his fourteenth birthday. A sketch of this academy in the article "Our School" in Household Words October 11, 1851 written by Dickens, mentions that it was remarkable for white mice, the favorite pets of the students, "and that the boys trained the mice much better than the master trained the boys." To corroborate this view, Forster got the written

15 Wilson, 5-6; Forster, 68-69
16 Wilson, 7
testimony of some school fellows of Charles. As regards the general estimate of the teaching, the testimony is in substantial agreement. Dr. Henry Danson, for example, says of it:

It was considered at the time a very superior school, one of the best, indeed, in that part of London; but it was most shamefully mismanaged, and the boys made but little progress. The proprietor, Mr. Jones, was a Welshman; a most ignorant fellow, and a mere tyrant; whose chief employment was to scourge the boys, etc.17

For a short time after leaving Wellington House, Charles was at a school kept by a Mr. Dawson in Henrietta Street. But from this point on there is nothing important to mention in regard to his education. An education in those days was based on the classics, and the curriculum of Salem House in David Copperfield gives a good idea of the studies he pursued. Charles made up for the gaps in his training by intensive observation particularly of the seamy side of English life; as a result he brings to his novels the zeal and enthusiasm of the apostle who writes in order to move the callous men in power to return to the disinherited poor their rightful inheritance and dignity as Englishmen.

After leaving school in the spring of 1827, Charles got a job as clerk of Charles Molloy, solicitor, in New Square, Lincoln's Inn. He remained there only six or seven weeks, for by May of the same year his father had sufficient influence with Edward Blackmore, an attorney of Gray's Inn, to obtain for Charles a similar engagement as office boy. He worked here till November 1828 for 15 s. a week. Although he was clerk to a solicitor for

17 Forster, 74–75 and 82–83
only a year and a half, Charles absorbed enough knowledge of the technicalities of law to be able to assail its enormities without falling into rudimentary errors; besides, he gained enough knowledge through observation of lawyers and lawyers' men to fill an entire chamber in his gallery of living characters.18

In his spare time as a clerk Charles had, after eighteen months of intensive application, acquired a facility and confidence in using shorthand. The reporter's life had always appealed to him; consequently, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps, at least in this regard. Since a reporter needed shorthand, Charles applied himself to "Mr. Gurney's Half-Guinea Brachygraphy." A friend had warned him that to master the mere mechanical accomplishment would require years, "a perfect and entire command of the mastery of shorthand writing and reading being about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages." Undaunted by this dismal outlook, he plunged into his work keeping always before his eyes the golden rule of one of his characters: "Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. What I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely." In David Copperfield he tells us of the difficulties he encountered, which in short were "almost heartbreaking." One of his friends, Tom Beard, said of Dickens, "There never was such a shorthand writer."19 Charles was unequalled for accuracy in notating or for speed in transcribing.

18 Ibid., 86 sq.
19 Ibid., 90 sq.; Pope-Hennessy, 14 sq.
The next step upwards for young Charles was a position as reporter in the Consistory Court of Doctors' Commons. Though his main aim at this time was to reach the gallery of the House of Commons, his youth kept him in legal reporting; there he rented a box and waited for customs in Doctors' Commons. The personnel of the admiralty and ecclesiastical courts were robed and seemed by their aloofness to be out of touch with modern life; here they dealt with "people's wills and people's marriages and disputes among ships and boats." Here Dickens became acquainted with the different types of legal characters that walk through his novels -- Tulkinghorn, Wholes, Heep, etc. Dickens' impression of the law courts of England briefly was that the law of England "puts all the honest men under the diabolical hoofs of all the scoundrels." Behind the law courts' tangle of procedure Dickens felt there was an unworthy purpose -- the maze created confusion for the uninitiated and jobs for the lawyers. Seconding this opinion was Macaulay who maintained that a rational system of law was the great reform England needed.20

In the beginning few patrons came to Charles; but after clients discovered how thorough and accurate he was, Dickens did not lack for work. During his spare time when not reporting he interested himself in theatricals, reading plays and memorizing roles. With the idea that in case all other positions failed he could still become an actor, he visited the theater often, became a pupil of the actor Robert Keeley, and practised

20 Pope-Hennessy, 16-17
various parts at home before a mirror — a prelude to his own impersonation of characters he would create for his novels, and to his private theatricals either for benefits or for entertainment, and still later to his personal reading tours. Since immediate success was for the time being the important consideration to Dickens, his success as a political journalist soon after made him shelve his footlight ambitions until a more leisurely opportunity offered.21

His energy and accomplishments during these months seem amazing. What was the driving force behind his efforts? Something like inspiration sustained Charles during these trying years in Doctors' Commons before he entered the political arena as a parliamentary reporter. Some months earlier Dickens had been introduced to the Beadnell family by his friend Henry Kolle, affianced to Anne Beadnell. Anne's sister, Maria, pretty and flirty, caught and fired young Dickens' fancy, held it for two years, and then when their secret romance, which Kolle helped to promote, was blossoming into serious love, Maria's parents sent her to a finishing school in Paris in order to remove her from the influence of Charles. Because the Beadnells were financially better situated than the Dickenses, they looked upon Charles as a daring young fortune hunter hoping to improve his status. Eventually Maria said no to his suit; nevertheless this futile idol of his youthful worship had furnished him a motive for superhuman and sustained exertion. Later in David Copperfield Dickens immortalized Maria as the

21 Ibid., 18
fragile but lovable Dora; still later in *Little Dorrit*, after Maria, now a married woman, had dined with him and his wife, his disillusionment changes Maria into the plump, talkative, feather-brained, tiresome Flora.

In this connection, Harvey-Darton asserts that it is not necessary to attribute Dickens's boundless energy to his youthful infatuation. For the creative genius of Dickens was liberated by other causes, namely, his apprenticeship as reporter, his opportunities for authorship, and his consciousness of growing importance. "His extensive and peculiar knowledge ... of England and her people, her roads, inns, humours, uglinesses, her incurable optimism and courage, was almost all acquired in those two years spent in rushing about with Thomas Beard." Those two years that Dickens spent as Parliamentary reporter with Beard extended from August 1834-1836. In fighting for the *Morning Chronicle* Dickens developed assurance, confidence, the ability to make decisions, and the realization that he was an individual.22

On his twentieth birthday Charles threw a quadrille party for his friends at which he learned from Tom Beard that Dickens's energy had qualified him for a job as parliamentary reporter in the House of Commons. At this point, Grubb clears up a few facts and dates in Dickens's early years. In the year 1830 when Dickens was eighteen, he began his career as a parliamentary reporter, actually if not officially, for the *Mirror of Parliament*. For a brief period, starting March 5, 1832 or soon after, he

22 Harvey-Darton, F.J., "Dickens the Beginner: 1833-1836", *Quarterly Review*, CCLXII, (January, 1934) 52-69
reported concurrently for the **Mirror of Parliament** and the **True Sun**. Later Dickens continued his engagement with the **Mirror of Parliament** until he joined the **Morning Chronicle**. On March 5, 1832 Charles joined the **True Sun** staff and got to the Gallery in time to take the last speeches made during the Committee stage of the Reform Bill. In the autumn of 1832 Dickens resigned from the **True Sun** and was engaged by the **Mirror of Parliament**, and finally in his twenty-third year became a reporter for the **Morning Chronicle**. During these four years, 1832-36, his work principally consisted in taking down in shorthand important political speeches.

All England seemed interested in the reform speeches. These debates gave most Englishmen in the lower and middle classes their first primer training in politics. Thirst for political information was new and avid; a seven-penny paper was worth a shilling to people twenty miles out of London. Still with all this interest shown by the populace, with newspapers engaging reporters just to give the exact political situation even as to a word for word report of speeches, no official permission was given newspaper men to publish debates, no tables or chairs were provided them in the gallery, and some M.P.s like Wellington stated that the people of England had no right to know what went on in Parliament.

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24 Forster, I, 96 sq.; Pope-Hennessy, 20-21
25 Pope-Hennessy, 22
While Dickens was employed for the *Mirror of Parliament*, a kind of Hansard, he was busy working on three important measures, the Peace Preservation Bill (Ireland), the Abolition of Slavery (British Colonies), and the administration of British India. The paper specialized in exact transcription, and Dickens's reports were models of accuracy even as to the inclusion of "No! No!" "Slight laughter." When Gladstone in 1877 lauded Barrow's paper as being verbatim reports of the Reform Bill debates in Commons "done in the highest degree of perfection", he was paying an indirect compliment to Dickens who was one of Barrow's leading political reporters at that time. Another instance of Dickens's accuracy concerns the speeches during the Bill for the Suppression of Disturbances in Ireland, which included the use of courts-martial instead of trial by jury. During the moving of the second reading of this Bill Mr. Stanley, Chief Secretary, spoke for hours. *Mirror* reporters, working on forty-five minute shifts, took down the speech, Dickens being assigned to the first and the last sections. After reading his speech in print, Stanley claimed that, with the exception of the beginning and end, it was replete with errors. Since Stanley desired an exact version for circulation in Ireland, he requested Barrow to send over to him the reporter responsible for the accurate sections.

While recording debates during the discussion of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery, Dickens became acquainted with the leading political speakers of the House. There he heard the maiden address of Gladstone, who was to figure importantly in politics for the next forty years; there he
reported Bulwer's speech about keeping faith with the negro. In the same session but during the India Act discussions Dickens reported the talks of Macaulay and Buckingham. Macaulay believed in race equality and in using natives for official positions.26

His work in the gallery is important, for it acquainted Dickens with an entirely different cross-section of life and with viewpoints not only new to him but broadening. While politicians were debating and worrying about British policies in the colonies, Dickens realized they were ignoring the more important business of setting the British Isles in order at home. While safeguarding their own interests, these law-making aristocrats showed an abysmal ignorance of the heart-rending effects on the poor and the laborers which the laws produced. From his experience in the House of Commons Dickens sincerely felt that it was useless to appeal to legislators to get any worthwhile reform enacted. To understand this typical reaction, we must realize the temperament of Dickens: he was a man of action and results, not of debates and delays; he was a man of feeling and will, not of reflection and political intrigue or vision. To satisfy him, the legislators would have to make reforms now, enact administrative improvements effective today, and start social betterment beginning tomorrow. He saw little purpose in long-drawn out wordy debates, which involved simple problems in legal strait-jackets and in organized red tape in order to prolong the easy useless government life of parasitic officials like the

26 Ibid., 24 sq.
Barnacles and Boodles. Consequently, he appealed in his novels to the disinherited poor and workers, the lower and middle classes which he knew so intimately through sad experience and social bonds. Throughout his life interspersed between his other literary, social, and theatrical endeavors Dickens worked actively in conjunction with Miss Burdett Coutts to abolish slums, to save girls from lives of shame, and to build schools and tenements for the poor.

Through a recommendation by his uncle John Henry Barrow to Payne Collier, then working as parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, and through Tom Beard's chit that Dickens was 'the fastest and most accurate man in the Gallery' Dickens got the job as political reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* at five guineas a week, session or no session. With the team of Collier, Mackay, Hogarth, Beard, Crowe, and Dickens, editor Black presented his new proprietor John Easthope (nicknamed Blasthope) a staff that was a worthy rival to the *Times*.

For the *Chronicle* Dickens had the disagreeable job of reporting debates of the Poor Law Bill with its interminable "clauses on guardians, parishes, and paupers." This experience was more in line with his secret social work done with Miss Coutts; moreover, the reports furnished him abundant ammunition to shell the unfortunate conditions of the poor under the new law.

As Pope-Hennessy says, Dickens's allusions to the House of Commons or its members are not complimentary. In a Sketch he describes the House full of members, laughing, talking to each other, while no one listens to the
speaker. Some members are stretched out full length, some perch their legs on the backs of seats, some just talk, laugh, cough; he compares the scene to Smithfield on a market-day or a cockpit in its glory. Throughout his books Dickens gives the impression that the government is in the hands of men who are stupid and corrupt and parasitic. Gregsbury is a windbag; the Boodles, Coodles and other alphabetical-oodles are not interested in serving the public or their country but in preserving themselves and families in office; Dingwall M.P. is interested in no more important a measure than the better observance of Easter Monday.27

Between sessions in parliament Dickens's work was to follow important political leaders over the country and to report their speeches. For example, when Lord Grey retired from office he was tendered a banquet in Edinburgh and honored by being made freeman of the city; Dickens and Beard were assigned to cover this event. By using an extraordinary expense account, the Times printed these speeches a full day ahead of the Chronicle; later Dickens made use of this valuable lesson in speed in favor of his own paper.

In May and in September of 1835 Dickens traveled to the west country to take the speeches of Lord John Russell. Sometimes he had to take the speeches in the rain. On one occasion by tipping the postboys generously he got his report to London for the Chronicle before the Times. A vivid account of this scene and a condensed report of his whole life as a reporter

27 Ibid., 31 sq.
Dickens included in a speech given May 1865 at the second annual dinner of the Newspaper Press Fund.

I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren here can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle-yard there, to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once 'took', as we used to call it, an election-speech of Lord John Russell at the Devon contest, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such a pelting rain that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my note-book, after the manner of a state canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery of the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep, -- kept in waiting, say, until the woolsack might want restuffing. Returning home from exciting political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been, in my time, belated on miry by-roads, towards the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr. Black, coming in the broadest of Scotch accents from the broadest of hearts I ever knew.28

28 Forster, 99 sq.
In May 1836 he reported O'Connell's speech at Ipswich, which episode may have been used in his Eatenswill sketch. The previous December he had watched a by-election at Kettering, the aftermath of which was that he witnessed "the beastly swine who wallow in the public-houses down here under the name of Conservatives"; this incident made him lose faith still more in politics. Dickens was beginning to tire of the game of politics; the refreshing newness and glamour of his life had worn off after four years. In June of 1836 he undertook his last assignment for the Morning Chronicle, reporting the sensational trial of Melbourne vs. Norton. Lord Melbourne was charged by Captain Norton with having had a clandestine affair with Mrs. Norton. Testimony of released servants was the main evidence introduced. When through cross-examination these servants were proved to be of low moral repute the case against Lord Melbourne was punctured and he was acquitted.29

Obviously Dickens was disappointed with the reformed government. Its chief boast was the Poor Law which in no way affected the extremes of rich and poor in England. Actually the Poor Law was a smoke screen hiding the horrors of poverty behind the opiate-slogan, "No outdoor relief." Nothing drastic had been done for the ones who needed help most — the poor and the laborer. In the light of the Gordon Riots and of the French Revolution Dickens saw clearly that tyrannizing the people and neglecting their interests eventually would provoke the mob to violence.

29 Pope-Hennessy, 36 sq.
After he had spent a year or more in the Gallery, Dickens wrote down his impressions of persons he saw and happenings or scenes he had witnessed. Their chief trait was humor or an unusual slant. Dickens had always fancied himself a writer and longed to see his own work in print. Like Franklin, he dropped his first contribution stealthily, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter box in a dark office up a dark court in Fleet Street. This sketch was anonymous, "A Dinner in Poplar Walk;" and when he bought a December copy of the Old Monthly Magazine, he was surprised to find his article in print. So happy and proud was he at that moment that his eyes dimmed with tears. Occasionally throughout the next two years he contributed articles to the same magazine letter box, unsigned and unpaid. By 1835 ten contributions had been made and published by the Monthly Magazine. But to the eleventh and twelfth sketches he signed the name "Boz" the nickname obtained from his young adenoidal brother Augustus (whom the family called Moses and who called himself 'Boses'.) Pope-Hennessy states that Dickens first signed himself Boz in August 1834, which antedates the chronology of Forster by some months. Since the Old Monthly Magazine, owned and edited by Captain Holland, was unable to reemburse Charles for these sketches, Dickens told Black and Hogarth of the Morning Chronicle about his sketches. They jumped at the opportunity of printing the first of the London Sketches on September 26, 1834. Boz received favorable criticisms for these early efforts and encouragement to continue. As yet Dickens received no cash for his efforts; but when George Hogarth became editor of the Evening Chronicle, an offshoot of the Morning Chronicle, Charles made an
arrangement to write for Hogarth at an increase in salary from five to seven guineas a week.

At publisher Macrone's insistence Dickens assembled his Sketches with a view to publishing them in book form, for by 1836 Sketches by Boz had become very popular. In his enthusiasm Charles offered to add as many sketches as Macrone considered necessary to make a good volume. He discussed various topics that he could well describe, like the "House of Correction" or "Newgate". Eventually the book came off the press on the author's twenty-fourth birthday. He republished the Sketches and got £150 for the copyright. Later Charles found it profitable to buy back this copyright for more than twelve times what he had originally been paid for it.

The sketches had created by their popularity a demand for more work by the author. Shortly after Christmas 1835, Hall of the newly formed publishing company Chapman and Hall, on the lookout for new authors, came to Furnival's Inn to ask Dickens to do more work along the lines of "The Tuggs at Ramsgate." The series was to be continuous, the continuity provided by a series of illustrations dealing with a sporting club of amateur sportsmen. Dickens did not like the idea of writing on sport or of following the illustrations of another, for both cramped his ideas; and Dickens's style lives by its fanciful freedom. But when he was offered £14 a month plus a sales payment, he succumbed to the tempting offer.

At this time it is well to mention a few of Dickens's acquaintances who prove important sources of contact for him. First, there is Thomas Talfourd, to whom Dickens gave a copy of his Sketches, a friend whom he had met while
he was law reporter for the *Times*. Talfourd took to Dickens and introduced him socially to Lady Blessington and to Lady Holland, later engineering the author's unusually early election to the Athenaeum. Talfourd crosses Dickens's path at the book dinners and during the Copyright Bill.30

Another important acquaintance is Mr. Edward Marjoribanks, one of the partners in the Banking House of Messrs. Coutts; for it was he who arranged the first meeting between Miss Coutts, then twenty-one, and Dickens, then twenty-three. This was "probably not later than 1835." These two young crusaders of social reform found each other mutually complementary and inspiring. Both were interested in the same apostolic mission of alleviating the hard lot of the poor, saving disgraced girls, providing schools. These youthful apostolic dreams were in a few years translated to the world of reality, for on the death of her father in 1837 Miss Coutts became the heiress to one of the largest fortunes in England, a fortune which she used to promote her philanthropic aims. Before deciding on certain social reforms she often consulted Dickens, as his numerous letters to her testify. Consequently, through her works in conjunction with him we sometimes get an indirect clue to a political bent in Dickens.31

Through George Hogarth, *Chronicle* editor, whom Dickens wrote for, Charles became acquainted with the Hogarth girls, Catherine, Mary, and Georgina.


Charles was at an age when he was eager to marry and have his own children. Of the Hogarth girls only Catherine was of a marriageable age, though Dickens probably showered his affection more on Mary. During the engagement which lasted about a year Catherine seems cold in her affection towards Charles as he complains in a letter to her in the first stages of the engagement. That lack of affection and understanding eventually paved the way to their separation; but in view of his letters and his year-long engagement Charles could scarcely claim that he had entered the union blindly. The wedding was set for Easter 1836 at St. Luke, Chelsea. The young couple were at home in Chalk, near Rochester.

March 31st saw the first installment of the *Pickwick Papers*. This number sold four hundred copies at a shilling. The sixth number, however, sold forty-thousand copies; it was with the introduction of Sam Weller in the fifth number that the circulation leaped noticeably. *Pickwick* became highly popular, brought Charles a handsome income, and has always been one of the favorites with the reading public. In these sketches, horses and coaches are the necessary machinery of the quick changes of scene; the journeys, chases, and accidents link the story unmistakably to the picaresque novel of the 18th century and likewise to the sporting sketches which Dickens was originally asked to link together. A well known illustrator, Seymour, had been engaged to draw these illustrations. This artist suggested that Dickens write about a Nimrod Club whose members were to go out to shoot, fish, and occasionally get themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity. Seymour wished to have Dickens follow the illustrations;
Dickens remonstrated that is would be better and more natural to have the plates arise normally out of the text; besides, Dickens wished to have a wider range of English scenes and people than the group originally planned. Seymour, considered this request by Dickens, his junior by ten years, impertinent and left highly ruffled. Eventually Dickens's opinion was deferred to; he wrote the initial number of *Pickwick*, and Seymour from the proofsheets made his drawing of the club and his happy portrait of Mr. Pickwick.

Between the first and second number Seymour committed suicide. Later Seymour's wife claimed that her husband had originated the idea for the *Pickwick Papers* and that she was entitled to some remuneration. Dickens naturally objected that Seymour was not the originator of the sketches because he followed the manuscript that Dickens had written. As Chesterton puts the case,

> If Seymour gave Dickens the main idea of *Pickwick*, what was it? There is no primary conception of *Pickwick* for anyone to suggest, Dickens not only did not get the general plan from Seymour, he did not get it at all. In *Pickwick*, and, indeed, in Dickens, generally it is in the details that the author is creative, it is in the details that he is vast. The power of the book lies in the perpetual torrent of ingenious and inventive treatment; the theme (at least at the beginning) simply does not exist ... Seymour, as I say, was in a manner right in spirit. Dickens would at this time get his materials from anywhere, in the sense that he cared little what materials they were. He would not have stolen; but if he had stolen he would never have imitated. The power which he proceeded at once to exhibit was the one power in letters which literally cannot be imitated, the primary inexhaustible creative energy, the
enormous prodigality of genius which no one but another genius could parody. To claim to have originated an idea of Dickens is like claiming to have contributed a glass of water to Niagara... The Pickwick Papers, when all is said and done, did emerge out of a haze of suggestions and proposals in which more than one man was involved... But originating Pickwick is not the point. It was quite easy to originate Pickwick. The difficulty was to write it. 32

After the unfortunate incident of Seymour, who committed suicide while working on a new design for "The Stroller's Tale", Dickens had to find a new illustrator. The first three men who presented sample drawings, Buss, Leech, and Thackeray, proved unsuitable; eventually Hablot Browne became the illustrator Phiz for the inimitable Boz.

Because of the assured success of Pickwick Dickens's salary was increased. As he wrote to Macrone in a postscript, "Pickwick triumphant." From this point on Dickens was never at a loss for a contract; in fact, he bound himself to write so many different books or articles that he got himself into impossible contracts with several publishers. First he signed a contract with Macrone which gave him £200 for a novel to be finished in six months. Two months later, August, he agreed to supply the Carlton Chronicle, a magazine for nob's, a sketch every two weeks; Richard Bentley, Savile Row publisher, offered Charles £500 for the entire copyright to a novel; no time was set for delivery and Dickens could choose his own subject. Charles snapped up this offer and also signed a second contract, August 22, 1836 on the same terms. Meanwhile, Bentley was planning to start a

miscellany with humor as its main attraction. On George Hogarth's recommendation Bentley offered the editorship to Dickens on November 4. The first issue came out the following January 2nd, 1837. Besides editing Bentley's Miscellany Dickens contracted to write sixteen pages of original matter for it every month for a total stipend of £22 monthly. All these contracts kept his inventive genius working at white heat; during the ensuing four years Dickens worked like a defense plant on three shifts.

With an assured income of £65 a month and with more work than he cared to admit, Dickens felt justified in ceasing work as a reporter for the Morning Chronicle. On receiving Dickens's notice Easthope was nettled at losing him and mentioned that Charles had been paid in advance to supply weekly sketches. Such treatment from the paper for which he had slaved with energy and enthusiasm and fidelity, working under impossible conditions in rain and cold at all hours of night and day to meet deadlines and scoop rival papers, disgusted Dickens. Instead of being congratulated for the future's promise and praised for his past successes he was being treated as a dishonest employee. He returned the six guineas advanced for the unwritten sketches.

Meanwhile Charles had his own domestic problems. On January 6, 1837 his first child was born. Mary Hogarth had been invited to live with the young couple some months before in order to help Catherine. But when the mothers of both Charles and Katey decided to move in during the days of the blessed event, Charles engaged larger quarters, a twelve-room house in Doughty Street, and moved there in April. It was there that tragedy struck Dickens for the first time. After he had taken his family to the theater
one day in June and had returned home, Charles heard Mary choking for breath in her bedroom. He rushed upstairs, and sent for the doctor, but neither love nor medical skill could save her life. His intense grief is shown in several ways; he was unable to write his regular monthly installment for Pickwick and for Oliver Twist, whose opening chapters saw light in the second number of the Miscellany, in February. Besides, his most pathetic deaths, those of Little Nell and Paul Dombey, reflect his suffering when Mary lay in his arms choking to death.

The year 1837 was important also because in that year Dickens met Forster and this meeting of critic and author launched a close and intimate friendship. Forster eventually became Dickens's Boswell with his famous three-volume biography published in 1872. Since Charles cared little for the business end of publishing, he confided his contract difficulties to Forster. At this time he was worried over his contract with Macrone, for whom he had promised to furnish a novel for £200. With his other contracts with Chapman and Hall for Pickwick sketches, and with Bentley for two novels in addition to the Miscellany, Dickens felt he could not handle the one with Macrone. When he approached Macrone, Dickens found that he could not expect to be released. In desperation, then, Dickens decided to waive his rights to the Sketches in return for the so-called Gabriel Vardon novel which was being advertised as coming from the pen of Boz. After he had this contract, he was again excited to hear that Macrone was making thousands of pounds from the Sketches. Eventually Dickens induced Chapman and Hall to buy the copyright from Macrone at £200; Dickens stood security for the amount by
giving Chapman & Hall the Pickwick profits and a forthcoming novel's profits, each for five years.

The popularity of Dickens was unprecedented. The market value on his books increased so much within a year that the previous contract appeared to enrich everyone but the author. Such injustice, not legal of course but, in Dickens's eyes, moral injustice, infuriated him because he seemed legally handcuffed to protect his own interests. In 1837-38 Dickens began to suspect that Bentley, who had already given him excellent terms for two novels at £500 each as well as the Miscellany at £22 a month, was making a fortune out of Dickens's own writings. The writer was irritated at Bentley's pinching over half pages or insisting on his full quota of lines and pages and other economies; Dickens even wished Bentley to show him the account book of profits made on the magazine. While Forster tried to prevent an open break, Ainsworth appeared to sympathize with Charles. As Pope-Hennessy implies, Ainsworth probably hoped thus to aggravate Dickens further; for "in his dealings with Bentley, Ainsworth was angling for the reversion of the editorship of the Miscellany." By April Dickens 'burst the Bentleian Bonds' entirely when he persuaded Chapman and Hall to buy all rights to Oliver Twist for £2250, including in this deal the annulment of the Barnaby Rudge contract (the new name for the Gabriel Vardon book.) Now at last Dickens felt free of cramping legal shackles, for he was bound only to Chapman and Hall, who curried his favor by heeding his suggestions.33

33 Pope-Hennessy, 78-85
For some time, probably the autumn and winter of 1837 and early 1838, Dickens had been mulling over the idea for a story based on 'th cheap schools'. Into this bypath he had been remotely led by his own neglected education and his acute realization of the necessity of education for the children of the poor and middle classes. The immediate stimulus came from the regular advertisements that appeared in London papers. In order to see actual conditions at such schools, Dickens decided to take a trip to Yorkshire, which had a cluster of academies. Prepared to disarm suspicion, Dickens carried a letter of introduction from a London attorney which explained that the bearer was acting for a widow who wished to place her sons.

With this preparation Charles visited Bowes Academy under a Mr. Shaw, The 'no vacation' feature immediately struck Dickens's attention; obviously Shaw thus got many problem children, whose parents or guardians were happy to be rid of them. Worse still, the head master was able to inflict on his charges whatever discipline was deemed necessary to maintain order, for these pupils could not reveal to anyone what went on, since letters were censored and no pupil had a vacation. Inflamed with these shocking facts and implications, Boz hurried back to London and started the first monthly number of Nicholas Nickleby, eight months before Oliver Twist was scheduled to end. With neither story was Dickens a single number in advance. After finishing one, he would start on the other; each issue ran to 17,000 words, more or less. As a result of his slaving concentration on work he needed a rest in the autumn of 1838.
With Hablot Browne he went sight-seeing in Warwickshire, visiting Stratford-on-Avon and Kenilworth. Eight years later this trip was taken by the Dombey's. The Dickens traveled to north Wales, through Birmingham and Shrewsbury, viewing all the mechanical features of an industrial town: factories, furnaces, steam engines, smoke, long working hours, filth, cramped living quarters, cholera-reeking gutters, stunted children, etc. This world is recaptured in The Old Curiosity Shop. His visit to the cotton mills provoked him to disgust at the inhuman conditions and pity for the 'unfortunate creatures' for whom he determined 'to strike the heaviest blow' in his power. At this time Lord Ashley was conducting his campaign to remove the most degrading features of child labor. But this visit did not bear fruit immediately for Dickens; he had to wait until the heavy denunciations of Carlyle's Chartism moved him to write Hard Times. After these eye-opening and anger-inspiring experiences Dickens took more intense interest in London slums, their housing conditions, education, and health.34

Before the end of Nickleby, Dickens had been toying with the idea of discontinuing long stories, with their consequent drain on his fancy and strain on his nerves and emotions, and of shortening and varying the length of the tales. Here again we get the impression that he found it chafing to limit himself to a specified length, even if that limit were of his own making. Besides, he had some idea of starting a new publication from which he would derive all the profits, even though he would not necessarily write every line.

34 Ibid., 87 sq.
However, he did not wish to leave his publishers Chapman and Hall without advising them of his intentions and giving them an opportunity to improve their previous terms. Eventually Chapman and Hall, did offer terms satisfactory to Dickens, and he got Master Humphrey's Clock striking about March 1840.

From his enthusiastic ideas concerning the form and purpose of the magazine we infer that Dickens was a man of gigantic labors, colossal plans, and strenuous demands on himself and others. He wished to have a gigantic framework within which he could weave story after story and story within story like room within room of a large mansion. He suggested to Chapman and Hall an Arabian Nights of London in which Gog and Magog, the giants of the city, should tell stories. "In this spirit he wished Master Humphrey's Clock to begin, and to be a framework or bookcase for numberless novels." 35

But that was only part of his plan.

Dickens also intended to champion the poor, to reveal misery in low places and duty derelictions in the high. As Dickens himself explained,

The best general idea of the plan of the work might be given, perhaps, by reference to the Spectator, the Tatler, and Goldsmith's Bee; but it would be far more popular both in the subjects of which it treats and its mode of treating them. I should propose to start, as the Spectator does, with some pleasant fiction relative to the origin of the publication; to introduce a little knot or club of characters and to carry their personal histories and proceedings through the work; to introduce fresh characters constantly; to reintro-

35 Chesterton, 118 sq.
duce Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, etc... I would also commence, and continue from time to time, a series of satirical papers purporting to be translated from some Savage Chronicles, and to describe the administration of justice in some country that never existed, and record the proceedings of its wise men. The object of this series (which if I can compare it with anything would be something between Gulliver's Travels and the Citizen of the World) would be to keep a special lookout on the magistrates in town and country, and never to leave those worthies alone.36

As if the above plans were not optimistic enough, Dickens also indicated his desire to go to Ireland and America in order to add novelty and interest to his undertaking by introducing local tales, traditions, and legends after the plan of Irving's Alhambra. Certainly his magazine, if it embodied all these features, would not lack variety.

Old Humphrey's Clock began as planned. The first number sold seventy thousand copies; but after the public realized there was to be no serial by Dickens but chiefly a lot of social uplift preaching, the sales dropped like a barometer presaging a storm. It was useless to console himself that critics lauded his intentions; it was the public that bought the copies. Consequently, a change in plan was imperative; and the Clock stopped.

Besides, an idea for a longer novel had dawned on him, and he immediately devoted himself to the story which eventually grew into the Old Curiosity Shop. Despite the sudden and forced change in his plans, his ambitions and intentions at this time are interesting because they light the way to future trends in Dickens's life. One point bears mention: he was largely a slave

36 Forster, 193 sq.
to his public, not leading their minds with new ideas of reform but following their lead and acting as their voice.

Even before Dickens had finished with Little Nell, whose pathos bathed the reading world in tears, he had plans and made announcement of his proposed new novel, Barnaby Rudge. About this time Dickens was reading Carlyle's thick pamphlet on Chartism, for he, like all Englishmen, was interested in the Charter campaign which began after Lord Russell spoke in Parliament against the advisability of introducing further reform measures. Dickens welcomed the Peoples' Charter for it indicated "that the nation was developing political consciousness." Some of the grievances mentioned in the Charter concerned "the existing monopolies of the suffrage, of paper money, of machinery, of land, of the public press, of religion, of the means of traveling and transit." Such unfair monopolies he considered the effect of class legislation, the cause of England's 'accursed gentility'.

On the subject of current Parliamentary reforms Dickens and Carlyle saw eye to eye. Political reform to be effective must be yoked with administrative reform. Ability should count more than the accident of birth. Besides, the laws introduced should look to the common welfare, not to the maintenance of an outmoded aristocracy. In the political and economic world Dickens realized that religion and Christian principles unfortunately played an unimportant role; in fact, the legislators' apparent forgetfulness in practice of the simple truism of the brotherhood of man led to needless
misery. The spirit of Christmas was all he knew of Christianity in action and he preached it with all his might.37

Besides, Dickens was afraid that the huge mob of millions of poor and disinherited workers would rise up in rebellion against the rulers. He loved the people; he sympathized deeply with their woes; yet he feared their potential power, which, like unchained lightning, could bring disaster wherever it struck. And so we find his novel *Barnaby Rudge* dealing with ideas current in England then and in Dickens's own thought life. His story dealt with the Gordon Riots of 1780, which had occurred some sixty years before; but in imagination Dickens spanned the chasm of the intervening years and was really thinking of the Chartist movement and riots going on under his very eyes. In fact, he was using the Gordon Riots as a moral to the government of Victorian England: treat the workers more humanely and justly unless you rulers wish to provoke another riot and revolution and have bloodshed on your conscience as well as injustice, misery, and poverty.

Because of his four years of experience as reporter in the House of Commons, Dickens viewed the current system of government as unprogressive, blindly self-seeking, and even obstructionist. His experience there during debate speeches and discussions convinced him of the fundamental lack of harmony, honesty, and right intention among the majority of the members. Even high-minded leaders like Grote (vote extension advocate), Lord Ashley (champion of the workingman), and Lord John Russell (educational reformer)

37 Pope-Hennessy, 120 sq.
received short-sighted and continual opposition from their colleagues in the House. Worse still, these men even eyed each other's reforms with suspicion.

Since Dickens held such distrust of parliament, we should hardly expect him to think of joining that legislative body. From his boyhood almost he was able to see that 'the imperfections of Parliament were largely caused by the initial corruption of its members through the very process of election.' 'The corruption of electioneering promises and party propaganda undermined the morale of an M.P. from the start.' Yet in 1841 Dickens considered going into Parliament himself; perhaps he was encouraged to this end by Miss Coutts and Talfourd who argued that he could more strongly promote social improvement by being the voice of the underprivileged in the House of Commons. Yet this ambition came to naught; for when he informed the electors of Reading, who had asked Dickens to represent them as their second candidate, that he was unable to pay the expenses of a contested election, he learned that they did not intend to stand the expenses of his campaign. And he refused to prostitute his independence in thinking by having his election financed by party funds. Later, at a dinner held in his honor in Edinburgh through Lord Jeffrey's arrangement, he was again offered a seat in the House of Commons, for a Scotch county this time; but he refused.

In both instances Dickens realized that the duties which would devolve on him as an M.P. would necessarily interfere with his career as writer, now so

essential to his livelihood.39

In 1842 Dickens visited America to get a rest and change, and fresh inspiration for a new novel. These experiences on the boat and in the United States he describes in American Notes. While he was on his lecture tour, spent for the most part in the Eastern states, he championed the cause of international copyright. At this time he felt that he was losing much in royalties that rightfully belonged to him; his espousal of this cause was strenuous for he felt that his popularity had reached a peak. However just his cause and sincere his intentions, his talks in favor of the copyright were received unfavorably by the American press and public. Americans felt disillusioned at finding him so uncompromisingly mercenary. In his defense we can state that, while he was thinking of the money he was losing, he was primarily fighting for the principle of copyright for all English and American authors, not merely for himself. At that time, however, he was undoubtedly the most popular writer and the one who stood to gain most by the copyright laws. Nevertheless, some Americans did sympathize with Dickens in his fight for the copyright. Irving, at a banquet for Dickens in New York February 19, 1842, said, "It is but fair that those who have laurels for their brows should be permitted to browse on their laurels." Another speaker, Cornelius Matthews, seconded the international copyright, asking by what legal loophole does property in one country cease to be property when changed to another land. In an editorial the New York Tribune

39 Pope-Hennessy, 122 sq.
also supported Dickens's cause. Because of the general violent reaction in America to his proposal, Dickens, who was convinced that he was perfectly justified, took a strong dislike to American ways. In 1834 he wrote *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a satire, in great part, of many American scenes.40

Dickens's visit to America in 1842 only confirmed his growing conviction of the inadequacy of representative government, both as legislatures and as a means of bringing public opinion to influence the executive.

In May or June 1843 at the Manchester Athenaeum Dickens sat on the same platform with Disraeli and Cobden. In his speech he expressed pleasure that, amid the bustle and noise and distraction of machines, the minds of the workers were not being neglected. Here at Manchester he first got the idea of writing his Christmas stories to arouse the better nature in man by appealing to his heart. The first one was *The Christmas Carol*, the best known and most widely read of all his Christmas tales. It was so popular that Dickens decided to write a new one each year, and did write during the seasons of 1843, '44, '45, '46, and '48. Of these the most important are *The Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes*, and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. In general the purpose of these stories was to call to the attention of rich employers the plight of their poor underpaid employees and to stir the wealthy to mercy and charity on behalf of the poor; a special appeal was made in favor of the victimized children of these unfortunate circumstances.

40 Ibid., 163 sq.
In these mid-forties Dickens had some unfortunate financial experiences which strengthened his convictions concerning the heartless rich and the unjust applications of the law. First of all, The Christmas Carol was pirated by the weekly, Parley's Illuminated Library, in which it was condensed but not changed substantially. Dickens decided to make a test case of this plain robbery. Eventually it involved him in six Chancery suits; his claim for £1000 damages was countered by a plea of bankruptcy; and Dickens had to pay £700 for his own costs. As he wrote, "I am really treated as if I were the robber instead of the robbed." This sad experience made him resolve never again to seek justice through the law.

