Sensationalism of Bulwer Lytton

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THE SENSATIONALISM OF BULWER LYTTON

by

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CHAPTER 1

LITERARY TASTES OF THE AGE

Eighteenth century romanticism, realism, and propagandism still prevalent -- Effect of democracy, science, and imperialism on literature -- Bulwer's contemporaries -- Literary trends of the time reflected in Lytton's own works -- The influence of Mrs. Radcliffe, Byron, Godwin, the occult, Scott and the historical romance, the fashionable, domestic, and realistic novel.
CHAPTER I
LITERARY TASTES OF THE AGE

The novel of the nineteenth century was broader and more complex than that of the eighteenth because the life which it essayed to portray was more complex and diversified. The three departments of fiction so prominent in the preceding century, the romance, the story with a purpose, and the realistic study of manners, were still prevalent, but the range of each was vastly extended. The increase in knowledge of the past and of strange lands, which the century brought, threw open to the romanticists two great sources of material. The number of readers was increased, and the growth of circumstances of man's life under varying conditions caused the realistic novel to widen its scope. The world of fiction in the eighteenth century was a small one; the characters, with few exceptions, were drawn from the upper or the aristocratic class and its dependents; they usually had no business in life beyond that of carrying on the action of the story.

However, in the nineteenth century, there were novels dealing with the life of the sea, the army, crime, sport, commerce, toil, politics, and the Church; and with the particular difficulties and dangers which each career involved. Then too, the deep thoughts of the century, bearing fruit in rapid social changes, gave the novel of purpose greater dignity and power. The attempt to reform government and institutions, the labor movement of which chartism was one manifestation, the so-called conflict between science and faith—all these were reflected in novels, and were in turn influenced by them.

The widening of the scope of the novel caused the three departments of fiction to lose in a large measure their exclusive character. Thus, the
romancer, using his materials gathered from study and travel, came to have some of the conscientiousness of the realist; while the realist discovered romantic possibilities in everyday life. The novelist with a purpose found in the realistic picture of things just as they were one of the most potent forces of redress.

Thus we see that while the tendency of nineteenth century literature was to withdraw from the heights and ideals of romance to the plains and realities of common everyday events; yet the lure of far away times and places, the grotesque and mysterious still persisted, and it was only as a kind of compromise between the romantic and the realistic that Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, and Thackeray wrote their romances of real life.

Amid the many changes that occurred to make the nineteenth century one of the most progressive in English history one may notice three tendencies that have profoundly affected our present life and liberty. The first was political, democratic, and social, and may be said to have started with the Reform Bill of 1832 and to have continued to the present time. Briefly stated, English government, society, and literature became very democratic.

The second tendency might be summed up in the word scientific. Man desired to know the truth and, if possible, the whole truth of life; no limits were set to the exploring spirit, whether in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. Science aimed to give a more exact account of the mechanical structure of the universe, and thus, realism in fiction sought to describe the world in terms of its appearance through the senses. While the Elizabethans looked upon an enlarging visible world, and the wonder of it is reflected in their prose and poetry, the Victorians overran the world almost from pole to pole, then turned their attention to the
unexplored world of invisible forces, and their best literature thrills again with the grandeur of the universe in which they live.

A third tendency is centered around imperialism, and the literature of the period reflects the wide horizons of the Empire. Through the efforts of Disraeli and Gladstone, Great Britain came to control much of the world, and the acquisition of new territory brought about a revival of romance later in the century which took on a patriotic and political tinge.

At the close of the eighteenth century several forces were striving for supremacy in the novel. There was the novel with a purpose which sprang from the didactic impulse, and there was also the Gothic strain that in time came to be connected with the historical romance. Then too, the novel of manners which was popularized by Fanny Burney passed on one hand into the refined realism of Jane Austen whose finished stories are very "shrewd, very human, and extra-ordinarily neat"; and on the other hand into the novel of local color and dialect represented by Maria Edgeworth. Later, in the novels of Scott there was a combining of Gothicism, history, and local color, and his success prompted many writers to follow in his footsteps. One of his imitators, G. P. R. James wrote over a hundred such novels and tales between 1825 and 1850; while W. H. Ainsworth used such themes as the career of Lady Jane Grey, Henry VIII, and the London fire and plague. It was quite natural that in the first quarter of the century romantic fiction would tend to glorify war, and this impulse is seen in the works of James Grant. Charles Lever gave a humorous turn to this fiction, while Frederick Marryat carried forward the broad humor of Smollett, and Thomas L. Peacock wrote the one Arthurian romance of the day that is remembered, namely, The Misfortunes of Elphie.

1 George N. Shuster, English Literature, New York, 1926, 312.
The Gothic tradition, pure and simple, was continued by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley in *Frankenstein*, and Charles R. Maturin in *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

Jane Austen's humor and realism, to some extent, influenced the writing of Susan Ferrier who was very much at home in the cultured Edinburgh society; while Mary Mitford and Harriet Mortineau also succumbed to Jane Austen's charming style. John Galt, a prolific writer, depicted the humorous side of Scotch life, without the historical setting, in *The Annals of the Parish*, a chronicle history of an Ayrshire village minister and his parishioners.

The names of Benjamin Disraeli and Bulwer Lytton serve to bridge the slight gap in years between the later Waverley Novels and the first of the *Sketches by Boz*. Both began their writing, like most young authors of the time, under the all-powerful influence of Byron's popularity, and produced thrilling novels of fashionable life whose characters assumed an air of sophistication and cynicism mingled with sentimentality. However, let us pass over for the time being Bulwer Lytton's contributions to literature and hurry on to a word about other famous creators of the Victorian era.

Two who are outstanding, both in the order of time and merit are Charles Dickens and William W. Thackeray whose names are always closely associated in the field of Victorian fiction. Although they exerted great influence, they shared very little in common as writers. Dickens was a lover of men and things, and so a little blind, as lovers usually are; Thackeray remained a critic, noticing always the awkwardness and shortcomings of people, especially of those who were well-satisfied with themselves. There are a few other notable writers of the period whose books, if not of the highest order, will

always hold a prominent place in literature. Among these are the Brontes, Charlotte and Emily, whose highly romantic works show a tendency toward Gothic impulses. Charles Kingsley wrote of the existing social conditions in England striving to improve the situation of the poor and the workingman. Charles Reade, another humanitarian author, set forth the evils of the English prison system and the management of the insane asylums. The names of Anthony Trollope, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, and others, round out the literary register for this era and form a decorative background for the subject of this paper, Bulwer Lytton. Since every kind of literary endeavor appeared during the nineteenth century and Bulwer Lytton tried his hand at each type, changing his theme to meet the popular demand, no better study of the literary tastes of the day can be made than a thorough survey of Bulwer's own literary progeny.

Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873) was one of the most versatile men of letters and the most sensitive literary barometer of his time. He tried practically every type of writing, and according to the judgment of many of his contemporaries he did nearly everything better than anyone else could do it. Charles Reade, using Byron’s comment on Sheridan, stated that Lytton had "written the best play, the best comedy, and the best novel of the age.

His versatility is not more astonishing than his ability to keep his finger on the public pulse and anticipate the changes of public taste. Bulwer realized fully the demands of the reader for literature of a sensational nature and he satisfied them completely. In a first attempt he wrote novels dealing with Wertherism, dandyism, and crime; later he modified the historical romance; again, in The Pilgrims of the Rhine, he brought together

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3 Ibid., 324-27.
the fairy lore of England and Teutonic legend; he imparted into his stories pseudo-philosophic occultism; then he gave his attention to England and the English, commenting on national character; national burdens; and national aspirations; later still he expounded his ideas of a new scientific Utopia in *The Coming Race*; and finally, in *Kenelm Chillingly* and *The Parisians*, he revealed character and society changed by a greed for wealth.

To his novels, dramas, verse both lyrical and satirical, and his epic, should be added a number of essays, a history of Athens, and translations of Schiller and Horace. Although busy with these multifarious works, Lytton had time to be a politician, a successful public speaker, and a much sought figure in society.

Bulwer's fondness for mystery and the occult led him to study the eighteenth century novelists who had dabbled in this dark art in what is called the Gothic romance. Gothic romance—-that dominant strain in the popular fiction of late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—-blended the trappings of past ages or the unusual scenes and customs of foreign places with a respect for the modish sentiment and refinement of contemporary England, and a deliberate exploitation of the weird and the terrible. Of all Gothic novelists none brought to greater perfection the fusion of historical or geographical detail with genteel emotion and wildly thrilling incident than the archpriestess of the whole Gothic romantic school—Ann Radcliffe.

Numerous writers imitated Ann Radcliffe. Practically every novelist and poet of the first three decades of the nineteenth century looked at nature through her eyes, exclaimed with her over the ominous cast of the gathering

6 Walker, 648.
Readers were bewildered by this cloudy portrayal of self-tormenting individualism of strife with a world which they did not recognize as a world they knew. In depicting its hollow splendors, follies, and falsehoods, Lytton combined something of the dark psychology of Godwin's later novels and the stagy romanticism of Mrs. Radcliffe with a fantastic mysticism of his own. His passion for the occult is in line with Disraeli's mystical bent, though not the same thing; just as his elaborate rhetoric was his own substitute for lyrical pose.

Bulwer Lytton humanized Gothic art and evoked its poetry in *The Pilgrims of the Rhine*. Here he displayed bands of English fairies that had been sleeping in the flowers and under the leaves ever since Shakespeare and Drayton had dreamed of them. They go on a visit to the fairies of the Rhineland, and there in cool caverns, talk, barter, woo, and wed.

However, in his effort to prolong the vogue of the novel of terror, Bulwer did not neglect the supernatural. In *Zanoni*, he went deep into the mysteries of the Rosicrucians. The Rosicrucian initiate, Zanoni, yields up all he has won of youth and power for the sake of a forbidden human passion and in consequence, falls a victim to the Terror. At this point the author shifts from the vague to the dramatic when he deals with the fates of Robespierre and Henriot. The older romancers—Godwin, Shelley, and later Maturin made free use of Rosicrucian doctrines, laying particular stress upon the demon. Bulwer has very little to say about this malignant personage, being more interested in the Rosicrucian himself. Zanoni, who in this story is something like five thousand years old, meets and marries a beautiful

Cambridge, 467.
Italian opera singer, loses his phenomena-piercing vision, and dies on the 13 guillotine.

In A Strange Story a murder mystery is darkened and complicated by the power which one character has of suspending the natural law; while in The Haunted and the Haunters Lytton dips deep into the occult. He follows Mrs. Radcliffe's device of explaining at the end the supernatural machinery; namely, by persistent will power, a curse is preserved in a magical vessel many years after a crime has been committed. However, the gripping effect of the tale is due less to this than to the half-impalpable loathsomeness which menaces the invader of the haunted house; here, the story may challenge comparison with the Moncada episode in Melmoth.

In Devereux, Bulwer follows the Gothic pattern in using as his villain the priest, Abbe Montreuil; and by centering much of the action around a dilapidated, lonely tower, overlooking the restless waters below. Of course, there is the usual secret stairway, a trapdoor, and long subterranean passage leading to the seashore through a cave hollowed into beautiful Gothic form.

Since the Gothic romance which was continued in the novel in the first half of the nineteenth century and was to a large extent responsible for the prolongation of the Romantic Movement, and since Bulwer Lytton, one of the chief exponents of the Gothistic trend, was also one of the very popular authors of his day, this study of his efforts in the field of the occult and mysterious is representative of the literary output of most writers of the period. Cross says, "From Mrs. Radcliffe down to 1850, the novelists were

13 Cross, 161.
14 Cambridge, 467.
15 Bulwer Lytton, Devereux, passim.
exceedingly few who did not on occasion excite their readers by the strange, and the marvellous, or frighten them by some sort of supernatural or bloody performance."