Besides, the monthly sales of Martin Chuzzlewit failed to reach the normal expected level, at least during the first numbers. In compliance with a clause in the contract, Dickens's publishers, Chapman and Hall, reduced his monthly stipend. Dickens was angry at being treated so shabbily. Previously he had made arrangements in publishing the Carol by which he paid all printing costs and received all profits with the subtraction of a modest percentage for the publishers. When the financial results failed to reach his expectations (he received a check for £500 and expected at least £1000), he blamed Chapman and Hall for the meagre returns. Here we have another instance of the fact that Dickens was a man with whom it was difficult to deal over a period of years. In many ways he proved unreasonable; he was ruled by a strong will and a romantic imagination that seemed to paint a much rosier picture than he had reason to see. Finally he had Tom Mitton conclude an arrangement with the printers Bradbury and Evans;
Chapman and Hall were given an agreeable financial settlement, and Dickens was free again. His new printers gave him £2300 for a fourth share in any book written by him within the next eight years.41

By 1843-44 we notice that Dickens has risen in the world financially and socially. It has been mentioned already that he had been introduced to Miss Coutts; in addition, Sir Francis Burdett invited Dickens to his home on several occasions. During these years Dickens became acquainted with Mr. Rogers, a genial wealthy man who patronized literary people. To his home he invited persons of intelligence, position, or distinction. He liked Dickens immediately; and through Rogers, the writer was introduced in Gore House, the home of Count d'Orsay and Lady Blessington; since many well known men appeared at her parties, Dickens through this means was introduced to a new world of high society where the conversation was usually literary. Through Talfourd, Dickens met Lady Holland about 1838; she directed the subject matter and time of the conversation on any given point like a dictator. At her parties the talk usually took a political or diplomatic turn. These and many other friendships proved Dickens socially adaptable and personally well liked; unfortunately, though, his social success coupled with his wife Catherine's lack of social charm only served to accentuate their marital maladjustment.42

41 Ibid., 206 sq.
42 Ibid., 94 sq.
In order to maintain social contacts and friendships Dickens realized that he had an obligation to return the favor of the many invitations he had received. Consequently, as fame and fortune continued to smile on him he took larger and more sumptuous quarters to keep pace both with his growing family and his increasing social prestige. In the 1840's Dickens was living at Devonshire Terrace and had a staff of three servants and a houseman and cook; besides, he owned a carriage and horses. In order to have an excuse to invite his friends, Dickens began to hold book dinners regularly to celebrate the completion of a successful novel. The first one, held to commemorate the conclusion of Pickwick was given in 1837. In view of the expenses of a large establishment, a growing family, (by Oct., 1845 he had six children) and the continual drain on his resources made by his father and the Hogarth's, it becomes clearer why Dickens became a literary factory in his output and a temperamental despot in his family life.

In October 1846 the first number of Dombey and Son appeared; like most of Dickens's novels it reached twenty numbers, ending in April 1848. The book, a study in family pride, reveals through a host of lesser characters the self-centered smallness of a rich man who hopes to make the whole world revolve around himself and his son. Rich character studies, a criticism of the principle of seeking the almighty shilling and pound for themselves are partial rewards from reading the book. At Leamington Spa we are introduced to a few society characters well individualized. Dombey sold well, 25,000 copies going in the first printing.
Along with his interest in theatricals and the dramatization of his Christmas stories, in 1845 Dickens was keenly interested in starting a paper in which he could air his views on social reform, the administration, and bureaucracy. For six months he feverishly was gathering ideas on the various departments conducted by the Morning Chronicle and the Herald. Probably the actual beginning or germ of the idea lay in a conversation attended by Dickens, Paxton, and Bradbury & Evans in the spring of 1844. To this project the publishers and Paxton guaranteed financial backing; Dickens added that two of his friends, Sir William Jackson and Sir Joseph Walmsley, would also back the paper with money. Walmsley, parliamentary champion of Liberalism in the north of England, was an outstanding organizer who had united the Chartists and the middle class amicably. The union of these two groups was the policy of the Daily News from the very beginning.

The business meetings in connection with the organization of the new paper gave Dickens a sense of importance. For his services as editor he demanded £2000. Besides, he must have a subeditor, able and reliable. His staff must be the best that money could buy, even if he had to entice reporters from rival papers. Because of such pirating of staffs, Dickens incurred the anger and criticism of many editors and publishers. Examples of his pirating are Eyre Crowe, Paris correspondent of the Morning Chronicle, and Thomas Hodgkinson of the Economist. Among his leader writers were W. J. Fox, M.P., Forster, Wills, Knight, Hunt, Mackay, and Prout. The other departments, news, sports, commerce, music, society, drama, were all handled by competent writers and editors. In a leader of its first issue its
principles were summarized as 'principles of progress and improvement, of education, civil and religious liberty and equal legislation.'

The English political situation in the summer of 1845 seemed a heaven-sent opportunity for radicals to launch a new paper. Both Protectionists and Free Traders in the House of Commons were disturbed by the Irish famine, which had like a chemical reaction precipitated an immediate crisis in the political laboratory. The famine demanded attention, a change in the tax and trade policy. Leaders were changing long-held views on the Corn Laws; Peel inclined in favor of Free Trade. After Russell urged his backers to end the system of protection and join the Anti-Corn League, Peel resigned because he could get no cabinet agreement on the Corn Law repeal. However, since Lord John could form no government, the Queen again sent for Peel, who added Gladstone to his cabinet. It was on this propitious occasion, the day before Parliament was to reassemble, that the first issue of the Daily News appeared. On the following day, after the Queen's speech, John Dickens, who was in charge of the parliamentary reporters, kept his men rushing in and out of the Gallery to get all the news. This meeting was especially welcome to reporters for it was climaxed by speeches of great news value; Peel announced that he would follow Cobden's lead, whereupon Disraeli called Peel a traitor to his party. For some unaccountable reason two days after this exciting session Dickens's interest and enthusiasm in the paper waned; he made plans to resign as editor, and ten days later actually resigned. Perhaps the criticism and difficulties connected with bribing away rival writers and correspondents drained him of energy and creative ability; besides, he wrote Evans at this
time that Bradbury was interfering with his newspaper work and was more
difficult to deal with than Easthope, the owner of the *Morning Chronicle*
when Dickens was a parliamentary reporter.43

After these trying and draining weeks in launching the *Daily News*,
Dickens concluded plans to rent Devonshire Terrace, settle at Lausanne,
Switzerland, engage in restful and stimulating tours, and enjoy himself
while getting mentally conditioned for a new book. Shortly before leaving
England he discussed plans with Miss Coutts concerning a rescue home for
girls; this plan materialized a year later as Urania College, Shepherd's
Bush. His travels on the continent to Italy, Germany, France, and Switzer-
land were intensive rather than extensive. Despite the change of environ-
ment and people, his writings even during this period of foreign travel have
a distinctly British flavor.

On his stay in Germany, where he was always popular, Dickens concluded
arrangements to have his works translated and printed in German. Dickens
had a staunch advocate at this time in Karl Marx who considered the English
author an important social reformer because he never softened the bitter
facts of the evil conditions in England. In theory about social improvement
Dickens was vague; in practice, he was ruled by sentiment and emotion.

At Lausanne, Dickens met William Haldimand, a former member of Parlia-
ment, and his sister Mrs. Marcet, educationalist. At Haldimand's home
Dickens also met M. de Cerjat and the Watsons of Rockingham Castle, with

43 Ibid., 233 sq.
whom Dickens maintained a lifelong correspondence. Since Watson was a Liberal and had been at the Reform debates, political figures and reminiscences inevitably were brought into the conversational focus. Excursions to Great St. Bernard, Chamnix, Chillon, etc., made with these new-found friends, later found their way into Little Dorrit, the second book which recounts the foreign travels of the Dorrits.

In order to get the atmosphere and inspiration needed to finish Dombey, on which Dickens was working, he decided he must get to a large city. Consequently, in mid-November he was in Paris. There in his spare moments he entertained the Watsons, Lord Normandy, the British Ambassador, and Lord Mulgrave. Despite all his good intentions Dickens realized more and more that social obligations and friendships, even though delightful and useful and informational, can also be a severe drain on one's time and patience. At the time of his visit, Lord Normandy was worried about the political situation in France; as a shrewd observer of events he ventured that Louis Philippe's throne would soon be wrested. In March, 1847 Dickens returned to London to await the birth of another, his fifth, son.

For some time after his prolonged vacation Dickens could not get the energy to start a novel after Dombey. To tide him over this desert spot in his inspiration, he devoted himself to short sketches, such as 'Temperance', wakened by Cruikshank's plates, 'The Bottle' and 'The Drunkard's Children.' He traced the workingman's addiction to drink to his desire to escape from the disgusting conditions under which he had to work and live and raise his family. As Pope-Hennessy says, Dickens's abiding desire to improve
conditions for his down-trodden fellow-countrymen, and to rid the land of shams and smugness which refused to see or face the ugly facts, made him long for a literary pulpit. This rostrum eventually took shape as Household Words, a magazine intended for the poorer classes.44

In connection with this paper germinating in Dickens's brain, he decided the publication would be a weekly, the contributors nameless, and the contents a serial novel, essays on current topics, poetry, and a feature called the Shadow. This Shadow, which reminds one of the earlier Gog and Magog idea, would haunt streets, churches, the House of Commons, etc. and reveal all that he saw or heard. Obviously it was 'the gentle mouthpiece of reform'.

By the third number Dickens devised a monthly supplement, a Narrative of Events, edited by his father, which gave condensed reports of government news, debates, measures. Among its features were these divisions: Narrative of Parliament and Politics, Law and Crime, Social, Sanitary and Municipal Progress, etc. In the fourth number Household Words states that it is foolish to exclude by tradition or law whole groups of the citizenry from offices in public administration; this narrow practise permits much intellectual ability to go unmined, whereas it serves to encourage a mediocre and hide-bound administration. In this new organ of his propaganda Dickens tries new tactics to accomplish his aims: instead of laughing the stock politicians to scorn, he implies that the proper management of England requires the mutual cooperation of all classes in the common interest of all.

44 Ibid., 273 sq.
Secret diplomacy with foreign powers was labeled a mistake, for it involved the whole nation in possible war while it served to draw attention from pressing problems at home.

For the next twenty years, 1850-70, Dickens was editor of Household Words, though his control gradually became that of an overseer and the work of editing was given over to Wills. That was particularly true after 1859, for from 1859-70 he edited All the Year Round.

According to Grubb, the following principles ruled Dickens's editorial methods in guiding Household Words and All the Year Round: Dickens paid attention to editorial details, he was exacting in his methods of editorial work and he was superior in his handling of his staff and contributors. First his painstaking care applied to style, punctuation, grammar, syntax. He suggested changes of titles, alterations and rearrangements of copy, deletions and explanations. Without fail he criticized every article that went into the magazines and he decided what should be included or excluded from each number of Household Words. Everyday he set a definite task before him and worked steadily through the morning hours; he was extremely methodical. In fact the intensity of his method drained not only his time but his energy and in some measure led to his death. In handling his staff and contributors, Dickens proved a superior editor; in this capacity he guided the young members of his staff, maintained personal contact with promising writers, and despite his strict demands he was able to hold his writers. For example, he remained very intimate with Wilkie Collins, he showed his
patient with Mrs. Gaskell and proved his tact with Bulwer-Lytton.45

With regard to the editorial work of Dickens, we should remember that during his life he was editor of five different publications: Bentley's Miscellany, 1837-39, Master Humphrey's Clock, 1840-41, Daily News (seventeen issues in 1847), Household Words, 1850-59, and All the Year Round, 1859-70. His first and foremost principle was editorial honesty. This assumed complete honesty of motive in himself and others and scrupulous accuracy in handling and presenting facts. No articles in the publications were signed, for Dickens felt himself personally responsible to the English public for the truthfulness of the material presented in his pages. Though Dickens was just to his staff, he unhesitatingly repudiated any article that savored of either unintentional error or planned deceit. This scrupulous editorial conscience extended not only to public affairs but also to minor matters. As a necessary corollary, Dickens wasted no sympathy on plagiarism, not only because he had been the victim of literary pirating, but because plagiarism artificialized the natural style of a contributor and infringed on the lawful right of an author. However, these stringent editorial policies were tempered by generosity in matters of opinion, in his attitude toward readers and contributors, and in liberal payment for contributions.47

With regard to Dickens's influence as an editor, Grubb asserts

that Dickens tried to reform popular literature and placed high standards of morality on his work. Besides, Dickens began a number of original features in newspaper or periodical work. For example, in the seventh number of the Daily News he began a special feature supplement; he introduced the informal drama and music review; he started co-operative newsgathering with the Morning Herald and the Daily News; he pioneered in the journalistic travel letter; and he employed a special foreign correspondent when he sent Sala to Russia. In general, he influenced many writers who carried his ideals and principles into journalistic practice.47

In this brief sketch we have been trying to highlight the political connections of Dickens, shown through his writings, his friends, his magazines. Where necessary, we have mentioned some important historical event with political implications. Other details in his life are mentioned or explained in order to make the story of his life clear, human, and chronological. During the last score of his years the principal events may be summarized under the heads of his writings, especially his novels, his editorships, his theatrical interests, his separation, his private readings, and his social uplift work.

From 1847 on, Dickens began a period of writing which is often characterized as realism. This began with Dombey and Son but reached a high point in David Copperfield and in Bleak House. At the completion of David Copperfield in July 1850 Dickens reached a new high level, even for him, in public

47 Grubb, G.G., "Dickens's Influence As an Editor", Studies in Philology, XLII, (1945) 811-23
popularity. Autobiographical to a great extent, this novel gives the
ingexperiences of his unhappy childhood, the unfortunate incidents of school
lifecommemorated in the chapters devoted to Mr. Creakle, and the painful
imprisonment of his father and family recounted in Chapters XI and XII as
being the fate of the Micawbers.

In the spring of 1850 Dickens assembled a cast to play in Not So Bad As
We Seem as a benefit performance for the Guild of Literature and Art, an
organization to band authors and painters in their own interest. One of
the cast was Wilkie Collins, with whom Dickens became more and more friendly
until his death. In fact, this friendship gradually pushed Forster into the
background; consequently, for the later years of his friend's life Forster's
biography is not as complete or intimate.

For the first performance of the benefit play The Duke of Devonshire
consented to donate Devonshire House. At the second performance, given at
the same place, Dickens distinguished himself by taking several parts in a
farce, Dr. Nightingale's Diary, such as an old woman, a sexton, a waiter, etc.
This success gave Dickens confidence and was the germ from which grew his
later successful reading tours.

During the early 1850's Miss Coutts and Dickens were still intent on
social uplift. Now since the government was taking no action, she decided
personally to finance and rehouse 10,000 slum dwellers in Bethnal Green.
After consulting the possibilities with Dickens, Miss Coutts decided to erect
tenements for Charles insisted that large houses served the purpose best.

In 1852-53 appeared Bleak House, a burning indictment against the delays
of the Chancery Court. In this novel, as in most of his books, Dickens drew his characters directly from observed life. Sometimes he made his characters so like the originals that the similarity could be easily recognized. In the cases of Landor as Boythorn, Dickens did not overstep aesthetic bounds; but in the case of Leigh Hunt as Skimpole, the picture was too painfully revealing and caused ill feeling. The points which were most cruel in the Skimpole caricature were the emphasis on irresponsibility, imposing on friends, and pretending in his dress and appearance even at sixty-five that he was a young man. Mrs. Jellyby in Bleak House was thought by many to be a caricature of Harriet Martineau, a writer of tales on Political Economy. There is a hint of her also in Miss Pardiggle, who was on various social committees.

The comment caused by Bleak House during its publication in monthly installments and its influence even on public minds may be judged by the following incident. At the Royal Academy banquet held April 30, 1853, at which Dickens was a speaker, Vice-Chancellor Wood, substituting for the absent Chancellor, made some remarks tantamount to a defence of the Chancery. Though he did not mention Bleak House, he obviously had its scathing criticism in mind; for he explained the Law's delays as due to the insufficient number of judges. He hastened to add, however, that since more judges had been appointed, such unnecessary delays would be curtailed.

In the fall of 1853 while on a trip to Naples Dickens made another political connection when he met Henry Layard, who was traveling with Lord
and Lady Somers. With Layard Dickens learned he had many reform ideas in common; the two had many long political discussions. The principal concern of Layard, as of Dickens, was to find solutions for the social problems and evils in England. At this time Layard was newly elected Liberal M.P. for Aylesbury; in this position he hoped to suggest important reforms in the House of Commons.

The period from 1852-58 may be described as a period of changes for Dickens. During 1852-54 he wrote *A Child's History of England*, not important as history, but a departure from his usual type of writing. Since he had previously made arrangements to give readings in Birmingham on Dec. 27 and 29, Dickens left the Continent for London. These were his first readings. He began these public performances with *The Christmas Carol*; this entertainment lasted nearly three hours, double the time devoted to it in later years. On Dec. 30 he was asked to give the Carol again to the townspeople who had been unable to attend the crowded preceding readings. To this audience of workers and their wives Dickens said by way of introduction that laborers should take a share in management, for cooperation between employer and employee is a necessary goal.

At this time Dickens limited his readings to the Carol and the *Cricket on the Hearth*, to a few stories from the Christmas numbers of *Household Words*, episodic readings from the trial scenes in *Pickwick* and from the trials of Mrs. Camp and Paul Dombey. Despite what we might ordinarily be led to expect, his performance was not at all amateurish, but in the words of one who listened to Dickens his readings were 'ingenious and highly elaborated
histrionic performances.' His first readings were benefit performances for local institutions in Birmingham, Folkestone, Chatham, Peterborough, Sheffield, Coventry, and Edinburgh. In 1858, however, he issued an announcement for paid readings.

January 1854 Dickens started *Hard Times*, a novel dealing with the misery caused by factory conditions. This idea had been pregnant with him for months; he had made notes and preliminary plans. But in order to fire his imagination he needed the match of firsthand information; consequently, he went to Preston to see a strike in action. When he arrived, the strike and lockout had been in progress for twenty-three weeks. Everything seemed quiet; there was no bloodshed, no dramatic demonstrations, nothing that his exuberant imagination had associated with a strike. Obviously he had expected something in the nature of a local revolt and was surprised to see things so orderly. On the day after his arrival, Sunday, he attended a meeting of the delegates; on Monday he went to an open-air meeting in which the assembly resolved to be free of tyrants. What he saw in Preston, a so-called model town, only made Dickens more determined to fight for betterment in the laborer's living and working conditions.

The reason that he found writing *Hard Times* difficult was that he was trying to refute the accepted doctrines of the economists and manufacturers, *sociology*, supply and demand; furthermore, by nature and inclination he was no abstract thinker and by education or learning he knew little of the dogmas of the economists. Consequently he tended to suspect what he did not understand, especially since he saw the evil results in the working class of the
practical application of these economic laws. The evil fruit of exploiting
the helpless could hardly come from a good tree. As Ruskin justly says in
criticism of this book, the satire is weakened because Dickens makes
Bounderby a monster and the worker Stephen Blackpool a saint.

When England and France declared war on Russia in March 1854, Dickens
considered this almost the knell of all his hopes and social improvements.
Now the misery and abuses at home would be 'obscured by cannon-smoke and
blood-mists.' More people in London alone are like to be slain by cholera,
he wrote, than all the English soldiers in the Russian war. During the
progress of the war reports came from writers near the action stating that
the lack of organization in the supplies was causing needless suffering;
besides, the contagious disease hospital was in a terrible state. At home
Layard flayed the government for taking an eight-week vacation in crucial
times. After Christmas, during a session in the House of Commons Roebuck
asked that a committee be appointed to look into the bungling connected with
the war and lay the blame on the responsible men. In face of certain
censure the ministry resigned. By February 16 a new government under
Palmerston supplanted the old under Aberdeen. This was an opportune occasion
for Dickens to bring his old political skit, "A Thousand and One Humbugs,"
up to date.48

During these years Dickens was keeping in close touch with Layard, "who
was as active as ever in attacking bureaucracy and demanding administrative
reform." At a Drury Lane meeting June 20, 1855 Layard pointed to 'records of

48 Ibid., 321 sq.
inefficiency, records of indifference to suffering' all reflecting discredit on England and the government. The Civil Service, overstaffed, simulated being busy by passing work from one department to another. The Prime Minister himself was blind to the miseries of the poorer classes. Stung by Layard's accusation Palmerston referred insultingly to Layard's private theatricals at Drury Lane. Dickens rushed to his friend's defense and a week later at another political gathering he said that the reason for Layard's private theatricals was that the noble Lord's public theatricals were so bad, the machinery cumbrous, the company full of 'walking gentlemen'. Consequently the sensible citizenry find themselves forced to form an opposition, to try to correct social grievances, for "There is no understanding of the general mind in Parliament." 49

For the same reason, Dickens said, he had joined the Society for Administrative Reform, because unless reform came as a result of the people's demands, he held little hope that it would ever come unsponsored from the House of Commons. In coming to that conclusion he was prompted by the years spent in the Gallery. There he had been convinced that the members on the whole were more interested in the mechanics and flourishes of Parliamentary debate and procedure than they were in alleviating a pressing injustice. The Society felt that the future of England was more important than preserving mere routine and convention, such as 'the retort courteous, the quip modest, the reply churlish, the reproof valiant,' etc.

49 Dickens, Charles, Speeches by Charles Dickens, London, John Camden Hotten, 1870, 125 sq.
While in Paris during 1855, between the theater and dining out, Dickens worked out an idea for a new story based on an attack on the bureaucracy. This was right in line with his conversations with Layard and the aims of the Society for Promoting Administrative Reform. Finally the word 'circumlocution' struck him like a lightning flash and he had the whole theme; Little Dorrit, the story that resulted, was a caricature of British officialism and in particular was an indictment of the involved red tape and unnecessary delays in court procedures. It occupied Dickens from 1855-57.

While Dickens was in Paris Wilkie Collins attended him constantly and dined with him daily. In September 1856 Dickens appointed Collins assistant editor of Household Words. From this point on Forster's intimacy suffers and his biography becomes less reliable.

While political conflicts and theatrical engagements were consuming his energy and patience, another conflict was brewing on Dickens's own hearth. In 1858 he separated from his wife Catherine. Catherine during all these years had been gradually relegated to a spot farther and farther away from the important interests in the author's life. Catherine took little interest in politics. She was no social lion like her famous husband. She was not a glib or witty conversationalist. In fact, she was never invited to the affairs held by Mr. Rogers, who could not brook dullness. About the one thing that Dickens and his wife had in common were the ten children; and for some strange reason Dickens felt that Catherine was solely responsible for them. Perhaps, as Wilson suggest, "Dickens's terrible gallery of shrews who browbeat their amiable husbands suggests that she (Catherine) may have been a
scold; but surely Dickens himself was no Joe Gargery or Gabriel Varden."

Perhaps the fundamental reason for the lack of true happiness and harmony in Dickens's home was a temperamental unsuitability which neither made much effort to rectify. With all his compassion and liberality, with all his industry and tenderness, Dickens had developed an inordinate sensitiveness, a weakness which in time and through pampering and public acclaim became stronger than all his virtues. According to Chesterton, Dickens was a domestic despot, in the sense that the family had to be always in tune with his feelings or whims.

If the day were too noisy, the whole household must be quiet; if the night was too quiet, the whole household must wake up ... All this, which was mainly mere excitability, did not seem to amount to much; it did not in the least mean that he had ceased to be a clean-living and kind-hearted and quite honest man. But there was this evil about it — that he did not resist his little weakness at all; he pampered it as Skimpole pampered his. And it separated him from his wife. A mere silly trick of temperament did everything that the blackest misconduct could have done."

On this dark picture in Dickens's life the Ellen Ternan relationship sheds important light. In August 1857 Dickens had been obliged to get, in place of his girls, some substitute professional actresses, who turned out to be Mrs. Ternan and her daughters Maria and Ellen. The previous April Charles had met Ellen behind the scenes crying because she was asked to

50 Wilson, 47; Leacock, Stephen, Charles Dickens, His Life and Work, New York, Doubleday Doran & Co., 1934, 204 sq.

51 Chesterton, Charles Dickens, A Critical Study, 209 sq.

52 Storey, 89 sq.; Wilson, 68 sq.; Pope-Hennessy, 379 sq.
appear in a costume which showed too much leg. He had been captivated by her virginal modesty then. During the rehearsals for his present play, *The Frozen Deep*, Ellen took such pains to interpret lines as Dickens wished that he became infatuated. In her he seemed to have found the "one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made." She sat on the arm of his chair, sang duets with him, and took over his heart interest. In one of the farces, *Uncle John*, which accompanied the featured drama, Dickens gave Ellen a part which approximated the real state of affairs. Since the mythical Uncle John loaded his bride with necklace and earrings, Dickens decided to send Ellen some jewelry. By mistake the package was delivered to Kate, who guessed what was going on. She had a scene with her husband who resented the suspicion attached to the innocently conceived affair.

Dickens tried to conceal his infatuation from his friends. The more he thought about the unfortunate incident, the more he pitied himself and blamed Kate. After all, she had never seemed to fit in with his social life; she never bothered to interest herself in his work or plans. With all his insistence that public officials face facts, he refused to face in his own domestic life the ugly fact of his misguided affection for Ellen. Probably, as Wright believes, Sydney Carton reveals the first hopeless phase of his love. Probably, too, the intimacy with Wilkie Collins who spoke with unseemly jocularity of sex-relations led Dickens to underestimate his wife's part in his married life. After separating their beds and sleeping quarters and suggesting further segregation, to which the Hogarths naturally objected as
humiliating, Dickens decided on separation by mutual consent. In the spring of '58 he separated, left Catherine in London with one of their sons, and removed with the rest of the family to Gadshill. Here Georgina, sister of Kate, mothered the children. Georgy's siding with Charles and desire to cooperate in solving his marital problem led her parents to suspect that she might be pushing the separation to a head. Ugly rumors reared their Hydra-heads. To stop them, Dickens forced the Hogarth's to sign a statement that the rumors had no foundation in fact. In a statement in Household Words Dickens defended his separation by stating that he and Catherine had nothing whatever in common. Later on, he induced Ellen Ternan to be his mistress and set her up in an establishment. At times he saw her three times a week. Ellen gave birth to a son by Charles, but the child did not live.

The last twelve years of Dickens's life were busy like the others. More of his time was engaged in public readings, which were pleasantly remunerative. In accepting his many contracts for reading tours through England and America, Dickens was only yielding to his youthful and never-quenched ambition to be an actor, to receive visible signs of applause, and to impersonate creations which were already flesh and blood to himself. Besides, such acting helped him to enter a make-believe world in which he forgot the troubles and miseries of this frail mortality. With customary vigor and enthusiasm he threw himself body and soul into his new love; he reduced his stories to an acting version, and he went to the trouble of committing them all to memory so that there would be no mechanical delay or drawback in looking after words.
In the winter of 1859 Dickens dissolved his partnership with Bradbury & Evans. However, he still kept Household Words and in addition began a new magazine All the Year Round. This is only another instance showing that Dickens was difficult to handle.

By 1860 he had become a world figure, prosperous, and in great demand as a writer and reader. But as Pope-Hennessy remarks, 'in slipping his marital moorings, he had lost balance and sense of direction.' His new life demands change and novelty. Family responsibilities have lessened, for his children have grown and he has sent most of them away to earn their own living. Only Mamie and Georgy stay with him; they understand him, agree with him, flatter him. From 1860 on, he has less time to devote to political affairs. In fact, the well-being of England during the prosperous 60's gave him less opportunity to flay the economic and political opportunists; for the wealth that poured into England overflowed into the laps of the lower classes through higher wages.

After writing A Tale of Two Cities (1859), Great Expectations (1860), Uncommercial Traveler (1860), and Our Mutual Friend (1863), Dickens was again free to engage in public readings. Our Mutual Friend is a satire on social conditions in England, a study of contemporary life as seen by the middle class. Here the rich middle class industrialists become detestable. They have succumbed to the vice of getting money for its own sake, and Mammon leads to snobbishness and insincerity.

He had made successful readings in Belfast, Dublin and Cork; at Edinburgh the triumph was great; Manchester, Birmingham, and Brighton
continued the good news. At the start of 1866 he considered it propitious to continue his reading tour. Among the towns visited were Leamington, Cheltenham, Plymouth, Liverpool, and London. He gave eighty readings in half a year with estimated profits of over £15,000.

After he had received glowing reports of the possibilities that America offered, Dickens in 1867 decided to favor America with a return visit. Twenty-five years had passed since he had stirred up Americans by his criticism and satire. Any doubts he might have entertained about his success were dissipated like dew before the sunny and heartfelt reception he received in Boston November 19. There was an unprecedented demand for tickets, Dolby his agent selling $12,000 in tickets. After four readings in Boston, he went to New York for eight; he confined himself to four readings a week. At New York, he tells us with pride, there was a rush for tickets at the box-office. People stood in line for hours in wintry cold and snow, having only the refreshment of hot coffee from a nearby restaurant to warm them.

Throughout February and March he gave readings in New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Cleveland, and Buffalo. Because there was a bitter political campaign going on in the Midwest, Dickens was advised not to go farther west on his tour. When rumors of the impeachment of President Johnson got about, ticket sales dropped; and he decided to cut his tour short. His last reading was in New York on April 20th. This tour netted him a profit of more than £20,000. Dickens was extremely pleased with the reception tendered him in all the cities and towns; he was deeply impressed by the changes for the better which he noticed on his second
American visit. In fact, he was so overwhelmed that he promised in every subsequent edition of *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* to mention his changed attitude, the changes in the amenities of life, the improvement in the press, the politeness, delicacy, and hospitality extended him, and his gratitude for the respect shown to the privacy enforced upon him by the nature of his work and the condition of his health. After the testimonial dinner in New York, Dickens sailed for home and arrived in England in May, 1868.

By October of the same year he began his 'farewell' readings. His intense labors had imposed a severe physical strain on his health. Even during the American tour he had limped badly, his right foot was swathed, and he had leaned heavily on the arm of Horace Greeley. At this period his doctor warned him to reduce his readings in number and length or to discontinue them entirely. For a short time Dickens would follow the doctor's instructions; but as soon as he felt strong enough, he would go on tour again. For his farewell readings he decided to work up a selection of scenes from *Oliver Twist*, culminating in Nancy's murder by Bill Sikes. From January 1869 on, this condensed *Oliver Twist* formed one of the most frequent of his readings. During the early months of 1869 he continued, often giving four readings a week. His engagements kept him shuttling through the various towns of Great Britain and Ireland. It was the exertion of these performances and the strain of traveling that hastened his death. Physical weakness and disability crept up on him during some of these readings: giddiness touched him at Blackpool and deadness of the side at Chester.
He had to discontinue his contracted readings with twenty-five undelivered. After some weeks of rest he was well enough to attend dinners and to get back to the routine of writing.

In the closing months of 1869 Dickens began his last book, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, a mystery story destined never to be completed. As usual, it came out in monthly installments. When on March 16, 1870 his doctor forbade him to continue his scheduled reading tour, Dickens bade farewell to the British public, closing fifteen years between the English people and their most popular author. His last months saw him working hard on his last novel. Though Forster thought that *Edwin Drood* was free from the social criticism which in Dickens grew more bitter with age, it seems to some to contain 'the most biting criticism of all, despair of a civilization rotting with worship of a dead past.'

On June 9th he worked all day on the story. At dinner he looked ill; soon after, he had a stroke and never regained consciousness. On June 15th he was buried in the Pantheon of England's mighty dead, Westminster Abbey; he lies between Shakespeare and Fielding, facing Geoffrey Chaucer. At his death all England mourned as if for a national hero; London was crushed by the news as though England had suffered a major defeat on the sea. Even today it is rare to find no blossoms on his grave. Such was the popularity of Dickens.
CHAPTER II
THE RELATION OF POLITICS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS
IN DICHENS'S WORLD

In a representative government social and economic needs influence to a large extent the nation's politics and laws. In general, politics means the administration of affairs of state or the conduct of government according to a settled system; economics means the way that people use a country's resources to supply their needs; social economy means the way people group themselves to gain their essential needs. While social and economic needs play the important and basic role in a representative government, yet a political group through strong unity and similarity of interests may change the economic and social life for a time, until there is a political reaction from the groups against which discrimination has been exercised. However, the political influence never reaches a point where it outweighs the other needs over a long period; for the economic needs (eating, clothing, shelter) will insist on manifesting themselves and will protest against excessive abuses, e.g. the French Revolution in 1789.

Consequently, because of their close interdependence, political, economic, and social elements often interwine closely. Conceivably, there can be functions, duties, persons, policies or milieu that are entirely or predominantly social, political, or economic. On the other hand, one may conceive the same group or nation from a viewpoint that is partly political and partly economic. In fact, existing social conditions may and often do
have an important effect on changing the political policies, the administration, or the Members of Parliament. Contrariwise, an unjust or discriminating political administration often affects economic or social conditions by consciously or unconsciously favoring one class of the citizenry at the expense of another or by being unable to cope with a changing situation, e.g. the Industrial Revolution in England. For obvious reasons, the group in office usually identify their own private or group interests with the national welfare. This conclusion may be and often is reached in good faith; it need not always be the result of crookery or perverse will. It may result from ignorance of existing conditions, or of the just cause, or of the right solution for pressing problems; again it may result from a blind trust in providence, a smug satisfaction with the existing order, or a crass refusal to face facts.

Changes in political policies, laws, and administration may come directly from the law-makers or may arise indirectly as a result of agitation from the ones governed. Where the law-makers are out of touch with the common people, the laws, taxes and civic duties may work an unjust burden against the poor; such was the attitude of the French monarchy and nobility in the 18th century. Such too was the attitude of the English aristocracy toward the middle classes and the workers in the 18th and early 19th century. Whereas the French aristocracy turned a deaf ear to the pleas of the poor for bread, the English Lords felt it was their duty to maintain common decency and order in the realm, even at the expense of compromise. The French nobility refused to compromise and the aristocratic system went
the way of the guillotine; the English compromises resulted in a series of reforms in which the government was shared gradually by more and more of the people.

The generally accepted theory of government practice or law is that law is a dictate of reason made by a competent authority for the common welfare. Obviously the common welfare is the good of all strata of society in a nation. Laws then should consider the welfare not of the aristocratic class exclusively, nor of the manufacturing or agricultural group predominantly, nor of the laboring class excessively; for in overlooking the rights of one group, serious injustice may be the unfortunate result for another. Law-makers or those interested in pushing new laws through the legislature naturally and usually have at heart either their own personal interests or the interests of the group which they represent or from which they hope to gain most. By appealing to selfish motives of aggrandisement the influential classes may persuade the law-makers, their own representatives, to introduce new laws. In such ways the English landowners pushed through the Corn Laws; they rationalized that raising the price of imported wheat and corn was good for the nation; nor did they neglect to console themselves with the assurance that the law would enrich the landowners. The full effect of such laws may not be revealed for a generation. Usually the changes are gradual; furthermore, the poor are long-suffering and are not influential; besides, the laboring workers lack leaders, lack united strength, lack a press, and often lack the necessary education or intelligence. Many of these points are graphically illustrated in Disraeli's *Sybil* and Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge*.
and Hard Times.

But when affairs reach a state of oppression or starvation, a reaction sets in. In fact, the reaction begins before the state of oppression is actually attained. The poor realize something is wrong, but they do not know the fundamental reasons; as the laborers in Sybil express the solution, 'What we need is more food and higher wages.' The remedy may voice itself in terms of the practical needs or in terms of the theoretical explanation. Idealists and social workers start agitation and make practical efforts in favor of social improvements. Among the representatives in this group may be cited Dickens and Miss Coutts, Owen and Ruskin. Critics of government point out weak spots in its armor, satirize abuses of power and the incompetence of those in high places, and expose the injustices of the law by showing its effect on the poor. Some may perform this office through essays or lectures (Carlyle and Ruskin); some may theorize on the false principles on which existing government depends (Bright and Cobden) or lay down an entirely different set of principles (Bentham and Mill); some may base their theories principally on economic laws (Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Owen, Mill); some may seize the concrete representation of government or law in a practical demonstration of the argumentum ad hominem. Dickens found his most effective outlet for reform in novels which dealt with the middle and lower classes principally, less often with lords or M.Ps. His argument to English pride and sense of fair play and his appeal to human charity made the lower classes conscious of their degradation and the ruling classes conscious of their duty in relieving their fellow countrymen of
unjust strictures.

In a representative government, based as it is on freedom of speech, reformers are allowed great freedom in expressing their protests. These men represent the voice of social and economic needs or desires. The more closely they identify themselves with the feelings and thoughts of the poor, and the more exactly they depict the situation in terms of misery and suffering, the more effect the reformers have. Dickens had the gift of imaginatively identifying himself with the millions, of depicting their woes in heart-touching and tear-impelling scenes. He made the cause of the poor known and popular. As a result, the men who introduced into Parliament statistics and committee reports on the poor laws and the factory workers, *etc.* had the path smoothed, the minds informed, and the hearts of the legislators disposed. The Industrial Revolution exploited the common man for the benefit of industry. To achieve reform some men must stand out as fanatics against the whole current of the political stream. Such a man was Dickens.

In English politics there are external and internal phases. The external phases include imperialism or developing the Empire by colonization, and foreign trades and agreements for developing the economic and social life of the nation. The Mercantile Theory, which prevailed during the 19th century, embraced a favorable balance of trade: sell more than you buy; the more you sell the more you enrich the nation. This system of trade became of importance to the English people for it effected lower wages, a change in the Corn Laws, and a host of changes for the masses.
The internal phases include party rule, and economic and social legislation. The party system existed on the assumptions that a capitalistic society was right, that the government existed to protect property (especially the richly propertied nobles and capitalists), that the welfare of the nation depended on the wealth that flowed into the country (i.e. especially through the industries of the manufacturing capitalists), that the government should therefore adopt a stand-off attitude (Laissez faire) toward capital and industry (i.e. should let the owners of factories, trades, and banks run their businesses as they wish without government interference, for owners and capitalists know best how to make their industries profitable, thereby bringing more money into the country by increasing exports.)

Such a policy, of course, was excellent -- for the capitalists and nobles. Characteristically, the money-makers ignored the implications: that the economic laws of a capitalistic society are made for the particular benefit of the capitalist. Other members of such a society will, of course, share in the good fortune reaped by the energy, initiative, and courage of the manufacturers; nor do the manufacturers begrudge the wage-slaves the moiety they earn by the sweat of the brow fourteen to sixteen hours a day. The laborers existed for the manufacturer, and the manufacturers existed for the good of the nation. Thus did the rising industrialists reason. The fallacy of the rich was that they identified their personal welfare with the welfare of the nation. Consequently, they forced through the Houses legislation which benefited industry at the expense of labor, particularly
at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. On the strength of the principle that the more you sell to foreign nations the more you enrich your own, and that the cheaper the article manufactured the more you can sell, the capitalists lowered the wages of the workers and lengthened the hours of the working day. Therefore, labor got less so that the factory-owner could export more, and incidentally increase his own profits.

Such economic legislation, naturally, had a deleterious effect on the social life of the English laborer. His home life was ruined as a result of unbelievably long hours in factory or mine. Education was at a low ebb for the poor, because the children had to go to work at an early age, even five and six, in order to help maintain the family on the mere subsistence level. Obviously, the poor didn't get enough food, enough sleep, or enough recreation. Their homes were mere hovels, sometimes in cellars; sewage flowed through the streets; odors and filth were nauseating; cholera stalked the industrial towns. Consequently, health was in a sorry state. Often as a result of overwork and weakened physical condition the breadwinner died young. This tragedy threw the widows and orphans on the mercy and charity of the state, and the state under the middle class regime was not charitably disposed. The new Poor Law made life intolerable; the laboring man found that being employed, bad as that was, was better than being the victim of the revised Poor Law.

As society and law existed in Dickens's day, the rich were protected by law, and were favored by the law. Actually it was the poor who needed protection by the Government; for the poor have no power, money, or
influence to protect themselves against the unscrupulous employer. Dickens was one of the forerunners who brandished his pen like a sword or rapier or bludgeon at times to demand decency, justice, and protection from the English government for English poor, widows and orphans, workers, debtors, the uneducated, and the underprivileged. No wonder he was hailed in America as an apostle of the poor; no wonder Karl Marx considered him a social reformer; no wonder the English poor hailed him as a savior; no wonder the aristocracy, the manufacturers, and the government struck their breasts with a triple mea culpa.

The part that Dickens played in the politics of England was indirect. He was not a politician; he did not have political influence like a member of Parliament, although on two occasions he was asked to become a candidate for the House of Commons. However, in this lay his political importance; he awakened the social conscience of the influential, the wealthy, and the law-makers to their duty of ending the worst abuses and of treating the poor like human beings; he awakened the political consciousness of the masses and urged the workers to join trade unions. While these ideas were not original with him, he gave them value by making them the accepted coin of the realm.

While Dickens was not an extensive reader and probably read few works of a theoretic or philosophic nature, while his education was so short and meagre that it did not acquaint him with social studies, and while his natural tendency would scarcely incline him to plow through works of political economy, much less raise the furrows of original political principles, still he could have become acquainted with many of the new ideas
in economy disturbing the thinkers of that age. First, he had spent four years as a reporter in the House of Commons, listening to debates; and while debates are primarily concerned with the latest problem, they usually hark back to first principles. His two years spent in Doctors' Commons acquainted him with laws and their practical application. He referred to these two years as the most useful in his life. Evidently here he learned how the laws passed in Parliament reached down into the daily lives of the middle and lower classes. The law was the arm of Parliament, carrying decrees from the House into execution. This part of Parliament he could see and understand, and he did not always like what he saw. Finally, Dickens could have learned political theories and the latest tendencies through his friends, especially those with political leanings or appointments, like Lord Jeffrey, Watson, or Layard, and through the dinner parties he attended, especially those at the homes of Lady Blessington and Lady Holland. There he could meet such men as Disraeli and Macaulay. Knowing more of the political background of this period, we shall be better equipped to judge, when we sift his works, the full political implication of his reform ideas, even though we do not always know the means of the communication.

The background of Dickens's world can be viewed from the standpoint of theory or of historical fact. Theory would comprise the general principles governing society and government; fact would take in their practical application. Since society was undergoing the throes of childbirth and change, we can profitably inquire into the causes. In the field of politics and government there were new and dangerous ideas afoot, involving liberty and equality
for all, and a new attitude toward property. These new ideas led in time to new institutions, to the extension of the franchise, to homage paid to ballot statistics rather than to a king or oligarch, and to a centralized government. In the field of economics there were new inventions, new methods in factories, new trade ideals and policies — all of which revolutionized social conditions in England and changed the way of life and standard of living of millions. First, we shall plunge lightly into political and economic theory.

Controlling the social destiny of men and directing society to noble purposes has engaged the minds of many clear thinkers, even from the days of Aristotle. In general, theorists may base their political or economic structures on these assumptions: either government is inevitable or it is under human control. If it is inevitable, you assume that society is a natural growth in which the human will plays no part in directing its destiny. If it is under human control, entirely independent of non-volitional forces, then government becomes a problem of determining the best end and of selecting the best means. A third possibility combines these two: for society is definitely influenced by material forces, yet always is subject to human control and direction.¹

schools, even the sciences which overlap and influence one another, e.g. economics and politics and ethics. Despite some crude errors in morals, Aristotle never made that fundamental error in separation committed by modern philosophers. He considered the three sciences as interlocking: he studied the family, then property, then the production and distribution of wealth, and subordinated all to the role of means which enabled man to lead the best possible life under existing conditions. His ideal state is one in which the members possess property and wealth in moderation. His most enduring democracy is based on agriculture. The nature and distribution of wealth determine the state's form. Commerce, as a basis of democracy, Aristotle considered dangerous; 'for there is no moral excellence in employments of traders, mechanics, and laborers.'

John Locke, the English philosopher and defender of the revolution of 1688, held that the origin and end of the state is property. Men unite into societies to protect properties of all the members of the society.' Property 'gives the right of revolution against any government or authority that invades property.' And if the supreme power tries to take property from the citizens without their consent, the citizens can 'cast off the old form of government' and 'establish a new one', only, of course, after 'a long train of abuses menaces the privileges of property and person.'

Further light on the intimate connection of politics and economics is thrown by the structure of the English government and economic groups.

2 Ibid., 6 sq.
3 Ibid., 14 sq.
In England, though a central government with a king grew up in time, the English remained largely self-governing village and shire communities in details that affected their personal lives. This local government remained unchanged even through the Norman Conquest which deeply changed the whole system of central government in England.

A share in English government was sometimes won by an economic group which resisted royal despotism. For example, the contest between the barons and the King ended when the Magna Charta gave the barons as a class a share in government. The House of Commons arose when the king during wars needed money and called on the various classes or estates for support. The rights secured by the House of Commons were gotten, not by distinct royal grant or definite charter, but by use of the principle of precedent. Consequently, precedent is important in the development of the English Constitution; precedent is a legal fiction by which any innovation made in the English Constitution is assumed to be a revival of some ancient and long-standing right. As a result, any right once won by the House of Commons was never afterwards lost; therefore, the history of Commons is a train of growing powers.4

Group interests, down through the centuries, formed the essence of English politics in theory and in practise. Statesmen made their appeals to groups, made business deals with groups, and sought the predominance of one group or the balance of several. In the 19th century a new political

4 Masterman, 31 sq.
idea arose regarding power; instead of having the government invested in classes or estates, the people or masses should rule.5

Before the Industrial Revolution, the outstanding political philosophers regarded property as the fundamental element in political power and 'a constitution as a balance of economic groups.' The change in those basic conceptions resulted from two world-shaking revolutions, 'one in economic fact, and the other in political theory.' The first was caused by great inventions, especially the steam engine and machinery, which revolutionized travel and industry and even commerce. Industrial and mercantile property was concentrated and mobile; these were important advantages over agricultural property which was widespread and stationary. Important effects resulted from the new factory system: industrial property and capital fell into the hands of a few energetic men; class differences had weaker barriers now, for even a peasant or a middle class man might become a wealthy industrialist or even a peer. Wealth had been the chief reason for class differences; now a new means of obtaining wealth had been ushered in, a means almost totally independent of agriculture. No wonder that Cobden and Bright of the Manchester school announced that the era of individual equality had arrived in the sphere of economics.6

As Watt's steam engine blew up the old economic order in the world of fact, so Rousseau's Social Contract declared ideas which eventually blew up

5 Ibid., 45 sq.
6 Ibid., 46 sq.
the old political order in the world of thought. According to Rousseau the origin of the state is not a 'fusion of estates' but the 'voluntary union of free men.' Under Rousseau, the rights and property of all groups and classes become subject to the will of the numerical majority. The majority will is right; the minority is wrong. Consequently, a system of government based on compromise or balance of interest in defiance of numbers is indefensible, immoral, and undemocratic. Through violence and a blood-purge the French masses leveled the aristocrats and imposed the political trinity of liberty, equality, and fraternity.7

In the field of economic theory, the important figure who comes up first for discussion relative to our purpose is Adam Smith. Preceding him were the Mercantilists, who preached as a national policy 'balance of trade' favorable to the mother country, by which England, for example, exports more than she imports.8 Furthermore, because amassing great stores of money was important in creating a great state, the Mercantilists insisted that the merchants be paid in gold and silver. Opposed to the Mercantilists were the Physiocrats, who considered nature, i.e. agriculture, as the only true source of wealth, and who considered commerce and those engaged in it, as manufacturers, merchants, or artificers, 'unproductive.' According to them social activities are subject to the laws of nature; consequently, they approved of initiative and freedom from government control, or 'Laissez faire, laissez passer.' This principle led to freedom of exchange and

7 Ibid., 50 sq.
unrestrained competition; it freed industry and trade from crippling restrictions by law. 9

Adam Smith disagreed with the foregoing systems in important points. Whereas the Mercantilists considered commerce the real wealth of a nation, and the Physiocrats gave that honor to agriculture, Adam Smith taught that the real source of wealth was a nation's labor. He stressed the importance of consumption and its relation to production. The most important factor in making labor effective in adding to a nation's wealth was the division of labor, i.e. specialization. For instance, he divides the making of a pin into eighteen different processes. Thus even the work of morons and children could be utilized. However, such specialization makes the different members of society mutually dependent for supplying each others wants. Consequently, the need of barter leads to a practical means of exchange — money. This in turn leads to the idea of value, and the natural and market price of commodities. In short, he subjects gold, commodities, and even human labor to the inexorable law of supply and demand. 10

Like the Physiocrats, Smith stressed the necessity of economic liberty; however, his arguments were based not on the assumption of a natural order but on economic reasoning. The economic system rose naturally from man's own selfishness and the convenience resulting from that tendency to 'truck and barter.' From purely selfish reasons merchants tried to get the highest

9 Ibid., 70 sq.

prices, laborers to get the highest wages for the fewest hours, consumers to get the best products at the lowest prices. Moved almost by an invisible hand, the individual, while he was trying to further his own interests, was led automatically to promote the nation's welfare. Consequently, a man, provided that he did not violate justice, had a right to be left perfectly free to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order of men. 11

Smith's doctrine appealed especially to the rising merchant and industrial classes, whose business was buying raw goods, manufacturing them into the finished product, and selling them on the open market. Their activities and desire for wealth were given a haloed approval by Smith's principles. Included in this economic freedom was competition to get labor as cheaply as possible, for the masses were viewed chiefly as 'instruments of production and gun fodder for war.' However, the industrialists and capitalists carried Smith's law to a logical conclusion which even he did not suspect their selfish avarice was capable of reaching, for they often paid workers less than was necessary to keep their families alive and healthy. According to Smith, however, 'it is but equity, besides, that those who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged.' 12

11 Ibid., 4 sq.
12 Ibid., 194 sq.
The optimism of Smith was not shared by other members of the classical school of economists. Malthus, who by 1798 could see unemployment, misery, and disease rampant, felt that the lower groups of workers had no hope of improving their status unless they diminished their numbers by a smaller birth rate.

Robert Owen, a cotton mill owner, saw the evil results of an unchecked economy; his aim was to persuade Parliament to pass laws which would benefit labor. At Lannarck he established model working and living conditions for his employees, in which he pioneered in limited hours, better wages, and schools for the children of his workers. With these demonstrated results he went to Parliament but did not meet immediate success. Eventually he was an important factor in formulating the Factory Acts, which improved conditions for British labor. Originally Owen hoped to have 'villages of cooperation' instituted by the state, or poor law authorities, or by subscriptions. But after the failure of his communistic experiments with nine hundred families in New Harmony, Indiana, in which experiment Owen lost £30,000, he became interested in trade-unions, labor exchanges, and consumer cooperatives.

Between Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, several men had discussed in books the theories of political economy; they had added to Smith's original deposit, clarified some points which Smith may have merely touched, and crystallized others. In that period of seventy-two years many changes in the economic world had been caused by the application of the Industrial Revolution. In 1848 John S. Mill restated and organized the main tenets of his predecessors, taking account of the practical effect of the economic
principles on British life. Influenced by Owen he introduced humanitarian motives into economics. The earlier and deterministic idea of the 'economic man' Mill modified by allowing room for the human will to work out its own salvation, economically speaking. For he says, "The peculiar characteristic of civilized beings is the capacity for cooperation." 13

Great Britain's representative government was born of a revolution and a grim civil war which lasted almost fifty years. Yet for the past two hundred and fifty years all its fundamental changes have been since effected by peaceful compromise. Because of an instinct for discussion and compromise England has been able to introduce gradual changes in the political organization adapted to a gradual change in the distribution of economic control. 14

Since 1689, for all effective purposes, England has had a single party in control of the state. True, the party was divided into two wings, the Whigs and Tories, differing in the pace and direction of change, e.g. details of foreign policy, amount of self-government to be given the colonies, character of social legislation, free trade, extent of suffrage, and limits of religious toleration. Consequently such political differences and debates amounted to family quarrels. The men of both parties had similar backgrounds: they came from an aristocratic environment; they belonged to the same clubs, engaged in the same pursuits, attended the same parties,

13 Ibid., 382 sq.
thought and lived in the same fashion. These Whigs and Tories represented the same social class, had the same economic beliefs, and were convinced that the private ownership of means of production could not be questioned.\(^{15}\)

Consequently, the House of Lords exercised a powerful influence over the unreformed House of Commons until the fatal year of Reform, 1832. Although aristocratic predominance was a marked feature of the British Parliamentary system, still the nobles of the 17th and early 18th century had the genuine spirit of freedom. But as the 18th century progressed the House of Commons became less and less a true representation of the millions. Because there was a substantial identity of interests among the members of both Houses, the Commons represented the court and aristocracy.\(^{16}\)

Politically, Great Britain was, at the end of the 18th century, a corrupt aristocratic clique. While the theory of popular government was accepted, political practice gave entire governmental control to about seventy important and related families. There were four hundred hereditary peers in the House of Lords.\(^{17}\)

While the House of Commons was not completely out of touch with public feeling, its members were unrepresentative because they were not chosen by the mass of the people. At the start of the 19th century, at least 424 out

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 72 sq.

\(^{16}\) Jones, Harry, Liberalism and the House of Lords, London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1912, 1 sq.

of 678 members of the House of Commons were nominated by great landowners for seats in their patronage. With politicians whose scruples about justice were not nice, getting seats became a question of bargaining. A seat in Parliament became a marketable commodity; you could buy a seat for £5,000 and pay £1,000 a year while you retained it.18

Obviously there was room for Parliamentary reform; the time for change had come and the conditions were propitious. With the Industrial Revolution the center of gravity in English life shifted from the country districts of south England and the Midlands to the growing industrial towns in the north. Together with the shift in population came a new power in English economic life, the rich energetic manufacturers and business men. These men had wealth, intelligence, and influence; they were imbued with the spirit of progress and optimism and self-confidence; they demanded a share in government. Previously the Pitts had brought up the need of reform in H.C., but the French Revolution and later the War with Napoleon put all thought of reform in the background; for the country had to concentrate on defense.

The Industrial Revolution included a complexity of forces and reactions. Briefly, the causes were a thorough-going change in economic thought by the manufacturers; industrial organization through the division of labor; the mechanization of the factory system through mechanical inventions and improvements; the development of mineral deposits, essential to the development of metallic inventions; the growth of the capitalistic system,

18 Ibid., 495-496
supplemented by banking; the stimulus provided to foreign markets for the increased output of factories; improved methods in speeding transportation on land and sea.19

Obviously changes would result from such giant interlocking causes; new social problems would arise, but they came slowly. Take, for one instance, the question of inventions and their effect of changing the domestic to the factory system. Originally, woolen cloth manufacturers in the west of England bought raw wool, washed and combed it themselves, and horsebacked it to cottages of spinners. Later these same clothiers collected the spun yarn, and again horsebacked it to weavers' cottages to be woven into cloth. On the credit side, the clothiers had to invest little fixed capital, for every home was a factory; the workers had in their favor the fact that they were their own bosses and could depend on their truck gardens or small farms for food during off-seasons in the trade. On the debit side, the traveling involved in this process of manufacture wasted valuable time for the clothier; and the spinners and weavers, as a result of their isolation, could not unite to fight against the clothiers' laissez faire policy of beating wages to a minimum by having the workers compete against each other.20

In this way the concentration of laborers, and the subdivision of jobs, and juxtaposition of machines run by steam power produced the factory. Factories spread rapidly in cotton yarn spinning and in metal industries; it

20 Dietz, 441
was slower in cotton yarn weaving and in the woolen industries. Free competition became the life of the factory.  

The workers in factories came from farms, workhouses, poor-farms, and Ireland. As more and more families migrated from country to factory town, the wages of labor became lower, and living conditions worse. Because the new industrialists demanded a free hand in running their factories, they insisted on being free from government interference. Supply and demand applied to labor as well as to goods. Through influence, the manufacturers obtained repeal of laws intended to prevent abuses resulting from excessive competition between workers. As a consequence, untrained workers competed with trained, women with men, and children with both. The longer hours and lower wages that resulted from this competition forced parents to send children to factories, for the father might be laid off at the age of thirty; and besides, the father's salary alone was insufficient to support the entire family.

Because of scanty earnings, factory workers and their families lived meanly. They could not easily adjust themselves from farm life to town life; their housing was unfit for humans; their food was unsuitable to maintain strength and health; lack of running water and of proper sewage disposal brought death to thousands. An education in adjustment was imperative, but the State made little or no provision for such training.  

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21 Dietz, 443
22 Ibid., 447
23 Ibid., 448-49
the townspeople was the work of Sunday schools after 1780, of some private organization, aided by the government after 1833, and principally by the Methodist movement which brought civilization to the factory help. Because the workers were lazy, and labored only enough to support themselves, showing little desire to improve their condition, their viewpoint needed a new orientation. They needed to be instilled with self-respect, the value of labor and thrift, and the virtues of temperance and purity. The work of evangelization was done by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, all of whom started with a love for the industrial worker and pity for his inhuman conditions.24 The importance of this evangelization for the Industrial Movement lay in this: it instilled into the English lower classes the ideas of work, discipline and obedience to law. Through these means the revolutionary elements were held in check and the industrial achievements of England were encouraged.

Along with the industrial changes and as a result of them came the agricultural revolution. The whole 18th century had been a period of progress; new methods were discovered and introduced: drills for planting seed, horse hoes to cultivate crops, pulverizing the soil, using turnips and clover as fallow, salvaging sandy wastes with marl, and rotating crops. But to introduce scientific methods required the abolition of common rights over arable and common fields and the redivision of land into compact farms. By these enclosures of the 18th and early 19th century, heartless in some

24 Ibid., 451 sq.
effects, over four and a half million acres were added to the cultivated area.25

As Wingfield-Stratford points out, the horrors of the factory system were not caused exclusively by villainous employers. Even before the factory there were long hours, low wages, and indecent human conditions. In fact, the worst scandal of all, the chimney sweeps, did not result from mechanization but was a product of the 18th century. Strangely, the standard of living did not go down because of mechanization, but up. And the population increase was due not to the increased birth-rate but to improved sanitation which prolonged life-expectancy. And even though it increased the pauper population to about one-fourth the population of the rates, still 'magisterial socialism, by which wages were supplemented out of rates and some sort of employment provided for all, was about as human and effective as any that could have been devised.26 Even the measure that made combinations among workers illegal should be regarded, he says, as martial law. For in the early 19th century revolution stared the government in the face; industry was needed to beat the French; unions might contain plotters against the government.

The time for change had come, but the aristocratic group in Parliament was not equal to the occasion. The pursuit of wealth and power, making England the workshop of the world, had brought new conditions of life. But

25 Ibid., 454 sq.

the lords, satisfied with the constitutional system and the existing social order, ignorant of the shameful conditions prevalent in industrial towns, and unaccustomed to seek root social causes, ignored the condition of the people. The upper classes led a strenuous life of pleasure in town and sport in country; the conviction of sin was not a part of their practical view of religion. In the country social intercourse was the rule and it led from one round to another in drinking the cup of amusement at balls, dinners, parties, and teas. Unfortunately, too, the lack of intellectual power and strong leadership among the lords meant virtually the loss of political power. Intellectual centers like Holland House had its Whig circle, but the jewels of intelligence came from middle class men like Macaulay. In fact, the Tories could not even retain leadership of their own party; for they had to call on Peel, a middle class man and on Disraeli, a member of a despised race.

Into such a world stepped Dickens and in such a world walked the characters he created. Dickens's England was a country with a feudal spirit. Even after the Reform Bill, whether Whigs or Tories were in office, the aristocrats ruled. The middle class scarcely obtained any representation in the Cabinet till 1868. The Barnacles and Stiltstalkings and Dedlocks, aristocrats, never doubted their hereditary right to govern England and "to live upon the country." This social group was supremely confident that

27 Ibid., 21 sq.
28 Ibid., 21
it was indispensable to England, a confidence not shared by the governed class.29

Dickens's age was a world of transition from coaches to trains, from agriculture to industry, from small shops to world-wide businesses, from country to city, from aristocratic-landowner domination to middle-class-factory-or business-owner influence. Dickens recreated these changes with the observance of a sharp detailed photographic lens. Unfortunately, his view was not telescopic; he took no long view either of the past or of the future; his forte was the immediate present. Though Dickens did not indulge in historical bypaths as Disraeli did, he did occasionally give some political reminiscences. Cousin Feenix, for example, in Dombey recalls with delight the days of Pitt; Sir Leicester Dedlock, a firm believer in the old political principles of aristocratic rule, is probably thinking of the same political warhorse when he laments that England has had no pilot to weather her political storm.30

Among the Regency survivals mentioned by Dickens are Mr. Turveytop, Major Bagstock, and Sir Mulberry Hawk. The first was painted as vain and selfish, the second as boastful and self-indulgent and toadyng to the rich, the third as cruel and unscrupulous. After the Reform such dandies gradually began to disappear from the English social scene. After the period of his own transition in writing from romantic to realistic, Dickens created a new

30 Ibid., 19-21
species of Baronet: Sir Leicester Dedlock for Sir Mulberry Hawk, and Cousin Feenix for Lord Frederick Verisopht. The earlier nobles were impossibly villainous or idiotic; the later ones, while they were afflicted with garrulity, pomposity, narrow-mindedness, and ancient precedents, were more true to life and had the virtues of the gentleman.31

In the Veneering type of English social climber and ambitious politician, Dickens introduced a new type of citizen. The Veneerings were not only 'bran new' but they were also unstable, whereas the Cheerybles, Pickwicks, Feenixes, and Dedlocks were solid. Moreover, the earlier type of politician had principles, even though Dickens might not accept them; but the new Veneering type, like James Harthouse in Hard Times, had no principles, except that of advancing himself, socially and financially.32

The early Dickens considered aristocrats fools or knaves, surrounded by toadies; for example, Lord Mutanhead at Bath was attended by the obsequious Honourable Mr. Crushton in Pickwick; Lord Verisopht the fool was closely allied with Sir Mulberry Hawk the villain in Nickleby. Furthermore, Hawk was surrounded by Pyke and Pluck, toadies; and his acquaintances included the Honourable Mr. Snobb, and Colonel Chowser "of the Militia -- and the race-courses."33 Barnaby Rudge reveals another aristocratic villain, Sir John Chester. "But, apart from Chester and Hawk, Dickens's noblemen and gentlemen

31 Ibid., 40 sq.
32 Ibid., 41 sq.
33 Ibid., 110-11
were guilty of little worse than mannerisms and eccentricities." Perhaps Dickens's desire to discredit and ridicule the ruling classes may have arisen from his own humble origin, about which he was hypersensitive, and from his desire to justify himself and the middle class before the bar of the world. With years and experience and travel these severe judgments of the young Dickens were tempered and softened in his later works.

Dickens drew in his novels only a few "gentlemen". Pickwick represents his democratic idea of a gentleman; whereas Cousin Feenix, Sir Leicester Dedlock, and Twemlow represent the aristocratic idea of gentlemen. With all his shortcomings, Twemlow is chivalrous, high-minded, trustworthy; he has the 'soul of a gentleman'. In like manner, Cousin Feenix, though eccentric and diffuse, is genial, delicate, honorable, and gentlemanly. The Dedlock circle was afflicted with boredom; Lady Dedlock frequently gives the impression of stifling a yawn. To Sir Leicester Dedlock's cousins, of which there are legion, "Dickens imouted nothing worse than lounging in 'purposeless and listless paths,' and a certain kind of Dandyism. By the latter word he seems to refer partly to Ritualism ("Dandyism in Religion") and partly to the Young England movement of Disraeli." But Sir Leicester Dedlock himself with all his political failings, with all his prejudices, with his die-hard Tory opinions, with his positive dislike of industrialism, with his countenancing bribery at

34 Ibid., 115
35 Ibid., 118
elections, and with his fear of the Reform of 1832 with its inevitable "opening of the floodgates, in the end wins our sympathy and admiration.

Although Gissing felt that Dedlock and Feenix could not "rank with normal personages", "they portray what Dickens no doubt intended to convey -- aristocrats who belonged to an ancient family and "were therefore deficient in energy and intellect."36

But if the aristocrats sidestepped the social problem, the condition of the people refused to be ignored. Before 1815 agitation for reform was chiefly economic, precipitated by factory shutdowns, financial panics, and consequent starvation. The resentment of the wage slaves flamed up 'in Swing Riots, rick fires, and broken threshing machines.'37 After 1815, agitation urged political reform. In his weekly paper, The Political Register, William Cobbett wrote that the cause of all the misery was the oligarchic rule, e.g. sinecures held by the upper classes, government extravagances, the Regent's wastefulness; besides, Parliament had passed both the Combination Acts and the Corn Laws.38

During this period two important gains were made for the cause of parliamentary reform: first, Bentham's test of utility gave a theoretical justification for the reform. Secondly, parliamentary reform was adopted by the Whig Party as part of a practical political program to get into power.39

36 Ibid., 116-25
37 Wingfield-Stratford, 36 sq.
38 Dietz, 501 sq.
39 Ibid., 504
Meanwhile, other influences had been preparing the way for reform: first, the political education of the masses through Cobbett's Political Register; secondly, the realization of the power of acting together in trade-unions through the repeal of the Combination Laws.\textsuperscript{40}

However, the hour of labor and the masses had not yet come because the mob lacked effective leadership, education and organization. Poorly organized meetings usually ended in riots, destruction, and even bloodshed. Since labor was not prepared to place an effective hand on the reins of English government, and since the lords were out of touch with the real condition of the people, the only class left to step into the breach was the middle class.\textsuperscript{41}

Then came the Bill of 1832. Grey's first bill was aimed at destroying the rotten boroughs and giving the populous industrial districts a more equitable representation. It reduced the number of members in the H.C. from 658 to 596. The Act of 1832 is important, not because it created 500,000 new citizens with the power to vote, but because with the disappearance of the rotten boroughs the old power of the aristocracy over H.C. was destroyed.

With all its limitations the 1832 Reform was the first legislative sign that England was changing from a society rural to industrial, from a society aristocratic to democratic.\textsuperscript{42} Actually the aristocrats still

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 501
\textsuperscript{41} Wingfield-Stratford, 102 sq.
\textsuperscript{42} Hayes, Carlton J. H., A Political and Cultural History of Modern Europe, Vol. 2, New York, Macmillan Co., 1939, 54
maintained a numerical majority in the Houses, but the representatives of the middle class exercised a powerful influence intellectually, especially in instituting reform measures for the benefit of the masses: the Poor Law Reform, the Factory Acts, the change in municipal corporations, and grants for education.

With those reforms the new ministry had spent itself. However, the mass of workers were disappointed, not only with the reforms but with the Reform Bill itself because the vote was limited to the £10 freeholder. Therefore, the movement among the workers for representation started again. It took two directions; organized trade-unions and Chartism: the former, precipitating strikes and lockouts so graphically described in Sybil and Hard Times; the latter, aiming to modify the political machinery to give labor control in the government.

Briefly in capitulation, English history shows a gradual flow of power from the King to the people. First, power passed from the Crown to the Ministers of the Crown; secondly, it passed from the Ministers to the House of Commons; thirdly, it passed from the House of Commons to the people. This third phase included a gradual flow of power through the sharing of the franchise: first, the upper middle class, then the lower middle class, then the laboring class, and finally the women received the power to vote.

43 Wingfield-Stratford, 102 sq.
44 Dietz, 512 sq.
Between 1832 and 1870 the middle class ruled economically though the aristocrats were still politically the majority. This period corresponds with the principal years that Dickens spent in writing, lecturing or reading, and advocating reforms to help the conditions of the workingman. These years may be treated under the following heads: Principles governing middle class rule; practises; effects on Tory prestige, on the lower middle class, and on the laborers; efforts of labor to improve its position economically and politically.

To begin with, the philosophy of life on which middle class rule was based was bankrupt spiritually and morally. The focus of importance had been removed from the next life and concentrated on this one. Industrial expansion, progress, economic freedom were the catchwords of the day; and through the Reform Bill power was put into the hands best fitted to realize those goals — the manufacturing class that owned the capital behind machinery, had the mental ability, and gave direction to industrial expansion. Moreover, the rising industrialists had the political power to make their economic policies effective; Grey and Russell, Melbourne and Palmerston owed their official lives to the householder; consequently, they paid homage to their political creators by passing legislation favorable to their new masters.

45 Wingfield-Stratford, 118
46 Ibid., 104 sq.
These middle class capitalists based their political economy on the principles of Adam Smith and their philosophy on Bentham's Utilitarianism. Utility, he taught, was the all-sufficient foundation of governmental ruling and of political duty. Consequently, the manufacturers argued that their best interests depended on freedom from government control and on free trade. They accepted the resultant struggle for survival, feeling that competition would force each man to work harder and thus bring more wealth to the nation as well as the factory. They put their business faith in an impersonal Deity called Progress, which would cause all things to work out for the good of the individual and the country. When the workers complained that competition was forcing their wages down, even below subsistence level, the manufacturers blithely insisted that it was a patriotic duty for the laborer to receive less and less for producing more and more, in the interest of creating more capital for the manufacturer and more wealth for the nation, and unfortunately, more misery for himself.

This struggle for existence fostered selfishness, avarice, and contempt for the spiritual; it produced also initiative, independence, and go-ahead energy.

In dealing with middle class manufacturers Dickens emphasizes their energy and inventiveness being held in check by the shackling red tape of an

48 Wingfield-Stratford, 321
49 Ibid, 83 sq.
unwieldy, outmoded bureaucratic organization. Rouncewell, ambitious, forward-looking, active is contrasted with Dedlock, who is an ivy remnant clinging to a venerable institution, now in decay. Similarly, Daniel Doyce, the inventor, has been trying for years to do his country a favor, but the Circumlocution Office, controlled by the Barnacles, is one maze that inventive genius cannot pierce. However, as the wealth of the nation pours into the middle class coffers, Dickens removes the halo from the manufacturer and business man, and reveals that selfishness and avarice can turn a factory man into a Bounderby, and a business man into a Veneering.

The law of life in Victorian England, then, was the law of progress; progress consisted in getting more money through production and labor; unproductiveness, therefore, was the mortal sin in business, and poverty was merely its tattered cloak. The Poor Law illustrates this lack of Christian spirit. For example, to keep a sick or old man in decent comfort was considered encouraging him in unproductiveness and sloth; so they made the poor house a work house. Dickens embodied the spirit of the new Poor Law in Mr. Bumble. The Poor Law opened the eyes of politically minded workers; this was not the representation they wished or had been fighting for; they wanted power in the masses, not merely in the middle classes.

The middle class rule was based on the conviction that science, especially as applied to commerce and industry, held the key to progress. To the industrialists, better machinery, increased production, and scientific advance were good in themselves and must by their very nature lead to progress. According to that principle, work became a means to further that
ideal of indefinite improvement. "The cult of work soon got detached from its religious moorings, and became a gospel of its own."50 The work philosophy accounts for the Victorian earnestness and output. For example, the novels of Dickens, with three exceptions, average 350,000 words, and came out in 20 monthly installments. Usually he gauged the length of each installment closely; sometimes, however, he fell short of the required number of lines. When his publishers insisted that he make up the number of lines and words, Dickens petulantly complained to Forster that Chapman and Hall, and later Bradbury and Evans were too intent on the mere letter or word of the contract. He felt that he should be given a little leeway and that his publishers, who were making money at the expense of his imagination, should not be sticklers for petty omissions in lines. On the other hand, the publishers were merely following the Victorian principle of work to its logical conclusion: they were paying not for so many ideas but for so many words.51

After the initial and inadequate reforms of the reformed House of Commons, followed by the let-things-stay-as-they-are policy of Melbourne, had led to the hungry forties, a practical solution for the problem had to be found. And the representatives of the manufacturers had the answer stored up in their economic theory of trade. The people were hungry because the food prices were too high; the food prices were excessive because the Corn Laws and imports had set an artificial ceiling; therefore, remove the

50 Ibid., 145 sq.
51 Ibid., 217 sq.
taxes on imported food, and let prices seek their natural level without interference with the law of supply and demand. Then the wages of the workers would suffice to feed their families. That agitation for free trade was the first serious effort of the newly franchised group to impose a law to which the aristocracy was whole-heartedly opposed.

Free trade and prosperity came in when the Corn Laws went out. Every class benefited; but from 1844-64 the middle classes (factory owners, merchants, investors) made the most profits; the Lords of the Loom were able to maintain their dominant position in England; and the famished forties became the prosperous fifties and sixties.52

Thus far in the 19th century the economic group has shown itself more important than the political group in producing changes in laws, trade policies, and in securing power in the House of Commons over legislation. At first the manufacturing class was the power behind Parliament; gradually, however, the workers began organizations which in time brought the lower classes representation in Parliament. The slow but gradual progress of the people to power is the story of trade unions and education for the masses. In these two movements Dickens played an important part.

Dickens had always realized the importance, power, and need of education; he felt that the gaps in his own education constituted a personal tragedy. Perhaps under the stimulus that the lack of educational facilities among the workers constituted a national shame, he urged improvements in the

52 Dietz, 525
system of teaching. Dickens advocated national schools. In his writings he describes twenty-eight schools, revealing nearly every form of bad training resulting from ignorance, selfishness, indifference, or unwise zeal. His revelations of children's ignorance, especially of the poor, led to a national interest and investigation which finally culminated in the free schools of England.

One phase of his interest in education regards his efforts to improve the education and social condition of the workers. Convinced that the workers would have to improve themselves, because the governing powers turned a deaf ear to all appeals and doled out educational grants niggardly, Dickens urged the laborers to form their own associations. The purpose of these associations was to build schools and furnish teachers, erect libraries and promote reading, build recreation centers and promote leisure time pursuits. Even as early as 1843, Dickens addressed thousands of these workers at their soirees, noticed their progress, and praised their efforts. In order to aid them Dickens in the early 1850's gave benefit readings for these workingmen's organizations. All through his life he was intensely interested in the social betterment of the workers and the poor. According to Axson, Dickens saw "man as a social animal, not as a spiritual entity." He stormed against miseries 'traceable to preventable disease and accident, to loss of employment and a low standard of living, to intemperance and vice, to ignorance and inefficiency.' Dickens is most effective when he summons society to help what society can reach.53

In a sense, every book is a reflection of the spirit of the times in which it is written. Thus no writer can be divorced from the era in which he lives. To understand Dickens, therefore, one must project his genius against the background of the age. The turbulence of economic upheaval and political unrest, the stigma of social inferiority and educational poverty, the struggle for happiness and economic liberty, all are reflected in Dickens's novels, gripping social novels, and dramas of the human heart. On the other hand, an appreciation of the Victorian panorama — social, economic and political — is enriched and vivified through an intimate acquaintance with his books.
CHAPTER III

THE POLITICAL NOVEL AND THE SOCIAL NOVEL

From the standpoint of subject matter or theme, the novel may deal with manners, reform, history, social problems, political milieu, and/or psychological development. Briefly, the three types of fiction in the 18th century, the novel of manners, of reform, and of Gothicism continued into the 19th century as realistic, propagandist, and romantic. They represent three possible reactions to social conditions: to describe them objectively, to attack them in their causes, and to escape from grim reality. Obviously, it is possible for them to overlap within the same novel.¹

Both the social novel of Dickens and the political novel of Disraeli had their roots in earlier forms of fiction. Both belonged to the genre called 'the novel with a purpose.' Both had a message for the reader over and above the primary purpose of entertaining. As Cross says, theories of moralists and philosophers have a tendency to filter into popular fiction. Before the French Revolution the conclusions of Hobbes and Locke — 'developed, distorted, and emotionalized' — were employed in fiction with the purpose of propagandizing the reading public. In that way novels were used to popularize current philosophies. Richardson, for example, was didactic. In

the latter part of the 18th century, novelists wrote with varying reasons in mind: some wished to reform society, some aimed to change the constitution, and some wrote merely 'to mark the manners of the time.'

The novel of manners was characterized by satire and sentiment; it could deal with domestic realism like The Vicar of Wakefield or with the pretensions of the upper middle classes and aristocracy like Pride and Prejudice or Sense and Sensibility. Previous to Disraeli fiction of fashionable society had been written chiefly by women in 'shiploads'. Much of the output was mediocre, and the type needed a transfusion to survive. It got that transfusion from Disraeli who rejuvenated fashionable society fiction by concentrating on the political milieu. In such wise, the political novel grew out of the older novel of manners; yet it constitutes a new genre, e.g. Coningsby and Sybil.

Dickens's novels are rather the continuation of the fiction written by the exponents of the revolutionary novel. This school of fiction, which arose in the last thirty years of the 18th century, had a definite social program in mind. Among their chief tenets were advocated democracy, humanitarianism, and feeling. In the best tradition of this type Dickens wrote, bringing the purpose novel to the highest peak of efficiency in arousing the public. His stories are really a record of the humanitarian movement whose shining lights were Wilberforce, Romilly, Brougham, Peel, Owen.

3 Ibid., 174
Lord Ashley, Cobden, and Bright. This movement to repeal laws most responsible for the state of the poor gave rise to the humanitarian novel. In the searchlight brightness of Dickens's novels both rich and poor could see the inhuman workhouses, the unjust debtors' prisons, the disease-breeding slums, the London haunts of crime. His novels are 'a lawyer's brief' for the underprivileged and the poor. His milieu is usually the lower classes and the entire range of the middle class; at times he allows the upper class to enter his broad canvas of English life, but he feels more at home on the lower levels.4

In the preface of The Political Novel Spears defines a political novel as a "work of fiction which leans rather to 'ideas' then to 'emotions'; which deals rather with the machinery of lawmaking or with a theory about public conduct than with the merits of any given piece of legislation; and where the main purpose of the writer is party propaganda, public reform, or exposition of the lives of the personages who maintain government, or of the forces which constitute government."5 In this treatment the drawing-room is frequently used as a medium in presenting the inside life of politics. As a new genre in English letters the political novel appeared with Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred in the 40's of the 19th century.

The main differences between the political and the social novel, according to Speare, may be reduced to the following items:

The political novel must appeal to its readers not primarily as a social

4 Ibid., 180

5 Speare, Morris Edmund, The Political Novel, New York, Oxford University Press, 1924, ix
force but as an intellectual force. The social writer throws an air of common humanity like a halo around his characters, even when they are caricatures as Micawber, Sam Weller, or Quilp; besides, he deals with incidents that are usual and ordinary in the daily lives of men, hiring and traveling in a carriage, enjoying a meal at an inn, meeting and making new friends, taking a trip to London, going to school, falling in love, etc.

However, the political novel, even though its material embraces many fields, is selective, for its scenes and incidents fall within the experience of comparatively few men. Furthermore, in the use of his material the political novelist must likewise be selective; for instead of being dominated by emotions, as Dickens, he must be dominated by ideas.