There was a second eighteenth century influence that contributed to the moulding of Bulwer's fiction, which though subsidiary to Mrs. Radcliffe, was nevertheless found in all his novels from *Pelham* to *Kenelm Chillingly*. It was a theme which, while popular with some of the early Victorians, gained prominence after Bulwer's success, and was used to advantage by Dickens and his followers. This influence, which came from the reformist and philosophical novels of Holcroft, Bage, and especially Godwin, had a large share in Lytton's early literary training. These revolutionary romanticists used the novel as a tract; it was published simply as propaganda. However, the need for reform was urgent. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the penal code of England was only a brutal anomaly. The number of offences punishable by death rose from sixty-six to over two hundred; even such acts as pocket-picking and shop-lifting anything valued at five shillings or more provoked the death penalty. The condition of English prisons at this time was most deplorable; they were simply tombs where men and women were being buried alive. The Industrial Revolution created new social problems, such as long hours of heavy work not only for men, but even women and children; low wages; terrible living conditions; and a general lowering of the moral and physical well-being. The humanitarian movement which was initiated to right these many wrongs gave rise to the humanitarian novel. The philanthropic spirit was not lacking in the early eighteenth century writings; it was seen in Defoe, Fielding, Goldsmith, and Mackenzie. However, it became the conscious aim

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16 Cross, 158.
17 Ibid., 181.
of the revolutionary authors to popularize their social theories, and Godwin was the acknowledged leader. He wrote Caleb Williams as a tract against the Constitution of Britain and the ideals of an aristocratic society which strove to maintain its ascendency over the less fortunate. In this book the author gives a striking account of the means used by an aristocrat named Falkland to force society and the law against an individual of a lower class, and he presents a touching picture of the sufferings of this particular victim of society.

But the Godwin novel of theory, with its humanitarian tendencies, received a check from Scott. Scott brushed aside in jest all social and philanthropic schemes; and consequently his romances are free of them. Before the great bard's death, however, the philanthropists showed a marked disposition to take possession of the novel again, and an approximate date of this appropriation is the publication of Bulwer Lytton's Paul Clifford in 1830.

Lytton reverenced the author of Caleb Williams as a champion of human rights who had expressed himself fearlessly in condemning the existing penal code and the demoralizing effects of a vicious prison discipline. However, Bulwer's attack was aimed at the effect of an evil environment in creating criminals. Paul Clifford succinctly states that there are two classes of laws—one that makes criminals and the other that punishes them. He pleads that as a boy he was accused of an offence, and although he was innocent, he was sent to the House of Correction, herded with thieves and men of notorious reputation, and, due to the demoralization which resulted from this unjust imprisonment, he emerged a criminal.

19 Cross, 182.
20 Baker, 187.
Paul Clifford won the benediction of Godwin, and of Ebenezer Elliott; and in its melodramatic way, it furthered the efforts of Mackintosh, Romilly, and others for the reform of prison discipline and penal law.

The truth of Lytton's contention, that a sanguinary criminal code and prison rule do not prevent crime, but turn out criminals, was fully corroborated by an investigation of Parliament five years later.

Paul Clifford has been dealt with at length in this study because it not only formed a link in the chain of humanitarian novels of the early and later eighteenth century writers which had been broken by Scott, and those of the nineteenth century; but it also gave impetus to a host of reformists, the most notable of whom was Charles Dickens, especially in his *Oliver Twist*.

"Paul Clifford also started a fashion in the romance of crime and rascality which gave Ainsworth's *Rookwood* and *Jack Sheppard* to the world."

The humanitarian mood continued to color a large section of popular fiction down to the death of Dickens in 1870. By that time there was no possible abuse or shortcoming that had not had its satirist.

In the initial phase of his writing Bulwer followed the mode of the day; namely, the fashionable novel. His first attempt, *Falkland*, (1827) shows the Byronic influence as well as the Godwinian trend, but it was unsuccessful, and was later censored by the author himself and excluded from his collected works. His second and perhaps his best novel, *Pelham, or The Adventures of a Gentleman*, was enormously successful; it was "read with avidity throughout Europe", and stands preeminent among the fashionable novels.

21 Cambridge, 465.
22 Cross, 182.
23 Baker, 188.
24 Cross, 196.
25 Baker, 186.
Pelham is a dandy, coxcomb, wit, scholar, and lover, and is in many ways offensive and exasperating; but he is also a staunch friend and an ambitious and studious politician. The hero is in his externals a new ideal of a gentleman. At a time when a fop wore his hair in long ringlets, was adorned with diamond studs, and wore a heavy chain around his neck, Pelham cast aside his jewelry, brushed out his curls; and, in defiance of the custom of donning dress coats of blue, green, or purple, he followed his mother's advice to wear black, "for people must be very distinguished in appearance to do so."

Bulwer contended that society is too easily conquered to make rebellion worth while, and the success of Pelham proved that he was right. In fact, gentlemen adopted for evening wear the black waistcoat and black trousers which are still the proper apparel for formal attire.

The fashionable novel as loved by the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties had a good traditional excuse for its aristocratic personnel. It served as a kind of Court circular for the ambitious, as a text book in etiquette for the parvenu, as a means to pin money for clever writers, and as an outlet for the satiric bile of well connected rebels. Beginning its vogue around 1820, it flourished until about 1840, and was equally delightful to those within the pale as to those without. The latter were ordinary British folk who loved to read of lords and ladies; while the former, among whom were the numerous newly created lords and earls, felt a keen satisfaction in reading about themselves, even though at times they were held up to derision; at least, they were in the public eye. In this respect Pelham is most repre-

26 Cambridge, 465.
28 Sadleir, 111.
sentative of the silver-fork fiction. The hero goes through a crowded social life laughing at everyone and everything and making as much fun of himself as of anyone else. The book contains much of period furnishing in the houses, clothes, and snobberies of the many characters. There are portraits of the Salisburys at Hatfield; of Lord Mount Edgecumbe; and of Theodore Hook, who appears in nearly every social novel of the time. Then there are views on Shelley's poetry, Hope's novels, and Paul Veronese's painting. There are exaggerations of certain fopperies made famous by Beau Brummell; and fragments of jargon known as "flash". The whole is peppered with epigrams and sly malicious jokes.

Besides its gaiety and dash, Pelham has some qualities of a serious stamp. Beneath the lightness there is solid thought and serious conviction. Tory reviewers and critics felt that here was no mere gifted trifler, but a writer who for all his affectation and foppery meant business which the opponents of reform had to take into consideration.

Pelham, a dandy's handbook, with an influence that extended beyond literature into life itself, is without doubt the most important of the fashionable novels. Carlyle's attack on it, although based on an unaccountable misapprehension, was a tacit recognition of Bulwer's supremacy in the realm of "dandy" literature. This novel was issued at a time when a publisher's recipe for popular fiction was a little elegant chit-chat or so. The effect was galvanic; Pelhamism superseded Byronism, established a new fashion in dress, and made Lytton famous eight years before Pickwick began to appear.

29 Ibid., 175-77.
31 Cambridge, 465.
The novel of high life which skimmed the surface of things eventually fell into the hands of women, and degenerated into trash and nonsense. The copies of these poorly written fashionable fictions that came from the press during the thirties and immediately afterwards were too numerous to count. To Carlyle they seemed "shiploads". However, the one hundred novels of Mrs. Catherine Gore, those of Theodore Hook, and Disraeli's Vivian Grey together with Pelham will always live as the best in the field of the silver-fork writers.

Before Scott died in 1832, G. P. R. James, Fenimore Cooper, Captain Marryat, and Mrs. Bray were already following in his footsteps. Historical novels or romances, modeled on the Waverleys, at times formed half the annual output of fiction; although there were some that followed the Shakespearian example, and dramatized outstanding incidents with famous historical personages as the protagonists. Historical literature was bound to be fashionable with both reader and writer since an approved pattern was available. For this was an age deeply interested in history, having such writers as Hume, Gibbon, Roscoe, Turner, Hallam, and later Carlyle and Macaulay. Not only the novelists but even the poets indulged in historical themes; e.g. Scott's lays and Byron's metrical tales and historical dramas.

As has been stated, Bulwer experimented with every type of fiction; and with his keen sense of what was popular and what would be expected of one holding his position among novelists, he was alive to the appropriateness of historical romance. He produced five historical novels: Devereux (1829), The Last Days of Pompeii (1834), Rienzi (1835), The Last of the Barons (1843), and Harold (1848). To these must be added his incomplete Pausanias, published  

32 Cross, 176.  
33 Baker, 62.
posthumously in 1876. "Except the first, Devereux, they were acclaimed as at least equal to the finest contemporary efforts of their kind." Lytton's historical novels alone prove that he had one of the attributes of genius, the art of taking pains. This trait will be considered as his histories are treated.

Since Scott and Bulwer were both outstanding in the field of historical fiction and have many points in their works that may be compared and contrasted, a brief survey of either would give a panoramic view of most historical novels of this particular time. Scott used Shakespeare as a model, but Bulwer followed Aeschylus and Sophocles; he did however study intently the dramatic histories of the Bard of Avon, and injected into his own famous historical drama, Richelieu, some of Shakespeare's dynamic force and characterization. Bulwer frequently took as the climax of his story some outstanding turning point in history, as the struggle between old and new ideas; and he developed his theme along the lines of an epic narration, compiled from many common-place books, into which he had read what he thought would be of use to him. Numerous details, which Scott would have scrapped, were used bodily by Bulwer. The result was that Bulwer's stories contain more accurate history, but less imagination, and a slower movement than Scott's.

Before Scott's time the usual method of historical romancers was to select a group of historical characters and invent for them a series of adventures. What they really did was to write a Smollett novel, manipulated by characters carrying historical names. Scott brought together not only historical characters and events, but also characters and events wholly fictitious. Bulwer's "The Last Days of Pompeii was a successful novelty.

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34 Baker, 112.
Bulwer studied Roman history, observed Italian life and customs, read Latin and Greek literature and philosophy, and topped all his research with a trip up Mt. Vesuvius. He visualized Pompeii with its decadent life just before the eruption of Vesuvius, and then, having no historical characters to set in this background, he proceeds to invent them and make them harmonize with the period.

However, Lytton was hampered by ideas of the dignity of literature such as never entered Scott's head, and in *The Last Days of Pompeii* he freights almost every chapter with his scholarship. "Temples, palaces, streets, and the figures crowding them, costumes and manners, sports and amusements, including the brutalities of the amphitheatre, religious rites and the wildest superstitions, witchcraft and Egyptian sorcery, are depicted with a brush heavy with color. The early Church and the simple piety of the Christians are contrasted with the worldliness and cynicism of the educated." The story is permeated with sensation and havoc; pathos is aroused for the blind slave, Nydia, and a rather thin plot is climaxed by a series of terrifying rumblings, and then the final catastrophe serves as the agent of poetic justice. Many, among them Lockhart, had tried the classical novel and failed. Probably no historical romance has enjoyed greater popularity and has had more readers than *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Both distinguished litterateurs and the mob of readers were in ecstasies, and Lytton flushed with success and filled with renewed hope and ardor completed another novel, *Rienzi*, "which was to rival Scott's Continental romances."

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35 Cross, 143-144.
36 Baker, 114.
38 Baker, 114.
Rienzi pictures Rome and Florence in the heyday of the feud between the rival families of Colonna and Orsini who were continually striving for mastery of Rome. There is a vivid description of Florence during the plague; and the character, Rienzi, was so forcefully and vitally drawn that Wagner, then a budding composer, used Bulwer's hero and story as a basis for one of his early operas.

Although Bulwer showed lack of tact in speaking as he did of the art of his predecessors, especially Scott, as "Picturesque," and of his own, in contrast to theirs, as "Intellectual," yet there is some truth in the statement; and this introduces us to a second original element in Bulwer. He viewed history from a philosophical and psychological angle. It was his duty not only to portray the troublesome times of Edward's reign, but also to interpret them. The social forces that were finally responsible for the rise of the middle classes and the fall of Warwick are thoroughly discussed; while the author searches deep for the motives that stirred up court intrigues and actuated Warwick's final stand against his king.

A dual plot enables Bulwer to bring in such semi-historical characters as the necromantic Friar Bungay, with his heroine Sybil and her love affairs; and her father, the man of science and invention, execrated by the mob as a wizard, and thus doubly typical of the age.

In Harold, or The Last of the Saxon Kings (1840) Lytton follows Scott in the introduction of the half legendary Taillefer and the very substantial Lanfranc; Taillefer chanting his Ballad of Rou and thundering war, and Lanfranc insinuating policy, make a contrast significant of the final issue.