The second difference follows almost as a corollary from the first: the leading characters in political novels are above the common average in intelligence, are sophisticated in tastes, are highly trained in diplomacy, can intelligently discuss educational problems, feel perfectly at home arguing the merits of economic barter and exchange, soar easily into the empyrean of philosophy, theology, and jump lightly to history, political theory, or economic practice. Ordinarily, such characters have college or university backgrounds and are well read. On the other hand, in the social novel the leading characters are of average intelligence, are simple in tastes, have had few educational advantages, and are little concerned with problems in economics, philosophy, or theology, except in so far as their personal pocketbooks or individual lives are affected.
The milieu of the political novelist includes wars, industrial conflicts, economic adjustment, parliamentary procedures and tactics, commercial progress, expansion and internal development. However, in using this vast material, the political novelist must avoid gigantic panoramas, like Scott's, and must limit himself to a definite group, to a precise theory or interpretation of life as a philosopher, and to a definite compass of ideas. Instead of being a crippling handicap, this restriction allows the writer to probe to the root causes of a cancerous social or economic problem and from this concentration to get literary effects more sharply focussed.

Again, the political novelist attempts to describe the influence or effects of certain ideas upon some class of society (lower, middle, or upper) that has been altered by a sweeping reform or by a change in administration. Obviously, the purely social interpretation would record the habits and customs of the unsung portion of the nation. But the intellectual interpretation demands the presentation of powerful forces working across large sections of people, embracing widespread customs, and exerting a potent influence on national life.

While the social novelist uses scenes, moods, characters, and passions that fall within the experience of an ordinary man, the most dramatic and effective characters of the political novelist are by their very importance and by the unique nature of their work, withdrawn from the experience of ordinary people. These characters, so common in political circles, are the Prime Minister, the lord of the ministry, members of Parliament, aristocrats and executives of leisure and wealth. Because most readers lack the proper
intimate experiences which would make the complications of party control
and diplomacy comprehensible, the political novelist must, first, create
characters and portray his situation accurately and clearly, and then
translate both into terms of our ordinary experiences.

Besides this political pageant of statesmen and diplomats, there is a
philosophy of politics which must be represented in an artistic manner.
While the political novelist must have a scholar's knowledge of the various
issues, sides, and arguments, and an insider's familiarity with the general
working of the political machine, he must studiously avoid partisanship and
dogmatism if the work is not to be a political platform disguised as a
novel.6

Outlining the main difficulties or requirements of a political novelist
will help us realize why Dickens did not take enthusiastically to this genre.
First of all, a successful political novelist must have an insider's
knowledge and love of political life. He must understand the workings of
party influence and party combinations; he must appreciate at their proper
value the methods used to spar for time or to gain a place of advantage.
Whereas Disraeli loved politics with the accompanying power to influence the
important minds of the nation and to rule the people, Dickens considered the
House of Commons the dreariest place in the world. Disraeli took means to
attain his great ambition in life: to enter the political arena as a member
of Parliament.7 He acquainted himself with the political aims and

6 Ibid., 21 sq.
7 Taylor, G.R. Stirling, Modern English Statesmen, New York, Robert M.
McBride & Co., 1921, 212
principles of the parties in England; he studied the history of England with
the view of equipping himself mentally with the necessary background to
understand the working of the political machinery in the present by comparing
it with its forbears; he renounced the Hebrew religion and became a member of
the Established Church because English law contained a disability clause
against the religion of the Jews (his sincerity in this defection is not
questioned; only the fact is mentioned); he cultivated the acquaintance of
women whose husbands and coteries could further his political aspirations,
for he knew that women were less prejudicial to racial differences than men;
in 1839 he married a wealthy widow, Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, who was his senior
by some sixteen years, and thus assured himself of the financial basis that
he discovered was a necessity for a political career (again his sincerity
of affection or respect is not questioned).

Dickens, on the other hand, did not respect the political life. He
considered politics a sham battle, parliamentary debates mere verbal rhetoric,
the House of Commons the veriest merry-go-round of routine procedure. His
four years spent in Commons as parliamentary reporter Dickens considered an
almost total waste of precious time. Obviously, politics was not the sun of
his life, nor was he a political sunflower. Whereas, Disraeli gladly offered
himself on the hustings, Dickens had to be wooed with political offices.

8 Speare, 45 sq.
9 Dickens, Charles, Speeches by Charles Dickens, London, John Camden
Hotten, 1870, 128 sq.; Pope-Hennessy, 27, 30, 31; American Notes, 142
10 Speare, 45
The opportunities he had to enter parliament, first as a candidate for
Reading and then for 'a Scotch county gone a-begging', he resolutely
refused. 11 Dickens preferred to root out oppression through fiction rather
than through politics; that is why after he had edited seventeen numbers,
his interest waned in the Liberal paper The Daily News. 12 He made no
particular effort to cultivate political friends as such; Dickens was more
interested in raising his status socially than politically. 13 Often, too,
his political acquaintances sought his company as much as or more than he
sought theirs, e.g. Lord Jeffrey. 14 Briefly, the whole mental outlook of
Dickens on political life and purely political figures was ill calculated to
predispose him to take kindly to that milieu. Characteristically, he had
very little to do with Disraeli even in a social way, despite the fact that
the two men met occasionally at the parties of Lady Blessington.

Besides a mental congeniality for political life, other requirements are
needed by a political novelist. "The language of Downing Street, the jargon
of Committee meetings, the interviews with the Crown, the scenes at great
political dinners, the life of great political clubs" could scarcely be

11 Pope-Hennessy, 123, 129
12 Lovett, 226; cf. Grubb, "Dickens Influence As an Editor", Studies in
Philology, XLII, (1945) 811 sq.
13 Pope-Hennessy, 95 sq.
14 Ibid., 127
observed or even imagined by the ordinary layman, to whom politics was a sort of higher algebra.\textsuperscript{15} To wed politics to art, a writer had to think in political formulas and to adorn his thoughts in the imagery natural to political life. Accurate portraits of political manners or political psychology can hardly be expected from one who is not a member of the inner circle.

Furthermore, Dickens was rocked in the cradle of the social novel, and the picaresque novel. Before 1844 there had been written no novels with a strict political backdrop; before Coningsby and Sybil, no writer except Disraeli in his early experimental novels had penetrated into this new, inviting and dazzling milieu.\textsuperscript{16} Consequently, the political course was still an uncharted enigma for most writers. There is another consideration which may have influenced Dickens adversely against using this new method. Boz was like a barometer recording changes in public tastes and popularity. He lived on applause and on the more tangible demonstrations of popularity, such as increasing circulation. In spurning the political milieu, he felt he was catering more to public tastes; for the public, like Dickens, had only an outsider's knowledge of party tactics. The appeal of Coningsby and Sybil would, in Dickens's time, be normally limited to the upper classes and to a limited section of the middle classes; for these novels do illustrate a totally different set of experiences and would appeal normally to the

\textsuperscript{15} Speare, 14

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 30 sq.
intelligentsia.

Furthermore, his meager education, his lack of strictly disciplined mental training, and his natural flair for emotional and imaginative scenes made Dickens ill suited to be an interpreter of the philosophy of politics. Dickens thought in terms of the immediate present, especially in practical affairs of life or living conditions or working conditions. Disraeli, on the other hand, was a man of vision, for he saw England and its place in European affairs through the eyes of one belonging to a universal race. On great national and international questions men eventually tend to take sides. Whigs and Tories, Conservatives and Liberals, Unionists and Chartists, Utilitarians and the prophets who advocated return to the ideals of God and the spirit, Utopians and Anti-Corn Law Leaguers -- all have definite principles based on a particular philosophy of society and government. To treat all fairly and truthfully and to guide the political ship between partisanship and tractarianism requires delicate craftsmanship, a scholar's knowledge of the arguments, and an artist's fancy and creative power. For the long range view in politics and economics, for the careful weighing of theoretical arguments of different social classes, Dickens was not well equipped, either by nature, by choice, or by training.

Since the political novel had a purpose in view, the writer included a significant social or political moral. In doing this he might be criticized

17 Raymond, E.T., Disraeli Alien Patriot, New York, George H. Doran Co., 1925, 10

18 Speare, 26 sq.
by the 'art for art's sake' advocates for including propaganda. This marriage of beauty with purpose was called illegitimate by Lowell especially in regard to Tancred. However, the purpose novel goes back to the 18th century and Godwin; and in general the English novelists have a definite bent for moralizing. This tendency of the political novelists Dickens possessed as a natural gift. But whereas the political writers aimed their moral at the intellectual or social condition of whole classes of men and women, Dickens usually aimed his moral against institutions or against the vices of individuals.

At first glance Disraeli and Dickens seem antithetic, for Boz had little interest in the pageantry of English history or society. In Dickens's novels the medieval glorification and panorama of tournaments, crusades, archery contests, knights-errant, and ladies imprisoned in castles, give way to modern themes like strikes and riots, work-houses, cellar dwellings, slums, cholera epidemics, and trade unions. He lashed contemporary vices. "Dickens sought only to discover the imperfections in the body politic," but after he had discovered a flagrant injustice he caricatured it, he dwelt on its most vulnerable weakness, and he ridiculed it out of existence.

Like Dickens, Disraeli possessed sympathy for the poor and unfortunate. The politician was, however, more interested in their practical needs than in their souls. Dickens seemed to be more interested in keeping the poor

19 Ibid., 27 sq.
20 Cross, 192
human and happy; nevertheless, he realized that to be happy the poor had to be well-housed, well-fed, healthy, and decently-recreated. What were ends for the politician were immediate means for the humanitarian. Dickens's optimism was a definite and integral part of his philosophy of life; while he realized the world of the poor was in a sorry state, he believed that all Englishmen could become one happy cheerful family. He put his faith in the better elements of human nature; and he tried to snuff out the pitiful candles of selfishness, pride, greed, hypocrisy, tyranny, snobbishness, injustice, and deceit which sum up 'what man has made of man.' As Cross says, in Mark Tapley, who travels the earth seeking to relieve distress, that he may have some occasion to be jolly, we have Dickens's philosophy of life in practical demonstration.21

On the other hand, while Disraeli flayed the sham nobility and their useless lives of selfish pleasure, he still had confidence in the ability of the true aristocracy to adjust itself to the changing social and economic status. He firmly believed that Parliament could correct social abuses and injustices; however, he felt that the members had to be educated to their new duties and had to be acquainted with industrial and social facts.22 To arouse the aristocrats to their ancient duty of service of the nation, Disraeli in his trilogy lashed their outstanding vices with his satire; the satire concerns large blocks of society rather than individuals.

21 Ibid., 188
22 Taylor, 227-228
Dickens, however, had little faith in Parliament. He saw little if any good in all the talk, discussion, debate, wit, and party maneuvers that constituted a session. He wanted action, decision, promptness. According to Axson, aggressiveness and impatience at delays were Dickens's chief traits.

When he considered the sufferings of the poor and the wrongs done the helpless in the name of progress and political economy, Dickens was intensely subjective; for his heart was entirely with the poor. Then when he turned his gaze at the employer or at the aristocrats or at the government that either caused the woeful condition of misery or did nothing to end or prevent it, Dickens saw nothing but black-hearted scoundrels. Just as his villains are all black and his heroines all goodness, so in actual life Dickens considered the poor all virtuous and the rich ruling class, with few exceptions, all unjust.

Disraeli's outlook is more objective, for he sees the failings of the poor as well as the shortcomings of the aristocrats and the employers; besides, he sees reason for hope and possibility of reformation among the nobles, and looks for greater cooperation from the laboring class. Between the rich and poor, Disraeli saw an unfortunate ocean of economic rules and

23 American Notes, 142 sq.; Speech at Birmingham and Midland Institute, September 27, 1869; Letters (to Layard), 194; Pope-Hennessy, 122

24 Speech on "Administrative Reform", June 27, 1855, Theater Royal, Drury Lane; Cf. Pope-Hennessy, 328 sq.


26 Ibid., 22

27 Sybil, 324 sq.
practises, whereas Dickens considered the barrier an iron wall caused by lack of sympathy, feeling, or understanding. Disraeli, however, was convinced that England needed a change of soul more than a change of political parties. Whereas Disraeli emphasized the understanding, Dickens placed his hope in a change of heart.

From the above summary and contrast the conclusion that seems clear is this: Dickens is strictly speaking not a political novelist; most of his novels are humanitarian tracts. Consequently, he is a social novelist in the majority of his works. However, since social reforms were so intimately tied with economic conditions as cause and with political institutions both as cause and as means of improvement, it was inevitable that political elements would creep into his text and that he would venture to give some political views. Novels of such a nature may be called politico-social novels.

Before we enter the world created by Dickens to see the part played in it by politics, it would be beneficial to be led there by the searchlight played by Disraeli upon the political world in which he lived, and moved, and prided. In Coningsby his purpose was political: to show that England's political salvation lay in the aristocracy; however, since the aristocracy was morally weak and socially ineffective, it must change its habits of indifference, ease, and selfishness, and consecrate its time and talents to its hereditary duty of serving the best interests of the nation. His object

28 Taylor, 240
was 'to scatter some suggestions that may tend to elevate the tone of public life, and induce us for the future more carefully to distinguish between facts and phrases, realities and phantoms.' In his preface, Disraeli hoped 'to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of the country.' In Sybil Disraeli boldly tells the wealthy that their money was wrung from the slave labor of the English poor. Consequently, the subtitle, The Two Nations, the Rich and the Poor, was the theme of his social sermon. In Tancred, a paean in honor of the Hebrew race, he points out the debt of England to the despised Jewish race; but the main moral is that real hope of a social and political rejuvenation of society lies in religion, for spiritual advancement is more important than the material progress or golden calf which England adores.

Disraeli's world centers around high society. There we see Lord Monmouth and Lords Milford, Fitzheron, and Mountchesney, pictured as devotees of the easy, useless life. Sybil, for example, opens on the eve of the Derby when Lord Milford makes a bet with Mr. Latour, a member of the Jockey Club. The characters disclosed include idealists like Coningsby, Egremont, Tancred, iron-willed realists like Lord Monmouth, social climbers like Mr. and Mrs. Guy Flauncey, and political hangers-on like Rigby, Tadpols, and Taper. In this gay world he reveals the influence of women in politics, confidential letters, and boudoir political froth. There stands revealed the ineptitude of the aristocrats to be the rulers and politicians, their

30 Coningsby, Preface
31 Taylor, 220 sq.
disinterest in the poor, their loss of contact with the real condition of England. At the parties and dinners political fiddle-faddle is bandied about; the real purpose of life is ruling power and entertainment. At times however, usually when Sidonia is the main speaker, or when the hero of the book is in earnest discussion about the real state of affairs, Disraeli displays political principles and in brief historical forays into the past comes forth with an interpretation which sums up and explains many contemporary conditions.32

In *Sybil*, however, Disraeli gives a vivid picture of the condition of the poor in an agricultural town,33 and an industrial town.34 The novel describes Trafford's model factory,35 working conditions in mines,36 the injustice of the tommy store,37 the harshness of the masters at Wodgate,38 ignorance of the workers,39 trade-unions and activities of the laborers,40 the riots,41 the sham nobility, the attitude of the manufacturers toward the aristocracy, and the ineptitude of the politicians.42

32 Coningsby, 70 sq., 157 sq., 243 sq., 326 sq.; *Sybil*, 72-76, 88-93 194 sq.
33 *Sybil*, 60 sq.
34 Ibid., 186 sq.
35 Ibid., 186 sq.
36 Ibid., 208 sq.
37 Ibid., 161 sq.
38 Ibid., 162, 178
39 Ibid., 192
40 Ibid., 248 sq.
41 Ibid., 324-37; 64; 410 sq.
42 Ibid., 255-64
In Tancred, Disraeli discusses the necessity of religion to solve the problems of the aristocracy in politics, for duty cannot exist without faith. As the hero puts it, "How can I know what to do unless I know what to believe?"

In Coningsby and Sybil, Disraeli developed the revised Tory creed — Tory democracy. Its main tenets were the following: to vindicate the just claims of the Tory party to be the popular political confederation of England; to show that English political institutions are the embodiment of popular necessities; to indicate that the principles of inheritance and memory were in his Conservative philosophy the safest guiding principles. In vindicating the English constitution Disraeli held that respect for precedent, prescription, and antiquity accounted satisfactorily for the permanent nature of English liberties.43

In Disraeli's opinion,

Power has only one duty: to secure the social welfare of the people ... In the Political cosmos there are two great realities — the throne at the centre, and the people at the circumference; and on the maintenance of their normal and unimpeded interaction the health and balance of all depends ... 'The privileges of the multitude and the prerogatives of the Sovereign had grown up together, and together they had waned'; together also they were to be redeemed from the selfish oligarchy which had usurped them, and the no less selfish and only less narrow middle class which had now taken the place of the oligarchy.44

According to Speare, the principles of the New England Party, as evidenced by the trilogy Coningsby, Sybil, and Tancred, seem these: a) the

43 Speare, 47-48; 50-51
44 Ibid., 42 — quoting Monypenny's summary of Disraeli's Tory ideal
party should sponsor Conservatism, not destructive, yet not outworn; b) changes should be made cautiously under the influence of public opinion, and still by means of existing forms; c) the Young England Party recognized the authority of public opinion, the abolition of specific class legislation, the restoration to the Sovereign of prerogatives usurped by Parliament, enlarged religious freedom, and legislation adaptive and progressive; d) finally, the party considered representation of the press more important than parliamentary representation, for it is a more complete instrument of government.45

Regarding the constituent elements of national polity, the Young Englanders held these principles for the nobility, the middle classes, the working classes, and the Church: The Nobility must regain the spirit of noblesse oblige by recapturing the sense of duty toward the other elements of the nation. While essential to English government, the aristocracy's existence is justified only when they accept the obligations imposed by leadership and inspire in the people confidence in the leaders. The essence of good government is that the tenure of property should be the fulfillment of duty; this divine right of government is the keystone of human progress. But in order to progress, the nation needs leaders with energy and accomplishment. This vitality, so essential to national growth, the aristocracy lacks; but the middle class of manufacturers and industrialists possesses it.

45 Ibid., 56-57
As a result of this vitality, the middle classes furnish an industrial ideal based on disciplined labor and untiring application, on invention and resource; their activities are developing the energies and hidden wealth of England. "This wealth was fast developing classes whose power was imperfectly recognized in the constitutional scheme, and whose duties in the social system seemed altogether omitted." The manufacturers, consequently, represent the new spirit of Progress, the partnership between capital and science. Many nobles lead futile aimless lives, like Lords Monmouth, Fitzheron, and Fitzwarene, in contrast with the inspired purposeful activity of industrialists like Millbank, and Trafford. Through the Young England Party, Disraeli hoped to stir up the young aristocrats to recognize 'this new factor in England's economic and social life' and to 'see the need and responsibility of combining with the new forces and of according them their just privileges."

The third group, the working classes, are the enslaved mass of people, enslaved under economic laws of cutthroat competition and the inhuman application of supply and demand to human labor. Release from this servitude must be effected, not through the workers' unaided efforts, which thus far have proved futile, but from direct help of government agencies. The young aristocrats in parliament will enact laws whose object will be the protection of the masses and destruction of the economic and political evils or abuses which thumbscrew the laborers under impossible hours, unlivable wages, and unhealthy quarters.

46 Ibid., 57 sq.
47 Ibid., 58 sq.
In this economic and political crisis, the English Church must destroy the struggle between government and people by furnishing spiritual ideals of leadership to the rulers and spiritual motives for obedience and industry to the workers. Thus through mutual cooperation and understanding of each other's work in the national polity, both aristocrats and workers will yoke themselves together in wholehearted unity to promote mutual and national prosperity.48

However, this "Young England Party" represented the idealistic aristocrats and the idealistic side of Disraeli. The Party was more 'a spirit in the air' than a faction in Parliament. According to Taylor, Disraeli's novels probably helped create this new Party, which for a few years in the early 40's seemed as if it might start an important phase in English politics.49 But because the group lacked enough leaders and influence, the movement remained purely an ideal. After the Chartist petition was rejected in 1848 and the workers rioted, Disraeli remained one of the few men courageous enough to uphold the rights of labor.

Everything of the Young England movement worth preserving is found in Coningsby and Sybil. In each of these novels a young aristocrat, inspired by a new plan for political reorganization or social improvement, reacts against the idleness and emptiness of the aristocratic classes. Coningsby

48 Ibid., 57-59
49 Taylor, 255 sq.
condemns the Whig system, for Whiggery is constantly represented as the interested rule of an aristocratic caste which has reduced the monarch to the position of a Doge, has plundered and imprisoned the Church, and has appropriated the substance of the poor. Sidonia tells Coningsby to put his trust not in laws and institutions but in the national character, and to rely on the greatness of youth in achieving results.

In his political novels Disraeli never records long parliamentary debates, or long political arguments between rivals on the floor of the House of Commons or Lords, or mere party mechanics. However, he does enter into prolonged discussions of that section of English history which has a definite bearing on existing conditions among the English upper classes, or of the history of present English party fortunes. For example, in Coningsby he flays the Whig system in 1834, as a system of 'enlightened practice' without principles.

Again, in a withering reply Millbank Sr. uses the argument of history past and present to disprove Coningsby's assumption that a preponderance of aristocratic principle in a political constitution is conducive to the stability and permanent power of a State, and that the peerage, as established

50 Raymond, 107
51 Speare, 61 sq.
52 Ibid., 971
53 Coningsby, 65-72
in England, tends to that end. In another blast of satire, Disraeli denounces the Conservative Cause.

In *Sybil* Disraeli continues the political ideas begun in *Coningsby*, but now he contrasts the social condition of the rich and poor in England from 1837-1844. His main purpose seems to be to propose a political philosophy which would discipline the wealthy class and save the poor from exploitation. He gives vivid pictures of workers in town and country, and of miners, their pitiful life, stunted children, ignorance, poverty, their unions, and lawless leaders. The aristocrats in general are pictured as interested more in social prestige, hunting, races, clubs, dinners, vacations, and trips. They ignore the riots and rebellions of the workers, considering them the work of ignorant cranks. Disraeli attempts to awaken the new generation of the wealthy ruling class to the social changes and their consequent new political duties.

Egremont, the aristocratic hero, is an idealist like Coningsby. He was the younger brother of an English earl, but the dignity comes a little stained with spoliation; for the family's nobility was attained three hundred years ago at the expense of priors and abbots. Egremont, disappointed in a love affair, is looking for a purpose in life. In traveling through the countryside behind the rural town of Marney, he sees penury

54 Ibid., 158
55 Ibid., 243
56 Speare, 71 sq.
57 Sybil, 13
and disease. After being disabused by Sidonia of typical aristocratic errors, and after meeting Sybil, Egremont realizes he has found his purpose in life: to eliminate the errors and shortcomings of the ruling class and to alleviate the woeful condition of the people.

The condition of the laborers is given in a graphic scene. Master Nixon, the leader of a group of miners who gather in a bar called the Rising Sun states the grievances of the workers and suggests a solution:

We are tommed to death ... What is wages?... tayn't sugar, tea, or bacon ... The miners go to a company store to get their wages in goods, food, beer... Sir, this age wants a great deal, but what it principally wants is to have its wages paid in the current coin of the realm.

While the ruling classes had their faults, the trade unions were not highminded and blameless. Dandy Mick, one of the workers at Trafford's was initiated into a Trade Union through a secret ceremony. He agreed to abide by the injunctions of the majority of the members for the common welfare. Among the jobs he promised to do were these: to chastise Nobs, kill tyrannical masters, demolish mills, fire shops deemed incorrigible, strike, riot, etc. Obviously the labor unions were not always the haloed groups that they claimed to be.

53 Ibid., 60
59 Ibid., 72-76
60 Ibid., 158
61 Ibid., 162-167
62 Ibid., 248-249
Eventually, Sybil, an idealist for social welfare just as Egremont, learned that the world of politics and economics was more complicated. She discovered to her disillusionment that not all the labor leaders were disinterested, that the people's delegates often had ambitious and selfish ends, and that human affairs are decided not by ideals but by compromise. To her surprise, too, she learned that the rich as a class did not hate or scorn the poor, but as a rule merely lacked sympathy and understanding for the unfortunate class; mutual ignorance of each other widened the breach.  

Finally in the union of Sybil and Egremont, Disraeli disentangled the knotty social problem. Through mutual understanding, cooperation, and sympathy the Two Nations will carry Britain to a satisfactory economic, social, and political solution. "The future principle of English politics," according to Egremont, "will seek to ensure equality, not by levelling the Few, but by elevating the Many."

In Sybil, both sides of the workingman's story are given. The unions had their good men and idealists but they had also had violent irresponsible physical force advocates. The aristocrats had many who ignored the threat and danger which the rioting implied; but they numbered others who were alive to the situation and were sympathetic to the poor. The fact that social reforms are not made quickly, or that political platforms are not changed overnight, or that ideals cannot become reality merely because they are

63 Ibid., 337-40

64 Ibid., 340
right, was clearly known to Disraeli from his own political experience. But why such a state of imperfection should be permitted to continue was not always apparent to Dickens. Dickens saw the goal, the shining light of his reform ideal beckoning him on; he did not always give sufficient attention to the human means or agencies, through which reforms are engineered. If the party machinery could not accomplish his goal, if the Circumlocution office could not be reduced to immediate action, if political machinations did not serve to obviate delays and abuses, then, in Dickens's mind, throw the causes of such inadequate government out. He did not see the difficulties of Parliament or of the aristocracy; he focussed his eye only on the end — relief for the overworked, underpaid, undereducated working class.

Perhaps that outlook gives the clue to the differences in treatment of the same problems faced by the politician and the reformer. Dickens never lost the character of idealist; whereas Disraeli did. Actually, as Taylor says, there were two Disraelis: the one who lived in his books is an idealist, a social revolutionary with the passionate enthusiasm of Dickens and he is the writer who dared to call the politicians a clique of scoundrels; the other Disraeli appeared on the political platform and at Westminster, and he was in his political ambitions a realist, a man who submitted to compromise. When Disraeli turned to politics as a career, he called himself a Radical, for

'Toryism is worn out and I cannot condescend to be a Whig ... I shall withhold my support from every Ministry which will not originate some great measure to

65 Taylor, 212-20
ameliorate the condition of the lower orders.' Consequently, he attacked 'the incapable faction who, having knavishly obtained power by false pretences, sillily suppose that they will be permitted to retain it by half-measurers ... I plead the cause of the people, and I care not whose policy I arraign.'

The political novels of Disraeli convey the same impression of politics that Dickens got from his career as reporter in Commons: that most political activity is trivial, and that the politicians ignore essentials. Consequently, his books Coningsby and Sybil and Tancred tell the reader what Disraeli would have liked to accomplish; they discuss ideas and principles underlying parties and political programs; they catalogue his sincere ambitions and the mental maneuvers by which he arrived at his ideals. Because his books laid bare the littlenes of party intrigue, he even endangered his political hopes by arousing the opposition of the influential House members of blood and wealth. "He challenged at once Rank, Wealth, Prejudice, just at the moment when he was attempting to persuade all those supreme powers to make him a member of their governing clique." 67

In Disraeli's ideal England the Crown would get back much of the power snatched from it by greedy aristocrats at the Reformation and in Hanoverian times; with this power the royal hand would protect the English people from tyrannical nobles. The English Church would become a moral power for unity and national good, not a tool of the nobles but an independent power. The peopled he considered the foundation of the country's welfare, for whose good

66 Ibid., 218
67 Ibid., 222
both Crown and Church must dedicate themselves. It was evident that "as the
power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the People have
disappeared, till at length the sceptre has become a pageant, and its subject
has again degenerated into a serf."68

Dickens, on the other hand, seemed to place little confidence in the
Crown or the Church; he had supreme faith in the English People. In his
estimation the ruling powers had proved derelict in their duty toward the
great body of the nation; in fact, the rulers seemed incapable of adjusting
their mental horizon to the new social vision of a laboring class that was
proving itself capable of independent action and personal initiative in
matters of personal and collective improvement. While he extenuated the
failings of the workers individually (laziness, drunkenness, sexual
immorality, ignorance, etc.) and collectively (violence, riots, destruction
of property, fires, secret oaths of trade unions), he laid the blame for
their servile condition and violence almost entirely at the doorstep of the
rich and the rulers. Disraeli never went to that extreme.

Both writers would have agreed that England needed a moral revival.
Disraeli felt that lasting reform depended not on a change of political
parties as much as on a change of soul; this change the Church would give in
the form of great ideals and moral convictions. Dickens seemed to hold
practically that the change on the part of employers and the governing class
was all that England needed to produce the change requisite in the workers.

68 Ibid., 235-36
Scrooge was a blight on the happiness and social well being of the Cratchits; the Cherryble Brothers were like the sun bringing out the best elements in their workers.

Obviously, Dickens really never understood political life; he confused the accidents of procedure, tactics, and debates with the essence of principles, platforms, and vision. The danger of political life is that high ideals and principles cannot flourish in that self-seeking soil. The end of Coningsby illustrates the 'inevitable conflict between principle and expediency'; and Sybil also learns eventually that high ideals, even among the workers, are watered by compromise; and the essence of compromise is littleness. Political life is just a series of compromises, and that is what Dickens failed to understand or to accept. A politician accomplishes not always what he desires, but what he can. The history even of an honest statesman is a record not of his hopes but of his disappointments.

69 Ibid., 249
70 Ibid., 220
CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL VIEWS AND PRINCIPLES IN DICKENS'S EARLY WORKS (1836-1845)

To understand the political views and principles of Dickens, we must be familiar with his characteristic method of attacking a problem mentally. First of all, Dickens was not a philosophical or an abstract thinker. According to Santayana, Dickens was insensible to the great themes of the human imagination — religion, science, politics, and art. For example, while he had a religious disposition and realized the necessity of a religious spirit in the world, Dickens had no religious ideas. Properly speaking, he had no new ideas, or abstract generalizations, on any subject. What he had was an all-embracing participation in the life of men and sympathy with its suffering. What he saw of ancient institutions made him fight them, not as philosophical systems of thought like Disraeli, but as needless sources of misery and oppression for the poor. His outstanding political passion was philanthropy, sincere, heart-warming, and favoring the underprivileged; but it manifested itself only in its negative, reforming side. Of positive utopias he had nothing to say. Ordinary life for Dickens was sufficiently good, lovable, and happy if only the cruelties, the selfishness, and the injustice were removed. For him there was more piety in being human than in being pious.1

1 Santayana, George, "Dickens" in A Book of Modern Essays, ed. by B. W. McCullough and E. B. Burgum, New York, Scribners & Sons, 1926, 350 sq.
With the foregoing analysis Quiller-Couch substantially agrees.

When he saw a legal or political hardship which hurt or depressed the poor, conventions injurious to the commonwealth — Poor Laws, Debtors' Prisons, Court of Chancery, the Patent (or Circumlocution) Office, with the people who batten on such conventions taking them for granted as immutable — Dickens struck hard and often effectively. But he struck at what he saw under his own eyes. Beyond this immediate indignation he had no reasoned principles of political or social reform ...  

His simple formula was — in an age when Parliament carried a strong tradition of respect — 'Yes, my Lords and Gentlemen, look on this waif, this corpse, this broken life. Lost, broken, dead, my Lords and Gentlemen, and all through your acquiescence, your misfeasance, your neglect!'  

Secondly, Dickens offered no reform platform. His protests were always against an immediate abuse, or an abuse which he conceived as present. But his denunciations never took a radical turn and never went back to first principles. Perhaps the basic reason why Dickens was not revolutionary was that he needed to feel in his writings, and even in his life, that he was carrying every man with him; he could not brook opposition or contradiction. Witness the pains and unpleasantness to which he extended himself on the occasion of defending his action of separating from his wife; he had to feel that the world did not condemn him.  

Against the utilitarian tradition or philosophy, which in his day held the center of the field, Dickens uttered a protest far different from the protests made by Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Newman. Theirs were made

respectively "in the name of neglected intellect, insulted art, forgotten heroism, and desecrated religion." His was principally social in character and emotional in method. Continuing the thought of Chesterton, we read the following:

Dickens was a mob — and a mob in revolt; 

through his characters; he fought by the light of nature; he had not a theory, but a thirst ... He had no particular plan of reform; or, when he had, it was startlingly petty and parochial compared with the deep, confused clamour of comradeship and insurrection that fills all his narrative. It would not be gravely unjust to him to compare him to his own heroine, Arabella Allen, who 'didn't know what she did like,' but who (when confronted with Bob Sawyer) 'did know what she didn't like.' Dickens did know what he didn't like. He didn't like the Unrivalled Happiness which Mr. Roebuck praised; the economic laws which were so faultlessly working in Fever Alley; the wealth which was accumulating so rapidly in Bleeding Heart Yard. But above all, he didn't like the mean side of the Manchester philosophy; the preaching of an impossible thrift and an intolerant temperance ... In The Chimes... he hit hard at the economists. Ruskin ... would told him that ... they missed many essential things even in economics. But Dickens did not know whether they were economists or not: he only knew that they wanted hitting.3

Despite the fact that Dickens was guided primarily by feeling or emotion, he possessed the ability to recognize the presence or absence of positive good. Despite his brutally truncated formal education, he refused to be misled by slogans or catchwords or systems which kept the poor undernourished and overworked and which kept inefficiency in the high places.

... we should get the whole Victorian perspective wrong... if we did not see that Dickens was primarily the most successful of all the onslaughts on the solid scientific school; because he did not attack from the standpoint of extraordinary faith, like Newman; or the standpoint of extraordinary inspiration, like Carlyle; or the standpoint of extraordinary detachment or

serenity, like Arnold; but from the standpoint of quite ordinary and hearty dislike.

While the forementioned considerations emphasize the negative approach in the writings of Dickens, the following serve to stress the positive mental attitude: he was by nature optimistic, democratic, conservative, and humorous. First of all, even though he was often intimately concerned with pointing out abuses in politics and economics and laws, he remained buoyantly optimistic that life could be beautiful. Micawber, for example, is almost rich always, because he is constantly expecting something to turn up. His life is never a failure because it is always a crisis; he never despairs of life for he is too happily occupied in living. Even in prison Micawber's spirits are not cast down, certainly not for long; the realization that there was some goodness in the world, as evidenced by David's loans, immediately buoyed him up. In prison, too, Micawber is so sensitive of his English citizenship and of his right to criticize existing conditions that he composes a petition to the King, no less, to have the Poor Laws changed and the Debtors' Prison Act ameliorated. Although such examples of Dickens's optimism seem vulgar, they certainly proved effective; his optimism did help to bring about some of the reforms for which he fought. He did help to tear down the debtors' prisons; he did help to drive Squeers out of Yorkshire; he did leave his mark on the workhouses and the Court of Chancery.

However, as House points out, the immediate effect of Dickens on these

4 Ibid., 79 sq.
reforms was negligible; for the most impressive fact about reforms in this era is their sloth. Not till 1905, for example, did the Royal Commission try to meet his objections to the Poor Laws; not till 1869 was imprisonment for debt formally abolished; not till 1866, after an epidemic or cholera, was something done about Public Health; not till 1870 was the Civil Service reorganized.6

While Dickens often lost his patience with people and with institutions and with hard philosophies, he never lost his optimism. Of this trait Santayana writes that it was not the business of Dickens to find philosophic formulas of happiness. Humanitarians like Bentham and Mill had only a theoretic love of mankind; their formulas expressed not their hearts but only their minds; they wished mankind to be happy not in its own way, but in theirs. On the other hand, however, Dickens had a hearty love of his fellowman, i.e. his love flowed from his heart. His love of the good of others shines in every book; he is genuinely in sympathy with life and with people, a sympathy untainted by dogma or snobbery.7

Yet along with this practical love of his fellowman, Dickens had the zeal of a reformer. This combination was peculiarly complementary, irresistible, and effective. In rationalizing this happy union in Dickens and its aptness to stir people to action, Chesterton cleverly remarks that if we are to save the oppressed, we must think the oppressed man intensely miserable, and at the same time intensely important.

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7 Santayana, 347-64
We must insist with violence upon his degradation; we must insist with the same violence upon his dignity. For if we relax by one inch the one assertion, men will say he does not need saving. And if we relax by one inch the other assertion, men will say he is not worth saving ... If the poor man is made too admirable, he ceases to be pitiable; if the poor man is made too pitiable he becomes merely contemptible.

From this possible two-fold viewpoint we have the pessimistic and the optimistic reformer; the pessimist emphasizing that souls are being lost, the optimist reminding us that men are worth saving. This typical optimism in Dickens accounts much for the success of his works and for stimulating thought and discussion in the reforms he advocated.

Dickens described the happiness of the poor, and men rushed to remove their sorrow. He described them as human, and men resented the insult to their humanity ... Both Gissing and Dickens agreed that the souls of the people were in a kind of prison. But Gissing said that the prison was full of dead souls. Dickens said that the prison was full of living souls. And the fiery cavalcade felt that they had not come too late.

Dickens's optimism often poured itself out in the fury of caricature and satire against oppressors of the people, for Dickens was by nature democratic. At the Birmingham and Midland Institute on September 27, 1869, Dickens summarized his political creed in these simple effective words: "My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the people governed is, on the whole, illimitable." Because this passage was misunderstood and misinterpreted Dickens, when he returned to Birmingham the next January, explained himself by quoting from Buckle's History of

8 Chesterton, Charles Dickens, 273-80
9 Ibid., 280
Civilization:

... lawgivers are nearly always the obstructors of society instead of its helpers, and in the extremely few cases where their measures have turned out well, their success has been owing to the fact that, contrary to their usual custom, they have implicitly obeyed the spirit of their time, and have been — the mere servants of the people, to whose wishes they are bound to give a public and legal sanction.10

In another passage Buckle develops the ideas of the obstructiveness of legislation, and even ventures to say that commercial reforms in England during the last twenty years had consisted solely in undoing mischievous and intrusive legislation. While we cannot ascribe all of Buckle's ideas to Dickens, they serve to indicate the climate in which his political creed was developing.11

Chesterton and More agree in stressing the importance of this democratic facet in Dickens's genius. Moreover, in explaining the intense popularity of Dickens, Zweig notes a strange anomaly: for to bring about such a popular reaction in creative work, it is necessary to have the identification of a man of genius with the traditions of his epoch. Ordinarily, genius and tradition are in violent conflict, for the genius is engaged in creating a tradition of his own. Strangely enough, however, Dickens was fully content to be bounded by the four walls of English tradition: his outlook on life and his tastes were Victorian; his humor and morality were strictly of his age.

10 House, (passage quoted) 172-73
11 Ibid., 174
Dickens stands as a defiant monument of what happens when a great literary genius has a literary taste akin to that of the community. Dickens did not write what the people wanted. Dickens wanted what the people wanted. Dickens and his school had a hilarious faith in democracy and thought of the service of it as a sacred priesthood. Hence there was this vital point in his popularism, that there was no condescension in it. Dickens never talked down to the people. He talked up to the people. He approached the people like a deity and poured out his riches and his blood. His raging and sleepless nights, his wild walks in the darkness, his note-books crowded, his nerves in rags, all this extraordinary output was but a fit sacrifice to the ordinary man. His power, then, lay in the fact that he expressed with an energy and brilliancy quite uncommon the things close to the common mind.