39 Cross, 144-45.
The protagonists are the unfortunate Harold and the heartless William of Normandy, and the familiar story needs only to be amplified and rationalized, which Lytton does by making love a decisive factor in affairs of State, a device nearly always avoided by Scott.

Bulwer's first historical romance, *Devereux*, is set in the early eighteenth century atmosphere, beginning while Anne was queen and carrying over into the first Hanoverian reign. An unusual feature of this story is the use of actual historical personages as characters. Addison, Steele, Colly Cibber, Fielding, Swift, Pope, R. Cromwell, Marlborough, Voltaire as a young man, and to climax all, Bolingbroke—all play carefully selected parts in the drama. This device of using contemporary historical characters was followed later and to better advantage by Thackeray in *Henry Esmond*.

Although Scott had an appreciable following and numerous imitators, Bulwer also had many who admitted their debt to him either tacitly or publicly, and even the critics who were most severe in denouncing his turgidity and rhetorical digression admitted that he had a good story to tell.

Once again Bulwer showed his opportunism and versatility, when he began his professed delineations of "Varieties in English Life" with *The Caxtons* (1849), followed by *My Novel* (1853), and *What Will He Do with It?* (1858). Hitherto he had been an unmistakable romanticist. At one time it was the romance of crime, at another the romance of history; now Byron, and now Scott is the model; but whatever the theme might be, in the first twenty years of his life Lytton is not realistic. In mid-century, one of the great features of literature was the rise of a school of realism headed by Thackeray. Romance continued to

40 Baker, 116.
41 Sadleir, 201.
exist, and even drew new strength from Pre-Raphaelitism which itself is realistic. A few dates will show the extreme sensitiveness of Lytton to prevalent tastes. Vanity Fair, the new gospel of realism, was issued in monthly parts in 1847 and 1848. Jane Eyre (which is realistic with a difference) appeared in the former year, and Mrs. Gaskell's novel in the latter. In 1848 also the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded, and the members vowed to paint faithfully and exactly what they saw. Nothing could have been more alien to all this than Bulwer's previous work. He had been mystical, metaphysical, romantic and melodramatic—anything but realistic. Yet, before people were well aware that there was a revival of realism, Lytton was in the midst of it.

A return to realism in the nineteenth century was essentially a return to the manner of the great novelists of the eighteenth century. Dickens and the minor humorists went back mainly to the caricature of Smollett. Thackeray was a second Fielding to fiction. The product of the new realism, however, was quite different from the old; Dickens and Thackeray had their own rich experiences and observations, and both greatly admired the historical setting of Scott. If Smollett and Fielding were to be reintroduced to the reader, why not Sterne also? True, Sterne did appear in the equivocations of Pierce Egan, in the gestures and grimaces of Dickens, and in the pretty sentimental scenes that Thackeray built up and pushed over. But the fully premeditated restoration of Sterne is a debt we owe to Bulwer Lytton. Immediately after the rise of Thackeray, this talented novelist, who wrote of fairies, ghosts, criminals, philosophy, Norman barons, and English nobles, as the heartbeat of his readers seemed to point the way, turned his attention to unusual characters of country life. In 1849 The Caxtons appeared, and the theme was contin-

43 Walker, 650.
The Caxtons: A Family Picture was intended to show man "less in his active relations with the world, than in his repose at his own hearth— in a word, the greater part of the canvas has been devoted to the completion of a simple Family Picture... it has been the author's intention to imply the influences of home upon the conduct and career of youth."

In creating the Caxton family, Bulwer realized the value of humor in making virtue plausible, and this humor he drew directly from Sterne. The characters are a broken-down military captain, whose exploits are highly reminiscent of Sterne's Uncle Toby; old fashioned squires, parsons, quack doctors, refugees, beautiful young women created for young members of Parliament, and a cabinet minister and leader of the House of Commons. The action is carried on in short and abrupt sentences and chapters, and often by dialogues arranged in dramatic form. Humorous pity is awakened by a lame duck which the elder Caxton fancies and which knows its benefactor and follows him around the gardens; in a donkey that has been thrashed for munching a thistle and is consoled by a parson with a "rose-cheeked apple"; and in a poor moth which almost loses its life in the candle flame—"We leave ourselves in the dark to save a moth from the flame, brother! shall we do less for our fellowmen?"

In My Novel Bulwer gives a broad panorama of the squirearchy and those of higher degree, with glimpses of London fashionables and of the dissipations of some people of social standing. Political life is viewed and Parliament itself is introduced to the reader; but the prevailing atmosphere is of country life and the tone is more like that of Fielding than of Sterne, although the active and effective influence probably came from Dickens and Trollope.

44 Cross, 209.
45 Edward B. Lytton, The Caxtons, Preface iii.
46 Ibid., 77.
47 Baker, 197.
The third novel of this series, *What Will He Do With It?*, while following Sterne in a few instances is largely on the Dickensian plan. Sterne's influence is seen in Book III, Chapter III where Bulwer uses the one word "Poodle!" which could easily have been appended to the last word of the previous chapter. However, the influence of Dickens is written all over the book, and we know that Dickens even suggested the title. Obviously Waife and Sophy are borrowed from *The Old Curiosity Shop* as are several of the other characters. Bulwer had that essential of sound realism, namely, the keen sense of the value of money and the part it plays in the mechanism of life. This is quite evident in *What Will He Do With It?* where the problem of ways and means is the hinge on which nearly every contingency turns.

*Kenelm Chillingly* (1873), which followed *A Strange Story* and *The Coming Race*, is another realistic study with modern tendencies, though intended to illustrate the same philosophy of the Real and the Ideal. Memories of fifty years before are embodied in it; but the gospel of muscularity preached by Hughes and the Kingsleys, G.A. Lawrence, and other stalwarts in the previous decade is only one of the fresher ingredients in the composition of the hero. That hero follows the fashion and saves his soul by living in the slums and working as a laborer, for this was the era of the humanitarian and Christian Socialist novel. Kenelm thus triumphs over the misfortune of being a baronet and born to wealth, and probably wickedness, and works out for himself a wholesome theory of life. Bulwer reverts once again to his old Ealing romance (his first and perhaps his only unspoiled love affair) in the sad episode of Kenelm and Lily.

*The Parisians* was written in 1873, concurrently with *Kenelm Chillingly*. It is a view of Parisian society of all ranks and colors just before the siege.
and fall of Paris: the old noblesse, the financial and industrial potentates, the working classes, the Bohemians and outcasts, and the socialists and communists with their specifics and subversive activities. Lytton's knowledge may not have been very deep, but he showed ability in divining forces and tendencies, just as he had done in The Coming Race.

The leaders in the return to realism, the Bulwer of 1850, Thackeray, Dickens, Reade, and Borrow, had many traits in common. In the way of banter or invective all were satirists; all possessed unusual personalities which they projected into their works, and herein lies their charm, for they were all men with marked manly qualities. They were not dramatic in the high sense in which Jane Austen was; and their humor had an Elizabethan flavor; their pens followed withersoever their emotions led. They indulged in poetic prose, if their mood was lyrical; they wrote in eloquent indignation if their sense of justice was offended; and they always, Reade excepted, ridiculed with the intention of improving, when the opportunity to ridicule came their way.

The nineteenth century saw no small amount of philosophical and theological writing, which sometimes even surpassed the best in strictly literary attractions. The works of Bentham, Mackintosh, J.S. Mill, H. Mansel, and others strove to form the English mind along certain definite lines, while the Tractarian or Oxford Movement provided the greatest theological interest of the century.

Many prominent writers devoted much time to the study of conditions—mental, moral, spiritual, social, and physical—and offered solutions to problems of national ills. Carlyle's Sartor Resartus sketches a picture of

49 Baker, 201.
50 Cross, 215.
faith and doubt in conflict, and resounds with the cry of the "Everlasting Yea". Ruskin's Unto This Last outlines a plan for making a nation wealthy, not by more factories and shops, but by building up the health and happiness of human beings.

Bulwer gave a very definite account of his individualistic philosophy in England and the English (1833); the first part dedicated to Talleyrand—a straight-forward enunciation of his views which has much the same significance in his intellectual history as the Coningsby trilogy in Disraeli's. It is a comparative analysis of the English character, to which, in the 1834 edition, Lytton added a long survey of recent affairs, shrewd, keen, and enlivened by strokes of unaffected humor. He avows his allegiance to Bentham, the long standing neglect of whom is deplored. He is severe on the aristocracy, and castigates the Lords for their stupid resistance to the Reform Bill and their ungracious surrender to its final approval. He is caustic on the question of money-barons who have gained admittance to the most exclusive circles, and the apes of fashion who feebly copy both. He is irked by the disdain and disregard paid to the artist and the scientist. He freely discusses the novel of manners and sets forth his views on the silver-fork school. He is openly contemptuous of the English public school, and offers sage advice and suggestions for improving the educational system.

For a time Bulwer was a disciple of Rousseau, but he soon outgrew the sociological tenets of the Master and the philosophy of primitivism embodied in Alice Darvil, child of nature; also the crude version of German rationalism found in Ernest Maltravers, i.e. the philosopher's quest of spiritual happiness. Both Ernest Maltravers and Alice; or The Mysteries were unfolded with the skill of a practiced dramatist. This evident turn toward theatrical

display may be accounted for by the fact that Lytton presented his dramas, *The Lady of Lyons* and *Richelieu* in 1838 while his comedy, *Money*, was completed in 1840. These three plays "had a success which few if any other plays of the century have had," and they held the boards until the generation of Edwin Booth and Sir Henry Irving had passed. In fact, Bulwer was the chief figure in the revival of serious drama under Macready in the middle years of the century.

In an age of voluminousness, Lytton is an outstanding example; to his novels must be added a great mass of epic, satirical, and translated verse, much essay writing, pamphleteering, and a number of successful plays. His wide range of accomplishment, his untiring industry, his talent in construction, his practice of dealing with imposing subjects, his popularity with the bulk of readers give him an air of importance in the Victorian epoch.

Bulwer's literary output most assuredly mirrored the times, reflecting the fashionable novel in *Pelham*; the crime story in *Eugene Aram* and *Paul Clifford*; the romance of mystery in *Zanoni*; the romance of classical times in *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Rienzi*; the historical novel in *Harold* and *The Last of the Barons*; then on to a change in type to the domestic story as in *The Caxtons, My Novel*, and *What Will He Do With It?*—three books which are held by many critics to be his greatest triumph. Then suddenly Bulwer veers back to the tale of terror in *A Strange Story* which created a stir rarely, if ever, caused by one who had been writing for a generation or longer. Later he produced a gem among ghost stories, *The Haunted and the Haunters*, which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*; then with a quick about face, since popular taste was on the move, he penned—partly as novels of actual society and

53 Lovett, 202.
partly as satires on what was or what might be—The Coming Race, Kenelm Chillingly, and his unfinished Pausanias.

Bulwer wrote with ease, had distinct ability in construction, and at many points must be given the credit that goes to one who innovates rather than follows a fashion. At the same time he was often merely melodramatic and he has quite as much in common with the authors of sensational best sellers as with the masters of English fiction. The mention of sensationalism conjures up the fact that of all the diversified characteristics of Bulwer Lytton none stands out more prominently than his sensationalism, but that particular trait calls for special discussion.
CHAPTER 11

DEVELOPMENT OF SENSATIONALISM

Romantic Movement gave rise to imaginative productions — The Gothic tradition through Mrs. Radcliffe and Byron to Bulwer Lytton — Fashionable background — a basis for sensation novel of later date — The appeal of the occult, the mysterious, and the fantastic.
CHAPTER II

Development of Sensationalism

One of the very interesting phases of literary history is the development of the sensational tradition in the eighteenth and through the first half of the nineteenth century. It is true that sensationalism had its roots in the earliest writings extant, and in England the picaresque tales of Chaucer, Nash, Greene, etc., provided the thrill element. However, the picaresque novel was shorn of its farcical villainy by Fielding, whose Tom Jones evolved from the Spanish rogue as a typical English gentleman, while the satyr or miscreant of the old romances became a Lovelace. Both Fielding and Richardson, who adhered to the Augustan mandates of criticism, aimed at being real, sane, and at restraining the imagination. But in the second quarter of the eighteenth century a wave of dissatisfaction with the poetry and criticism of Pope was slowly growing and led the way to the introduction of the Romantic Movement, which in time revolutionized literature. This literary revolt meant for the form of the novel that the epistolary and dramatic analogies used by Richardson and Fielding would give way to epic narration, a form that Bulwer Lytton popularized; and for the content of the novel, that analysis and ridicule were set aside and magic, mystery, and chivalry became prominent. Smollett carried realism to such extremes that his stories became romances, as in his Count Fathom where we find a revival of superstition, one of the factors of sensationalism. His Renaldo, who spent the night prostrate in agony on the grave of his beloved, set a precedent for Bulwer who used the same idea in both Pelham and Kenelm Chillingly.