Closely akin to this democratic element in Dickens is his innate conservatism. The Tories desired no change in the political regime; and Dickens desired no fundamental change, even while he strongly urged that the outstanding evils and inefficiencies be swept away. Though Dickens called himself a radical, he was merely extending the meaning of the term to include anyone who is in sympathy with the underdog. According to Bagehot, this is sentimental radicalism; for Dickens believed that social evils could be

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12 Chesterton, Charles Dickens, 107-108

13 Jackson, T.A., Charles Dickens, The Progress of a Radical, New York, International Publishers, 1938, 173. Jackson starts with the assumption that Dickens is a revolutionary radical who changed in his economic and political views from sunniest optimism to gloomiest pessimism and in his three dark novels (Bleak House, Hard Times, and Little Dorrit) trumpeted the need of more complete social revolution. While some of his explanations are clever, logically he carries his conclusions far beyond his premises. In Little Dorrit, for example, he admits that even Dickens was unconscious of all the implications of his novel, Jackson sees communistic tendencies in Dickens whenever Dickens is exposing a social evil, or caricaturing a political institution, or denouncing an economic abuse. This sounds dangerously like interpreting the past through the eyes of the present. In Bleak House, Hard Times, and Little Dorrit, Jackson sees only different "phases of one common purpose -- a general attack upon the established order of society."
remedied by benevolence. Certainly with Dickens radicalism lost "its connection with the idea of going to the root of the matter." And even if benevolence did lie at the root of all the economic and political evils, there still remained the problem of applying benevolence on a national scale.14

Dickens's most effective weapon to combat the abuses against which he waged relentless war was a merciless irony. By its use he hoped to laugh the time-honored humbugs out of office and the chief abuses out of existence. The secret of his humor seems to be exaggeration. His description, for example, of the Circumlocution Office is a masterpiece of satire and caricature. There was a lot of truth in what Dickens wrote about it; there was a shameful emphasis on 'how not to do it'; there was a pointless delay in handling inheritance cases; there was a reprehensible neglect in handling patent cases. Englishmen were taking their inventions to the Continent and were allowing other countries like Germany and France to profit from their ingenuity, because they could get no satisfactory hearing in the Court of Chancery. Take, for instance, the way Dickens handles the case of the inventor Daniel Doyce. After a fruitless afternoon at the Circumlocution Office, trying to find out how the case for Mr. Dorrit stands, Arthur Clennam on his way out meets a friend, Mr. Meagles, who is accompanied by the inventor Doyce.

"Mr. Clennam, will you do me the favor to look at this man? His name is Doyce, Daniel Doyce. You wouldn't suppose this man to be a notorious rascal, would you?"

14 House, 171-72
"I certainly should not."
"You are right," said Mr. Meagles. "But he has been ingenious and he has been trying to turn his ingenuity to his country's service ... The moment he addresses himself to the government, he becomes a public offender! Sir, he ceases to be an innocent citizen, and becomes a culprit ... He is a man with no rights in his own time, or his own property; a mere outlaw, whom it is justifiable to get rid of anyhow; a man to be worn out by all possible means"...

With this prelude, Mr. Meagles went through the narrative; ... How, after interminable attendance and correspondence, after infinite impertinences, ignorances, and insults, my lords made a minute, number three thousand four hundred and seventy-two, allowing the culprit to make certain trials of his invention at his own expense. How the trials were made in the presence of a board of six, of whom two ancient members were too blind to see it, two other ancients were too deaf to hear it, one other ancient was too lame to get near it, and the final ancient member was too pig-headed to look at it ... How the Circumlocution Office, in course of time, took up the business as if it were a brand new thing of yesterday which had never been heard of before, etc. ...15

This chapter shall concern itself with the evolution of political ideas in the works of Dickens. At the start of his writing career Dickens gives the impression that he is feeling his way along; during this formative period he was trying to discover what the people liked and wished. He reacted immediately, almost spontaneously, to public change. When, for example, he began to edit Humphrey's Clock as an organ of social criticism, preaching, and uplift, the circulation dropped; as a result Dickens changed his plans for the publication and introduced the regular installment for a new novel, The Old Curiosity Shop. His sensitiveness to public change indicated by the

falling barometer of circulation also dictated a change of locale for Martin Chuzzlewit from England to the pioneer hinterlands of America.

After his literary successes Dickens identified himself with his public more and more. Their sufferings were his personal concern. In his walks through London he visited the slums to see how the people vegetated; before he wrote his criticism of schools, he visited the Yorkshire district and saw the shameful educational system in operation; before he wrote of the factory problems, strikes, and lock-outs, he visited Preston to see a strike in full swing. After he had filled his mind with local color, he emotionalized the poor man's experiences, which are imaginative enlargements and prolongations of his own.

In politics, Dickens's interest was from the public's or the outsider's viewpoint. His interest in politics arose from his commanding interest in social reform. As House points out,

... it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between Charity and Politics in Victorian Social history; voluntary associations of many kinds were often instrumental, through such people as Fowell Buxton, Mrs. Chisholm, and Ashley, in widening the sphere of Government against the drift of current political thought. The technique of legislation being far more flexible than at the present day, it was possible for private members to carry reforms from philanthropic motives without raising strictly political issues.16

Dickens's first articles of a political nature are concerned with political meetings, elections, and parades. At this period he is not concerned with party principles or economic laws; large ideas form no part of his program.  

16 House, 171
At the Estanswill election, for example, Dickens sees only the mechanics of politics, i.e. what would appear to the eye and ear. He does not penetrate to the far-reaching importance of Parliament as regards the daily lives of the people.

At first, after he has become acquainted with the problem of social and economic evil, Dickens is convinced that human wrongs can be righted if there be a change in the human heart. Men with evil hearts bring misery and suffering into the lives of their fellowmen; his early examples are Fagin, Monks, Bumble, Ralph Nickleby, Squeers. In contrast, men of good heart bring sunshine and happiness into the world of men; examples of this group include Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies, Nicholas Nickleby and the Cheeryble Brothers. However, the list could be extended to include each novel and the Christmas tales.

In the course of years, however, there is a gradual change in his views of the importance of politics. Even though men are of the greatest good will, their efforts to improve social conditions and alleviate the slum and factory miseries are often checkmated through the higher lawmaking power in England. Consequently, despite his distrust of politicians and his distaste for their parliamentary methods, Dickens is forced to recognize that politics is a power; it passes laws today that influence the lives of men tomorrow; it can work weal or woe for certain social segments. While it can be a source of good for the many, it often is the cause of misery for it favors the privileged few.
The early Dickens seems to take for granted that most men are or wish to be of good will. If they are shown the light or given the vision, men who can, will immediately take steps to improve the lot of other humans. The chief reason for evils, like slums, is ignorance of the facts of evil or misery. Later, after Dr. Southland's reports were read in the House of Commons and no immediate action was taken, Dickens was forced to admit that perhaps some men refused to face or admit the facts. The politicians in both Houses were selfishly concerned for private or group interests at the expense of the public welfare.

As a result of his years spent as reporter in the House, Dickens was convinced that it was foolish to appeal to the government to make changes that would benefit the millions. Consequently, he must appeal to the people themselves. Let them know the intolerable evils under which they all live; let them see examples, causes, effects, and remedies. Knowledge will wake up the millions to their own plight and will at the same time make the aristocrats realize the base injustice being perpetrated on the working class.

In *Sketches by Boz* Dickens is content with mere observation and with setting down what he has seen and heard. Chesterton wrote that every idea which Dickens used in later books is contained in some way in his sketches. Here he gives a cross-section of life in London — the streets, the vendors, beggars, drunks, poor families living in one and two room shacks, the beadle and work house, a local election, *etc.* all from the human angle. He doesn't speculate; he merely states facts. As yet he is not interested in reforming institutions; reform is not a part of his theme. Life in England, he seems
to say, is worth living; in spite of known evils, it is grand to be an
Englishman. This attitude is especially true of **Pickwick**.

Here he merely describes political places like the House of Commons in
"A Parliamentary Sketch," or political persons like John Evenson or Mr.
Wisbottle, or the conversation of political characters. Dickens chose to
sketch the House, for he thought it might be productive of amusement. In one

**tidbit of description he writes:**

> Take one look around you and retire! The body of the
> House and the side galleries are full of Members; some with
> their legs on the back of the opposite seat; some with theirs
> stretched out to their utmost length on the floor; some going
> out, others coming in; all talking, laughing, lounging,
> coughing, o-ing, questioning, or groaning; presenting a
> conglomeration of noise and confusion to be met with in no
> other place in existence, not even excepting Smithfield on
> a market day, or a corridor in its glory.17

In the **Sketches** the political characters are vague; Dickens gives them
names and associates them with some general political ideas, but it is
obvious that he does not know them intimately. Of John Evenson and Mr.
Wisbottle he writes:

> Mr. John Evenson ... was a thorough radical, and used to
> attend a great variety of public meetings, for the express
> purpose of finding fault with everything that was proposed.
> Mr. Wisbottle, on the other hand, was a high Tory. He was a
> clerk in the Woods and Forests Office, which he considered
> rather an aristocratic employment; he knew the peerage by
> heart, and could tell you offhand where any illustrious
> personage lived.18

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17 Dickens, Charles, *Sketches by Boz*, New York, Peter Fenelon Collier &
Son, 1900, 179-80

18 Ibid., 337
And the government-office people, he writes, in the same general tone, are "little spare priggish men, who are perfectly satisfied with their own opinions, and consider themselves of paramount importance."\(^19\)

The most realistic of the political sketches describes the election for parish beadle. Here the working of a local arm of government is satirized by Dickens, who shows that local elections were ruled by the sentiment of the electors, rather than by the qualifications of the electees. When the beadle died,

the field was filled with competitors for the vacant office, each of whom rested his claims to public support entirely on the number and extent of his family, as if the office of beadle were originally instituted as an encouragement for the propagation of the human species. "Bung for Beadle. Five small children!" — "Hopkins for Beadle. Seven small children!!" — "Timkins for Beadle. Nine small children!!!" — "Spruggins for Beadle. Ten small children (two of them twins) and a wife!!!\(^20\)

Besides, the speeches on this occasion followed the Parliamentary style. Captain Bung, in answer to the opposing speech which omitted mention of the qualifications of Spruggins and consisted mainly in attacking Bung himself, says:

He would not say he was astonished at the speech they had just heard; he would not say he was disgusted (cheers). He would not retort the epithets which had been hurled against him (renewed cheering); he would not allude to men once in office, but now happily out of it, who had mismanaged the workhouse, ground the paupers, diluted the beer, slack-backed the bread, boned the meat, heightened the work, and

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 53
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 30
lowered the song (tremendous cheers) ... The captain concluded, amid loud applause, by calling upon the parishioners to sound the tocsin, rush to the poll, free themselves from dictation, or be slaves forever. 21

Similarly in The Pickwick Papers there is little of a political character; Dickens was too busy writing and supplying a reading public's demand. In the opening chapter Pickwick makes an oration in which he alludes to Blotton as a vain, disappointed -- "he would not say haberdasher" -- jealous of the praise heaped on Pickwick's researches. Blotton retorts that the "hon. gent. was a humbug." In answer to Chairman Snodgrass's query, Blotton admits that he called Pickwick a humbug not in the common usage of the term but in the Pickwickian sense. This scene alluded to a debate in the House of Commons between Canning and Brougham, in which Brougham declared that Canning had used trickery to obtain office in a divided cabinet. Wilson suggested at the time "that Brougham's offensive words were applied to Canning not in his personal, but in his official character." 22 If this reference proves nothing else, it at least indicates that Dickens was alive to political quarrels, but only in their external and accidental aspects.

In Chapter Thirteen of Pickwick there is an account of the Eatanswill election. Eatanswill is a typical small town in which the people consider themselves of such importance that each must join "one of the two great parties that divided the town -- the Blues and the Buffs." Everything in town was made a party question; the Blues and Buffs wasted no opportunity to

21 Ibid., 33-4
22 Pope-Hennessy, 29
oppose each other. Each party had its own newspaper: The Eatanswill Gazette advocated Blue principles and attacked the Eatanswill Independent which was promoting Buff measures.23 Mr. Perker, a Blue, lets Pickwick in on a political secret; the opponents, Fizkin's people, have thirty-three people in the lockup coach house; there the thirty-three prospective voters are kept drunk until their services are required at the polls. However, the Blues countered that political stratagem with a tea-party at which forty-five women were given a green parasol, at seven and six-pence apiece.24 When Pickwick visits Mr. Potts, editor of the Eatanswill Gazette, he learns that while Potts is constantly hurled into the 'vortex of politics', Mrs. Potts does not share either his political interest or enthusiasm. Says Mrs. Potts emphatically, "I am wearied out of my life with your politics, and quarrels with the Independent, and nonsense. I am quite astonished, P., at your making such an exhibition of your absurdity."25 This attitude probably reflects Dickens's own early reaction to politics.

Disconcerting as this information is to Pickwick, his education in politics is just in the kindergarten stage. From Sam Weller, Mr. Pickwick learns Sam has been paid a shilling per man to drag out the independent voters, who had eaten and drunk themselves into a state of stupefaction at the expense of a political committee, and put them under the pump until they were in voting condition. When Pickwick expresses surprise at such tactics,

23 Dickens, Charles, Pickwick Papers, Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, New York, 1900, XX, 200
24 Ibid., 203-4
25 Ibid., 207-8
Sam asks where Mr. Pickwick was half baptised. The opposite party bribed the bar-maid at the Town Arms to put laudanum in the brandy and water of fourteen unpolled electors; as a result, those men did not awaken until twelve hours after the election was over. Furthermore, Sam mentions that once Weller Sr. was paid to bring some voters by coach from London to Eatanswill; later he was bribed by the opposite faction to have the coach upset accidentally on the road in order to keep the voters away.26

Obviously, while exaggeration plays a large part in the humor of the situation, Dickens uses those incidents to snipe at the election irregularities, the correction of which was one feature of the Reform Bill of 1832.

The rest of the Eatanswill sketch is a satire on the political fanfare, parades, handshaking, and speeches. For example, there was a band of trumpets, bassoons, and drums, marshalled four abreast; constables with blue staves, committeemen with blue scarfs, voters with blue cockades; an open carriage and four for the Hon. Samuel Slumkey; all this time flags were rustling, the band was playing, the mob was shouting. From Mr. Perker, Slumkey learns that plans have been made for the honorable candidate to shake hands with the men, to pat the children on the head, and to kiss some of the youngsters.27 In the following words, Dickens satirizes the political speeches of the two candidates:

26 Ibid., 210-11
27 Ibid., 213 sq.
The speeches of the two candidates ... afforded a beautiful tribute to the merit and high worth of the electors of Eatanswill... Both said that the trade, the manufactures, the commerce, the prosperity of Eatanswill, would ever be dearer to their hearts than any earthly object; and each had it in his power to state, with the utmost confidence, that he was the man who would eventually be returned.28

In an early skit, "The Thousand and One Humbugs," Dickens shows his impressions of the House of Commons, the result of four years reporting there. In broad satire, a Sultan, much-married, raises many women to the dignity of Howsa Kummauns (Peerless Chatterer). All prove boastful, talkative, inefficient. The youngest Peerless Chatterer is "Reefawm" (Light of Reason), who also proves disappointing. Eventually the Sultan concludes that every Howsa Kummauns is a Humbug.29 For Dickens the political arena was a world of sham, boast, and bluff; he detested the false talk and bombastic speech. In satirizing political mechanics Dickens decided to appeal not to reason and logic but to the Englishman's sense of humor. Probably he felt he could never argue the absurdities away, for tradition and precedent were against him; but he might be able to laugh them out of existence.

At the time when Oliver Twist was being published in monthly installments, 1838-39, the new Poor Law had been in operation for several years. This law, the pride of Reform Ministry, was based on the principle that, if you make the workhouse conditions intolerable enough, men will prefer to work in factories rather than to inflict themselves on the charity of the

28 Ibid., 219

29 Pope-Hennessy, 40 sq.
workhouse. That was the practical meaning of 'no outdoor relief'. Against the inhuman and unchristian methods of the Poor Law, Dickens wrote the opening chapters of *Oliver Twist*.30

The political references in this novel are incidental to the main story. The satire deals with a local arm of the Poor Law enforcement, the Beadle, his official staff, the matrons, and workers, all of whom interpret the Beadle's will for the poor house victims without benefit of charity. Because the starving Oliver dared to ask for more gruel, Oliver is denounced by the board of officials, on an inspection tour, as a potential criminal and ingrate.

Dickens visits a fitting punishment on the parochial beadle Bumble for his unmerciful judgments in administering the Poor Law in the workhouse. Bumble woos and marries the shrew Mrs. Corney, matron of the workhouse. From then on, Bumble's life is a torture chamber; he meekly obeys the shrill commands of his domineering wife. Eventually, both he and Mrs. Bumble are deprived of their positions of trust because of their parts in the conspiracy with Monks to deprive Oliver of his rightful inheritance. From all this, it is not reading too much into the narrative to conclude that in Dickens's

30 Gissing, George, *Critical Studies of the Works of Charles Dickens*, New York, Greenberg, Publishers, Inc., 1924, 46. Gissing notes that when Dickens uses "philosophers" in *Oliver Twist*, he means political economists. Eventually the New Law justified itself by awakening self-respect and by increasing wages. Nevertheless, though Dickens was in error in condemning the law, he deserves credit for criticizing the "mechanical" philosophy, which urged the inhuman procedure, and for insisting on justice and mercy.
mind, even in the late 1850's, the government existed for the benefit of the people, that the government had failed in this essential capacity, and that the Reform Ministry, at least with regard to the Poor Law administration, had not improved but rather aggravated the heartless situation. Even here he seems to be arguing for less mind and more heart in the treatment of the poor, for less logic and more sympathy, for fewer figures and more food.

In his next published novel, Nicholas Nickleby, there is little of a political nature. Yet the book reveals some of Dickens's early ideas on labor, his attitude toward wages, the relation of employers to employees, and shrewd observation of the externals of an M.P.'s behavior. One of the employers in the novel is Ralph Nickleby, a money lender, who is the brains behind a joint stock company. His cardinal principles are "that riches are the only true source of happiness and power, and that it is lawful and just to compass their acquisition by all means short of felony." Ralph acquired his money by lending at high rates of interest, especially catering to the idle, voluptuous aristocratic group. To his secretary, Newman Noggs, Ralph pays a mean salary, somewhat less than a thirteen-year-old boy should receive. Furthermore, he aids his relatives only to that extent that it costs himself no money. His relationship with Noggs and with those who work for him is hard, calculating, shrewd, and penny-pinching. He trusts very few of his acquaintances and employees; even Noggs is locked out when

31 Gissing, Critical Studies, 64. "Nickleby taught him his power as a social reformer.

Ralph is plotting villainy with the aid of Squeers. Briefly, Ralph uses his employees as stepping-stones to promote his own selfish and immoral interests. Eventually, such avarice and egocentric tactics lead to his own undoing, to loss of friends, to cynical suspicion of all, to felony, and to suicide. His life goes from light to dark shadows, and then to night.

Contrasted with Ralph are the Cheeryble Brothers, who employ Nicholas after he returns to London from an acting tour; Nicholas is recalled by a letter sent him by Newman Noggs, in order to protect Kate Nickleby, his sister, from the debauched Sir Mulberry. Sir Mulberry and Lord Frederick Verisopht are business friends of Ralph Nickleby. In order to further his own private business aims with these two nobles, Ralph invites the attractive Kate to a party at which the rake Mulberry forces his attentions on her. Ralph not only ignores the insult to Kate but extenuates the offense. In connection with these characters it is well to mention the sycophants Pyke and Pluck, hangers-on who do the bidding of Sir Mulberry and act as go-betweens in arranging a visit to the Nicklebys for their depraved master.

The Cheerybles are, of course, an exaggeration of the good or ideal business man. Social service is their main interest in life; making money in business is obviously only a sideline. Doing good to deserving unfortunates is a cardinal principle with the Cheerybles; finding and befriending a deserving jobless man or woman gives these business men more pleasure than making a million dollar profit. With them, business and money are good only in so far as they promote happiness and spread the means of livelihood. Their salaries are high; their workers are happy; the
brothers themselves prosper financially and grow in happiness as they spread cheer around. Their life is one ray of sunshine after another, each a vast improvement on its predecessor.

However, the business methods of the Cheerybles would scarcely be termed practical. For example, the best recommendation that an unemployed person could bring was that he had been knocked down, kicked, gouged, and pilloried by hard luck. Personal qualifications for the job seemed to bear a very secondary consideration. Strangely enough, such people always found a perfect home with the Cheerybles and job to suit. Success at the work was assured once the brothers had deemed your case one that merited their attention. For example, the brothers' right hand man, Linkinwater, gives Nicholas unqualified approval in the job as bookkeeper after only a few days, because "His capital B's and D's are exactly like mine."

From the Ralph Nickleby–Cheeryble Brothers contrast, Dickens draws the moral that employers fare best when they spread happiness, contentment, cheer, and money in good fellowship with their employees. In enriching others the Cheerybles enrich themselves, whereas Ralph Nickleby with his penny-pinching, impoverished himself spiritually and impoverished economically the little world which in a measure depended on him. Patently, practical economics or politics is not the theme of Dickens here; he is preaching for a change of heart in the individual employer or money-controlling man, rather than for a change in economics or politics. This change of heart is the lesson he reiterates in his Christmas stories, starting with the transformation of Scrooge.
After Nicholas Nickleby vainly tries to get Madeline Bray, whom he secretly loves, to leave her mad pact to marry the miser Arthur Gride in order to please her wilful father, to whom Gride furnishes money and the promise of more, Nicholas indulges in these moralizing reflections: that daily such injustices were done;

... how crafty avarice grew rich, and manly honest hearts were poor and sad ... how much injustice, misery, and wrong there was, and yet how the world rolled on, from year to year, alike careless and indifferent, and no man seeking to remedy or redress it.33

Regarding political characters Dickens indulges in light bantering satire of members of parliament, first in regard to Sir Matthew Pupker and later in regard to Mr. Gregsburry, M.P. To begin with, the members of parliament concern themselves with the resolutions anent the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Co.

Just before the M.P.'s arrive, the committee tacks up a gigantic announcement on the propriety of petitioning Parliament in favor of said Company. While the committee was clapping,

... in came Sir Matthew Pupker, attended by two live members of Parliament, one Irish and one Scotch, all, smiling and bowing, and looking so pleasant that it seemed a perfect marvel how any man could have the heart to vote against them.34

Parliamentary high-sounding phrases and empty speechifying Dickens hits in a paragraph devoted to Pupker who

33 Nicholas Nickleby, 687 sq.
34 Ibid., 22 sq.
... went on to say what must be his feelings on that great occasion, and what must be that occasion in the eyes of the world, and what must be the intelligence of his fellow-countrymen before him... etc. 35

After Punker, Mr. Bonney takes the literary cudgels to talk the opposition into submission and to make the resolution:

That this meeting views with alarm and apprehension, the existing state of the Muffin Trade in this Metropolis and its neighborhood; etc. 36

The obvious import from all this is to indicate that the politicians were interesting themselves in affairs of only minor significance from the viewpoint of the country as a whole; the members of Parliament were chiefly interested in making friends of their constituents, in impressing on their constituents the importance of their political connections, in flattering their followers with promises, and in prolonging their own political life.

Later in the same book, when Nicholas is looking for a job in London, he goes to an employment agency and is directed to Mr. Gregsbury, M.P. Nicholas arrives just as a crowd of constituents try to see Gregsbury because they are dissatisfied with his political conduct. When Pugstyles, one of the constituents, questions the M.P.'s conduct, Gregsbury defends himself in pompous, meaningless periods:

My conduct has been, and ever will be, regulated by a single regard for the true and real interests of this great and happy country. Whether I look at home, or abroad;... whether I behold the peaceful industrious communities of our island home; her rivers covered with steamboats, her roads

35 Ibid., 23 sq.
36 Ibid., 24
with locomotives, her streets with cabs, her skies with balloons of a power and magnitude hitherto unknown in the history of aeronautics in this or any other nation — I say, whether I look merely at home, or stretching my eyes further, contemplate the boundless prospect of conquest and possession — achieved by British perseverance and British valor — which is outspread before me, I clasping my hands, and turning my eyes to the broad expanse above my head, exclaim, "Thank heaven, I am a Briton!"37

Such talk might, under different circumstances, have been 'cheered to the very echo', but the deputation wished 'an explanation of Mr. Gregsbury's political conduct', and such bombast 'did not enter quite enough into detail.'38

The next novel of Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, grew out of the failure of his Miscellany, Old Humphrey's Clock, to click with the reading public. While it contains no political characters, it does have a graphic description of a factory town, one of the towns through which Nell and her grandfather travel in their escape from the specters of the past. Though the chapter in which this description occurs is merely an isolated adventure in Nell's flight, it is important because it gives Dickens's early impressions of the filth, squalor, and misery of factory towns and factory families. Here, in brief cameo etchings, Dickens shows the pity wringing effects on the poor, of long hours, low wages, lay-offs, and the lack of education, sanitation, health, and necessary food.

Seeking shelter from the rain, Nell and her grandfather meet a factory

37 Ibid., 197 sq.
38 Ibid., 198
worker who offers them warmth. Their first impressions of the factory are that it is a large lofty building, supported by pillars of iron,

... echoing to the roof with the beating of hammers and roars of furnaces, mingled with the hissing of red-hot metal plunged in water; in this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke ... a number of men labored like giants... 39

While he shares his breakfast with Nell and her grandfather, the factory worker tells them he knows little of the country through which they plan to travel, "for such as I pass all our lives before our furnace doors, and seldom go forth to breathe." 40

In their slow journey through the factory district, they come to a suburb of red brick houses. When Nell knocks at the door of one of the hovels in a factory town, she learns that the condition of the people is even worse than the stunted dying vegetation. The first man who answers her request for bread shows Nell a dead child, his third tragedy; he and five hundred other men were thrown out of work three months before; No, he has no morsel of bread to spare.

In another hovel, shared by two poor families, a gentleman is returning a boy charged with theft to the mother. The boy would have been punished severely but because the lad was deaf and dumb, the magistrate had mercy. When the other woman asks the man for her son, also charged with theft, the gentleman says her boy did not have the same infirmities. Yet she argues

40 Ibid., 333
that her boy "was deaf, dumb, and blind to all that was good and right from his cradle." To the man's "your boy was in possession of all his senses" she argues,

... and he was the more easily to be led astray because he had them ... You gentlemen have as good a right to punish her boy, that God has kept in ignorance of sound and speech, as you have to punish mine, that you kept in ignorance yourselves.41

Here we have the typical Dickens's argument, pleading the cause of the poor, placing most of the blame on ignorance, and insisting that ignorance is due to lack of proper educational facilities which should have been provided by the very government which is condemning the hungry child to jail.

In Barnaby Rudge, published between April 1839-1841, Dickens takes up a new theme. The book was written after the Chartist movement had begun to make itself felt throughout England, and especially in London. The principal demand of this movement was universal franchise; the principal means to attain this premature right were giant petitions running to millions of names, rioting, mob meetings, and obvious lack of clear-headed, high-minded, disinterested leadership. The overall setting of the book is not political; characters and scenes for the most part are social, from the lower and middle classes, e.g. the honest, patient, kindly Vardon, his shrewish wife, pretty, vain Dolly, the servant Miggs encouraging Mrs. Vardon's tantrums, the innkeeper Willet, his son of Maypole fame, and his helper Hugh; the devoted, tragic Mrs. Rudge and Barnaby, her happy halfwit son, dogged by a

41 Ibid., 338 sq.
parasitic husband, an outcast and murderer fleeing the law and society. The time is laid in the 1770's and 80's; the climax is the Gordon Riots of the 1780's, based on the No-Popery cry. The satire is against the injustice of the No-Popery riots "by one who has no sympathy with the Romish Church"; against the helplessness of the law in time of stress; against the ineptness of the House of Commons and political leaders in handling the mass meeting of 100,000 rioters who gathered around Parliament on the day that Lord George Gordon, fanatical and misguided leader of the Great Protestant Association presented the petition against removing Catholic disabilities. While Gordon is pictured as sincere in his delusions and is painted as a believer in moral suasion only, he is surrounded by unscrupulous scheming followers who use his influence to lead the mob in physical violence against established law and authority, against the deliberations of the House of Commons, and especially against the property of Catholics. Barnaby was "the only light-hearted, undesigning creature in the whole assembly." The mob scenes in Barnaby Rudge undoubtedly grew out of the mass meetings of the Physical Force Chartists. Though Dickens projected his story into the past, he was actually thinking in terms of the present.

Though Dickens often seems to get close to a live political situation, as a rule he never enters into the metaphysics of either economics or politics. In Barnaby Rudge Dickens concentrates attention on the physical appearances and appurtenances of the mob, the characters of the leaders, and their methods in recruiting followers. He seems to emphasize the dangerous power for evil that resides in a mob, when the people are uneducated and
are led by evil or unscrupulous men.  

Though Lord Gordon, M.P., leads the petitions against the repeal of Catholic disabilities, the real brains of the mob is Gashford, Gordon's secretary. Gashford, a renegade Catholic, works continually behind the scenes to stir the mob against Catholics. For example, it is Gashford who leaves circulars about wherever Lord Gordon appears, appealing to religious bigotry, inviting every red-blooded Protestant to join against the Catholic menace. By scorn Gashford lashes Hugh and Dennis to fury and action, e.g. to start the riot in London and to punish the Catholic Haredale, who had rebuked Gashford. In a word, Gashford put the idea of arms into the heads of the mob. In a vivid scene Dickens describes the violence and disunity of the mob, separated and disorganized by the soldiers' musketry, except on the night of greatest damage, when the lamp-lighters were kept from lighting the streets. Under cover of darkness and under the inspired fanatical leadership of Hugh, who moves speedily from street to street, the mob baffles the efforts of the soldiers and the powers of law, fires Newgate jail, and releases over three hundred prisoners.

42 Dickens, Charles, Barnaby Rudge, Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, New York, 1900, I, 417-18. The idea of blindness in various senses is described by the blind man Stagg to Mrs. Rudge; among them is the blindness of party and public men, 'which is the blindness of a mad bull in the midst of a regiment of soldiers clothed in red;' the blindness of youth, like that of young kittens, the blindness of husbands or wives, like that of a bandage, physical blindness, like Stagg's, and blindness of intellect, like Barnaby's. The mob is blind too in that it deliberately surrenders its powers for good or ill to its leaders.

43 Ibid., 396 sq.
44 Ibid., 462 sq.
45 Ibid., 484 sq., 489 sq.
Dickens's feelings are definitely opposed to mob tactics and violence, even if the crowd were right. Here he chooses a theme in which he would certainly be sympathetic to the multitude, for it is thoroughly Protestant, fighting the Protestant cause, and allied against the despised Catholics. Yet with all his native and inherited prejudice in favor of this mob and its cause, Dickens cannot bring himself to condone its brutal, unreasoning, heartless actions. By nature and principle he sympathized with the downtrodden, injured cause.  

More often than not, innocent, carefree, contented people are sucked into the maelstrom of the mob's crusade. Many are innocent trusting sheep with high ideals, blindly following evil leadership, e.g. Barnaby is talked into joining the mob, against his mother's entreaties, because he was told it was a noble cause of liberty, No-Povery. Simple-minded, he thought the end was good. Yet even he would never have burned down Sir Haredale's house; moreover, he would have tried to prevent it. After the halfwit is released from prison, takes his father to a hiding place, and returns to London for Stagg, Dickens states the true feelings of Barnaby at sight of the destruction, fire, and rioting. Barnaby regrets his part in it. His idealism is rudely shocked at the sickening crush of reality.

In the Chartist Movement of his own day Dickens saw a parallel to the

46 Still he never suggests that the mob should overthrow the government or that the mob was right in entertaining revolutionary ideas and in resorting to violent means.
Gordon Riots.\textsuperscript{47} Dickens sympathized with the cause of labor; he wished the workingman to get fair treatment from the government and a chance to educate and improve himself; from employers, the workingman should receive a just wage, and decent, healthful living conditions. Yet Dickens felt that the generality was unable to rule itself properly. It lacked the necessary education, the necessary leaders to guide it aright. Even if its cause were right, violent means was not the right or reasonable solution. With Dickens the end did not justify the means, as it might perhaps under the philosophy of revolt preached by Bentham's utility crusade. At this point, Dickens is certainly opposed psychologically to 'mobocracy' as democracy was construed to imply; for the mob's normally violent means would lead only to a violent end, mob-rule in government.

Here again Dickens is interested in the individuals of the House of Commons, not in group workings; he is concerned with lords not as a class but as individual characters; he deals with Parliament chiefly from the external view of the lower or middle classes. Parliament itself is treated as a necessary part of government, little understood by the common people and aloof from them, a closed proposition. Their deliberations are given scant attention as such; Lord Gordon relays to the mob outside a running account of the proceedings; one of the mob acts as fugleman for the others. The lords

\textsuperscript{47} Pearson, E. Kendall, "Facts about the Gordon Riots: Dickens's Use of Newspaper Reports", \textit{Dickensian}, XXX, (1934) 43-7. Pearson tells us that Dickens made use of newspaper reports contemporary to the Gordon Riots to get local color, accuracy, and atmosphere for the mob scenes of \textit{Barnaby Rudge}. 
and ladies of Parliament are viewed not as a major factor in the political background but only as rubbing elbows with the lower classes. Dickens does not attempt to give their thoughts, feelings, difficulties, aims, or ideals as a group.

After his trip to America, taken to give him a needed rest and to furnish him with new characters, atmosphere, and experiences, Dickens in 1842 wrote *American Notes*. Tho some writers consider this trip the turning point in his political views, his harsh criticism seems to have resulted partly from his disillusionment with regard to the American attitude toward the copyright question, and partly from the failure of American political institutions to reach his ideal of high-minded, disinterested practice for the common welfare. 48

*American Notes*, contains impressionistic views of American political institutions and practices. Besides he compared English with American law courts, the factory system at Lowell, Massachusetts, with the English factory system, and the political procedure in both countries.

Whatever cities or towns Dickens visited, he made a special point to view institutions, buildings, or factories that had social, economic, or political significance. For example, while he was visiting Halifax, he attended the opening of the Legislative Council,

... at which ceremonial the forms observed on the commencement of a new Session of Parliament in England were so closely copied, and so gravely presented on a

48 House, 178
small scale, that it was like looking at Westminster through the wrong end of a telescope.49

When he visited the law courts at Boston, he was surprised at the lack of formality and the fewness of the lawyers: "there is no such thing as a wig or gown connected with the administration of justice." Besides, since the counsel had no 'junior' as in England to take down his notes, Dickens realized that the "law was not quite so expensive an article here as at home." Besides, he was favorably impressed with the fewer delays in administering the law and with the accommodating citizens interested in cases of justice.50

When Dickens visited Lowell, Massachusetts, he investigated the factories, interested in seeing how similar conditions of workingmen in England could be improved. With his photographic eye Dickens noticed that the factory girls were clean, well-dressed, and healthy-looking; they had the deportment of young women, not of brutes. The working-rooms were clean and well-ordered; besides having fresh air the factory also boasted conveniences for washing. The workers resided in boarding houses near the factory; discreet investigation of new girls and complaints kept the standard of morality high. A hospital in the town checked disease and restored health to sick workers. Furthermore, the law allowed children to work only nine months of the year, thus removing many evils of child labor in England. One feature which pleased Dickens was the attempt of the working girls to

49 Dickens Charles, American Notes, Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, New York, 1900, 32
50 Ibid., 68 sq.
educate themselves by subscribing to circulating libraries and by editing periodical among themselves. Many of these improvements Dickens preached to England's laborers when he returned home.

While in Washington, the roving author visited the Capitol, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. Asked whether he had been impressed by the heads of the lawmakers at Washington, Dickens answered negatively but explained,

I do not remember having ever fainted away, or having ever been moved to tears of joyful pride, at sight of any legislative body. I have borne the House of Commons like a man, and have yielded to no weakness, but slumber, in the House of Lords. I have seen elections for borough and county, and have never been impelled (no matter which party won) to damage my hat by throwing it up into the air in triumph, or to crack my voice by shouting forth any reference to our Glorious Constitution, to the noble purity of our independent voters, or the unimpeachable integrity of our independent members.51

Obviously disappointed with American political practices, which fell far short of his own ideals or of those which he had been led to expect to find in the land of the free, Dickens makes the following query and reply:

Did I recognize in this assembly [or politicians] a body of men who, applying themselves in a new world to correct some of the falsehoods and vices of the old, purified the avenues to Public Life, paved the dirty ways to Place and Power, debated and made laws for the Common Good, and had no party for their Country?

51 Ibid., 141-42
I saw in them the wheels that move the meanest perversion of virtuous Political Machinery that the worst tools ever wrought. Despicable trickery at elections; underhanded tamperings with public officers; cowardly attacks upon opponents,... and in a word, Dishonest Faction in its most depraved and most unblushing form, stared out from every corner of the crowded hall ...

... It is the game of these men, and of their profligate organs, to make the strife of politics so fierce and brutal, and so destructive of all self-respect in worthy men, that sensitive and delicate-minded persons shall be kept aloof, and they, and such as they, be left to battle out their selfish views unchecked.52

After his first visit to the House of Representatives, in which he saw the assembly in political action and debate, Dickens comments thus:

There are more quarrels than with us, and more threatenings ... but farmyard imitations have not as yet been imported from the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The feature in oratory which appears to be the most practised, and most relished, is the constant repetition of the same idea, or shadow of an idea, in fresh words; and the inquiry out of doors is not, "What did he say?" but "How long did he speak?"53

At this stage in his political thought, Dickens seems to be of the persuasion that a politician should be an idealist. He forgets that politics

52 Ibid., 143 sq.
53 Ibid., 145. Jackson, 48 sq. Jackson says that because of his ignorance of political maneuvers to delay bills or block the passage of laws, Dickens while in America mistook for useless bickering the fight in the House which Quincy Adams made to prevent any extension of slavery. Dickens saw only the bad manners and vulgarity, the disrespect and political abuse to which the white-haired politician was exposed. Adams was deliberately provoking these insults for their value with the electorates; however, that explanation entirely escaped Dickens. Furthermore, while Dickens saw graft and corruption, avarice and success-worship, in America he failed to realize that these evils existed in England but were not so evident because they were institutionalized, or were cloaked under the halo of political economy.
is often a question of compromise; he forgets that economics and politics are not simple questions of benevolence and Christmas cheer; he forgets that the heart must be ruled by the head. Yet his one-sided view of the political and economic situation is all on the side of the poor, the uneducated, the helpless worker, and his family, on the side of goodness, and mercy, and right. He errs because he thinks so narrowly, and he thinks narrowly because he loves so much.

Like most of the preceding novels, Martin Chuzzlewit, written in 1843 contains little of a political theme; its main theme is moral. Pecksniff, the hypocrite, exults in his moral utility; he feels that he does a public service even through his process of digestion. Even at this early date the idea of utility seems to play like heat lightning at the tip of Dickens's brain, for there is gentle satire in Pecksniff's mechanizing everything, even digestion, into a social service. However, this theme gets full treatment from Dickens only about ten years later in Hard Times.