While Smollett is credited with having given to romance its method of appealing to superstitions, Walpole constructed its machinery, characters,
setting, and its Gothic title. In the preface to the second edition of The Castle of Otranto, the author states succinctly that the story was a deliberate and conscious revolt against a strict adherence to common life, because such adherence had clogged up the well spring of imagination. This aptly expresses the idea of sensationalism, which is a revolt against the humdrum by means of some public and unusual wonder.

There were various tendencies to influence Bulwer Lytton during his many years of writing, but three of them have a definite bearing on the development of his sensationalism. In the first place he followed the Gothic novel either directly from Mrs. Radcliffe or through Byron and Scott; secondly, the fashionable novel gave rise to a later sensational design; and finally, the occult engaged his attention and shaped some of his most interesting productions. The present chapter will deal with the development of Bulwer Lytton's sensationalism along these three lines.

The course of the sensational tendency which belongs solely to literary history and forms a narrative tradition can be briefly indicated. From the time of Walpole's revolt which had many followers at the end of the eighteenth century, the appeal to fear as a first motive engaged some of the best powers of invention which strove to present a terrible protagonist, half-human, half demoniac. The greater the terror he inspired, the more successful was his performance. At first this character was supernatural or was brought into direct contact with the supernatural forces; then like Lara and the early heroes of Bulwer Lytton, a frankly human being of doubtful moral nature, partly admirable, but more on the vicious side, was introduced; and this same individual later developed into the stereotyped villain of the

1 Cross, 99-102.
melodrama of the shilling shocker.

There is then a continuity from the romance of Walpole and the school of the Terrorists at the end of the eighteenth century to that which Bulwer, Dickens and his followers produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. The writers who advanced and at the same time altered the Gothic pattern were Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, Byron, Scott, Bulwer, and Dickens.

It is strangely ironic that Mrs. Radcliffe, who prided herself on being so proper in the midst of a rather improper literary environment, should have introduced the singularly disreputable Byronic hero to the world. Yet such is the case since it can readily be seen that Montoni, the villain of The Mysteries of Udolpho, was elaborated into Schedoni, the false Monk in The Italian, who later became the hero of The Giaour and Lara, and finally appeared as the victim of society in Eugene Aram and Paul Clifford.

"It was Mrs. Radcliffe who thus first created the romantic villain, stained with darkest crimes, yet dignified and impressive withal." Schedoni was indeed the progenitor of the silent ruthless villain who appeared in Byron's The Giaour and The Corsair, and the equally quiet and thoughtful student, Eugene Aram.

Byron and Scott contributed to the sensational tradition by rationalizing and presenting in a more plausible manner the characteristically supernatural melodrama of the Terrorists. Byron favored sentimental villainy with an oriental setting above the early supernaturalism; while Scott, experimenting with substitutes for supernaturalism left models divested of both diabolism and sentimental villainy, but with a direct appeal to fear, which is a staple

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2 Walter Phillips, Dickens, Reade, and Collins, N.Y., 1919, 6 and 155.
of sensationalism. Bulwer employed the Byronic sentimental villain especially in his first novel, Falkland, a work which he later repudiated. The theme of Falkland, which is but the echo of the Byronic legend, presents a man of compelling will who has tempted beyond her resistance a married woman to elope with him. Her husband discovers the plot, denounces her, and in a paroxysm of fear and passion, Lady Emily dies. Her ghost appears to Falkland in his room, and, in terror, he rushes to the window to calm his perturbed spirit and there he remains until dawn when he sets off to the appointed place to meet Lady Emily. However, as time passes and she fails to appear, Falkland can bear the suspense no longer and goes to her home. There he finds all in confusion, and learns for a certainty that his Emily is dead. Then, true to the sensational pattern, he departs for some distant land where he fights valiantly and dies at the same hour, half after twelve, in which his beloved passed away, and in his clasped hand is found a lock of her dark hair.

Here we have a splendid example of the sensational and the sentimental. The ghost provokes the proper chill, and the illicit love affair adds that pinch of spice so eagerly relished in the novel of the late '20's; while the lock of hair, tenderly clasped to Falkland's breast, affords a touching scene in a long series of sentimental events.

Bulwer's next attempt Mortimer, or Memoirs of a Gentleman represented a cynical reaction to Falkland's sentimentality. Mortimer is by far the most wicked of all Bulwer's characters but he follows the usual form—his determination to seduce his fiancée; his plans are discovered by her brother whom

5 Phillips, 8.
6 Bulwer Lytton, Falkland, passim.
Mortimer quickly dispatches; Mortimer escapes to the Continent to repent; he returns to England some years later and finds his beloved Ellen in an insane asylum; he secures her release and cares for her until she dies. This work of Bulwer's was never actually published, but it contains the germ of many of his later novels which follow this peculiar cut of the sensation pattern.

Before proceeding further it might be well to attempt a definition of the sensational novel and mention some of its characteristics. Sensation novels are those that produce their effects by highly exciting and often improbable situations; by taking as their ground work some dreadful secret, some atrocious crime, or the like, and depicting scenes of extreme peril, high wrought passion, or occult manifestations.

"The one indispensable point in a sensational novel is that it should contain something abnormal or unnatural; something that adduces, in the simple idea, a sort of thrill." Quarterly for 1863 states that the one essential is action; the story must abound in incidents.

The Victorian reviewers called the sensation novel the romance of the present which easily adapts itself to new conditions and bows to a new public. Like its prototype, its material was taken from records of crime and villainy, as in the adventures of a Lara, Redgauntlet, Fagin, Count Fosco, Eugene Aram, or Lucretia. It was indeed the narrative of villainy, violence, and crime; the delineation of the terrible, the abnormal, and the hideous, and it depended primarily upon the appeal to fear.

7 Rosa, 75.
Professor Cowie lists some of the standard devices for creating sensation, such as: "murder, torture, seduction, rape, incest, arson, insanity, hallucination, forgery, and blackmail." To these should be added all other vices that degrade and debase human nature and shock the sensibilities of the reading public. It is interesting to note how many of these devices were employed by Bulwer Lytton. In more than a dozen of his novels the most appalling murders occur, from that of Tyrrell in Pelham to that of the Arabian sorcerer in A Strange Story. Falkland presents a tale of seduction, while Alice; or The Mysteries, hints at incest. Ernest Maltravers and Lucretia develop the idea of insanity, and the forgery theme appears in Devereux and Night and Morning.

The production of sensational novels increased so rapidly that the market was soon flooded with this type of fiction. It is not difficult to assign some causes for the spread of this epidemic of sensational stories. In the early part of the century trade in printed matter was revolutionized; cheap books became realities; there stepped forth a new race of publishers; popular writers began to demand greater profits for their work, thus encouraging many others to write; but, in a special way, the railway bookstalls, circulating libraries, and periodicals were largely responsible for this sensational orgy.

Colburn, who held the copyright of Bulwer Lytton's works, became a leader in the production of cheaper books when, in 1835, he began reissuing stories of noted writers at reduced rates in his Library of Standard Novelists. Bulwer, whose early novels had remained among the exclusives for some

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twenty-five years or more, began to suffer startling reductions, and by 1863 his novels were easily obtained in volumes selling for three shillings and 14 sixpence.

The novelist's remuneration caused many to consider seriously the advantages gained from plying the pen. An industrious man of letters in England could earn from £250 to £1000 a year by periodical work or novel writing. "Bulwer Lytton received £500 for Pelham, £800 for The Disowned, £1500 for Devereux, £3000 for each of the Caxton series from the Blackwoods with reversion of copyright." In a letter to his mother, Bulwer boasted that he could make £1000 a year from his writing. Such inducements spurred both skilled and non-talented writers to produce some type of story, and that which appealed most to writer and reader was of a sensational character.

But let us return to the development of the sensation novel from Mrs. Radcliffe to Byron and thence to Bulwer. Although Bulwer stoutly denied it, he was Lara's next great sponsor. He honestly disclaimed any allegiance and even insisted that he had endeavored to put an end to the Byronic hero. However, Byron had been the rage for some time and was still very powerful in fiction, when Bulwer first began writing, and Bulwer was always susceptible to the wishes of the populace. In fact, it may be said that he never disappointed his reading public, and on many occasions he even anticipated its tastes.

While the influence of Scott may be seen in the historical novels, as in Devereux and Harold, this influence is mild in comparison with that of

14 Phillips, 48.
15 Ibid., 64-65.
Byron in the stories that appeared before Maltravers. Indeed the Lara model recurs most consistently throughout Bulwer's entire work, and is to be found in books as late as the Caxton series in such situations and persons as Darrell and his love affair or Harley L'Estrange and his. The "protoplasmic ruffian" is seldom absent from the earlier works of Lytton. Falkland is an excellent example; Pelham, the witty coxcomb, whose dandyism supposedly conceals abilities that are akin to genius; Reginald Glanville in the same story; William Brandon, the judge in Paul Clifford; the reserved crime-haunted Aram; Ernest Maltavers and his liaison with Alice—all of these are descendants of Byronic clan and owe their characteristics to the Schedoni-Corsair-Lara pattern. Falkland is a distinct adaptation of Byron provided by the fight for freedom, the hero's personality, and the distinct features of his passion. But the episode of Sir Richard Glanville in Pelham has a definite Bulwerian flavor. Glanville, without benefit of clergy, lives with his beloved Gertrude Douglas. Their romantic life is abruptly terminated when Glanville is recalled to England by the sudden illness of his mother. When he returns, he finds that Gertrude has been brutally appropriated by Tyrrell, an acquaintance of his. He determines to take vengeance on his foe and succeeds in ruining him at play in Paris. Finally, Tyrrell is murdered and all evidence leads to Glanville as his murderer. However, when the reader is keyed to the highest pitch, Glanville is proved innocent—the reader has had his thrill and is not called upon to waste his sympathy on a criminal.

From this account it is easily seen that while Bulwer is not a slavish imitator of Byron, he knew the public's craze for a certain type of character

17 Phillips, 162.
and he catered to that taste. Bulwer used the Byronic hero, but began his
moral regeneration.

Where Conrad had one virtue, Glanville, Aram, Maltravers have many.
Maltravers is devoted to poetry and platonism; Aram is interested in his books
and humanity; Glanville is a man of great abilities; Brandon reaches the
judicial heights by his intellectual endeavors; Darrell and Audrey Egerton are
noted figures in the realm of politics. All these characters are honorable,
chivalrous, high-spirited gentlemen in whose lives blighting or blighted love,
in greater or lesser degree lawless, is a common experience. Although Glan-
ville and Maltravers may be more philosophical than Conrad and the Giaour,
nevertheless, like the Byronic hero, they disregard the formalities of the
marriage ceremony either civil or ecclesiastical.

The Byronic hero is revealed in his final stage most distinctly in Bul-
wer's two novels of crime, Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, which are perhaps
the most famous among the Newgate novels. This panoramic view presents the
Schedoni-Lara model and shows how, through Bulwer's efforts, it makes its
exit from the English novel.