In this book Dickens preaches that money breeds misery, pain, and death for its owners unless they use it to alleviate the pain and wretchedness of the poor. Money must be accumulated not as an end but as a means only. For used as an end, wealth stifles and gags itself and becomes a stagnant Dead Sea, having no outlet; but used as a means it multiplies itself by multiplying smiles, friendship, contentment, health, and happiness. For

54 Dickens, Charles, Martin Chuzzlewit, University Edition, Hooper, Clarke & Co., Chicago, 130

55 Crotch, William Walter, Charles Dickens, Social Reformer, Chapman & Hall, Ltd., London, 1913, 28. Crotch says, Dickens holds that profit is justified by the social service it does.
example, Jonas Chuzzlewit has a rule for bargaining: 'Do other men, for they would do you.' 56 As a result, such selfishness and avarice lead Jonas to hasten his father's death, to kill Tiggs (or Montague), and finally to commit suicide.

In the England of Dickens's day adoration of money and belief in its powers were common; but your avarice had to be respectable; your aims had to be high. Even nobility esteemed and cultivated the man with money, for the power which he commanded; and the man with money esteemed the titled nobleman, for the prestige which his dignity and heredity and culture deserved. This attitude toward money Dickens satirizes when he ridicules Pecksniff, who has just censured Mrs. Todgers thus:

The profit of dissimulation! To worship the golden calf of Baal for eighteen shillings a week!... To barter away that precious jewel, self-esteem, and cringe to any mortal creature -- for eighteen shillings a week!

And Dickens comments Just, most just, thy censure, upright Pecksniff! Had it been for the sake of a ribbon, star, or garter; sleeves of lawn, a great man's smile, a seat in Parliament, a tap upon the shoulder from a courtly sword; a place, a party, or a thriving lie, or eighteen thousand pounds, or even eighteen hundred; but to worship the golden calf for eighteen shillings a week! Oh pitiful, pitiful! 57

After Martin Chuzzlewit is reduced to go to the pawnbroker for loans, he realizes how he has gradually lost delicacy and self-respect and now can do "without the least compunction," that "which but a few short days before

56 Dickens, 189

57 Ibid., 177
had galled him to the quick." Commenting on this loss of self-respect in men and women, especially of the working class, Dickens apostrophizes moralists, teachers, and economists:

... go, teachers of content and honest pride, into the mine, the mill, the forge, the squalid depths of deepest ignorance, and uttermost abyss of man's neglect, and say can any hopeful plant spring up in air so foul that it extinguishes the soul's bright torch as fast as it is kindled! And, oh! ye Pharisees of the nineteen hundredth year of Christian knowledge, who soundingly appeal to human nature, see that it be human first. Take heed it has not been transformed, during your slumber and the sleep of generations, into the nature of the beasts.58

To the plea for humane treatment for the laboring class Dickens later adds the disturbing thought that in some warped minds steel and iron mean more and are more precious than man himself. In his description of the onrushing train he says,

And now the engine yells, as it were lashed and tortured like a living laborer, and writhed in agony. A poor fancy; for steel and iron are of infinitely greater account, in this commonwealth of flesh and blood. If the cunning work of man be urged beyond its endurance, it has within it the elements of its own revenge; Whereas the wretched mechanism of the divine hand ... may be tempered with, and crushed, and broken, at the driver's pleasure. Look at that engine! It shall cost a man more dollars in the way of penalty and fine, and satisfaction of the outraged law, to deface in wantonness that senseless mass of metal, than to take the lives of twenty human creatures! Thus the stars wink upon the bloody stripes; and liberty pulls down her cap upon her eyes, and owns oppression in its vilest aspect, for her sister.59

58 Ibid., 231-32
59 Ibid., 345
In his apostrophe to duty, Dickens repeats the theme that the richer, more intelligent, and more powerful elements in human society owe a duty to the poor, the ignorant and uneducated, and the politically helpless. All these elements are taken up in greater detail and with closer political implications in later books; still it is interesting to note them in embryonic, moralistic state even here.

Oh late-remembered, much-forgotten, mouthing, braggart duty, always owed, and seldom paid in any other coin than punishment and wrath, when will mankind begin to know thee! When will men acknowledge thee in thy neglected cradle, and thy stunted youth, and not begin their recognition in thy sinful manhood and thy desolate old age! Oh ermined judge whose duty to society is, now, to doom the ragged criminal to punishment and death, hadst thou never, man, a duty to discharge in barring up the hundred open gates that wooed him to the felon's dock, and throwing but ajar the portals to a decent life! ... Oh magistrate, so rare a country gentleman and brave a squire, had you no duty to society, before the ricks were blazing and the mob were mad; or did it spring up, armed and booted from the earth, a corps of yeomanry, full-grown!60

In the mid-1840's Dickens got the inspiration for the first of his Christmas stories. So successful was the Christmas Carol that thereafter a story in keeping with the Yuletide season became an annual event with him. In writing these stories his chief purpose was "to awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season in a Christian land."61 However, Dickens was living in a society that had largely lost the Christian spirit of faith. While he was not a religious man, Dickens did make a feeble attempt

60 Ibid., 498-99

to solve the social and political problem by appealing to religion. Unfortunately, he appealed not to rock-basic principles of action, which religion furnishes to guide life, but to pious sentiments and religious emotions, whose purpose is to inspire and encourage. His Christmas stories represent his religious appeal that skirted the fringe of life but left untouched the hidden springs of action. To him religion meant Christmas and Christmas was the Christian spirit; it was all he knew of religion and all he felt he needed to know.

Victorian society, political, economic, and social, had pigeon-holed life into various compartments. At the root of all thought-life was the standard of utility. Obviously, God's law was frequently omitted from their calculations, especially since it interfered with their mechanistic conceptions of human life, their materialistic amassing of wealth, and their moral irregularities. One important army of opposition to the Utilitarians was the Oxford Group, whose principal aim was a return to primitive Christianity in living and in worshipping. Unless the whole of life — political, social, economic, intellectual, and religious — is governed by genuine Christian principles, the gospel of selfishness, greed, expediency, and present advantage dictates the policies of business and politics. Even men who still retained religious respectability by saving Sunday for God kept the rest of the week for themselves. Sunday they professed love of neighbor by attending divine service; Monday through Saturday they practiced sweat-shop tactics and encouraged competition among laborers to reduce wages.
Dickens wished the spirit of Christmas to reign every day in the hearts of politicians, employers, and aristocrats. If it did not reign among the rulers it could hardly be expected to exist among the people ruled. His solution to the complex problem was simple: it consisted in doing good, the golden rule, practical Christianity. He forgot that many Wise Men saw the Star, but only three followed the vision. For the vision entails hardship and sacrifice; and the world was ruled by hard-headed business men. Dickens himself never allowed religion to interfere with sound business. The question of present advantage and public demand took precedence in his literary calculations.

For obvious reasons only a few characteristic Christmas stories will enter into this discussion. Some are unimportant; some are repetitious in theme; some are not apropos. A Christmas Carol deals with the reformation of Scrooge, a hard-fisted, penny-pinching employer at the grindstone. The theme, dramatically enough, is given by Marley’s Ghost, in answer to Scrooge, who has just consoled Marley on being always a good man of business.

"Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business."62

Instead of spreading cheer about the world, as his nephew and as his underpaid clerk Bob Cratchit did, Scrooge calls Christmas humbug, grudgingly gives Cratchit the day off, and refuses to contribute to a charity that makes Christmas merrier for inmates of workhouses and Poor Law sufferers.

62 Ibid., 27
Only after he is visited by the spirits of the Past, Present, and Future does Scrooge change. Christmas Past recalls his childhood, schooldays, friends, scenes of happiness and hope; Christmas Present takes him to the Cratchit home and Tiny Tim: scene of want and frustration, relieved by simple humor, content, and faith; Christmas Future shows Scrooge his grave, tombstone, and engraved name, and reveals what people will say when Scrooge himself is dead: a scene to inspire remorse and change. As a result of this triple visit from the spirit-world, Scrooge amends his life and uses his money to spread cheer and food.

In the course of this sermon Dickens takes time to satirize the Malthusianists and political economists. While he and the Spirit are looking in at the home of Tiny Tim, Scrooge is told that Tiny Tim will die, unless the family is aided. "Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared," urges Scrooge. Then using Scrooge's own arguments and very words, the Ghost chides

"If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population ... Man... forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that, in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child."63

Before he leaves, the second Spirit shows Scrooge two children, Ignorance and Want.

Yellow, meager, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility... Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched

63 Ibid., 59
them with its freshest tints, a stale and shriveled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have been enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacingly ... This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want.  

Beware both of these, warns the spirit, but especially the boy. Erase Ignorance or prepare for doom. "Have they no refuge or resource?" asks Scrooge. And the taunting reply comes to him in his own words, "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"  

The moral theme of the Carol is continued in The Chimes; but now the economic and political elements enter into the story more intimately. Toby Veck, a ticket-porter and messenger at sixty years, was 'on the frosty side of cool.' Toby has been delaying the wedding of his daughter Meg to Richard because Toby hopes the family will be better off next year. In a vision or dream he sees that he is interfering with the happiness of his daughter and finally consents to the marriage. In the course of this domestic drama the members of the poor families come into contact with Mr. Filer, Alderman Cute, and Sir Joseph Bowley, M.P. Clever satire is urged against the lawmakers in the conversation between Meg and Toby.

"They're always a-bringing up some new law or other," said Toby. "And according to what I was reading in the paper ... we poor people are supposed to know them all. Ha, ha! What a mistake! ... how clever they think us!"  

64 Ibid., 70-71  
65 Ibid., 71  
66 Ibid., 107
Mr. Filer, a gentleman, expostulates on the ignorance among the poor of the first principles of political economy, on their improvidence, and wickedness. A man may heap up facts and figures mountain high; yet he cannot persuade the poor they have no right to marry and no earthly right to be born. Yet "We reduced it to a mathematical certainty long ago."67

Alderman Cute is a famous man for the people, so he says. This is all nonsense about want and hard up, and he intends to put it down. Of Meg he prophesies that she will become a distressed wife, bear children who will run about without shoes, and become a begging mother — and all these he will put down!

Trotting to the tune of Filer's words, "Put 'em down! Put 'em down! Facts and Figures, Facts and Figures! Good old times, Good old Times! Put 'em down! Put 'em down!" Toby delivers Alderman Cute's letter to Sir Joseph Bowley, M.P. Bowley, a great moralist for the poor, has very simple but definite principles: the Poor Man, in my district, is my friend and my business; I will think for the Poor; the Poor must feel the dignity of labor, live hard, practice self-denial, pay rent, be punctual; the Poor must feel entirely dependent on me. Toby is inclined to believe in the sincerity of this speech until the case of Will Fern comes up. The decision is that Will Fern must be put down, jailed as a vagabond for sleeping in the park, while looking for a job.

In the chimes tower Toby falls into a swoon and has a vision. The spirit of the Bells takes Toby to Bowley Hall, where there is in progress a

67 Ibid., 117
feast for Lady Bowley's birthday. In the midst of the feasting Will Fern comes in and delivers an impressive speech about the laws of the land. The laws are against the poor; the laws are made to trap and hunt the poor down when they are in need. It's to jail with the homeless for being vagabonds when they try to live elsewhere; to jail for breaking branches while nutting; to jail for begging a trifle on the road. At last, to jail for they are vagrants and jail-birds, with jail their only home.

"Give us, in mercy, better homes when we're a lying in our cradles; give us better food when we're a working for our lives; give us kinder laws to bring us back when we're a going wrong; and don't set Jail, Jail, Jail, afore us, everywhere we turn. There ain't a condescension you can show a laborer then, that he won't take, as ready and as grateful as a man can be; for he has a patient, peaceful, willing heart. But you must put his rightful spirit in him first; for ... his spirit is divided from you at this time. Bring it back, gentlefolks, bring it back."68

Dickens himself might have given that very speech in the House of Commons or before the Lords and Ladies of the land. It bristles with his feelings of reproof for the rulers and authorities, and it bleeds with his sympathy and tenderness for the unfortunate working class. But as yet, there is very little of a positive platform.69

68 Ibid., 158-160
69 Jackson, 295. Jackson looks upon the Christmas books as a transition from the early to the later Dickens; in their own way they "lead us, yet again, to the very brink of the slogan: "the emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself!"
Gradually through the 1840's and 1850's Dickens was becoming more convinced that society was a complex organization. It was far more than a union of individuals. Society was also a union of groups or classes, each dominated by its own principles, its own aims, its own views of life. Some emphasized the power and importance of politics in promoting the welfare of the country; others insisted on the influence and necessity of economics in keeping England the workshop of the world. Consequently, Dickens was forced to abandon his benevolent theory of reform, as advocated chiefly through his Christmas stories and his Cheerybles, because it aimed principally at the individual and was not productive of lasting fruit. Hereafter, he realized his appeals must pierce not only to the hearts of individuals but must penetrate the organized hearts of social groups.

This interlocking view of society resulted from several realizations, based on his own Zeiss-lens power of observation. These early realizations may be grouped under the heads of big business, debtors' prisons, labor organizations, the Sanitary Health Board, and Administrative Reform. Dombey and Son treats of a large business organization; David Copperfield in episodes considers the evils of debtors' prisons, a topic taken up with more devastating criticism in Little Dorrit; the remaining topics Dickens treated in his speeches delivered principally to labor organizations. All of these
form the main strands of his three gloom-overshadowed novels, Bleak House, Hard Times, and Little Dorrit. Big business included railroads, factories, world-wide branches, stock companies, shares. Dickens identified business with middle-class activity and initiative; he rejoiced in the power of his own social group, yet he feared that the power might be put to a selfish or evil purpose. Because of the power of large employers, Dickens advocated the organization of laborers into groups for their own education, self-improvement, and protection. In an age that looked askance at organizations because of their inefficiency or abuses, Dickens supported the Sanitary Health Board and agitated for organization against disease, slums, and filth. In a period that had seen world-shaking changes in the social and economic fields, Dickens advocated Administrative Reform as a defense against the abuses of a static, cumbersome, antiquated bureaucratic government. All these features of the changing English society find expression in his novels or his speeches or his periodicals, and lead progressively to the culminating criticism of his three dark novels.

However, before he wrote his sweeping condemnations of social conditions and his appeals for remediying the most flagrant abuses in the field of politics and economics, Dickens began his realistic writings with Dombey and Son and David Copperfield. Political and economic principles are closely connected with changes in business, working conditions, transportation, and social intercourse between the various classes in England. Some of these form the background and theme of Dickens's next major novel, Dombey and Son, the first of the realistic group. The action in Dombey centers around a big
business house (dealing in hides), its far-flung branches, and its proud head. Successful in business, Dombey has one major aim in life -- to have his firm named Dombey And Son. So easily has he made money and so much power and influence has money carried in its wake that Dombey has gradually come to believe in the almighty power of the pound and shilling.

In contrast to Dombey, small business men are confused by the unprecedented changes in economic conditions. As Solomon Gills, ship's instrument maker and owner of a small shop containing naval equipment, tells his nephew Walter Gay,

... competition, competition -- new invention, new invention -- alteration, alteration -- the world's gone past me. I hardly know where I am myself; much less where my customers are ... the world has gone past me. I don't blame it; but I no longer understand it. Tradesmen are not the same as they used to be, apprentices are not the same, business is not the same, business commodities are not the same. Seven-eighths of my stock is old-fashioned. I am an old-fashioned man in an old-fashioned shop ... I have fallen behind the time, and am too old to catch it again.¹

But in this novel Dickens never quite forgets that he is preaching an eloquent sermon on the evils of money and paternal neglect and selfish pride. So completely wrapped up is Dombey in the swaddling clothes of his hopes for Paul that he ignores, neglects, and even ices toward his daughter Florence.

Through the lips of little Paul comes the famous question about money, its nature, its power, and its limits; if money can do anything, why didn't it save my mamma and why can't it make me strong and well, Paul asks his father.

¹ Dickens, Charles, Dombey and Son, Part One, Peter Fenelon Collier & Son, New York, 1900, XIV, 52
And in bewildered surprise Dombey answers that "money caused us to be honored, feared, respected, courted, and admired, and made us powerful and glorious in the eyes of man," etc. After the death of little Paul, Dombey in paralyzed grief writes an epitaph for his son, "beloved and only child," completely oblivious of Florence. Yet it is this same neglected Florence who takes Dombey in and ministers to him in his old age, after his firm has failed and the wealthy Dombey has become a pauper.

Not only through big business do changes influence the English world, but also through the latest developments in transportation. The railroad looms important in this story not only as part of the milieu but as an integral part of the plot. It carries Dombey to Leamington Spa, where he meets Mrs. Skewton and her daughter Mrs. Granger; it enters into his chase after his crooked business manager Carker; and eventually an on-rushing locomotive crushes Carker to a horribly just end. How conscious was Dickens and the average Englishman of the changes ushered in by the new gigantic servant of steam, may be gathered from Dickens's own descriptive reactions:

As to the neighborhood which had hesitated to acknowledge the railroad in its straggling days, that had grown wise and penitent, as any Christian might in such a case, and now boasted of its powerful and prosperous relation. There were railway patterns in its drapers' shops, and railway journals in the windows of its newsmen. There were railway hotels, coffeehouses, lodging houses, boarding-houses; railway plans, maps, views, wrappers, bottles, sandwich boxes, and time-tables; railway hackney-coach and hangers-on and parasites, and flatterers out of all calculation. There was even railway time observed in clocks, as if the sun itself had given in.²

² Ibid., 266
Some of the very speed and mad rush of the rain is conveyed by Dickens when he describes Dombey's ride with Major J. B. Bagstock. The rushing landscape, the headlong hurry, the whirling mocking speed made the train "a type of the triumphant monster, Death!"

Away, with a shriek, and a roar, and a rattle, from the town, burrowing among the dwellings of men and making streets hum, flashing out into the meadows for a moment, mining in through the damp earth, booming on in darkness and heavy air, bursting out again into the sunny day so bright and wide; away with a shriek and a roar, and a rattle, through the fields, through the woods, etc.\(^3\)

Satire of the upper classes makes its stage entrance with the introduction of Mrs. Skewton and her daughter, a widowed beauty. Though Mrs. Skewton has lived in the lap of luxury, she has been forced by circumstances to live more modestly than her birth and breeding deserved. At Leamington Spa her chief preoccupation is hunting rich eligible husbands for Edith; she finds Mr. Dombey acceptable. Though not in love with Dombey, Edith espouses him as a marriage of convenience. The mother's part in her daughter's artful life is revealed by the passionate rebuke of Edith to her mother:

"A child!... when was I a child? What childhood did you ever leave to me? I was a woman -- artful, designing, mercenary, laying snares for men -- before I knew myself, or you, or even understood the base and wretched aim of every new display I learned ... Look at me ... married in my youth -- an old age of design -- to one for whom I had no feeling but indifference. Look at me, whom he left a widow, dying before his inheritance descended to him -- a judgement on you! well deserved!..."

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3 Ibid., 338-40
There is no slave in a market, there is no horse
in a fair, so shown and offered and examined and paraded,
mother, as I have been, for ten shameful years.⁴

Mrs. Skewton herself is pictured as loving flattery, enjoying being
called Cleopatra, seriously trying to be attractive at seventy, and falsely
attempting to seem more important socially and financially than she really
was. Her conversation with Carker, on the occasion of Dombey's visit to
Warwick Castle, is delicious in its revealing pretensions:

"Those darling bygone times, Mr. Carker," said Cleopatra,
"with their delicious fortresses, and their dear old dungeons,
and their delightful places of torture, and their romantic
vengeances, and their picturesque assaults and sieges, and
everything that makes life truly charming! How dreadfully we
have degenerated!... We have no faith in the dear old barons,
who were the most delightful creatures — or in the dear old
priests, who were the most warlike of men — or even in the
days of that inestimable Queen Bess, upon the wall there,
which were so extremely golden! Dear creature! She was all
heart! And that charming father of hers! I hope you dote
on Henry the Eighth!"⁵

The satire against the upper classes is continued in the description
of Cousin Feenix, who has come from abroad to attend the wedding of Edith
to Dombey.

Cousin Feenix was a man about town, forty years ago;
but he is still so juvenile in figure and in manner, and so
well got up, that strangers are amazed when they discover
latent wrinkles in his lordship's face, and crow's feet in
his eyes: ... But Cousin Feenix, getting up at half-past
seven o'clock or so, is quite another thing from Cousin
Feenix got up;⁶

⁴ Ibid., 471-73
⁵ Ibid., 463
⁶ Ibid., 524
At the marriage banquet Feenix gives a talk whose chief intent is to felicitate the bride and groom. In its circuitous course, he mentions that he had been in the House of Commons, did not do much there except to second the address, and "was — in fact, laid up for a fortnight with the consciousness of failure —" He blithely admits that he had never been an orator, and his wandering banter "ad longum et latum" certainly proves his statement. His observation that in his time "the order of parliamentary proceedings was perhaps better observed than it is now" seems to be an allusion to the trivialities of procedure which wasted time and accomplished nothing except to inflate the ego of the speakers and their henchmen. On the occasion of his visit to Florence to request a favor, Cousin Feenix again refers to his days in parliament, when the very mention of Pitt would provoke a storm of applause.

"As in my parliamentary time, when a man had a motion to make of any sort — which happened seldom in those days, for we were kept very tight in hand, the leaders on both sides being regular martinets, which was a devilish good thing for the rank and file, like myself, etc."7

Whereas in earlier books aristocrats were scoundrels like Sir Mulberry Hawk or Lord Verisopht, from Dombey on Dickens gives many shrewd insights into the peculiarities of the upper class. His point of view is not that of a gentleman criticizing an equal but that of an outsider who sees the absurdities of the aristocrats. As Chesterton points out, these are some characteristics of Feenix that represent the ruling class of England: his hazy notion that he is in a world where everybody knows everybody; the

7 Dombey And Son, Book Two, 436 sq.
round-about earnestness with which he leads up to a joke; his insistence that parliamentary technique was better observed in his day.8

In the second book Dickens returns to the theme that the upper classes have a duty to the lower. As usual, he offers no specific cure or principle; he argues from a specific case to the need of a general overhauling of the laws and the attitude of the lawmakers with the intent of getting justice for the underprivileged. After finishing her sentence, Alice Marwood, transported for crime returns to England and goes to her mother, the good Mrs. Brown. Alice's father is Mr. Carker, who has since disowned his daughter. Hardened by her harsh treatment from society, Alice speaks coldly about duty:

I have heard some talk about my duty first and last; but it has always been of my duty to other people. I have wondered now and then -- to pass away the time -- whether no one ever owed any duty to me ...9

And Dickens, the omniscient narrator, questions whether certain social vices in the lower grades of society are traceable often to vices prevailing in the upper strata. The social world is made of many circles, from high to low, but they lie close together; and often the extremes touch.10

Fortunately, there was a happy oasis in the desert of his social criticism; at this spot Dickens wrote his autobiographic masterpiece, David Copperfield. It is chiefly social in treatment; among other things, this book treats imprisonment for debt and the injustice of debtors' prisons, the

9 Dombey And Son, Book Two, 46-48
10 Ibid., 56
evils caused by hypocrites like Heep, and the final victory of good over evil.

There is a flavor of democratic optimism and boldness in Micawber's writing a petition to the House of Commons, "praying for an alteration in the law of imprisonment for debt". After penning his flowing and sonorous periods on a large sheet, Micawber invited his fellow imprisoned debtors to sign his petition. And Captain Hopkins read it to anyone who showed the least desire to hear it, giving a 'luscious roll' to certain phrases, such as 'The people's representatives in Parliament assembled,' "His gracious Majesty's unfortunate subjects".11

In a general way Dickens reverts to an old theme of money and power during the conversation between Dr. Strong and Mr. Wickfield. Quoting Dr. Watts against the evils of idleness, Dr. Strong says, "Satan finds some mischief still for busy hands to do", for the people who busy themselves merely in making money and getting power cause evils too. Here Dickens seems to be hitting again at those gold-and-glory-minded materialists who grind down humans in order to grind out dollars and influence.12

During the 1840's Dickens was developing a clearer consciousness, a more definite realization, and a growing conviction that the fate of the lower circles of English society was inevitably intertwined with the principles of the upper circles. The workers were dependent on the business principles of employers, principles countenanced by the political powers;

11 David Copperfield, Book I, 167-68
12 Ibid., 223
the citizens were dependent on and subject to the laws, made by upper groups for upper group interests and administered by not wholly disinterested lawyers and judges; and the whole country was committed to a predetermined policy of protecting vested interests by the Tory-minded or the middle-class-manufacturer-minded political group in power.

These groups wielded power for weal or woe, but it was a prejudiced power which often introduced changes without consulting the good of the great mass of Englishmen. From his visit to the Manchester cotton mills and from the report of Lord Ashley on factory conditions Dickens decided "to strike the heaviest blow in my power for those unfortunate creatures, but whether I shall do so in *Nickleby* or wait some other opportunity I have not yet determined." Obviously Dickens planned to write a novel or to do something positive to back Lord Ashley's campaign. However, we have already seen most of the novels of the '40's and have delivered the economic and political content without discovering that heavy blow. As Pope-Hennessy suggests, Dickens was so angered by the inhuman working and living conditions in the factories that he could not work himself to write in his normal 'half-sentimental, half-humorous way.' Conscious that his influence over readers did not extend to the 'didactic or minatory', Dickens's literary fury subsided until the embers glowed into *Hard Times*.14

However, in the 1840's Dickens was doing something for the workers.

13 Dickens's Letter to Edward Fitzgerald, quoted in Pope-Hennessy, 90-91
14 Pope-Hennessy, 91
From his experience in the House of Commons he realized that appeals to the Members of Parliament often fell on deaf ears. To do something about evil you must first see the evil. To avoid the duty of improving conditions, Parliamentary members sometimes closed their eyes to the evils; or if the evils were forced on their attentions, they, like Podsnap or Dedlock, refused to acknowledge their greatness or denied the possibility or necessity of changing social conditions. Realizing the ineffectiveness of the humanitarian argument before a political tribunal, Dickens addressed himself to the workers themselves. At least, the working classes had eyes to see, and hearts to bleed for their inhuman conditions, and wills to do something toward improvement. Dickens urged the laboring groups to unite for peaceful interests and to pool their resources for promoting education, hiring teachers, building schools, procuring books, encouraging reading, providing recreational facilities and social advantages. As early as February 7, 1842 in his "Speech on International Copyright" Dickens held as a conviction this principle: 15

I take it that we are born, and that we hold our sympathies, hopes, and energies, in trust for the many, and not for the few. That we cannot hold in too strong a light of disgust and contempt, before the view of others, all meanness, falsehood, cruelty, and oppression of every grade and kind. Above all, that nothing is high, because it is in a high place; and that nothing is low, because it is in a low one. 16

15 Crotch, 29. Crotch calls this "the democratic instinct for popular equality."

16 Dickens, Charles, Speeches by Charles Dickens, John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly, London, 1870, 65
On October 5, 1843 at a soiree of the members of the Manchester Athenaeum, an occasion at which Cobden and Disraeli also spoke, Dickens eulogized the efforts of the workers to improve themselves.

It well becomes ... this little world of labour ... that ... she should have a splendid temple sacred to the education and improvement of a large class of those who ... assist in the production of our wealth ... I think it is grand to know, that, while her factories re-echo with the clanking of stupendous engines, and the whirl and rattle of machinery, the immortal mechanism of God's own hand, the mind, is not forgotten in the din and uproar, but is lodged and tended in a palace of its own.17

There he also waxed enthusiastic over the workers' library of six thousand volumes, the classes in foreign languages, elocution, music, debate, and over the provisions for exercise. Out of his sincere belief in learning for the masses came his thrust at the 'parrots of society' who talk of the 'danger of a little learning' and give the people none at all. Ignorance, he insisted, is the 'prolific parent of misery and crime.'

In his address at the soiree of the Liverpool Mechanics Institution on February 26, 1844, Dickens again exulted about the "swift conquest over ignorance and prejudice" as was demonstrated in the documents of the organization "which recognizes the just right of every man ... to aspire to be a better and wiser man." After praising the members for their library of 11,000 volumes he added:

Every man who has felt the advantages of, or has received improvement in this place, carries its benefits

17 Ibid., 75
18 Ibid., 83-85
into the society in which he moves, and outs them out at compound interest ...18

Many of these ideas regarding the power of ignorance and knowledge and regarding the duty of the government to improve the living and working conditions of the great mass of English workers are continued in his speeches at Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow. For example, at Birmingham Polytechnic Institute, on February 28, 1844, Dickens enunciated these principles:

Society can't punish men for not being virtuous and for practising crime without showing them what virtue is, and where it best can be found — in justice, religion, and truth ... for it surely cannot be allowed that those who labour day by day, surrounded by machinery, shall be permitted to degenerate into machines themselves.19

Later in the same speech he dunned the theme that "vice and crime have a common origin in ignorance and discontent. But he optimistically held that the good work of the Institute went on in spite of political and party differences, 'although it may be retarded ... by the indifference of the middle classes."20

At the soirée of the Leeds Mechanics' Institution held December 1, 1847 Dickens reemphasized his principles and answered some objections that had been made in political circles.

'Some politicians say that 'a good man or a good cause has reason to distrust and dread' the educated town rather than an ignorant town, 'because knowledge is power, and because it won't do to have too much power abroad.' But

13 Ibid., 83-85
19 Ibid., 91-92
20 Ibid., 94
But ignorance is a power, too, for wrong and evil ... powerful to fill prisons, hospitals, graves — powerful for blind violence, prejudice, and error ... Whereas the power of knowledge ... is to bear and forbear; to learn the path of duty and to tread it; to engender that self-respect which does not stop at self, etc.  

From his attitude toward minor magistrates and his sympathy toward labor and his appeal for a change of heart in employers and political rulers, Dickens pointed the focus of his attention 'rather on administrative than on political problems'. Since he thought in terms of getting things done, he thought in the language of efficiency. He was not opposed to beadles but to bungling; he was not opposed to centralized administration but to the reams of red tape; he was not opposed to organization but to inefficiency and inhumanity. Consequently Dickens refrained from attacks 'on the central administrative departments of Government' until the 1850's. By this time, the work of Bentham, Mill, and Carlyle was telling in its propagandizing effect on the nation: the people were demanding more of government officials. Even in this criticism Dickens is merely a mouthpiece for the ordinary Englishman.

As House states, Dickens

... claimed to judge administration by its efficiency, not by any theory of powers, and he was remarkably free from the old-fashioned radical prejudice that economy for its own sake should be a leading principle of government ... He approved the centralized administration of France.

21 Ibid., 267
22 House, 183-84
when he found it worked ... but equally he damned the centralized administration of England when he thought it failed; and it frequently failed, as in the Crimean War, because though centralized, it was not unified.23

Dickens continued in the same vein when he denounced the 'obstruction of good things and patronage of bad things ... the saving of cheese-parings and waste of gold' in the Navy Dockyards. Furthermore, he intended to fight through Household Words in order to 'have England governed by men of merit, and not by fine gentlemen'.24

In his speech on Sanitary Reform, given in London, May 10, 1851, Dickens pleaded the need of sanitary reform and the usefulness of the Board of Health. Obviously he realized the urgent necessity of an organized control board to stamp out disease and its causes, for "the furious pestilence raging in St. Giles no mortal list of lady patronesses can keep out of Almack's." After he had read the reports of Mr. Chadwick and Dr. Southwood Smith fifteen years before, Dickens had been stimulated to enter the lists against disease and slums;

... and I can honestly declare that the use I have since made of my eyes and nose have only strengthened the conviction that certain sanitary reforms must precede all other social remedies, and that neither education nor religion can do anything useful until the way has been paved for their ministrations by cleanliness and decency.25

Whatever occupied the attention and enthusiasm of Dickens was, at that moment, the most important thing in the world.

23 Ibid.
24 Household Words, III, (September 6, 1851) 557 (Quoted in House, 185)
25 Dickens's Speeches, 315 sq.
On December 30, 1853 before the Birmingham Institute, Dickens looked forward to the day when there would be a "fusion of employers and employed, whose interests are identical, and who depend upon each other." Certainly these ideas on the relation of labor to management were forward looking and advanced, and indicated the direction of Dickens's economic thought.26

During the 1850's administrative reform became an important part of the political attack on the Government. Dickens was drawn into this political discussion through his connection with Layard. After Layard's motion for Civil Service reform had been defeated 359 to 46 in the Commons, Layard began a public campaign to arouse interest and gain support from the people. The prime minister nettled by this persistent criticism referred to the Drury Lane meeting of the Administrative Reform Association June 27, 1855 as 'private theatricals'. This was the first political meeting at which Dickens appeared as speaker; obviously he came only to lend his support and prestige to Layard's cause. While this speech might have been of little importance, as House says, it does contain some definite views on the political situation. In the beginning of his speech Dickens states that the reason for the private theatricals at Drury Lane Theatre was that the public theatricals of the prime minister

... are so intolerably bad, the machinery is so cumbersome, the parts so ill-distributed, the company so full of "walking gentlemen", the managers have such large families, and are so bent upon putting those families into what is theatrically called "first business" -- not because of their antipope for

26 Ibid., 42
it, but because they are their families, that we find ourselves obliged to organize an opposition. 27

Furthermore, Dickens felt it was a public duty to bring the situation to the attention of the English people. For in "that vast labyrinth of misplaced men and misdirected things" there was obviously "little adequate expression of the general mind, or apparent understanding of the general mind in Parliament." Besides,

... with the machinery of Government and the legislature going round and round, and the people fallen from it and standing aloof, as if they left it to its last remaining function of destroying itself, when it had achieved the destruction of so much that was dear to them -- I did and do believe that the only wholesome turn affairs so menacing could possibly take, was the awaking of the people, the outspaking of the people, the uniting of the people in all patriotism and loyalty to effect a great peaceful constitutional change in the administration of their own affairs...

I have the smallest amount of faith in the House of Commons at present existing ... I will not ask how it comes that those personal altercations, involving ... the retort courteous -- the quip modest -- the reply churlish -- the reproof valiant -- the countercheck quarrelsome -- the lie circumspect and the lie direct -- are of measureably greater interest in the House of Commons than the health, the taxation, and the education, of a whole people. I will not penetrate into the mysteries of that secret chamber in which the Bluebeard of Party keeps his strangled public questions, and with regard to which, when he gives the key to his wife, the newcomer, he strictly charges her on no account to open the door. I will merely put it to the experience of everyone here, whether the House of Commons is not occasionally a little hard of hearing, a little dim of sight, a little slow of understanding, and whether, in short, it is not in a sufficiently invalided state to require close watching, and the occasional application of sharp stimulants; and whether it is not capable of considerable improvements?... to preserve it

27 Ibid., 125-26
in a state of real usefulness and independence, the people must be very watchful and very jealous of it; and it must have its memory jogged, and be kept awake when it happens to have taken too much Ministerial narcotic...28

There is a long digression in the speech to remind the people of the "savage mode of keeping accounts on notched sticks" in the Exchequer; "and the accounts were kept much as Robinson Crusoe kept his calendar on the desert island." After many years of this ancient method, some revolutionary spirit inquired whether pen, ink, and paper would not serve the purpose better; at which 'bold and original conception' "all the red tape in the country grew redder." Eventually, after Parliament decided to dispose of the notched sticks by burning them, the sticks through overheating, caused by an over-gorged stove, set fire to the House of Lords, and eventually to the House of Commons.

From all his examples Dickens draws the conclusion that "our public progress is far behind our private progress ... To set this right, and to clear the way in the country for merit everywhere: accepting it equally whether it be aristocratic or democratic ... is ... the true object of this Association." In a stirring peroration Dickens aims his oratorical slings and arrows at the men in control of the government:

See you, who take the responsibility of government, who aspire to it, live for it, intrigue for it, scramble for it, who hold it tooth-and-nail when you can get it, see you that no man is left to find a day for himself. In this old country, with its seething hard-worked millions, its heavy

28 Ibid., 130 sq.
taxes, its swarms of ignorant, its crowds of poor, and its crowds of wicked, woe the day when the dangerous man shall find a day for himself, because the head of the Government failed in its duty in not anticipating it by a brighter and a better one! 29

29 Ibid., 135
CHAPTER VI

DICKENS'S POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SATIRE IN HIS DARK NOVELS AND LAST REALISTIC WORKS

Through the questions of Public Health, Administrative Reform, and labor difficulties Dickens was gradually led to take a larger view of society as a whole. Up till now he had taken a narrow view of the complex English political, industrial, and social world; as each problem presented itself to him he viewed it as an isolated problem island. The crimes in earlier novels were fraud, hypocrisy, selfishness, conniving against the poor; the good and evil were chiefly individual and a matter of private morals. But, as House points out,

Public Health could not be dealt with in this individualistic way: one foul cesspool might infect a score of families; the directors of one foul water company might infect a whole town; one man's meat might literally be another man's poison. 1

The same conviction dunned itself into his consciousness through repeated examples of administrative red tape, labor strikes, and epidemics of cholera. How administrative red tape winds its tentacles around the lives of thousands of innocent citizens is graphically described through the delays of Chancery in Bleak House and of the Circumlocution Office in Little Dorrit. How labor troubles and dishonest Trade Unions and unjust employers can disrupt the work and peace of individual workers and even of a whole town is treated in

1 House, 191

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Hard Times. How the evil effects of slums and unhealthy living conditions can burrow their devastating way through the various strata of society is shown in Tom-All-Alone’s effect on Jo, Hawdon, Esther, and even Lady Dedlock. Consequently, Dickens realized that many problems were social in character and complex in nature; that a social organization was necessary to combat giant evils and abuses in the field of health and economics and administration of justice; that in most instances individual effort was doomed to failure unless supported by a Government of good will and foresight. In other words, Dickens in the early 1850’s was forced to realize what many politicians had known long before:

... that the machinery of life designed to control an aristocratic, agricultural, and mercantile society could not control the society that industrial capitalism had imposed upon the older scheme. 2

This realization led him to his sweeping condemnation of social conditions in his next three novels.

After David Copperfield, Dickens entered into the catacombs of his dark period and wrote three books which have occasioned much controversy about his political and social disillusionment. Stevenson compares this period of Dickens’s writings with the dark period in which Shakespeare wrote his problem comedies. These dark novels, Bleak House, Hard Times, and Little Dorrit, brood in an atmosphere of bitterness and frustration. They flay, through satire and caricature, representatives of the higher social strata, trace legal and social injustices to the parliamentary parties, emphasize the

2 Ibid., 182
depressing effect by the futility of even the sincere and well-minded characters, and designedly employ social criticism as the motivating purpose, not merely of episodes, but of the entire novel.3

To explain this pessimistic attitude in the usually buoyant Dickens, Jackson postulates a thorough-going revolutionary change in society and politics at the root of Dickens's social criticism. However, taking a more balanced and reasonable stand, Stevenson attributes the dark period to causes that may be classified as domestic, literary, social, and political. First of all, in the spring of 1851 Dickens's father and infant daughter died within two weeks; furthermore, in January of 1851 Mrs. Dickens suffered an illness which was the probable start of her emotional difficulties. As Wilson says, a cramping marriage and social maladjustment caused Dickens's frame of mind.4 Secondly, the dark novels betray the influence of rival novelists in technical experiments in style and plot, in their propagandist seriousness, in satirical treatment of the upper class, and in attempts to probe passionate emotional problems. At a time when his pre-eminence was threatened, Dickens met the challenge of Charlotte Bronte through the Esther Summerson narrative strand, answered the competition of Thackeray through the Dedlock episodes with their muddle-headed political intrigue, and met the proletarian novels of Mrs. Gaskell and Kingsley with the Rouncewells shown with pride, and the Bounderbybs, shown with satire. In the third place,

3 Stevenson, Lionel, "Dickens's Dark Novels, 1851-57", Sewanee Review, LI, (summer 1943) 398 sq.
the speculation mania in England, the bankruptcy and suicide of John Sadlier, M.P. in 1856, the Crimean campaign 1854-56 with its expensive and unpopular mistakes, the widespread social injustice, and the hampering administrative incompetence, all were tied in with political conditions that annoyed Dickens.\(^5\)

In **Bleak House**, written during 1852-53, the satire of Dickens is devastating. While the story centers itself around the Chancery, it satirizes society in the Dedlocks, politics in the Boodles and Buffys, the law in Tulkinghorn, Wholes, Kenge and Carboy; it deals with the slums, philanthropic institutions, electioneering; it opposes middle class initiative to upper class do-nothingness.