There is another point to consider, however, before we formally dismiss
this particular type of hero, and that is the part Scott played in the sen-
sational tradition. Scott was alive to the direction of the method which
Mrs. Radcliffe popularized, and became an adept in the presentation of the
terror pattern. Being a keen judge of the demands of his novel readers,
Scott, as well as Bulwer, realized that there was excellent material in
Gothicism that could be used effectively, and he sought choice morsels

18 Ibid., 163.
19 Ibid., 164.
analogous to the Terrorists in order to produce similar reactions. Scott was forever ornamenting his historical works with the type of melodramatic incidents that were followed by Bulwer and were so delightful to Dickens and Reade. Since he dealt chiefly with dramatic events of history, Scott used the romancer's license in favor of sensationalism. Scott's superstition, fanaticism, and crime offered him an excellent field for carrying on the popular taste for terror; but Scott like Byron, attempted to substitute for the supernatural, and in so doing left models stripped of both Satanism and the sentimental villain. In fact, Scott's great contribution to the method of dramatic narrative is his use of the romancer's license with reservations. He not only started the appeal to fear on the road to self-respect, but he also employed melodrama as a means, not as the main objective of his narrative. He used it as a dash of seasoning to accentuate the pungency of the historical romance which he generally produced. Scott has characters and incidents that are potentially sensational enough, such as the swarthy, quick-tempered Brian De Bois Guilbert in Ivanhoe; Roderick Dhu in Lady of the Lake; and Marmion. The last named is indeed an obvious enough link between Schedoni and Byronic hero, and exerted a certain influence on Bulwer Lytton's characters.

To draw one point of comparison between the sensationalism of Scott and that of Bulwer, showing at the same time the influence of the Bard on his successor, the final scenes of The Pirate and Lucretia are very apropos. In Scott's story we find the old sibyl, Norna, who mistakes Mordaunt Mertoun

Ibid., 9-11.
for her own son from whom she was separated when he was a baby. Mordaunt had a bitter foe in Captain Cleveland, a pirate, whom he had rescued from drowning. Mordaunt was later struck down by Cleveland’s dagger, but Norna rescued him from death and she then vowed revenge on Cleveland. As the story progresses, Norna nourishes her plan to destroy Cleveland. She is wild with delight when, through her contriving, the law finally takes him into custody and she knows that death will claim him as a victim. In the midst of her exulting she meets the elder Mertoun, whom she now addresses as her husband. To him she tells her story of diabolical hatred of Cleveland and as she slowly works herself into a frenzy of joy at his unhappy fate, the elder Mertoun exclaims “Cleveland is thy son!” Norna, overcome with grief, sinks to the ground in a swoon; but Scott ends his story on the happy note of Cleveland’s obtaining pardon by his heroic conduct in having rescued some Spanish ladies at Quempos.

Bulwer handles a similar theme in Lucretia, but in a more dramatic presentation. Lucretia, the arch-fiend, realizes that the waif Beck has learned her secret to poison Helen Mainwaring, her ward, who had inherited the vast estates that Lucretia vowed to possess. Beck was discovered behind Lucretia’s curtain and in a brief struggle with him, she pricked him with her poisoned ring, but he escapes from her clutches. In a short time, Beck returns with the magistrate and before the gathered assembly he denounces her as a murderess. However, the poison has begun to wreak its havoc, and as Beck falls to the floor he hurls his passionate exorations at the woman who only at that moment learns that the dying man is her own son.

Historically, sensationalism depicts a popular development in fiction in which the novel of mystery is crossed with that of fashionable life.

21 Sir Walter Scott, The Pirate, N.Y., 1898, passim.
22 Edward Bulwer Lytton, Lucretia, passim.
Conditions were such that appeal to fear and the characterization of society in a rather ignorant and common manner were almost inevitable; the appeal to fear is universal; so, too, is curiosity. This curiosity was found among the middle-class English people who loved to peep into the elegant world of lords and ladies. The fashionable novel aimed to portray the ordinary lives of contemporary aristocrats; hence, "the greater the details of foreign travel, the gilded leisure, the informal talk, houses, marriages, clothes, and aspirations of these enviable folk were set forth, the more acceptable the 'tale' 24 to a public greedy for just such luxurious precision."

The vogue of the later sensation fiction is said to have sprung from Mrs. Maxwell's famous Lady Audley's Secret. Phillips brings out the fact that a significant point has been disregarded in connection with this story, namely, that Mrs. Maxwell's book was dedicated to Bulwer Lytton who aided her so generously with his literary advice. Another important point to note is that Bulwer penned an eight page letter of congratulations and encouragement to Ouida on one of her novels of high life. Indeed, her Strathmore is obviously close kin to Bulwer's Devereux and Maltravers.

Considering these circumstances, together with the fact that sensation fiction almost invariably presented persons of wealth and high social position, one begins to realize that the mystery and melodrama of such fiction harks back to the "fashionable novel" that was made so popular by Bulwer's Pelham 25 in 1828. The conclusion can be drawn that although Bulwer followed Byron, and Scott, and the Gothic School, he also played a prominent part in setting

23 Phillips, 34.
24 Sadleir, 115.
the pattern for the later sensation novel in a fashionable background with lords and ladies, kings and queens. Practically every book of Bulwer's highlights some titled individual or person in the upper brackets of society. These pretentious names appear in some fifteen Bulwerian stories: Lady Emily Mandeville, Lady Roseville and Sir Richard Glanville; Lord Borodaile and Lady Flora; Count Devereux; Lord Mauleverer and Judge Brandon; Countess Constance; the great tribune Rienzi; Lord Vargrave and Lady Florence; Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand; Lord Lilburne; King Harold; Lord L'Estrange; Lady Monfort; Sir and Lady Chillingly; Pausanias the Spartan regent—these and many other notable characters substantiate the claim that Bulwer used the fashionable folk and their background for practically all of his sensational stories and set the precedent for his followers.

While the early novels depicting sensationalism had their setting in remote times and foreign places, the public of the sixties cared little for castles in the Apennines. They wanted to know what those better situated in life than themselves were doing here and now, so a contemporary background was necessary. To repeat a statement that has already been made; the sensation novel, as the Victorian writers so aptly stated, was romance of the present, consciously adapted to new circumstances and to new readers; and found, like its prototype, material in records of crime and villainy. However, the adapting of the melodramatic terrors of medieval castles and trappings to local conditions and scenes involved several difficulties. The clever sword play with its usual fatal thrust by a Byronic hero became stealthy murder, and the extreme peril in which Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines always found themselves became adultery. The themes are the same, but the presentation of such scenes in a community where the constabulary was adequate to the enforcing of civil
law made the sensationalist's task very difficult indeed.

Since Bulwer Lytton produced, perhaps, two of the most famous of the Newgate novels, Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram, mention should be made of this particular type of sensation novel. The Newgate stories were those written mostly between 1830 and 1840, in which a distinguished criminal is the protagonist. They are rather decadent romances that are somewhat indebted to Godwin's Caleb Williams, but more to Gothic diabolism and its many modifications. Rather oddly enough Bulwer's Paul Clifford, the tale of prison reform in which Professor Cazamain found the beginning of "le Roman social", was followed by Eugene Aram, a story portraying a single crime and its dire consequences. These two novels of Bulwer set the fashion for a series of lusty Newgates, among which the most noted were Whitehead's Autobiography of Jack Ketch and Ainsworth's Rockwood and Jack Sheppard. In the same sensational vein Borrow, Whitehead, and Macfarlane furnished biographical dictionaries of the whole brotherhood of thieves, murderers, and freebooters. However, a cry was raised against this type of literature as being unfit for anyone, especially the young, to read. Bulwer, quick to sense the shift of public opinion, was out of the Newgate field and into another type of romance before most writers realized that Newgate novels were dead.

Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram brought to an end a certain phase of early sensational writing of Bulwer Lytton. When he later drew inspiration from crime or occultism, as in Lucretia, Zanoni, and A Strange Story, he turned, not to domesticated Byronism as he had done previously, but to science

26 Ibid., 34.

27 Ibid., 34.
through its romance in alchemy, astrology, and oriental magic.

Magic and the occult had been exploited in English fiction ever since the day of Godwin and Mrs. Radcliffe, and Lytton made a careful study of the novel of suspense. For example, *Frankenstein* is founded upon scientific research, as if the time had come when it was necessary to give some rational basis to the terror which novel-readers had been content to accept for its own sake.

The author, Mary Shelley, relates that the idea came to her while she was listening to a conversation between Byron and Shelley about the experiments of Darwin and the principle of life. A later writer, Catherine Crowe, went further than Mary Shelley in this direction. Mrs. Crowe not only delighted in ghosts and similar occasions of terror, but in *The Night Side of Nature* (1848), she also tried to find a scientific, or, as it would be termed today, a "psychic" explanation of such things; and the result was an engaging volume of mingled story and speculation. However, as usual, Bulwer did not follow any pattern in a slavish way but mixed new ingredients in the caldron. The Rosicrucian stage business in *Zanoni* was not new, but Bulwer applied it in an original way. It is interesting to note in connection with *Zanoni* that its author had made a serious and extensive study of magic--spirit rappings, clairvoyance, astrology, etc.,--he had investigated all, and found all very disappointing and unprofitable. He was himself a member of the Society of Rosicrucians and Grand Patron of the Order. At one time Bulwer wrote to Lord Walpole: "I have been pursuing science into strange mysteries since we parted.

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and gone far into a spiritual world, which suffices to destroy all existing metaphysics and to startle the strongest reason." Since Bulwer made such a serious and discriminating study of occult subjects, it is only natural that traces of this bent of his mind should be apparent in his works.

In *A Strange Story*, will-binding and clairvoyance are lavishly used for the setting of a crime. The classic investigations of hypnotism by Braid and others had long been known; but Lytton cared only for pseudo-science, and used the rights of a romancer without inhibition. Nothing in this department is too far-fetched for his imagination; and yet it is romance, and he draws the reader with him, since he seems half-frightened by his own inventions. The mysterious Margrave in *A Strange Story* is, despite his rather ludicrous side, an effective magician.

Between 1850 and 1860 modern spiritism gave rise to a literature dealing with the night side of nature. Through a dim eerie light, a chair would be seen suddenly moving from the wall; candle lights waning and swaying in some unaccountable breeze; the patter of invisible feet on the stairway preceding the story teller as he ascends to his room, figures distinguishable yet appearing in a mysterious blue mist; articles, such as watches or letters, quietly but surely disappearing from the bedside table—such were some of the current incidents; and in those days, romance was stimulated by reports of the Society for Psychical Research. Of this pseudo-spiritism the classic is Bulwer Lytton's *The Haunted and the Haunters*, which is an admitted triumph. An ordinary spot in London was chosen as the locale, but the evil atmosphere

29 V. A.G.R. Lytton, Vol. II, 44.
30 Elton, 190.
31 Cross, 280-81.
and the intangible barriers around the place are conveyed with great force and conviction, nor does the mystic explanation at the end weaken the effect.

In the Utopian fantasy, The Coming Race, a dash of the occult is again to be found. Possibly Bulwer was familiar with the delightful "Gowries" in paltook's Peter Wilkins (1750) with their wing-clothing. However, his fantastic story of an imaginary race living in the interior of the earth with a very highly developed civilization—this was an entirely new departure, unlike anything the author had written before. This work shows another step in the development of Bulwer's sensationalism which is subordinated to the picture of an underworld of serenely superhuman beings in whose community is found a quiet peace, liberty of the individual, the highest development of mechanical devices, and social security and well being, and most important of all, Vril, that electrical energy that was both life giving and life destroying. Bulwer in one of his letters reveals where he found the seed for The Coming Race. In 1870 he wrote John Foster to remember in making his critical remarks on the book that "the only important point is to keep in view the Darwinian proposition that a coming race is destined to supplant our races." The development of this theme gave plenty of scope for the indulgence of quiet satire and for the ingenuities of invention.

With the coming of such novelists as Blackmore, W. Besant, and W. Black in the 1870's the rigors and violence of the old sensationalism gave way to sentiment. With their appearance sensation fiction in the Victorian sense seems to have slid down the scale to find a resting place in the yellow backs, Penny Jupiters, and such of blessed memory. However, the demand it answered

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is a perennial one in modern society. Over a hundred years ago Byron, Scott, and Bulwer were its exponents; some years later Bulwer still sponsored it and Dickens, Reade, and Collins devoted undoubted genius to it. Today the motion pictures are supplying the ever-present demand for thrills and chills; but literature of such stamp is still being made.

As a literary tradition the history of sensationalism is essentially the history of the rise of the melodramatic method in the English novel since the third quarter of the eighteenth century. It is the lineal descendant not so much of Scott but of Gothicism; and the direct connection between the two is to be sought in the career of the picturesque ruffian who served as a hero for Mrs. Radcliffe, Byron, and Bulwer Lytton. This hero, the most frequently used figure in English romances during the first four decades of the century, from the very conception he embodied, was invariably arrayed in garish melodrama. Schedoni-Lara-Aram indeed is less important as a person than a prop for a method.

Another point to bear in mind is the part played by Bulwer in the fashionable novel which kept up the sensation tradition. If something horrible, fearful, or shameful befell some high ranking character, the lower classes, which formed the great reading body, could lap up much satisfaction from such incidents, while the great rich, or especially the newly rich and titled, took their complacency in being in the public eye.

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33 Phillips, 35.
34 Ibid., 220.
Lastly, the third influence in the development of Bulwer Lytton's sensationalism was occultism. He delighted in the mystic and mysterious, and his books dealing with the occult show careful preparation, much study, and were exceptionally successful. Bulwer's sensation novels must be recognized as a great factor in the literature of the day.
CHAPTER 111

SENSATIONALISM OF BULWER LYTTON

His early victim-of-society novels had a definite purpose—His occult and mystic stories were protests against materialism—His early contemporaries evaded reform novels—His leadership and popularity were a boom to propaganda literature—Addenda (Sensational elements in Bulwer Lytton’s life).
CHAPTER III

To pass from a study of the development of the sensation novel to an attentive consideration of the sensationalism employed by Bulwer Lytton in his endeavor to cope with and counteract certain unjust and unethical practices prevalent at that time, is a logical, natural step, since Lytton made use of practically all the sensation machinery and exerted a marked influence on literature. A brief glance at the tremendous output of the Gothic writers from Walpole through Mrs. Radcliffe will bring the reader to the realization that the "terror stories" were solely to entertain and amuse. Further, a survey of Scott and particularly Byron will again impress the reader that a serious moral or ethical presentation was not evident, but that the only motive was to arouse fear, horror, passion, or simply to give pleasure. Of course, the many followers of both Byron and Scott who lacked their finer sensibilities flooded the market with a nerve-tingling and hair-raising type of sensation story, a type that soon wore itself out. The purpose of Bulwer Lytton's first story, Falkland, was clearly to entertain in the Byronic fashion, and even Pelham savored of that light, sophisticated air that marked a novel whose end and aim was not to moralize but to provide amusement for the public.

However, it is quite clear that Bulwer's two early romances of crime intended something far different from and superior to the interpretation made of them by the current critics. Paul Clifford was an onslaught upon the penal code; Eugene Aram, a tragedy of the quiet scholar blighted by complicity in crime. Both had a purpose.¹

¹ Phillips, 166.
In Bulwer's own words from the Preface to the Edition of 1840 of Paul Clifford:

I may be permitted to observe, that the present subject was selected, and the Novel written with a twofold object: First, to draw attention to two errors in our penal institutions, viz., a vicious Prison-discipline and a sanguinary criminal code—the habit of corrupting the boy by the very punishment that ought to redeem him, and then hanging the man, at the first occasion, as the easiest way of getting rid of our own blunders. . . . So far this book is less a picture of the king's highway than the law's royal road to the gallows—a satire on the short cut established between the House of Correction and the Condemned cell. A second and a lighter object in the novel of 'Paul Clifford' was to show that there is nothing essentially different between vulgar vice and fashionable vice—and that the slang of the one circle is but an easy paraphrase of the cant of the other.²

In the Preface to the Edition of 1848 Bulwer insists more forcefully that reform is the purpose of this novel. Again he says:

A child who is cradled in ignominy; whose schoolmaster is the felon; whose academy is the House of Correction; who breathes an atmosphere in which virtue is poisoned, to which religion does not pierce—becomes less a responsible and reasoning human being than a wild beast. . . In this respect, the Novel of 'Paul Clifford' is a loud cry to amend the circumstance—to redeem the victim. It is an appeal from Humanity to Law . . . it is ridding the world of the hangman.³

By 1848 Bulwer could report that social reform was on the march and that it was the general and earnest wish to improve the conditions of the great

² Bulwer Lytton, Paul Clifford, New York, Preface v.
³ Ibid., Preface vii.
body of the people, and that only the government remained unpenetrated with the spirit. There is another question involved in Paul Clifford; namely, make what laws we please, the man who lives within the pale may be as bad as the man without; for example, Paul and Judge Brandon. After reading the story one would hesitate to say that Paul is worse than William Brandon. Such offenses as these which society cannot interfere with, that same society requires fiction to expose. Society can do only so much with regard to certain regulations, but "Fiction follows truth into all the strongholds of convention; strikes through the disguise, lifts the mask, bares the heart, and leaves a moral wherever it brands a falsehood". 

This last quotation is especially applicable to the story of Paul Clifford in which sensational incidents are used to drive home a lesson. These few instances from the book will clarify the idea: Paul grew up amid dismal and morbid surroundings; he was accused of a theft and, although innocent, was sent to Bridewell for three months. Bulwer tells us that Judge Brandon had sent the boy to a place where, let him be ever so innocent, he would certainly come out as guilty as any rogue would want. At the House of Correction Paul met two new companions; one, Augustus Tomlinson, an old file who had secured money under false pretenses; the other, a little boy who had been found sleeping under a colonnade; "it being the special beauty of the English law to make no fine-drawn and nonsensical shades of difference between vice and misfortune, and its peculiar method of protecting the honest being to make as many rogues as possible in as short a space of time."

4 Ibid., Preface viii.
5 Ibid., 72.
To show the unjust and inhumane treatment of prisoners, Bulwer tells of a slight disorder caused shortly after Paul's arrival at Bridewell, which ended in the turnkey's taking off to solitary confinement two of the poorest of the crowd who were absolutely innocent. He also describes a cell that generally accommodated three and which measured just eight feet by six.

Paul Clifford had the ambition to raise himself into a worthy member of his community, but a brief stay in the House of Correc­tion soon changed his desires and opened for him the path of the outlaw. Lytton tells us that young people are apt, erroneously, to believe that it is a bad thing to be exceedingly wicked; but the House of Correction is so called because it is a place where so ridiculous a notion is invariably corrected. Augustus and Paul staged an ingenious escape and sought out a low set of ruffians who were also highwaymen. Thus Paul was introduced to the criminal world, and before long he became the leader of the band under the name of Lovett.

Then follows the sensational story of the young William Brandon, with its word of warning against yielding to temptation. In brief review we see his marriage and the subsequent sale of his wife to her lover; the revenge of the wife in stealing the baby from Brandon's home; that baby whose mother died soon after and left him in the care of Mrs. Lobkins, a woman of low character. The baby, Paul Clifford, who, although he grew up amid very unsavory surroundings, never lost sight of the better mode of living until he entered the House of Correction, from which he escaped a confirmed criminal. Later he leads the highwaymen through many thrilling episodes—he himself being always the

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6 Ibid., 74.

7 Ibid., 75.
polished genteel highwayman, a favorite with the ladies—until finally he is captured and brought to trial. The judge is again William Brandon and the prisoner is being tried for life. Meanwhile, Brandon has been searching for his stolen son and has reason to believe that he is still living. The trial of Clifford starts, and when asked for his defense, Clifford says in part: "Your laws are but of two classes; the one makes criminals, the other punishes them... The laws themselves caused me to break the laws: First, by implanting in me the goading sense of injustice; secondly, by submitting me (innocent) to the corruption of example... When did the law ever protect the poor man?" Clifford admits he plundered the rich, but he scores those who grind the poor and carry on a systematic pilfering of their neighbors—those are the crimes of the virtuous and the honest! While the jury are out deliberating the fate of the prisoner, a note is handed to Judge Brandon which informs him that his long lost son is the prisoner on trial, Paul Clifford. At that moment the jury return with a verdict of guilty, and Brandon is forced to pass sentence of death on his own son. Not only that, but his son condemns him as being responsible for his life of outlawry, since it was Brandon who sent him to The House of Correction. As Clifford looks at the Judge he says, "You were the cause of my crimes!" and he does not realize that he is addressing the father who spent so many years in search of him.

Who can pass over that last morsel of sensational retribution where the carriage of Judge Brandon arrived at Lord Mauleverer's in time for dinner.

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8 Ibid., 382.
and when the door was opened, Brandon was found leaning against the farther corner of the carriage—a corpse. Thus far poetic justice!

Bulwer ends his story with the thought that circumstances make guilt, so the circumstances should be corrected before railing against the guilt; it is better to repair than to perish. "Mark this truth, all ye gentlemen of England... the very worst use you can put a man to is to hang him."

Although Bulwer in Paul Clifford used all the sensation trappings and introduced burlesque scenes in many instances, we must, nevertheless, admit that not once during the novel did he lose sight of his purpose, even though he digressed freely. He was in earnest about bettering conditions, but he was also a romancer and frequently his romancing ran ahead of his moralizing.

In Tomlinsoniana we find this further reference to unjust laws:

A sentence is sometimes as good as a volume.
If a man ask you to give him some idea of the laws of England, the answer is short and easy; in the laws of England there are somewhere about one hundred and fifty laws by which a poor man may be hanged, but not one by which he can obtain justice for nothing! 10

From depicting in Paul Clifford the errors of society, it is a natural progress to pass to those which swell to crime in the solitary human heart, from the bold and open evils that arise from ignorance and example, to track those which lie coiled in the entanglements of refining knowledge and pride. Eugene Aram was based on one of the most famous cases in the

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9 Ibid., 404.
Newgate Calendar. It illustrates the same transitional aspect of the novel of crime—the perpetuation of the terrific and the unavailing struggle to turn it into worthy channels, with the consequent moral ambiguity of the protagonist. **Eugene Aram** was a favorite with the author, partly, no doubt, because the critics detected in it the wolf in sheep's clothing. In this story the guilt of the hero is not that of a vulgar ruffian:

it leads to views and considerations vitally and wholly distinct from those which profligate knavery and brutal cruelty revolt and displease us in the literature of Newgate and the Hulks... Whenever crime appears the aberration and monstrous product of a great intellect, or of a nature ordinarily virtuous, it becomes not only the subject for genius, which deals with passions, to describe; but also a problem for philosophy, which deals with actions, to investigate and solve; hence, the Moabaths and Richards, the Iagos and Othellos.

The nature of the tragedy that Bulwer aimed at in **Eugene Aram** is clearly stated in the Preface of 1847. The moral consisted in showing

how the consciousness of the deed was to exclude whatever humanity of character preceded and belied it from all active exercise—all social confidence; how the knowledge of the bar between the minds of others and his own deprived the criminal of all motive to ambition, and blighted knowledge of all fruit; miserable in his affections, barren in his intellect; clinging to solitude, yet accursed in it; dreading as a danger the fame he had once coveted; obscure in spite of learning, hopeless in spite of love, fruitless and joyless in his life, calamitous and shameful in his end—surely such is no palliative of crime, no dalliance and toying with the grimness of evil. And surely


12 Bulwer Lytton, **Eugene Aram**, New York, 1840, Preface v.
to any ordinary comprehension, any candid mind, such is the moral conveyed by the fiction of Eugene Aram. 13

Bulwer's idea that the novelist is the teacher, philosopher, and leader is seen in all his books. In Eugene Aram he quotes Aristotle as saying that painters and sculptors can teach and recommend virtue in a more efficacious and powerful manner than philosophers, and are more capable of amending the vicious, but he adds the thought that a good novelist can do far more in this field than either painter or sculptor.

One of the most sensational moments in Eugene Aram occurs when a workman unearths a wooden chest which, when opened, discloses a bleached and mouldering skeleton! Another startling incident is Houseman's accusation of Eugene Aram as the murderer of Daniel Clarke, Walter Lester's father. However, the most breath-taking scene occurs on Eugene Aram's wedding day, when Walter Lester, accompanied by the officers, enters Aram's home, accuses him of the murder and hurries him off to prison. He is tried and condemned, but dies just before he is hanged.

No wonder Bulwer was partial to Eugene Aram. The book teems with dramatic possibilities and the author, who was always alive to the tremendous influence of the theatre, had started to write this story in dramatic form, but finally decided the novel would be better suited to the public taste and would convey to a greater number the lesson to be taught.