First of all, **Bleak House** starts with a heavy London fog that typifies the foggy dealings in the chancellor's office. The chancellor is surrounded by a foggy glory, interminable briefs, twenty subordinates mistily groping knee-deep in technicalities, tripping over slippery precedents. There on his table are "bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues ... mountains of costly nonsense ... This is the court of chancery."

Then we are introduced to all the injustice it has committed.

The Chancery weaves a magic spell around its victims, luring them by promises to doom. First, there is Miss Flite, the mad little woman who attends the sessions daily and expects judgment shortly — on the Day of Judgment. It is tragic to hear her repeating her ominous phrase of deferred

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5 Stevenson, 399-408
hope. She symbolizes the futility of expecting a short termination to a
suit of inheritance and the madness engendered by the needless delays;
furthermore, the Chancery weaves such a web around a victim that he can't
leave it. Tom Jarndyce called a Chancery suit "being ground to bits in a
slow mill." Another eccentric character associated with this legal
institution is the landlord Krook; he is called lord chancellor and runs a
shop called the court of chancery. As Krook puts the matter bluntly, "There's
no great odds betwixt us the Lord Chancellor and Krook. We both grub on in
a muddle."

The Jarndyce v. Jarndyce suit has become a joke to the lawyers and a
tragedy to the family. One Jarndyce committed suicide because of delays.
Mr. Jarndyce, the present heir, refuses to build any false hopes on the case;
he warns Richard Carstone, one of his wards in court, not to become too
involved in the suit. The chancery case eventually resolved itself from a
question of a will and trusts to merely costs, until the fortune left by the
will is squandered in legal fees. Inheriting money is treated by the
chancery as a crime. Equity sends questions to law; law sends them back to
equity.

Another tragedy of the chancery is Gridley, the man from Shropshire.
He has become a chancery joke. Instead of taking his wrongs from chancery in
silence like Jarndyce, Gridley is loud and voluble and critical, because 'if
I took my wrongs in any other way, I should be driven mad!' Even though at
one time the costs were three times the legacy, the court refused to allow
his brother to give up the suit. When he asks for an explanation, Gridley is
told 'it's the system.' He must not look to individuals, or to a judge, or a lawyer. None of these is responsible; "it's the system!"

On the other hand, there are men who batten on chancery and consider an interminable chancery suit 'a slow, expensive, British, constitutional kind of thing.' Sir Leicester Dedlock considers the chancery the perfection of human wisdom, and believes that to sanction complaints against it is to encourage uprisings from the lower class. For him legal repetitions and prolixities are the national bulwark.

Finally, there is the tragic case of Richard Carstone. Rick distrusts Jarndyce about the chancery suit and is convinced that some money can be salvaged from the estate. Rick ignores the warning that men have been broken heart and soul upon the wheel of chancery. As Jarndyce tells Esther,

*A young man ... cannot at first believe ... that chancery is what it is. He looks to it, flushed and fitfully, to do something with his interests, and bring them to some settlement. It procrastinates, disappoints, tries, tortures him; wears out his sanguine hopes and patience, thread by thread; but he still looks to it, and hankers after it, and finds his whole world treacherous and hollow.6*

First, Richard engages Kenge; dissatisfied with the delay, Richard dismisses Kenge and engages Wholes as lawyer. In Wholes, however, Richard discovers that the one great principle of English law is to make business for itself at public expense. Since Wholes and his three daughters and father must survive,

6 *Bleak House*, 484
... the question is never one of a change from wrong to right ... but is always one of injury or advantage to that eminently respectable legion, Vholes.7

Richard is put off from month to month by one pretext or subterfuge after another. Eventually, after the discovery of a new will by Skimpole, the Jarndyce case is solved; but Richard's joy is short-lived, for he learns that there is no money left of the inheritance. As Chesterton so aptly phrases the impression, Dickens meant the Chancery fog to be oppressive for it symbolizes oppression; he does not dispel the fog at the end, for Carstone does not get out of Chancery save by death.8

Titled society is satirized in the person of the Dedlocks and their retainers or parasites, political and social. First, Dickens compares the world of fashion with the Chancery and finds that both are things of precedent and usage. Our opening impression of Lady Dedlock is that she is bored with life and escapes boredom only by travel and change; she is cold, distant, graceful, proper, beautiful — merely an ornament to be shown off in a proper setting of gowns and jewels on occasions. However, Sir Leicester is never bored, for he 'can always contemplate his own greatness' — 'his importance to society' — an inexhaustible subject. "His family is as old as the hills, and infinitely more respectable." It appears to Mr. Guppy who visits the gallery of Dedlock ancestors at Chesney Wold,

... that there is no end to the Dedlocks, whose family greatness seems to consist in their never having done

7 Ibid., 538
8 Chesterton, Appreciations and Criticisms, 152 sq.
anything to distinguish themselves, for seven hundred years.9

Further, Mrs. Rouncewell, housekeeper at Chesney Wold, when she tells Rosa and Watt the story of the Ghost's Walk, "regards a ghost as one of the privileges of the upper classes; a genteel distinction to which the common people have no claim."10

Fashionable society is invited to the Dedlocks' mansion and offers an unusual target for keen Dickensian satire.

All the mirrors in the house are brought into action now; many of them after a long blank. They reflect handsome faces, simpering faces, youthful faces, faces of three score-and-ten that will not submit to be old; the entire collection of faces that have come to pass a January week or two at Chesney Wold, and which the fashionable intelligence, a mighty hunter before the lord hunts with a keen scent, from their breaking cover at the Court of St. James's to their being run down to death. The place in Lincolnshire is all alive. By day, guns and voices are heard ringing in the woods, horsemen and carriages enliven the park roads, servants and hangers-on pervade the village and the Dedlock Arms. Seen by night, from distant openings in the trees, the row of windows in the long drawing room, where my lady's picture hangs over the great chimney-piece, is like a row of jewels set in a black frame. On Sunday, the chill little church is almost warmed by so much gallant company, and the general flavor of the Dedlock dust is quenched in delicate perfumes.11

In spite of this distinguished group's education, honor, virtue, and courage, the omniscient narrator finds a false note -- dandyism. However, it is not the false external dandyism of George IV, which manifested itself in clear-starched jack-towel neckcloths, short-waisted coats, false calves, stays.

9 *Bleak House*, 93
10 Ibid., 95
11 Ibid., 161
This is an internal dandyism of attitude in religion, in fashion, and in politics. In religion, these educated people talk 'about the vulgar wanting faith in things in general; meaning in the things that have been tried and found wanting.' The new fashion agrees 'to put a new glaze on the world, and to keep down all its realities.' They comprise those 'Who are not to be disturbed by ideas. On whom even the fine arts ... must array themselves in the milliners' and tailors' patterns of past generations, and be particularly careful not to be in earnest, or to receive any impress from the moving age.'

In politics, Lord Boodle, an important figure with his party, gravely tells Sir Leicester,

... that he really does not see to what the present age is tending. A debate is not what a debate used to be; the House is not what the House used to be; even a cabinet is not what it formerly was. He perceives with astonishment, that supposing the present government to be overthrown, the limited choice of the crown, in the formation of a new ministry, would lie between Lord Coodle and Sir Thomas Doodle -- [And after providing all the -oodles down the alphabet with the choice political plums] What follows? That the country is shipwrecked, lost, and gone to pieces ... because you can't provide for Noodle!\(^1\)

However, on the other side of the table the Right Honorable William Buffy contends that the shipwreck of the country -- about which there is no doubt -- is attributable to Cuffy, because you did not prevent him from going over to Duffy, and thereby released on your party an avalanche of -uffys.

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12 Ibid., 162
13 Ibid., 163
Obviously, the satire of political characters is more generalized than in Disraeli; the political characters are not individualized but are policies or political principles personified. As Chesterton says in another connection, "Dickens had this of the philosopher about him that he always remembered people by their opinions." Here he treats the politicians "as if they were nothing else but their opinions. He studies them as points of view, symbols of a state of mind with which he disagrees. His art consists in finding an opinion without a leg to stand on, and then giving it two legs to stand on." 14 Obviously, in this political entourage, the important personages are Boodle and his retinue and Buffy and his retainers. The rest of the company are merely supernumeraries who are addressed and who applaud, agree, shake their heads, and in general are the puppets who dance to the whim of their political masters.

In Dickens the women characters do not play the active part in politics that Disraeli's women characters do. They do not intrigue or plan or inspire their husbands to political heights; their main interest seems to be in the election results or to be named, like Volumina Dedlock, on the pension list. None of them is guilty of service; for to a member of the Dedlock dignity such activity of usefulness is unthinkable. Since even the rich have many poor relations, Sir Leicester was no exception; and his many cousins were glad to visit him and live for a few weeks on his magnificent scale. For some time Sir Leicester had made efforts to get Volumina, now in her sixties,

14 Chesterton, Appreciations and Criticisms, 97
placed on a pension; but when Buffy explained that times were not propitious for that, Sir Leicester was convinced the country was going to pieces.

Another of Dedlock's cousins is the Honorable Bob Stables, who "has been for some time particularly desirous to serve his country in a post of good emoluments, unaccompanied by any trouble or responsibility." But again Buffy was unable to dispense a political job, and again Sir Leicester reached his melancholy conclusion. The rest of the Dedlock cousins

... lounge in purposeless and listless oaths ... quite at a loss how to dispose of themselves... Cousins at the piano, cousins at the soda-water tray, cousins rising from the card table, cousins gathered round the fire.16

The satire of the upper classes is obviously from the viewpoint of a member of the middle class, who is a close observer of the political and social drama in English life.

In another instance, Dickens satirizes the titled personages indirectly but effectively; he does it not by recounting in Disraeli's method the undeserving ones who for little reason were able to buy a title, but by assuming that titles were bestowed according to merit. Miss Flite, the half-mad woman, visits Esther Summerston with news that Mr. Woodcourt, the doctor, had performed a noble service for his country during a shipwreck. Miss Flite is sure that the doctor ought to be rewarded with a title, but Esther assures her that a title never will be bestowed on him for

15 *Bleak House*, 386

16 *Ibid.*, 386–87
... it was not the custom in England to confer titles on men distinguished by peaceful pursuits, however good and great; unless occasionally, when they consisted of the accumulation of some very large amount of money.

"Why, good gracious," said Miss Flite, "how can you say that? Surely you know, my dear, that all the greatest ornaments of England in knowledge, imagination, active humanity and improvement of every sort are added to its nobility!... this is the great reason why titles will always last in the land!"

I am afraid she believed what she said; for there were moments when she was very mad indeed.17

We can again see Dickens the prompter behind the scenes putting the words into the mouths of his characters.

Sir Leicester's one track mind, his opposition to any change, and his great respect for social barriers is revealed when he learns that the son of his housekeeper, Mrs. Rouncewell, has been invited to enter Parliament. In his own words,

"And it is a remarkable example of the confusion into which the present age has fallen; of the obliteration of landmarks, the opening of flood-gates, and the uprooting of distinctions."18

In another instance Dickens gives a cross-section of the mind of Sir Leicester reacting to the proposal made by the iron-master Mr. Rouncewell that Rosa, who is in love with Rouncewell's son but at present is a ward of Lady Dedlock, should be sent to a private school. Here Dedlock's mind races from the village school at Chesney Wold, which Rosa now attends, to the whole

17 Ibid., 492
18 Ibid., 338
framework of society; and he pictures society receiving cracks and death-blows from people like Rouncewell who do not mind their own business. These people not only insist on getting out of their own station, logically to Sir Leicester the first one in which they are born, but insist on educating other people "out of their stations, and so obliterating the landmarks, and opening the floodgates, and all the rest of it; this the swift progress of the Dedlock mind."  

The aristocratic and political groups are again put on the griddle of satire when Dickens recounts the unusual activity of the Coodles, Doodles, and Dedlocks before an election. *Bleak House* ridicules the English system of Party politics and the problems that have to be solved by Boodle in forming a Ministry.  

England has been in a dreadful state for some weeks. Lord Coodle would go out, Sir Thomas Doodle wouldn't come in, and there being nobody in Great Britain (to speak of) except Coodle and Doodle, there has been no government ... Still England has been some weeks in the dismal strait of having no pilot (as was well observed by Sir Leicester Dedlock) to weather the storm; and the marvellous part of the matter is, that England has not appeared to care very much about it ... But Coodle knew the danger, and Doodle knew the danger, and all their followers and hangers-on had the clearest possible

19 Ibid., 393  
20 Christie, 162-63. Even Gladstone and Lord Salisbury bewailed the difficulties of this undertaking; the Prime Minister must avoid offending the incompetent, or wounding the sensitive; yet he knew it was impossible to reward everyone who deserves promotion. With all his ridicule, however, Dickens offered no positive alternative.
perception of the danger. At last Sir Thomas Doodle has not only condescended to come in, but has done it handsomely, bringing in with him all his nephews, all his male cousins, and all his brothers-in-law. So there is hope for the old ship yet.

Doodle has found that he must throw himself upon the country — chiefly in the form of sovereigns and beer. In this metamorphosed state he is available in a good many places simultaneously, and can throw himself upon a considerable portion of the country at one time.21

Of course, during an election the Dedlock cousins come down to Chesney Wold to do their constitutional bit for the country and incidentally for dear old Dedlock. On these occasions of national importance Sir Leicester does find his relatives useful. Bob Stables meets the hunt at dinner; the other cousins ride over to the polling booths and hustings, 'and show themselves on the side of England'; Volumnia still engages in sprightly conversation and still hops about on the dance floor 'for the good of an ungrateful and unpensioning country.'

Of course, Lord Dedlock has always delivered in his own candidateship. Besides, he has also managed to get two other seats by having the tradespeople vote his own men into Parliament. However, all this campaigning has been done only at the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds. And when Volumnia innocently asks, "What for?" Sir Leicester answers, "For necessary expenses." He adds no explanation, seems uneasy about the methods employed, and begs Volumnia not to pursue the question, because as the omniscient narrator immediately adds,

21 *Bleak House*, 551–52
it is whispered abroad that these necessary expenses will, in some two hundred election petitions, be unpleasantly connected with the word bribery.22

The result of the election shocks Sir Leicester and all the cousins. Mr. Rouncewell, the iron-master, dared to oppose Lord Dedlock and won three to one. Not only that, but Rouncewell took an active part in his own campaign. His speeches were plain, emphatic, influential; 'in the business part of the proceedings he carried all before him'. Besides, he was helped by his son. All this activity of the middle class manufacturer contrasts decidedly with the inactivity of Lord Dedlock, just as Rouncewell's desire to progress and to educate his son and Rosa out of their stations, contrasted with Dedlock's opposition to change. Dickens is obviously for the man of action in politics. It is worth mentioning that the actual electioneering is given only indirectly, like the Greek chorus recounting the action at a distance. The results of the election are brought in by Mr. Tulkinghorn.

The satire concerning philanthropic institutions involves Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle. Mrs. Jellyby is interested in an African project, educating the natives of Borrioboola Gha, on the left bank of the Niger. By keeping her eyes telescoped on Africa, she neglects her own children, who run about like ragamuffins in tatters and tears. Mrs. Pardiggle, a rapaciously benevolent soul, is interested in a number of projects, among them the Tockahoopoo Indians. She is untiring in her zeal, her visits, her request for funds, and her speech. As Mr. Jarndyce remarked, "there were two

22 Ibid., 556-57
classes of charitable people: one, the people who did a little and made a great deal of noise; the other, the people who did a great deal and made no noise at all."

Obviously, to the first class belongs Mrs. Pardiggle. The conclusion from these two caricatures seems to be this: that charity should begin at home in England in educating English children and improving living conditions for English people before you aimed the telescopic sights of charity on colonies thousands of miles away; secondly, the charity should not be obtrusive or painful to the receiver, for in many cases the money and food and clothing extended in charity was already owed in justice by the Government which had failed in its duty toward the poor.

A glaring example of governmental neglect is the slum district Tom-All-Alone's, and the unfortunate gallery of characters which haunt its filthy, disease-breeding tenements and hovels.

It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes; fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Coodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years -- though born expressly to do it."

23 Ibid., 105
24 Ibid., 221
Among these ruins, where a house is ready to fall at any time, shuffles or skulks the unfortunate creature Jo, who 'don't know nothink'. Jo is homeless, parentless, almost friendless; without education, without any provision by the local authorities, without hope. Jo sees people read and write, but is 'stone blind and dumb' to his own native language. He sees people going piously to church on Sundays, but it means nothing to him; he is merely hustled, jostled, and told to move on, as if he had no business here, there, or anywhere. He is scarcely human, being more like the horses, dogs, and cattle he passes than the superior humans whose delicacy he offends.

... he sits down to breakfast on the door-step of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and gives it a brush when he has finished, as an acknowledgment of the accommodation ... He has no idea, poor wretch, of the spiritual destitution of a coral reef in the Pacific,...25

Here again is the practical philosophy of Dickens in operation: he believed in practical politics and practical religion. What does religion and what does politics mean if they do not remove evil and do good? Even when the fact of Nemo's (Hawdon's) death is brought by Tulkinghorn to Lady Dedlock, Sir Leicester protests the mention of his poverty-stricken circumstances, because he feels 'that to bring this sort of squalor among the upper classes is really -- really --'26 Yet the upper classes, whose sensibilities Jo offends, do nothing to remove the nauseating causes.

In another typical instance, the constable is insisting that Jo move on. "He's as obstinate a young goon unh as I know. He won't move one". When Jo

25 Ibid., 222
26 Ibid., 167
asks where he is to go, he learns that the constable's instructions do not cover that elementary circumstance. And Dickens takes another typical thrust at Parliament:

Do you hear, Jo? It is nothing to you or to any one else, that the great lights of the parliamentary sky have failed for some few years, in this great business, to set you the example of moving on. The one grand recipe remains for you — the profound philosophical prescription — the be-all and the end-all of your strange existence upon earth. Move on! You are by no means to move off, Jo, for the great lights can't at all agree about that. Move on!27

When Detective Bucket and Mr. Snagsby go to Tom-All-Alone's in search of Jo, [in order to ferret out the secret of Nemo's identity and Lady Dedlock's interest in Nemo] they are treated to a 'villainous street, undrained, unventilated, deep in black mud and corrupt water! and reeking with nauseating smells. A fever victim is borne on an enclosed litter down the street. The constable Darby points out the fever-houses and remarks that people by the dozens have been carried out dead or dying. Later in their search for Jo, Bucket and Snagsby happen on some drunken men and their families; these men and women have come from St. Albans, Hertfordshire, to London hoping to find work. Obviously they found nothing, were forced to locate in Tom-All-Alone's, and became drunk in order to forget their wretchedness.

But eventually Tom-All-Alone's has its revenge. It brings the fever and death to Jo; through Jo, the fever reaches Esther who harbors the waif and nurses him for a few days until he walks off in a delirium.

27 Ibid., 265
There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night, the choice stream ... of a Norman house, and his grace shall not be able to say nay to the infamous alliance. There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilentiel gas in which he lives, not one obscenity of degradation about him ... but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. Verily; what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge.28

All this goes on, of course; despite the mighty speech-making both in and out of Parliament about the slums and how the conditions should be remedied. The argument flies about

Whether he £Tom-All-Alone's/ shall be put into the main road by constables, or by beadle's, or by bell-ringing, or by force of figures, or by correct principles of taste, or by high church, or by low church, or by no church;...

The one clear end of all this wordy confusion is that Tom can be reclaimed only "according to somebody's theory but nobody's practice". There again we have Dickens's practical philosophy dinned into our consciousness with the maddening monotony of the jungle tom-tom.

Now that Dickens was viewing institutions, and organizations, and principles of life as contributing causes to social evils, he entered into the troubles behind factory life. In Hard Times, published in 1854, he deals with the practical application of the philosophy of Utility to economic life. For Dickens this subject proved uninteresting and uncongenial; it resulted in the shortest of his novels. Briefly, England had tried to untangle her political

23 Ibid., 614
29 Ibid., 613
and economic difficulties through the Reform Bill and the unsound Manchester School. Thus, England hoped to achieve equality by peaceful means. The English interpreted equality in terms of liberty; they argued that the more freedom existed the more equality must be present. However, the new freedom took the chains from middle class manufacturers like Rouncewell and Bounderby and put the chains, doubly heavy now, on the laborer. In *Hard Times* Dickens championed a more humane view of freedom and equality; for liberty practiced without restriction by the employer may mean slavery without equivocation in the employed. 30

In *Hard Times* Dickens weaves together several strands in a practical application of the philosophy of political economy. First of all, he strikes fundamental chords of this doctrine as the keynote of the whole novel. It is not his intention to argue the Manchester School out of existence by abstract principles and syllogisms; he aims to show that this philosophy does not work out for the good of people exposed to its soul-warping influence. It rules out morality and religion; it subordinates man to machines; it makes man, body

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30 Jackson, l44 sq. Jackson disagrees when Chesterton states that the industrial revolution took the chains from the lords and put them into the hands of the middle class manufacturer; and when the chains fell from the manufacturer, he put them on the poor. (Chesterton, *Appreciations and Criticisms*, 176 sq.) Jackson terms this an incomplete and twisted explanation and then proceeds to expound it in communistic terms. While the freeing of the Rouncewells involved an "intensification of the enslavement of their wage-workers, it did not of itself create that enslavement." The bursting of the feudal restraints of England's time-worn economic system created the slavery by revealing, through the country's expansive development, an inherent antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. "It was not, as Chesterton, implies, a *restoration* that was and is wanted; but a *completion* of the *revolutionary process of emancipation*." In ascribing these communistic ideas of revolution to Dickens, Jackson interprets through his own subjective reactions and preconceived theory the views of Dickens.
and soul, of less importance than supply and demand, facts and statistics, profit and power. The system proves a failure in Gradgrind's own children, Louisa and Tom; and its regrettable success in Gradgrind's student Bitzer shocks the Doctor of facts. The system works itself out mechanically and statistically to the detriment of the factory hands and the personal benefit of Bounderby. It makes a wreck of the life of Blacknool, who is pictured as Dickens's romanticized view of the typical honest, loyal, and hard-working laborer. Besides, Dickens shows the evil effects that Trade Unions have when the union leaders are unscrupulous, unreasoning, rabble-rousing Slackbridges. In the course of the exposition of these different phases, Dickens describes the people and living conditions in Coketown and alludes occasionally to vague political connections and influence in Parliament.

In the philosophy of political economy, Dickens was struck by the almighty influence of facts and unwavering emphasis on statistics. Therefore, the novel opens with Gradgrind, the Ph.D. of Facts, who bases the philosophy of his teaching and the training of his children on facts. He makes the pupils of his school mere encyclopedias and fact machines, whose mental mechanisms, in response to the penny question thrust into their hearing slot, release the required response in a neatly-wrapped package of words. To Gradgrind, the pupils were merely pitchers ready to be filled with 'imperial gallons of facts'. Viewing the world through eyes of fact and not through eyes of fancy "is a new principle,... a great discovery." Consequently, Gradgrind censures Sissy Jupe who would carpet her room with flowery designs, because she is fond of flowers; whereas Gradgrind, the fact-monger, would
keep flowers in fields or gardens and not introduce them as designs in rugs to be stepped on. For according to his philosophy, fancy and imagination must be ruled out of life; fact and reason must rule all things. Gradgrind hopes the day will come when the country will have "a board of fact, composed of commissioners of fact, who will force the people to be a people of fact." Gradgrind is horrified to find 'his own metallurgical Louisa' and 'his own mathematical Thomas' stealing through peepholes delighted glimpses of the very fanciful Sleary circus. And he is disgusted with Sissy Jupe who, after eight weeks of his training, said that the first principle of political economy is "to do unto others as I would that they should do unto me."

The only purely political references in *Hard Times* concern Gradgrind and James Harthouse. In time, Gradgrind became a member of Parliament for Coketown:

... one of the respected members for ounce weights and measures, one of the representatives of the multiplication table, one of the deaf honorable gentlemen, dumb honorable gentlemen, blind honorable gentlemen, lame honorable gentlemen, dead honorable gentlemen, to every other consideration.  

Thereafter, occasional references inform the reader that Gradgrind is

... sifting and sifting at his parliamentary cinder-heap in London (without being observed to turn up many precious articles among the rubbish) and was still hard at it in the national dust-yard.  

except, of course, when Parliament disperses for vacation and does even less. Obviously, Gradgrind supports in Commons the economic policies of his friend

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32 Ibid., 169
Bounderby, especially after Bounderby proposes marriage to Louisa and Louisa accepts.

Besides Gradgrind, the political economy school have a supporter in Parliament in the gentleman James Harthouse. The Gradgrind party in politics was always recruiting likely prospects; Harthouse was a clever speaker, came from a good family, was bored with travel and life in general, and was easily persuaded to join the economists. His convictions concerning the hard-headed policies of the Manchester School are in perfect accord with Bounderby's way of thinking; however, his 'convictions' are determined by the men whom he is representing in Parliament. As he confesses to Louisa, his only lazy conviction is

... that any set of ideas will do just as much good as any other set and just as much harm as any other set.
There's an English family with a capital Italian motto: What will be, will be. It's the only truth going!

Of such unprincipled men does political economy consist and boast. Other than these references there are none of significance concerning political life in Hard Times.

In the economic field, Gradgrind's philosophy fails to work out in the case of his daughter and son. First, Louisa, influenced by her father, enters a loveless marriage with Bounderby who is fifty, thirty years older than she. In considering this proposal Gradgrind advised his daughter, not to consider the question of love, but to consider the facts. Though in age there is a discrepancy, yet in means and position there is great suitability. Eventually, the difference in years and temperament proves too high a hurdle; coupled with a dangerous association with Harthouse, Louisa discovers that
she does not love her husband Bounderby. Through the figure of Mrs. Sparsit's staircase, which suggests that Louisa is gradually stepping down the stairs to her own shame, Dickens indicates how Louisa slowly succumbs to the attentions and attractions of Harthouse and falls in love. However, before any further degradation occurs, Louisa wisely runs to her father and begs him to solve her problem according to his law of facts and statistics. Though Gradgrind is at a loss how to cope with the situation, the despised Sissy Jupe comes to the rescue by telling Harthouse to walk out of the life of Louisa.

Furthermore, the philosophy of facts fails to keep the actions of Tom Gradgrind straight and honorable. To cover accruing debts, Tom steals 150 from Bounderby's bank, where he works, and adjusts the books to avert suspicion. By previous plan Tom arranges to have Stephen Blacknool, an innocent factory hand, wait outside the bank so that suspicion will fall on Blacknool. Later, when Mr. Gradgrind asked Tom why he did it, Tom replied in statistical staccato:

"So many people are employed in situations of trust; so many people out of so many will be dishonest. I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its being a law. How can I help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!"

Then in the case of Bitzer, his prize pupil, Gradgrind realizes the dubious success of the Gradgrind philosophy. Bitzer 'held the respectable office of general spy and informer in Bounderby's establishment'; he even

33 Ibid., 244
had his own mother placed in the Coketown workhouse. Even when Mr. Gradgrind is trying to spirit Tom out of England, after his bank fraud has been discovered, Bitzer momentarily upsets the plans. Having spied on Tom and suspecting Tom's guilt, Bitzer had followed Tom to Sleary's circus, the hiding place selected. When Bitzer threatens to call an officer, Mr. Gradgrind appeals to mercy, "Have you a heart?" And Bitzer rejoins that his heart is accessible to reason and to nothing else.

"If this is solely a question of self-interest with you ---" Mr. Gradgrind began.

... "I am sure you know that the whole social system is a question of self-interest." [Bitzer speaking] 34

Money Bitzer refuses, for he feels that his chances of rising in the bank will be better as a result of turning in Tom. The appeal to school loyalty he rejects as an untenable position, for "My schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away the bargain ended."

It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy, that everything was to be paid for ... Gratitude was to be abolished ... the whole existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter. And if we didn't get to heaven that way, it was not a politico-economical place, and we had no business there.35

Eventually again, the very ones whom Gradgrind had previously despised as being too fanciful come to his rescue, and help him in getting Tom out of England before the law can take its course.

34 Ibid., 247
35 Ibid.
Coketown was a triumph of fact both in its material and immaterial aspects. The keynotes were machinery and tall chimneys; endless "serpents of smoke" coiled over the town; the piston of the steam-engine pumped up and down. Streets were the same; the people were the same; their work, their hours, their day were the same. The churches were pious warehouses; the schools were all based on facts:

... everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchasable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, amen. 36

But the workers did not attend church services, and many of them did insist on getting drunk; and all the statistics garnered to account for these facts ignored the basic fact of human nature: "that exactly in the ratio as they worked long and monotonously, the craving grew within them for some physical relief -- some relaxation encouraging good humour and good spirits, and giving them a vent." 37 Here Dickens points his satire at those manufacturers who increased the working hours to the breaking point, and then blamed the workers for breaking into drunkenness, or for seeking cheap recreation in low dives. Later he warns the manufacturers to reform their hard policies:

Utilitarian economists, skeletons of school-masters, commissioners of fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gossips of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will always have with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the moment

36 Ibid., 19
37 Ibid., 21
of our triumph, when romance is driven utterly out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you!38

For while we can calculate the product of a machine by its power, we cannot use the same yardstick for the souls of men.

The case of Stephen Blackpool forms an important strand in the warp and woof of Hard Times. Stephen was a plain, honest, blunt, man; he was a good power-loom weaver, perfectly reliable and truthful. He had no education and was no speaker. Some years before his wife had become a habitual drinker, and had left him. Though the fault was entirely hers, he could not get a divorce; for the law charged too much for court costs. He calls the law a muddle for not providing a solution to his problem, and for not allowing him to marry Rachel.

In order to improve their working hours and conditions and wages, the men have decided to hold a meeting and to organize a union. Mrs. Sparsit echoes the manufacturers' thoughts when she insists that the united masters should not allow class-combinations among the laborers, for the workers must be conquered. The false logic in that position is soft-pedaled. The men who attend the United Aggregate Tribunal have come to decide what is to be done with Blackpool, for he has refused to join the union, not because he is opposed to unions but because he has given his promise to Rachel. He feels that the union's regulations will hurt the workers. All he asks is that he be allowed to work. However, the union speaker calls Blackpool a traitor to

38 Ibid., 140
the workers' cause; Slackbridge insists that "private feeling must yield to the common cause": he rants that the hour has come when the 'slaves of iron-handed and grinding despotism' should unite and 'crumble into dust the oppressors that too long have batten upon the plunder of our families,' etc. As a result, even his friends refuse to talk to Blackpool; he is met with an iron wall of silence.

When Stephen, at Bounderby's request, talks with the manufacturer, he admits that Slackbridge is a bad leader for the people and that the union man is talking the men into mutiny and strike. Stephen excuses the workers and places the blame squarely on the union leaders; most laborers wish to do right; the fault is not always theirs. The town is in a muddle: despite the fact that the town is rich, and the workers industrious, the working population makes no progress, no improvement. When Bounderby suggests that the muddle be settled by transporting the union leaders responsible for stirring up the men, Blackpool answers that the trouble is not made by them nor does it begin with them.

"I have no favor for 'em — I have no reason to favor them — but 'tis hopeless and useless to dream o' takin' them fro' their trade, 'stead o' takin' their trade fro' them! Aw that's now about me in this room were heer afore I coom, an' will be here when I am gone. Put that clock aboard a ship and pack it off to Norfolk Island, an' the time will go on just the same. So 'tis wi' Slackbridge, every bit."39

Continuing, Blackpool admits that he does not know what will solve the labor problem, but he does know what won't solve it: the strong hand won't; victory

39 Ibid., 129
over labor or over capital won't; insisting that one side is always right and
the other always wrong, won't solve it; rating the workers as so much power,
and treating them like machines without souls, feelings, loves will never
solve the muddle. In the words of Stephen we can see Dickens speaking, using
the negative approach to the solution and pleading the cause of humanity.

Bounderby is irked by Blackpool's straightforward replies and decides
to dismiss Stephen from the factory. Now Stephen is not only at swords-
point with the union but with the owners as well. For the employers had a
union regulation and a mutual understanding that a man who was not allowed
to work for one employer would not be accepted by another employer.
Eventually Blackpool leaves Coketown, falls into Old Hell Shaft, and is found
near death by Rachel and Sissy; his dying prayer is that the whole world may
come to a better understanding of one another. And that prayer seems to be
the best solution that Dickens can offer to the perplexing problem of the
relations between capital and labor in a politico-economic England.

In Little Dorrit many themes touched on or developed in earlier works
are repeated. Dickens "rode his pet hobby-horses against the English Sunday,
the English slum, the English bureaucracy, and the English worship of
wealth." The main theme is a satire on bureaucracy with its annoying
delays and avoidance of responsibility. The interrelated Barnacles repeat
the Buffy and Boodle theme of Bleak House; the delays and run-arounds of the
Circumlocution Office remind one of the delay theme of Chancery. The debtors
prison and Mr. Dorrit immediately recall Micawber in David Copperfield.

40 Pope-Hennessy, 360
Bleeding Heart Yard repeats the ugly tale of Tom-All-Alone's and Coketown. The power and influence of big business and money, whose name is Merdle, invokes as by an incantation the names of Dombey and Bounderby. The ancient aristocratic outlook with its emphasis on formality is represented by Lord Stiltstalking, who is surely an offshoot of the Dedlock clan. The borough-mongering of Merdle recalls the election irregularities of Dedlock. Here again Dickens is thinking of those institutions, social groups, and economic principles that have had a blighting influence on the mass of English middle and lower classes.

What made the Circumlocution Office chapter and references effective and topical was the Crimean campaign. As House analyzes the matter,

No preponderating blame was ever fastened on any individual; the whole system failed and its members with it. Dickens took up one of the main points that had been made very clear by the war — that division of responsibility between various departments was an effective check upon getting anything done. The division of powers at the top between Secretary of War, Secretary at War, and Commander-in-Chief was reflected in the absence of any machinery for co-operation between the various parts of the forces in the field. The utter breakdown of the Commissariat and Medical Service, though partly due to sheer ignorance of what the campaign involved, was due more to the cumbersome machinery which seemed to exist only for the purpose of delaying orders. The medical supplies lying unopened on the dock and the cargo of cabbages thrown into the sea were adequate examples of how not to do it.41

Obviously then, the question of delays in government offices was opportune, for the recent campaign had witnessed much useless circumlocution and

41 House, 187
consequent waste of money, time, food, medical care, and lives. Most of the public affairs are epitomized by Dickens as 'those truly British occasions,' or 'constitutional moments' 'when somebody came from some office to go through some form of overlooking something, which neither he nor anybody else knew anything about.'

The bureaucratic satire reaches hilarious highlights in the chapter on "The Whole Science of Government". Arthur Clennam, who is trying to help the Dorrits because Little Dorrit reminds him of his first sweetheart and because he speculates that his mother's business might possibly have caused the ruin of the Dorrit brothers, makes his way to the Circumlocution Office, the inner sanctum of Tite Barnacle, one of Mr. Dorrit's principal detaining creditors. The one sublime principle which this glorious establishment had revealed to statesmen and had studied and practiced for years was this:

Whatever was required to be done, the circumlocution office was beforehand with all the public departments in the art of perceiving -- HOW NOT TO DO IT.

It is true that how not to do it was the great study and object of all public departments and professional politicians ... It is true that every new premier and every new government ... applied their utmost faculties to discovering how not to do it. It is true that from the moment when a general election was over, every returned man who had been raving on the hustings because it hadn't been done ... and who had been pledging himself that it should be done, began to devise, how it was not to be done. It is true that the debates of both houses of parliament, the whole session through, uniformly tended to the protracted deliberation, how not to do it ... It was this spirit of

42 Little Dorrit, The University Edition, Hooper, Clarke & Co., Chicago, 64
natural efficiency in the circumlocution office that had gradually led to its having something to do with every thing ... Unfortunates with wrongs, or with projects for the general welfare ... who had passed safely through other public departments ... got referred at last to the circumlocution office, and never reappeared in the light of day. Boards sat upon them, secretaries minuted upon them, commissioners gabbled about them, clerks registered, entered, checked, and ticked them off, and they melted away...

The Barnacle family had for some time helped to administer the circumlocution office. The Tite Barnacle branch, indeed, considered themselves ... as having vested rights in that direction. The Barnacles were a very high family, and a very large family. They were dispersed all over the public offices, and held all sorts of public places...

At this efficient agency of government, then, Clennam one day makes his fifth inquiry for Tite Barnacle. Since Tite has the gout, Clennam is referred to the private address of the political genius. After stating his case, Clennam is told that it is a principle of the circumlocution office never to give a straightforward answer and he is referred back to the office from which he had come. There he meets Barnacle Junior, is referred to the secretarial department, is re-referred to Mr. Clive; at none of these departments does anyone know the least thing about the Dorrit case. Eventually Clennam meets a young Barnacle who blithely tells him not to bother himself any more. Later Clennam is called a radical by the young Barnacle, for "he wanted to know, you know." 44

43 Ibid., 110-12
44 Ibid., 213
Among the men whom the Barnacles cultivate, and the one who stands highest in their august esteem, is Mr. Merdle. Merdle is a middle-class business man who has made money under the new commercial system. He is a man of giant ventures; he is a Midas in banking and building, and is, of course, a member of Parliament. Because he is a social climber, Merdle cultivates the friendships of the Barnacle clan and the Stiltstalking group. But money has made both Mr. and Mrs. Merdle snobbish, for they frown on the poorer members of the same middle class in which they took their rise. For example, when young Merdle and Fanny Dorrit fall in love and reveal their intention to his parents, Mrs. Merdle frowns on the Dorrits' low social class and threatens to cut her son off as a beggar, if he persists in marrying Fanny.