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13 Ibid., Preface 1847, viii-ix.
14 Ibid., 131.
15 Ibid., 295.
Paul Clifford and Eugene Aram end a phase of Bulwer's literary career; they "close an era in the writer's self education." But there is another novel to be considered which treats the principal character as one in conflict with society—a victim of society. Lucretia is a painful book, but Bulwer states that the serious presentation of crime, and the ruin it entails, must necessarily be so. Lucretia and Varney are types of the intellectual cultivated criminals, and the moral to be drawn here is, the utter failure of their very intellects which they had perverted and misused. . . I wished, then, to show the fate of intelligence abused to the ends of guilt. . .

In Dalibard, the intention was to portray the wary, calculating, and laborious intellect, which, rightly directed, leads to science; in Varney, the versatile; lively, impressionable fancy, which, purified and guided, may conduct to art; in Lucretia, the energy and active will, which nobly stimulated and trained, may lead to eminence and success in the outward concerns of life. . . Dalibard, the coward and calculator, shrinking from all physical danger, . . . is betrayed at the hearth he has desecrated, and butchered by the dull ruffian he had duped. Varney, who had prostituted the perfection of his physical senses to their vilest gratifications, . . . is sentenced to the coarsest of hardships, the vilest of labor, chained to the most loathsome of malefactors, doomed to all that the senses, most pampered, would shudder from the most. . . Lucretia, who had made on earth no god but the intellect, is cursed in the intellect—smitten down below the brutes, but with the consciousness of the mortal—retaining, amid the ruins of all the past, only the image of her crime standing face to face with it, as a visible thing.
What more could be demanded of an author as just retribution for crime?

The delineation of these three criminal characters was undertaken, with a serious and honest purpose, to deepen the horror of guilt and to inspire a dread of its consequences; to teach wholesome lessons to the intellect; and to incite to lively self-examination in the heart. In the picture of crime dwells the warning to wrong-doing.

The most sensational moment in the story occurs when the beggar spy, Beek, denounces Lucretia as a murderess and at the same instant is identified by Ardworth as Lucretia's lost son for whom she has been searching for years. To add to the horror, Beek, with a low suffocating cry sinks to the floor, dead, a victim of the poison injected by means of Lucretia's finger ring. As Lucretia realizes the awful truth (that she is responsible for the death of her own son) she utters a piercing laugh which rings throughout the house, and with that hideous laugh fled forever the reason of the murderess-mother.

Devereux, written in 1829, follows the sensation pattern with a secret marriage, a forged will, and the tragic death of the heroine on the night that her marriage was announced through a public ceremony. In this book Bulwer again sounds a few warnings: to mothers, who are too interested in other things and neglect their children; to the nation, when he says that England "should beware not only of wars which exhaust but of governments which impoverish"; to the nobles in Isora's words, "I know, too, that poverty itself, in the eyes of your commercial countrymen, is a crime."

20 Ibid. 225.
In the novel Night and Morning, Bulwer Lytton had several ends in view. The first was to deal fearlessly with that universal unsoundness in social justice which makes distinctions so marked and iniquitous between Vice and Crime—viz., between the corrupting habits and the violent act... Let a child steal an apple in sport, let a starveling steal a roll in despair, and Law conducts them to the Prison, for evil commune to mellow them for the gibbet. He goes on to state, that if a man but live in vice from youth to old age, and even spend a fortune in demoralizing his own class, he, no doubt, will be acclaimed by the so-called virtuous and be highly esteemed by a servile world. Bulwer does not hold that law can reach vice as it does crime, but he feels that opinion can do much to eradicate vice. In this story he appeals to the "Conscience, that reigns, elder and superior to all Law, in men's hearts and souls."

The second purpose of this book was to lift the mask from the timid selfishness which too often with us bears the name of Respectability. ... I have shown in Robert Beaufort the man of decorous phrase and bloodless action—the systematic self-server—in whom the world forgives the lack of all that is generous, warm and noble, in order to respect the passive acquiescence in methodical conventions and hollow forms.

21 Bulwer Lytton, Night and Morning, 1879, Preface to 1845 ed., xi.
22 Ibid., xii.
23 Ibid.,
Another object was to teach the public to be honest on all occasions, to stand firm against temptation, and to hold fast to their faith in God despite adversities. This moral was used before in Eugene Aram, but Bulwer enforces it more directly here.

The sensation pattern is perfectly worked out in *Night and Morning*. Two boys, one reared in the lap of luxury, the other, uncultivated, a child of nature, were commonly used by the sensationalists, and are of prime importance in this story. Then there is the secret marriage, the hidden marriage certificate, the sudden death of Philip Beaufort leaving his wife and two sons without a name and without money. The elder boy, Philip, becomes associated with persons of low character who have befriended him on several occasions. The story follows the career of Philip who, although surrounded by evil, is able to preserve a nobleness of character and conduct.

Surely all readers thrill to the dramatic episode in the cavern when Gawtrey and his band of counterfeiters find that the celebrated chief of police in disguise has entered their den. Gawtrey strips off the officer's mask, kills him, and then dispatches Birnie, the coiners' Judas.

Another breath-taking scene is the leap-for-life incident when a rope is thrown across the street to a window beyond. Morton crawls across the rope and reaches the other side safely, but Gawtrey, who is older and heavier, is caught midway by a bullet and plunges to the pavement, a corpse.

The most melodramatic and at the same time most sensational moment occurs when Lord Lilburne shows Robert Beaufort the lost marriage certificate which he had discovered the previous evening hidden in a secret drawer. Robert seizes the document and casts it into the fire, but Fanny, Lord
Lilburne's granddaughter who is in love with Philip Morton, snatches it from the flames. At the same instant the hero, Philip Morton, who has been searching for Fanny who had been abducted by Lord Lilburne, rushes into the room and hears the story. Now he is able to bear his rightful name, Philip Beaufort; his dear mother's honor is cleared; he finds his long lost brother; and finally he marries Fanny.

In his novels Bulwer was constantly trying out new effects. He "re-furbished the tale of horror with corroborative details drawn from scientific psychology; he applied realistic technique to Utopian imaginings"; these are two of his innovations which established lasting modes in fiction.

In his endeavors to keep alive the style of the novel of terror, Bulwer directed attention to the supernatural. In Zanoni (1842), The Haunted and the Haunters (1847), and A Strange Story (1862) he employed the more subtle and mysterious terrors arising from occult powers possessed by men or spirits rather than the crude machinery of earlier writers. "In Zanoni, the hero possesses the power of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life."

The author went far in the mysteries of the Rosicrucians. They have a theory that supernatural beings who preside over the destinies of man and nature fill the earth and air. They also hold that those initiated into the brotherhood

24 Night and Morning, passim.
26 Lovett and Hughes, 245.
27 Ibid., 245.
of the Rosiorucians can pierce the veil which separates the vulgar phenomena from this spiritual world, and can gain from this glimpse the secret of eternal youth. However, to preserve the secret, the initiate must keep his heart free from mortal passion. Godwin and Maturin had previously employed the tenets of the Rosiorucians, with particular stress laid on the demon. Bulwer disregards the demon and centers his interest in the unusual Zanoni himself.

Zanoni aroused the curiosity of all who came in contact with him. He was said to have incalculable wealth, to be a sorcerer, to possess the evil eye, and even to have lived for centuries. In Italy Zanoni met the beautiful singer, Viola, fell in love with her, and carried her off to an Ionian island where Viola's love contented him for the wisdom he had forfeited. However, Zanoni yearned for a perfect union of their spiritual intellects. One day Viola playfully asked Zanoni for his amulet to guard her against the plague that was spreading throughout the country. He replied that it would be hers when the laws of their being would be the same.

When a son was born, a wonderful child, Zanoni spent long hours talking to it in a strange language, trying to impart his gifts to the child, who would in turn communicate them to the mother; then Age for all of them would be baffled. To do this Zanoni must further sacrifice his occult knowledge.

Viola, who became terrified for the safety of her child, fled from Zanoni to Paris which was in the throes of the Reign of Terror. Here she worked to maintain herself and her baby, but soon she was accused as a suspect and was taken to the Conciergerie and condemned to die in three days.

Meanwhile, Zanoni who had been searching frantically for Viola learned
of her whereabouts. Finally, in an agony of despair, Zanoni evoked the aid of a spiritual being who revealed to him that the only way he could save Viola was to die for her. In that moment Zanoni recognized the power of faith; his soul triumphed, and he resolved to sacrifice himself for his beloved.

Zanoni was able to gain access to Viola's cell. She was kneeling in prayer when he entered, but as soon as she heard his voice she became radiant with joy for she felt that, through his intervention, tomorrow she and her child would be free. Zanoni reminded her that he had promised her the amulet when the laws of their being became the same, and he said she would have it tomorrow.

At daylight Viola awoke to find Zanoni gone to the guillotine, but his amulet was around her neck. Later as the crowd went about freeing the prisoners, they found beautiful Viola dead, and her child quietly playing with her robes. An old priest in the crowd remarked that the fatherless and motherless are the care of God.

There are so many sensational incidents in Zanoni that one is baffled as to which is the most startling. However, the night scene on the mountain when Vesuvius suddenly sent forth a stream of fire and out from the crater a colossal shadow arose, then another shape that stood beside the shadow, and finally a wave of sulphurous vapor rolled over the mountain—such is the very essence of sensationalism. Or again, when Zanoni is offered the poisoned cup by the Prince to whom he pledges the wine, the reader waits breathless for the poison to take effect, but Zanoni only becomes gayer and more audacious, and before the banquet is over he promotes a duel between the
Duke and the Prince in which the Prince is killed.

The book teems with sensational situations, but beneath the chill and thrill of horrors, phantoms, and evil spirits, there was an earnestness of purpose. In a letter to John Forester in 1842 Bulwer indicates that it is not until the last page is reached, that the merits of the book as a whole can be understood. He feels that even then it will not be enthusiastically received by the public.

Thomas Carlyle acknowledged the importance of this work in these words: "By various indications I confidently gather, that this book like its predecessors, will be read and scanned far and wide; that it will be a liberating voice for much that lay dumb imprisoned in many human souls; that it will shake old deep-set errors looser in their rootings, and thro' such chinks as are possible let in light on dark places very greatly in need of light."

Bulwer states in the Introduction the purpose of the novel: "It was the revolt from the chilling materialism of the age which inspired the mystic creations of 'Zanoni' and 'A Strange Story'."

Bulwer built his novel, A Strange Story, about a supernatural power possessed by Margrave, similar to mesmerism, which is exerted by a drug that

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28 Bulwer Lytton, Zanoni, passim.
29 V. A. G. R. Lytton, Vol. II., 34.
30 Ibid., 39.
31 Bulwer Lytton, Zanoni, Intro. xi.
is prepared by weird incantations to produce renewed youth. The mysteries of the Rosicrucians are used again, and "the whole is given the significance of a protest against the materialistic limitations of physical science, and the mechanical view of the universe which it enforces."

A Strange Story is a murder mystery, in which the effect is heightened by the power that Margrave has of suspending the laws of nature. Margrave, who has tasted the elixir of life, is seeking its formula and decides to use Lilian, the pure minded visionary, as his medium to obtain the aid of Dr. Fenwick whose strong will is essential to the successful discovery of that formula. Bulwer states in the Preface:

Now as Philosophy and Romance both take their origin in the Principle of Wonder, so in the Strange Story submitted to the Public, it will seem that Romance, through the freest exercise of its wildest vagaries, conducts its bewildered hero towards the same goal to which Philosophy leads its luminous Student through far grander portents of Nature, far higher visions of Supernatural Power, than Fable can yield to Fancy... Christianity alone embraces the whole Man. 33

The purpose of the work "will develop in proportion as the story approaches the close," adds the author, and he implies that there are truths to be found if the reader but seeks.

32 Lovett and Hughes, 205.
33 Bulwer Lytton, A Strange Story, Preface 6.
34 Ibid., 8.
Dr. Fenwick's "creed was that of stern materialism." He held in contempt those who accepted on faith what they could not explain by reason. "Common sense" was his favorite phrase. He held that "no reasoner could arrive at the existence of the soul"; and he did not believe in life after death.

He meets and falls in love with Lilian Ashleigh whose sensitive nature he attributes to nerves. A strange young man, Margrave, fascinates yet repels Fenwick, especially when Margrave chants the weird song of the snake charmer, a song that produces a strange effect on Lilian.