Occasionally, the Merdles prepare an extravagant dinner party, which all the magnates attend. A view of society, its talk, interests, flattering conversation is given through personified groups, such as Treasury, Bar, Horse Guards, Admiralty, Bishop. On the occasion of the wedding of Merdle's son to Miss Pet Meagles, the Barnacles again are invited; all who can come appear, leaving the circumlocution office to look after itself. There we are introduced to some Parliamentary Barnacles who are going through their probation. Their job was to hear, applaud, oh, and cheer under orders from their heads of the family; they stalled disagreeable subjects off until it was too late to discuss them; they went through the country swearing that "Lord Decimus had revived trade from a swoon, and commerce from a fit, and had doubled the harvests of corn, quadrupled the harvest of hay, and
prevented no end of gold from flying out of the bank.\textsuperscript{45} They served at elections, toadied, jobbed, and corrupted, and in the country's service were tireless; besides, their names were down for any political opening in any part of the world.\textsuperscript{46}

One of the men maintained by the Barnacle clan is Lord Lancaster Stiltstalking. Though now in retirement, "This noble refrigerator had iced several European courts in his time"; now in his white cravat his presence graced many an occasion. He was of the opinion that the country (by which he meant the Barnacles and Stiltstalking) would be preserved if the newspapers could be muzzled and if it were made a penal offense to criticize the conduct of any political authority. In the course of the discussion, always about Tom, Dick, or Harry Barnacle or Stiltstalking (for everyone else was only part of the crowd), he was always a hundred years behind the period.\textsuperscript{47} Often in Dickens, the conversation of political characters is

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 409

\textsuperscript{46} Christie, 163–64. Christie says that Dickens rightly ridiculed election methods, which included bribery and corruption even after the Reform Bill. In Little Dorrit, Merdle commands three little boroughs, "three little rotten holes in this Island, containing three little ignorant, drunken, guzzling, dirty, out-of-the-way constituencies, that had reeled into Mr. Merdle's pocket." Merdle tells Bar that these constituencies "are perfectly aware, Sir, of their duty to Society. They will return anybody I send to them for that purpose."

\textsuperscript{47} Little Dorrit, 317–18
reported through the medium of Dickens's own subjective reaction or is colored by his prejudice against the men in office. Unlike Disraeli, who was familiar with the actual language and discussions used in political circles, Dickens talks about the conversation of his politicians; he does not transcribe it as he does in the case of his middle class and lower class characters.

By all these characters in political and social circles, Merdle is considered a boon to society. Each one wishes a private conversation with the banker to get tips on investments. At the end Merdle proves to be merely the greatest forger and thief who 'ever cheated the gallows'. But his failure does not end with him, for big business has many ramifications. Merdle's millions involve thousands of investors. With the downfall of the Merdle bank and interests, Mr. Dorrit loses all his money and Clennam is hard hit.

Other thousands affected by the downfall of the octopus-like Merdle Inc. included the unfortunate poor of Bleeding Heart Yard, the slum section. The general misfortune there is that jobs are scarce; but Bleeding Heart Yard was never the better for the demand. Flornish, who lives in the Yard, describes what goes on there and what the people do: girls and mothers sew, shoe-bind, and make waist-coats; people of all trades want work and look for it, but can't get it; old people are shut in work-houses. He didn't know who was to blame; but he knew who suffered as a result of these conditions, and he knew that the evils did not adjust themselves. Of these important matters of state that concerned the people, the circumlocution office, of
course, knew nothing. Eventually the poor people hear of Merdle's enterprises: 'Name up everywhere — immense resources — enormous capital — great position — high connection — government influence.' Pancks himself has invested a thousand pounds on the strength of such high pressure salesmanship. Many of the poor people in the yard have been taken in by dreams of a get-rich-quick-and-safe scheme without working. Eventually when Merdle crashes, the dwellers in Bleeding Heart Yard lose all. And so the whole structure of society, from the socially prominent and politically influential to the socially wretched and economically destitute is bound together and suffers through political nepotism and borough-mongering, through bureaucratic delays and giant fraudulent stock empires.

Throughout this decade Dickens was interested especially in persons, institutions, and principles that had large social significance, by which the lives of millions were daily influenced. Even his last novel of this period, A Tale of Two Cities, has essentially a political theme, but the story is laid principally in the political atmosphere of the French revolu-

48 Ibid., 147-48

49 Jackson, 165-70. According to Jackson, Little Dorrit is potentially near to being Dickens's most revolutionary novel. It is an allegory "of whose true purport its author was only partly conscious." The real villain is not any one of the characters, like Merdle, Blandois, Casby, or Mrs. Clennam, nor all of the characters put together; but it is "a vast, more palpable Evil, of whose true being we get indications in the shadow of the Marshalsea walls, in the heart-breaking immobility of the Circumlocution Office, and in the terrifying gloom of Mrs. Clennam's theology." With all its confinement, the poverty of the Marshalsea had humanness and kindness; but the riches of the economic world, only a larger Marshalsea, brought the Dorrits face to face with self-seeking, greed, malice, and soul-destroying influences. The implicit theme of revolution in Little Dorrit becomes explicit in the Tale of Two Cities.
tion in which the middle class revolted against the nobility and achieved by bloodshed and purge their political trinity, liberty, equality, fraternity. Essentially it repeats the mob theme of the Gordon Riots and The Old Curiosity Shop, and re-emphasizes Dickens's fear and hatred of passion-driven, uncontrollable mob violence. However, the revolution did not suppress oppression; it merely substituted one set of oppressors, the bourgeoisie, for another, the aristocrats.

At the time Dickens wrote his next novel, Great Expectations, England was in the midst of increasing prosperity. Many fortunes had been made; even the standards of the poor and lower middle class had been generally raised. The emphasis in the decade of the sixties was on the new change in society and its implications for England in general. Great Expectations contains nothing specifically and directly of an economic and political nature. It is a sermon on snobbishness; it illustrates the evil effects of money on those who come into wealth without working for it and without appreciating its true worth, and on those who try to raise their social position at the expense of others. As House puts it, money 'can change and make distinctions of class; it can pervert virtue, sweeten manners, open up new fields of enjoyment and suspicion.'

Socially, Pip starts life on the lower class level; he is an orphan before he comes to reason; therefore, his married sister, wife of patient Joe Gargery, cares for Pip. As a youngsters, Pip through fear aids an escaped convict Magwitch, bringing the jail-breaker food and a file to free

49 House, 159
his irons. Later, the convict sails to America, makes a fortune, and determines to repay Pip by placing a supply of money at his beneficiary's disposal. The money was supplied Pip in regular installments by a lawyer, Magwitch the benefactor remaining unknown.

Meanwhile, Pip has, through Pumblechook, an acquaintance of Mrs. Gargery, gained entrance to the home of an eccentric old lady, Miss Havisham, rich but heartless. Hurt through her marriage by her husband, Miss Havisham has determined to raise her adopted daughter Estella to win and break the hearts of many men. Through association Pip learns to love Estella, who returns his affections in a cool fashion. But he realizes she is above him socially; consequently, he can scarcely hope to marry her or ask her to descend socially.

Then Pip's 'great expectations' come from his nameless benefactor. Naturally, Pip believes that Miss Havisham is the source of his income and that she wishes him to improve himself by education and thus make himself worthy of Estella socially. To realize his dream, Pip goes to London, engages a tutor, and takes lodgings.

When Joe comes to London to do Pip a favor, Pip invites his gentleman friend Herbert to the gathering. Unused to table etiquette and conscious of his lack of education and culture, Joe makes many social blunders. Pip does not conceal his shame at Joe's manners and speech. Already, the change to snob is making Pip change toward the true friends of his childhood and youth. When Pip visits his home town, Trabb's boy, a former acquaintance of Pip, feigns terror and surprise at the dignity of Pip's appearance. Through
Trabb's boy Dickens hurls effective satire at the social pretensions of the snobbish middle class.

As Pip's horn of plenty seems to have no bottom, Pip does for Herbert what has been done for him. He becomes the nameless source of Herbert's education and expense account.

In time, Magwitch returns to London and reveals himself to Pip as the unknown benefactor. Pip feels deep shame as the realization that he has been raised socially by a social inferior smites him. Eventually, Magwitch is caught by the police; and since under English law a criminal's effects are forfeit to the state, Pip sees his rainbow dreams of great expectations dissolve.

Pip's snobbery has gotten him into debt; now he is forced to stoop to begging £900 from Miss Havisham to pay for Herbert's still unfinished education. Worst of all, Pip realizes that he has been untrue to Joe Gargery and Biddy. He has not visited them in years; he has treated them as social inferiors, even though they have always been the soul of goodness to him. Actually, as House points out, Pip had no cause for pride; for his acquired culture 'came to little more than accent, table manners, and clothes'. In Pip's illness, when creditors are hounding his sick chamber for an unpaid debt of £123, 15, 6, Joe Gargery, hearing of the plight, travels to London and stays with Pip during his sickness. Later, Pip learns that Joe not only nursed him to health but also paid the debt.

50 Ibid., 159
The moral of the story is this: money, quickly and easily acquired, causes or occasions social pretensions. Money hides real and basic human virtues, leads men to ignore, shun, and deprecate their true friends, and instills a false view of society. Money is not a substitute for genuine worth, honesty, friendship, or loyalty. Snobishness, consequently, is a social evil, dangerous for society when practiced on a large scale and injurious for the individual. The old class divisions that caused so much trouble in ages past are now being resurrected by the middle class snobs. However, by losing his great expectations of wealth Pip avoids the quicksands of snobishness and seems even better after his experience with money than before; he has many friends, more experience with life, has improved in speech and manners, and is widely read.

Trabb’s Boy is effective satire on Pip’s change after his rise in fortune. House calls this personal rather than political satire, impugning entirely the judgment of Chesterton.

Chesterton professed to find in Trabb’s boy the last word upon the triumphant revolutionary sarcasm of the English democracy; ... The assault of Trabb’s boy, which brings Pip’s class-consciousness to a head, is more personal than political.51 However, the satire here should be viewed in the light of similar means used by Dickens to obtain richer satiric results. In his character treatment, in two novels that preceded Great Expectations, Dickens uses character contrasts to emphasize the satire. For example, in Bleak House both Mr. Jarndyce and Gridley, the man from Shroobshire, are arguments against Chancery delays. But

51 Ibid., 158
they represent entirely opposite attitudes of the English public: Jarndyce is patient, self-controlled, reserved in his condemnation of Chancery practice; Gridley is voluble, angry, demonstrative. Both forms of criticism are political satire; one throws the other in sharp relief.

In Little Dorrit, likewise, Meagles and Doyce react in opposite ways in their condemnation of the same evil — the Circumlocution Office. Doyce, the inventor and factory owner, is calm, cheerful, controlled; Meagles is loud, exasperated, disgusted. Yet it is the silent Jarndyce who has lost thousands of pounds, from Chancery delay, to Gridley's hundreds; and it is Doyce who has suffered most from the Circumlocution Office. In Great Expectations, Joe Gargery has suffered most from Pip's change; yet he has been the silent, friendly, forgiving Samaritan to Pip, while Trabb's boy is demonstrative in his ridicule. According to Chesterton, Trabb's boy represents the common people with their energy, bounce, and vitality; Joe Gargery stands for long-suffering in the English poor; but the actual English people may be said to lie between these two.52

In these contrasts there is undeniable pattern and plan. The first two, namely, Jarndyce-Gridley and Meagles-Doyce are aimed against a political institution or political henchmen; the Trabb's boy-Gargery contrast is aimed against an undesirable change in the middle class group itself — the social change to snobbery, patronage, social climbing. In one sense, it is personal as House suggests; yet it is also social with political implications, as

52 Chesterton, Appreciations and Criticisms, 202-06
Chesterton appears to suggest. In the light of the growing importance of the middle class vote and wealth, rich bait for political anglers, Chesterton is right in viewing the criticism as satire against false trends in the middle-class way of life.53

The same social criticism of middle-class snobbliness is even more pointed in Our Mutual Friend. Here the Veneerings, Podsnaps, and Lammles share the spotlight of ridicule which before concentrated on the Dedlocks, Barnacles, Boodles, and Bounderby. The Veneerings are newly rich, "brand-new people in a brand-new house in a brand-new quarter of London". All their glitter, parties, clothes, and talk indicate sham, pretense, and social ambitions. They use Twemlow, poor first cousin to Lord Snigsworth, as guest at their affairs to increase the Veneering social prestige. The large mirror reflects the new Veneering crest in gold and silver, reflects Mrs. Veneering, 'gorgeous in raiment and jewels', reflects Mrs. Podsnap and her majestic head-dress 'in which Podsnap has hung golden offerings'. 54 Another vignette is the revelation, after the wedding of Alfred Lammle to Sophronia Akersham, that both were fortune hunters. Both had been led by the Veneerings to believe that the other was a person of property. Chagrinned at their mutual

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53 Jackson, 194-97. According to Jackson, the net effect of Great Expectations is that "Dickens saw in existing society and its whole crop of 'great expectations' ... nothing but folly and a headlong rush towards disaster." In the 1860's British society, like deluded Pip, buoyed itself up with hopes of wealth. Whereas Pip was indebted, to his shame, to Magwitch the convict, mid-Victorian society was thriving on the sweat of exploited labor.

54 Dickens, Charles, The Works of Charles Dickens, Vol. IV, Our Mutual Friend, (Part One), New York, Peter Penelon Collier & Son, 1900, 16-17
decoration, the Lammles decide to conspire together to make money. Their main objective is to cultivate the right people, namely, those with money. With that in mind the Lammles ingratiate themselves into the good graces of Georgiana Podsnap and of Bella Wilfer, after Bella has been taken in hand by the Boffins.

Podsnappery was the term coined by Dickens to label a peculiar kind of offensive middle class snob. Mr. Podsnap "stood very high in Mr. Podsnap's opinion." Satisfied with himself and his thriving income, "he never could make out why everybody else was not quite satisfied". He dismisses disagreeable subjects with finality and conviction: "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it." Though he admits the existence of other countries commercially, when their manners and customs unfortunately differ from his, he dismisses them with a flourish and a Podsnap anathema, "Not English!" 55 To the remark that certain poor people have died of starvation in the streets recently, Podsnap takes refuge in Sir Dedlock's defense that it is in poor taste and ill-timed after dinner; furthermore, even if proof is in the Registrar's office, Podsnap doesn't believe it, for "there is not a country in the world, sir, where so noble a provision is made

55 Christie, 232-35. According to Christie, Dickens's novels reflect the universal British tradition in all classes of society that England was superior to every other nation. Towlinson, Dombey's butler, never knew good to come of foreigners; Sapsea in Edwin Drood consigned everything unEnglish to the bottomless pit. Even the poor in Bleeding Heart Yard were suspicious of foreigners, and thought that foreigners were immoral, were prone to violence, and concealed weapons; furthermore, Bleeding Heart Yard felt it a divine visitation that a foreigner was not English. However, Dickens did not share this general suspicion.
for the poor as in this country."

"Centralization. No. Never with my consent. Not English ... I must decline to pursue this painful discussion."

The theme of Our Mutual Friend centers around money and its effects on the middle class. While money may be a power for good, its worship often harms individuals by inducing in them insincerity, snobbery, and a false sense of superiority. The Veneerings and Podsnaps use their money to create a false social distinction even in the middle-class in which they originated. Like the aristocrats before them, the Veneerings get into Parliament by donating £5000 to a legal gentleman named by Britannia, because Britannia realizes that Veneering is a representative man.

In this money-mad world, the be-all and end-all of life is shares. Shares get everything.

... traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares ... Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Directors in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares.

Mr. Lammle's business friends share this feverish haste and desire to cash in on the easy money offered via Shares. Some of his friends are busy going and coming across the Channel; others are engaged in discussing par, premium, discount, three-quarters, and seven-eighths; they speak of sums but leave the

56 Dickens, 171-73

57 Ibid., 141
money to be understood; they divide the world into people who are making fortunes and people who are being ruined. In other words, investment takes the place of work.58

The criticism of money and investments is scathing. First of all, the Harmon fortune, the hub around which the story turns, was made, not from banking, building, or railroads, which do have a purpose and do perform a real public service, but from dust, used in brick-making and fertilizing. Collecting 'dust' included removing the contents of privies, and piles of mixed dung and ashed from the poorer sections.59 After the supposed drowning of John Harmon, Boffin, as nearest of kin, inherits the Harmon fortune. Later, Venus the taxidermist and Wegg the reader and errand-runner, unearth in one of the dust mounds another Harmon will, leaving his fortune largely to the Crown. With this, Venus and Wegg try to blackmail Boffin. Money madness keynotes the story: there is no shame in how the money is acquired.

Part of the plot is to teach Bella, who has decided to marry a rich man, that money can make people ugly and that she can be happy without being rich. The rich Boffins volunteer to give Bella Wilfer the opportunities of a better home, and she accepts. Actually, Boffin is in the employ of his acting secretary John Rokesmith, who uses this expedient to be near Bella and to win her love for himself. To further the plot of his employer, Boffin changes from a benign benefactor to a tight-fisted miser, who denounces the secretary for making advances to Bella and dismisses him.

58 Ibid., 315-16
59 House, 166-67
Bella in turn denounces Boffin as a hard-hearted miser, whom his money has turned to marble. Thus, Dickens unites the lovers Bella and Rokesmith, alias Harmon. Even after the marriage, Rokesmith lives in humble quarters with Bella, not revealing that he is the rich heir Harmon. By having Bella become kind, affectionate, content, Dickens shows how she overcomes the evils of having money by being indifferent to riches.60

A recapitulation will tie together all these loose social ends which have important political implications. Through the years that Dickens wrote, many social changes took place; social conformity had new implications and far-reaching results through technical advances, the railroad, factories, stocks, shares, inventions, and the quick turn-over in fortunes through business booms and market collapses. As a result the middle classes steadily increased in importance; they became industrial magnates furnishing jobs for hundreds of thousands, a praiseworthy service; but later, money corrupted them by changing them into social climbers and snobs.

As an accurate, close observer, Dickens not only sensed these changes in the English tempo of living but he mirrored them progressively in his novels. Step by step he introduced the industrial, economic, social, and political

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60 Jackson, 204-21. In the eyes of Jackson, Our Mutual Friend underscores separation between the classes, the poor, the shabby genteel, the rich, and quasi-aristocratic. "Class-contrast and class-antagonism, class-hatred and class-contempt, are woven into the innermost texture of Our Mutual Friend." Again, its general theme is "its attack upon a social system which is based upon poverty for the mass of the population with wealth and demoralizing idleness for the privileged few."
forces which had effected these changes. As an important part of his plots or background (and Dickens was an artist at creating atmosphere), he used the railroads, far flung business ventures, bureaucracy, political intriguing, election campaigns, factories, trade unions, slum conditions and epidemics, stock companies and shares. For example, Dombey and Son breathes of the railroad: the train enters into the action and plot intimately; his observation of its speed, noise, smoke, motion, and time-tables, is accurate, modern, and stimulating.61

Since Dickens's public was the middle class, and since he himself loved the middle class and came from that social group, he echoed their opinions and reactions. Generally, aristocrats were recruited from the middle class; but particularly after 1832, the aristocrats had to accept closer social, cultural, and political contact with this group. As a result, snobbery began to exist only after 1840. Class consciousness was treated as a problem in morals, not in manners.62 Through his novels Dickens again indicated his observation of changes and shifts in classes of English society. Dombey, the self-made business man, who built his own far-reaching trade, is an example of class pride. While business men like Brownlow, the Cheerybles, and Chuzzlewits were class conscious, they did not withdraw themselves from the middle class; but Dombey lived expensively and attached importance to living on a grand scale. He married Edith Granger, a poor aristocrat; but because of his unbending pride, he failed to win or hold her love. Only

61 House, 139 sq.
62 Ibid., 154
through his daughter Florence, who remained middle-class in spirit and married a middle-class man whom she loved, did Mr. Dombey learn to accommodate himself agreeably to social life. The scoundrel and hypocrite Bounderby is another example of middle-class pride. First, he took pride in his humble origin, in having worked himself up by his boot-straps, and in owning the bank and factory in Coketown. He could not understand why other men could not be just as successful as he was. Bounderby boasted of having Mrs. Joarsit, who came from a genteel aristocratic background, work for him. Besides, he took pride in offering his hand in marriage and in winning a beautiful girl thirty years his junior. Finally, after a crisis in her love-life, when Louisa refused to accept his ultimatum and return to him within twenty-four hours, his pride prompted him to get a separation.

Coldness, pride, cheerlessness, without the warmth of true love or devotion, marked this type of middle-class pride. Dickens condemned it by showing it condemned in its own fruits.

Another social change was introduced by the prosperity of the 1850's and 1860's. Prosperity's horn of plenty poured streams of money into middle-class hands; more money led to more social climbers; more social climbers increased the problem of snobbery. The whole class drift in society was up, induced by the higher standards of living, from the lower to the middle, from the middle to the respectable, from the respectable to the aristocratic. Dombey and Merdle were Dickens's first examples; but in 1860, Dickens seemed concerned with snobbery as a serious middle class problem. Now it was the deplorable tendencies of the middle class group that he censured. However,
he was convinced that the Englishmen's innate common sense would rescue them from the worst effects of this vice. Pin was rescued from a snob's fate by losing his great expectations, but he gained in essential character goodness and in honest friends and in true happiness by his loss.

Dickens's attitude toward finance changed from the individualistic view to the social. In his early novels finance was individualistic. His opposition to usurers and usury was based on the fact that the loan-shark system enabled men to make money without working for it. Even his benevolent men had at least worked in the past for their money; his Cheerybles and Pickwicks were capitalists active in a small firm, as Nicholas, Pin, and Glennam became. Such people, plus the professional group, composed the respectable middle-class.63

In his later novels, finance became a social system. Historically, the speculating mania of 1825-26 and of 1837 had ruined many investors; the railroad boom of 1845-46 brought in its wake both ruin and fortune for many. When joint-stock companies were developed, they opened up new lines of investments. Between 1850-66 thousands of small investors intrusted their lifelong savings to large corporations. More people from the upper classes and the lower classes were interested in stocks and shares. The fortunes of Bleeding Heart Yard as well as those of the Coodles, Doodles, and Buffys depended on capitalists like Merdle and their giant companies. When Merdle's financial empire, built on the sands of fraud, collapsed, the small investors

63 Ibid., 164
turned against those who accepted him as reliable and underwrote his credit, namely, the political toadies who catered to him, accepted his dinner invitations, and gave him public recognition and even a seat in Parliament. In general, Dickens felt in his later novels that society had become too complex for the simple solution given in his earlier works.\footnote{Ibid., 164-69}
CONCLUSIONS

In his early works, roughly in those appearing from 1836 to 1845, Dickens takes a narrow individualistic view of the English world; he treats it simply as composed of individual persons reacting on other persons or small groups rather than as powerful groups or organizations influencing the nation as a whole. This outlook extends to business, finance, and politics. His theme seems to be: improve the individual employer, businessman, and politician, and you will improve society. Even his political characters are treated more as individuals than as members of an influential organization.

In this section, the political characters are vague and are associated with general political ideas. Here he satirizes the election for beadle, the parliamentary bombast of the speeches, the irregularities of elections, the political fanfare with local parades, hand-shaking, baby-kissing -- all reminders of ward politicians. Dickens satirizes the House of Commons for much talking and little action, and the new Poor Law for unchristian methods, a dubious tribute to the Beadle, a local official. In these years, he discusses the externals of an M.P.'s behavior, the high-sounding phrases of Pukker, and Bonney, Gregsbury's interest, not in satisfying his constituents but merely in prolonging his own political life. In the Gordon Riots, he views Parliamentary procedure through a fugleman; he himself viewed
Parliament through the eyes of the middle class. In American politics, he saw the evils of English government repeated and perpetuated: trickery at elections, tampering with public offices, useless name-calling and long-winded debates, political machinery whirling for private gain rather than public good. In the factory towns, he describes the filth, misery, starvation, and death, the long hours, low wages, and lay-offs. The evils of which the poor are guilty he blames on ignorance, the ignorance he blames on lack of schools, and the lack of schools he blames on the government which is condemning the poor. In Filer, Cute, and Bowley, Dickens shows that the laws work against the poor; their conclusions are based on figures, not on human nature; and laws are enforced not with understanding but with a "Put it down" attitude. In his novels dealing with employers like Scrooge, the Cheerybles, Nickleby, and Chuzzlewit, he teaches in effect that money breeds misery, pain, and even death for its owners, unless it is used to help the poor. Therefore, use money not as an end to be attained by accumulation, but as a means to be distributed among the needy; for money is a power for good or evil.

In the period from 1848-1859, Dickens contributed most of his political criticism; for he now realized that society was a complex organization of many interacting groups and influences. Changes and advances had gone on in the past thirty years which had left their impress on law and society, on business and politics. Dickens was inclined to blame the big business men and the worship of money for many of the resulting evils. Big business had made the small shop-keeper out of tune with the times; money, concentrated
in the commercial class, had become the sun around which the poorer social
planets did extravagant homage.

But other agencies forced their importance on his growing social
consciousness. In his labor for the poor, the Board of Health and its work
claimed his attention; here he saw a powerful ally. The cholera epidemics of
1849 and 1854 only strengthened his conviction that proper sanitation and
provision for health must be made before any other social advance could be
effected or consolidated. Epidemics were social cancers eating away at the
vitals of the people; slums were social eye-sores and disease-breeding dumps;
these were not private but public evils and dangers. Bleeding Heart Yard
and Tom-All-Alone's and Coketown multiplied misery, sickness, drunkenness,
irreligion, and immorality. In this field, argument, debate, and theory
were useless; action and prevention and medical work were imperative and were
needed immediately. His political agitation for a Public Health Board that
was organized to crush rampant epidemics was, practically speaking, his most
effective contribution; for here his fiery speeches and articles and
descriptions were based on actual facts and indisputable figures and
convincing arguments.1

Furthermore, the Chancery like a giant octopus spread its tentacles
into every segment of society. Besides, English society had a mill-stone
tied about its neck— the antiquated, inactive aristocratic group; and
society was doomed unless it could shake off this weighty drag or rejuvenate
it with young ideas. Unfortunately, this decadent ruling class, clinging

1 Ibid., 190-200
like ivy to ancient concepts of government in a socially changed world, brought political power to bear on the whole country through robbery, graft, influence, and party machine politics and intrigue.

In another social field, the business world, especially of factory towns, caused to untold millions of workers heartless misery by starvation wages, sixteen-hour work-days, and child labor. All this was done in the name of patriotism, to make England the workshop of the world; but it was accomplished through an inhuman application of economic principles of supply and demand, of buying in the lowest market and selling in the highest, and through unjust mergers of manufacturers against laborers. On the other hand, trades unions, organized to protect labor, had, through unscrupulous leaders, caused needless strikes, delays, and shut-downs, and had used pressure and unjust measures to force unwilling laborers to join the union. This happened when the union leader, the rabble-rouser Slackbridge, stirred up the workers against Blackwood.

In the Court of Chancery and in the "Circumlocution Office" prolonged delays killed hope and stifled initiative. Both institutions had power and influence that reached into the lives of the common people: they made laws, executed them, delayed procedure, and kept an infinite amount of minutes and memoranda about inconsequentialis. Besides, the members of these government agencies were closely interrelated; the jobs were kept in the family at all costs; the question of ability was secondary. Dickens insisted that government positions be given not to fine gentlemen who had rank but no merit, but to qualified Englishmen of any social strata who had merit even
though they had no rank.

Obviously, all these organizations or agencies or principles of social action had large implications for the English nation. Brought face to face with these powerful groups, Dickens realized that he had a larger foe to grapple with and overthrow than the individual villain, like the Beadle Bumble, the userer Nickleby, the miser Criddle, the grasping employer Scrooge, the local politician Gregsby, or the figure-quoting economist Filer. Here was organized villainy. One member of parliament could cause distress in his district, but he was only part of a nation-wide party system that could cripple and strait-jacket the nation. A small employer could injure and bring hardships into the lives of his few employees; but the large manufacturers and business men who employed thousands of hands became ogres of tyranny and oppression to millions of Englishmen. Once again Dickens rode out like Don Quixote to do battle for his beloved, the middle and lower class Englishmen, against organized hypocrisy whose name was Bounderby, against organized political economy whose name was Gradgrind, against organized political chicanery whose name was Barnacle and Bumble and Dedlock, against organized social evils whose name was Tom-All-Alone's and Bleeding Heart Yard, against fraudulent corporations whose name was Merdle, against nation-wide snobbery whose name was legion.

Dickens glorified activity, but only that activity which glorified the common man; his was not an indiscriminate or universal idolatry. He opposed the mob activity of the common people themselves, in the Gordon Riots, in the Coketown meetings, and in the French Revolution, because of its blind leader-
ship and power for evil; he opposed middle class indiscriminate activity in
business, because it put the common Englishman under an intolerable yoke;
he opposed the deceitful practices of large investment corporations, because
they involved ruin and heartbreak for millions of small investors. In
general, he opposed inactivity, characterized by the aristocratic opposition
to change and the legalized inaction of Chancery and Circumlocution. He
judged political parties and agencies, economic institutions and laws, trade
unions and workingmen's organizations, business and religion, individuals
and social classes by their works: by their fruits he knew them; by their
fruits he praised or condemned them.

In Dickens's mind the common people were England, the active drudges,
while the aristocrats were drones battening on the ill-paid work of the
lower classes. The lower and middle classes represented activity; they
operated machines in factories; they kept the fires of industry burning;
they turned the wheels of transportation; they sweated sixteen hours a day;
they were England. Their activity was for England; England should be for
them. The common people represented common sense, natural virtues, and good-
ness. Keep them healthy and happy; keep them in a decent job at living wages
in clean living conditions, with sufficient food, drink, rest, recreation,
and means of education; give them only half a chance to improve themselves,
and you do a public service, a patriotic service, for your country.

The activity that Dickens preached and practiced had to proceed from a
good heart. Since the proper aim of social activity was not private gain but
the common welfare, benevolence was the keynote of his social, economic,
and political mental pattern. Consequently, those in charge of the government, who made the laws, decided the policies according to which the nation would work, and enforced the decisions arrived at in Parliament, owed a duty of protection to the uneducated and underprivileged citizen. Likewise, those in charge of factories, who decided the salaries and living conditions, and intimately influenced the lives of millions of laborers, owed, as a consequence of such power, a duty to the poor and dependent worker. Therefore, it was important for men in positions of power to have a good heart.

Because religion put a good heart in man and as a result put good active men into society, religion could play an important role in Dickens's scheme of English life. Consequently, Dickens appreciated religion as a strong emotional force to improve men. However, his knowledge of religion was shallow and superficial; he often judged by mere external appearances, not by fundamental dogmas. Actually, churches, dogmas, formalism, or ritual left him cold and made him antagonistic or suspicious. To him such remnants represented the ancient Church of Rome, whose basic doctrines never change. To him living in a world of vast upheavals, changelessness of any kind was a sign of stagnation, comparable to the blameworthy inactivity of the aristocrats. His error was to identify inactivity with antiquity in an institution.

2 Dickens, Sir Henry F., Memories of My Father, London, Victor Gollancz, Ltd. 1928, 28 sq. Henry Dickens says of his father, "His religious convictions, though he never made a parade of them, were very strong and deep, as appears by the letters he wrote to me and my brothers when we started our careers, as well as in the beautiful words of his will, which are most solemn and impressive in their religious devotion. So strong was this feeling, indeed, that he wrote the simple history of Our Lord's life for us when we were children."
and intolerance with changelessness in religious doctrines.

Since his consideration of politics and politicians was usually from the social or economic viewpoint, Dickens employed sentimental religious ideals to solve the knotty difficulty. For him religion was social action, represented by the Rev. Frank Milvey, who is a good, active, glorified social worker. In some naïve way, Dickens felt that, by this emotional religion of social action, as by some divine alchemy, the human nature of politicians and of economists was to be reshaped. To his way of thinking, churches and religion had no other reason for existing than as an agency for social good and uplift. Only in neighborly relations did religion touch the individual intimately. In Dickens's eyes, the function of religion was to reform the individual, not in the sanctification of his soul, but in his outlook on this world. Religion was an activity, not of a mental or spiritual kind principally, not of faith or dogma, but of a social kind. Briefly, religion meant concentrating on this world, by improving living conditions here for one's self and one's fellow countrymen.

Likewise, his reasoning was shallow when he dealt with philosophies. As long as he limited himself to a man who warped life by living according to a master vice, Dickens was on safe ground, for he understood human faults. But in describing Gradgrind who lived according to a master philosophy, Dickens failed, for he was out of his depth. Consequently, his criticism in Hard Times was a feeble blow against political economy; first, he saw completely only the workers' side; he made every effort to paint the employer in the blackest possible smoke, and to identify every worker with the haloed
Stephen Blackpool. Secondly, he opposed, not the basic dogmas of political economy but merely the excessive interest in figures and statistics; he emphasized the insistence on facts and the obliteration of fancy in daily living. That was the external thing that Dickens saw, and he used those principles as catchword which should be ridiculed out of the world. Even here, he showed the failure of the philosophy of facts by applying the practical test of activity. The philosophy of facts failed in Gradgrind's own children; its success in Bitzer's case was even worse than the failure; and in Bounderby's inhuman application of the philosophy, his life was miserable and he made living miserable for all Coketown. Dickens's argument was simply this: something else is needed — more consideration for the workers, and more understanding and cooperation between capital and labor.

But Dickens seemed to be making another plea, based on his idea of activity. If man's laws restricted the activity of a good man, such as Stephen Blackpool, something was wrong with the law. First, the law prevented Stephen from divorcing his drunken wife by making the legal fees prohibitive; if he had money enough, there would be no delay or trouble. Obviously, the laws were made not for the poor, but for the rich. Strangely, Dickens did not even mention his own principle that laws are primarily for the common good, not for the individual. Sometimes a hardship must be permitted to work against the individual for the sake of maintaining a greater good for society. Of course, the idea of a divine law opposed to divorce did not enter into his mind.
Furthermore, the Trade Union was at fault in preventing Stephen from working, and Bounderby was at fault in preventing Stephen from getting a job with another manufacturer. Here, Dickens rightly flayed the principle of supply and demand and of buying labor in the lowest market, when it applied to men. A worker should be free to work out his own economic salvation without strictures from unions or manufacturers. Dickens's sympathy was all on the side of the worker.

In his article "On Strike" in Household Words, February 11, 1854, which dealt with the Preston strike, he could not conceal his shock at mass idleness; he had doubts about the lazy poor. Nevertheless, he stressed the point that the strikers' meetings were orderly and that the workers were convinced their cause was just. Nevertheless, the strike, in his opinion, was a calamity; for it made inactive thousands of men. Therefore, impartial arbiters should settle the strike. In this solution, Dickens accepted, according to House, the basic proposition of political economy, viz., the identity of interests between worker and manufacturer.  

The workers' unions of the 1830's and 1840's had political aspirations, to be attained, if necessary, by revolutionary means. The Combinations had been made conscious of class-struggle, and rejected the identity-of-interests principle. But in the 1850's, persuaded by the Chartist fraud and failure of 1848 and by the increasing national prosperity, the unions concentrated on achieving their economic ends through collective bargaining. Like many men

3 House, 204-08
who feared the potential violence of the workers considered as a mob, Dickens wrongly felt that every union leader was a Slackbridge, and that unions were often opposed to the liberty of non-union laborers. Because of this basic misconception, Dickens sought "some means other than the unions by which such men as Stephen might be politically and socially articulate".  

With regard to his democratic leanings, democracy was not the same concept for Dickens as it is for Americans. His illimitable faith in the people governed did not imply that he wished all the members of the lower and middle classes in his day to have a vote or to take an active part in the political machinery. Besides his fear of mob rule, he was convinced that the people had no able leadership. Unfortunately, their leaders were usually blind guides, often looking for power, money, or an easy life, under the pretext of serving the interests of the classes. On the other hand, the people were not educated enough to vote for the right men; and they did not know enough about politics, parties, or government to take an active share. Therefore, the lower classes should be educated so that they would be able to have an intelligent voice in their unions, in their factories, and eventually in their country.

As Crotch says, Dickens "possessed the democratic instinct for popular equality." He proclaimed the rights of the many "to equality of opportunity for social service and self-development." Gissing took the view that most

4 Ibid., 208-10
5 Gissing, 132. Gissing says that Dickens's "English spirit knows nothing of egalitarianism."
men were unfit to form sound views on what was best for themselves, and that the people, although they must be heard, could not rule. Dickens surely identified the common people with common sense; the people knew what was necessary for the common welfare of the laboring groups. It was only prudence, then, in the power groups to consult the needs of the people and make suitable provision, for the true progress of the nation and the safety of the upper classes lay in the improvement of the poor. In this connection Crotch holds that Dickens abhorred class distinctions; but it must be remembered that he denounced only false class distinctions based not on merit or service but on heredity, money, patronage, or political power. Furthermore, Dickens felt that the poor had many admirable qualities: ability to make the best of conditions, good sense, appreciation of all helots toward their improvement, self-control, and cheerfulness. He blamed the government and the upper classes for not making use of these qualities for the advancement of the poor and the English nation. In his political short story about the Bigwigs (rich) and the Man (common people), Dickens expressed the hope that the English mass would take hold of the machine of government, level up industrial conditions, remove social abuses, and deal on practical lines with political evils like discrimination, bribery, delays, and red tape. However, that story need not be interpreted to mean that Dickens wished the poor class to take over government; it is sufficient to gather from the story that Dickens was encouraging the ruling class to govern as though the

6 Crotch, 26-37
7 Ibid., 140 sq.
poor were at the helm, i.e. to make and enforce laws with the poor in mind. For as Gissing says succinctly of Dickens, "Morally, he would change the world; socially, he is a thorough conservative." 8

With regard to Parliamentary reform and criticism, Dickens exposed the most obvious and flagrant abuses: the political hypocrisy and factional shams called the Party system. Party politics had lost its high aims and had become a mere game; all politicians aimed at securing honors, offices, or rewards. The debates were conducted according to elaborate parliamentary procedure in high-sounding, elegant phrases; but they were merely sham-fights whose aim was to impress the people. Consequently, honest reformers despair ed of getting any practical reforms through such a hypocritical procedure. Besides, the average Englishman considered politics merely a conflict between aristocratic families or wealthy interests; the welfare of the poor was obviously only a secondary consideration. Furthermore, to add to the shameful hypocrisy, secret party funds were used to influence elections. Dedlock and Veneering made use of funds in their elections; even the manufacturers who got James Harthouse to represent them in Parliament were not above compromising means. Obviously, the political game was a closed corporation of the rich and no mirror of the poor man's desires.

With regard to the new group of middle-class manufacturers, Dickens felt that they promised a welcome change to activity. Since they came from the middle-class, Dickens was sure they would favor the lower class groups against the upper. But the manufacturers were looking to their own selfish

8 Cissing, 131
interests too; whatever political changes were made had in end the improving of business, profits, and sales, the increase in production, the spread of trade, the growth of factories, and the lowering of wages. However, it was obvious that while in principle the middle class political interests identified commercial progress with England's good, in practice they used sweat-shop methods, 16-hour days, inhuman wages, and paralyzing strictures. By the results Dickens judged them too, and the warped lives of workers indicated that something was wrong.

"But of positive platforms from Dickens there is not a word. Perhaps, as House suggests, the society he had in mind differed little from that of Robert Owen. After all, it was enough for him to point out the evil; it was the work of government to choose the positive good and apply remedies. Dickens always worked within the framework of English society as it existed in his day; he never preached or advocated any revolutionary change in the constitution of government. He was interested in better laws for the poor and honest representatives of the people in Parliament. With those fundamental improvements Dickens would have been satisfied."
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The thesis submitted by Reverend Aloysius P. Dehnert has been read and approved by two members of the Department of English.

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The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 12

James J. Young
Signature of Adviser