A murder takes place and Dr. Fenwick is accused of the deed. While he is in prison a luminous shadow in human form appears and he recognizes Margrave who promises to exonerate him if he will but treat him civilly when they meet in public. Next day Fenwick is liberated. Later he discovers a rod or magic wand by which he can force Margrave to do his will, but in disgust he throws it into the lake.

On her bridal day, Lilian receives a letter which unsettling her mind. She knows no one. Dr. Fenwick is bewildered by his wife's mental state but he finds some solace in working feverishly on a book setting forth his views against the soul's everlasting hereafter. He will not say that he will meet Lilian soul to soul, but only mind to mind. Finally, Dr. Fenwick determines to lend himself to alleged magic in the hope of saving his suffering wife from the physical dangers that have succeeded her mental disease. The proposition:

35 Ibid., 18.
36 Ibid.
was made to him by Margrave, a wanderer in many countries, who followed the Fenwicks from England to Australia. Margrave declares that he needs an accomplice of strong will to secure the elixir of life which his own failing strength demands. His mysterious mesmeric or hypnotic influence over Mrs. Fenwick had in former days been marked; and on the basis of this undeniable fact, he tried to show that his own welfare and Mrs. Fenwick's are, in some occult fashion, knit together, and that only by aiding him in some extraordinary experiment can the physician snatch his beloved Lilian from her impending doom.

The ingredients are found, and all night long the elixir boils. Then, just as the experiment nears completion, a sudden stampede of herds of cattle seeking escape from the fire in the Bushland, overturns the cauldron, the precious life giving substance trickles into the earth and Margrave sinks back dead. Bulwer introduces, as an element of horror, the vast Eye and a gigantic Foot, together with the mystic lamps and weird incantations.

When Dr. Fenwick returns home he finds all is dark and still. He suddenly realizes that hope is surging through him—but where was hope to be found? In the soul, and it comes from the Giver of all comforts when the heart is afflicted. When he becomes convinced of a soul, he begins to pray and then he realizes that the dead do not die forever. He even prays for resignation if Lilian is dead because he knows now that he will some day be reunited to her. What the art of man can achieve, man's reason can explain, but the wonders of God are infinite and immortal.

When Dr. Fenwick enters the house, he finds that Lilian is better and he utters a fervent prayer of thanks to God. Now he knows that he can meet
her not only mind to mind, and heart to heart, but also soul to soul both here and hereafter.

The short story The Haunted and the Haunters (1859) contains Lytton's most impressive use of the occult. In the manner of Mrs. Radoliffe, he explains, at the end, the machinery—by persistent will power an ancient curse is preserved in a crystal saucer filled with a clear liquid on which floats a kind of compass with a needle shifting rapidly around pointing to strange characters like those used in astrology to denote the planets. This saucer was hidden in a drawer which was lined with hazel. A peculiar odor caused a creeping, tingling sensation from the tips of the fingers to the roots of the hair. A tablet was found on which was written, "Accursed be this house and restless be the dwellers therein." The startling effect of the tale is due to an all pervading feeling of loathsome horror and finally terror that seizes the intruder in the haunted house.

The romance of science became common about 1860. Its purpose was to exhibit to advantage the late showy scientific experiments and discoveries. The possibilities of science, which were just beginning to be realized, appealed to the imagination and thus gave rise to what may be called the superstitions of science, which were later developed with such success by Jules Verne and H. G. Wells. "A distinct anticipation of the latter is found in

37 Ibid., passim.
38 Bulwer Lytton, The Haunted and the Haunters, 24-25.
39 Cross, 281.
Bulwer's *The Coming Race*, published anonymously in 1871. This is a fantastic story in which the author imagines a community where most of the Utopian philosophies of the day were realized to their fullest extent. Universal peace, perfect individual liberty, equality of both class and sex, the highest development of mechanical invention, perfect physical well-being of the community—all these were attained, and resulted in a race that was at once mild and terrible, highly intellectual, and insufferably dull.

This was not merely an excellent tale of adventure; it had a definite satirical purpose—an implied criticism of contemporary society, government, lack of faith in God and the hereafter, and of conditions in general in England. This romance of Bulwer's is socialistic as well as scientific, and as the theories of science became more and more practical, it was this socialistic phase that in a few years loomed so prominent. The fact that many of Bulwer's ideas with regard to the use of electricity have become realities, but shows more clearly that he was not only a romancer, but that he was also a serious and thoughtful writer; and that his stories were meant to instruct, improve, and correct, as well as to entertain.

Indeed, an intensive study of Bulwer Lytton's works, both fiction and poetry, discloses his earnestness and sincerity of purpose as a writer. Some critics have accused him of being insincere, but that mistaken view was drawn from his great gift of adaptability. "Versatility is not impossible

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40. Ibid., 205.
"I am, I own, no great believer in the moral utility to be derived from fictitious compositions."

The mention of a few other writers will show further how Bulwer stood alone about 1830 when he published his first purpose novel, Paul Clifford. The Bronte's were happy in simply presenting their stories; Ainsworth, who followed Bulwer in the Newgate fashion had no moral purpose, but used only crime and rascality on a grander scale and in more picturesque surroundings. Hook and Pierce Egan were humorists; while Thackeray held aloof from novels with a purpose. Disraeli wrote many novels, but they were for political reform not social. Other names might be added to the list, but let these suffice.

Although Richardson's example was but slowly followed, the influence of Rousseau and the French Revolutionists at the end of the century finally set in motion many doctrinaire novelists of a minor order, among them Bage, Holcroft, and Godwin. At about the same time novels with a purpose were written by H. More, Mrs. Inchbald, and Miss Edgeworth. Eventually, the didactic intention grew to adult importance, and the novelist became a teacher, a social prophet, and a critic of manners.

Bulwer Lytton deserves much credit for bringing about this humanitarian outlook of the novelist. True, Godwin, to whom Bulwer was indebted for some of his ideas, Mrs. Inchbald, and others had produced stories with a purpose, but they left behind them no great novel, except perhaps Caleb Williams.

Cross, 136.
and they exerted no great influence on any immediate followers. However, they
did create the didactic novel.

This purpose type of literature was abruptly checked by Scott and Jane
Austen since neither of them had social reform as their motive in writing.
Hence, it was the task of Bulwer Lytton to reinstate it and to popularize
it, so that it blossomed forth in all its glory under the facile pen of
Charles Dickens, and has retained its place in literature even to the present
day.
Before he was fifteen his taste for English literature began to assert itself. He read Scott whom he admired very much, and also Byron, to whom he conceed a very limited approbation, although his first novel, *Falkland*, had a definite Byronic flavor.

The year 1824 was an eventful one in many ways for Bulwer. He records that on a long walking tour two sensational events occurred. He stopped at Ambleside and decided to stay awhile amid such lovely surroundings. He chose an apartment at the mysterious Mr. W's home, although many villagers had advised against it because Mr. W. was believed to be a murderer and a 'bad man'. Bulwer, however, lived with him in quiet and peace for some time; at least, long enough to convince himself of Mr. W's honesty and sincerity. Probably the suspicion in which the solitary Eugene Aram was held is a flash-back to Mr. W.

Another more sensational event was his visit and stay for a week at a gipsy camp, where a charming gipsy girl whom he called Mimy proposed to marry him in gipsy fashion. He made use of much of this picturesque knowledge in *The Disowned*.

A third event of the same year occurred when he was benighted at a lonely cottage near Wastwater. This time, however, the host was really wicked and planned to kill his sleeping guest with a bill-hook. Bulwer was successful in overcomind his assailant, but the event stirred him so deeply that he undoubtedly used it in the opening scene of *Ernest Maltravers*, where Darvil makes an attempt on the life of the young stranger, but is failed by his daughter, Alice.
Surely the affair of Bulwer and Lady Caroline Lamb was sensational enough even for the best scandal-mongers. Lady Caroline was well past thirty years of age and Bulwer was about twenty-one when what he called his "Platonic romance" began; and he was a little over twenty-two when it ended— but it made a deep impression on the young man.

Sadleir informs us that the Bulwer of Windermere for all his vanity and exaggerated moods was still both natural and sincere. But the Bulwer who, after being flattered, and petted, and teased into desire, and then so abruptly cast aside by Lady Caroline, was a being suddenly and wryly matured. The end of this miserable love affair saw the end of Bulwer's great confidence in others. Haughty, foppish, and with that sense of grievance against the world which was never to leave him, and which he brought to the fore in Eugene Aram, Paul Clifford, and Lucretia, the author aimed to tell his story from the point of view of one in conflict with society.

What could be more unusual and sensational than the facts of Bulwer's meeting, courting, and finally marrying Rosina Wheeler against his mother's expressed wishes. The result of this affair was the cessation of his allowance from his mother and the immediate need of finding a way to procure financial security. Bulwer had been accustomed to the better things of life and he resolved at any cost to maintain himself and his beautiful wife in elegance and fashion. This was Bulwer's problem and he faced it with an almost savage industry. Although he might be said to be selfish, flamboyant, unscrupulous, and a mass of conflicting insincerities, nevertheless, he worked

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Bulwer bore all these nerve-tingling sensational attacks of his wife with quiet resignation; and although they poisoned his peace of mind and helped to impair his health, he never sank under the burden. His courage never deserted him and his industry never flagged. He worked to the end, and succeeded in winning the love of his children and the admiration of his contemporaries.

Even after his death an unusual and rather sensational incident occurred; namely, his burial in Westminster Abbey. Perhaps no one would have been more surprised or more flattered and honored than he at this unexpected recognition from his beloved England; and had he heard the lavish praise of the excellence and variety of his works by Professor Jowett who preached his funeral sermon, he would indeed have felt, and rightly so, a pride and satisfaction in having at last achieved literary and national greatness.

These thoughts are from V.A.G.R. Lytton, passim.
CHAPTER IV

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Bulwer Lytton's gifts are various; he filled so large a space in the eyes of the public of his own day, and was so clever, that he tempts analysis. An extensive and intensive study of the life and works of this unusual and tireless writer reveals not only his versatility, but also his ability to hold the attention of his readers. From his first fashionable novel *Pelham* to his last charming work *Kenelm Chillingly*, Bulwer never lost his popularity.

Lord Lytton undoubtedly ranks among the leading men of his generation, remarkable rather for the universality of his genius than for his supremacy in any one particular sphere. "There was something in his all-round interests; in the variety of things he tried; in his half-aristocratic swagger as poet and politician, that made him in some ways a real touchstone of the time." He affords a considerable insight into the history of culture as reflected by his singularly acute and sympathetic mind. His literary output is an accurate index of the changes in popular taste. A résumé of the variety of his subjects will indicate the march of fiction through the nineteenth century, from fashionable novels, murder mysteries, purpose stories, historical plots, horror tales, to the realistic domestic type, and the Utopian conception of a better world.

One quality that Bulwer possessed to an uncommon degree was the power to gauge a coming popularity. He was an eminently intelligent writer who

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While some critics were denouncing the sensationalism and low moral tone of his most popular works, others were paying tribute to his broader sense of what was best and noblest; for example, in Temple Bar we note that "Bulwer hated the base, and loathed the mean; but he would have wished to reconcile anything and everybody not base or mean by the ties of a common nobleness and kinship."

This earnestness of purpose found expression in his many writings. In fact, from the very beginning he wrote the "novel with a purpose". No one before him had so definitely recognized the propaganda value of fiction, or consciously set out to use the popularity of melodrama and wit as a stalking horse for serious doctrines. Once he discovered his power to influence the public mind, he used it more and more. From politics and high society, both of which he satirized, his interest spread to social conditions, and his Paul Clifford was a direct assault on the prison system. Thus he definitely inaugurated the series of fictionized tracts which was maintained by Dickens, Kingsley, Reade, and others. The strong ethical tendency, with special humanitarian emphasis, which is the most prominent factor in the accepted concept of "Victorianism", first showed itself in the early writings of Bulwer Lytton and can be found throughout his long list of literary works.

There is indeed an element so paradoxical in Bulwer--his foppish, coxcombry, cynical pose versus his earnest, serious, and ready-to-right-the-wrong attitude--that the reader is almost forced to admit in spite of himself, that here, at least, is a man who, although he lived according to the standards of the world, wrote fiction to better that world.

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The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Bernice (McGrath), S.C. has been read and approved by three members of Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

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

January 26, 1947

Date

Signature of Adviser