His Generation Read His Stories
Aspects of Sir Walter Besant's Publishing History and its Context, with Particular Reference to the Firms of Chatto & Windus and A.P.Watt

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January 1990

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The publishing history of Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901) is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is generally recognised that Besant's influence on the early development of the Society of Authors was crucial. A better understanding of the origin and nature of Besant's attitudes to fellow writers, publishers and literary agents will help explain the strengths (and weaknesses) of the movement to professionalise authorship in the late nineteenth century. Secondly, Besant's writing life spanned a critical period during which Britain became a mass-producing, mass-consuming print culture. Being typical in everything but the extent of his success, Besant provides an ideal case study, as well as allowing us to probe more general issues raised by the publishing history of the period. Chapter 1 shows how Besant's co-author James Rice (1843-82), acting as his informal agent, led him to underestimate the importance of reprint rights and royalty agreements. The false views and sense of exploitation Besant derived from this period were to dog him for the rest of his career. Chapter 2 follows the publishing history of Besant's most successful solo novel, All Sorts and Conditions of Men (1882), and explores the range of marketing metamorphoses a popular novel underwent from three-decker through cheap reprint to sixpenny paperback. Chapter 3 proves that the premature cheap reprint was a problem for circulating libraries from the 1860s, and suggests that by the 1880s it was common practice to undercut a novel's 31s6d first edition by issuing a 6s or 3s6d reprint soon afterwards. Chapter 4 discusses the problems Besant, Hardy and Blackmore had with the early issue of the Good Words annual volume, and charts Chatto & Windus's attempts to exploit Besant's 'Tauchnitz' rights. Chapter 5 surveys A.P. Watt's role as Besant's literary agent from c.1882-1902, in particular the farming of serial and book rights in the UK, the USA and Australia. It also discusses the problems of marketing literary property abroad, dramatic rights, and Besant's income from the novels. Chapter 6 provides a statistical survey of the annual issue of titles, their subject classification and price to demonstrate that the period 1870-1910 was indeed a time of rapid expansion and change in British publishing. There are three appendices.
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Acknowledgements

A version of Chapter 1 and Appendix 1 was first published under the title 'Unequal Partnerships: Besant, Rice and Chatto, 1876-82' in Publishing History, No. XXVI (1989), pp. 73-109.

A version of Chapter 2 was first published under the title '“His generation read His Stories”, Besant, Chatto & Windus and All Sorts and Conditions of Men' in Publishing History, No. XXI (1987), pp. 25-67.


Note

In quoted documents: all words underlined have been italicised, all ‘£’ signs have been placed before rather than after the sums specified.

Abbreviations

ASMI: Arts, Science, Mathematics, Illustrated Works (Chapter 6)


EC: English Catalogue

EDUC: Education (Chapter 6)

FIC/J: Fiction and Juvenile Literature (Chapter 6)

GTHB: Geography, Travel, History, Biography (Chapter 6)

LgB: the Chatto & Windus Production Ledger Books, Reading University Library.

LtB: the Chatto & Windus Out-Letter Books, Reading University Library

LPB-L: Logic, Philosophy, Belles-Lettres (Chapter 6)

MED: Medicine (Chapter 6)

MISC: Miscellaneous (Chapter 6)

PC: *Publishers’ Circular*

Princeton: the Besant Papers, General Manuscripts Collection, Princeton University Library

PSEMNN: Politics, Sociology, Economics, Military, Naval (Chapter 6)

PY/DR: Poetry and Drama (Chapter 6)

REL: Religion (Chapter 6)

Sheppard: the Sheppard Collection of Besant Papers owned by Mrs Barbara Sheppard, London

Late at night I picked up a book by Walter Besant which was called All in a Garden Fair ... What its merits may be from today's 'literary' standpoint I do not know. But I do know that that book was my salvation in sore personal need, and with reading and re-reading it became to me a revelation, a hope and strength.

Rudyard Kipling in Something of Myself (1937)

I sat near to Besant, and talked with him ... Commonplace to the last degree; a respectable draper.

George Gissing in his Diary, Monday 19 November 1894

It may be that out of the thousands who now live by letters there are not twenty who will be remembered in a hundred years: that does not affect the question at all. It is enough for us to remember that there are these thousands who actually live by producing attempts at literature, and who do really lead, whether in its higher forms or not, the Literary Life.

Walter Besant in The Pen and the Book (1899)
Introduction

'You', said my guardian angel, 'are to be endowed with certain powers of imagination which you will do well to cultivate; you will have a tolerably good memory, which you will also cultivate, if you are wise; in good hands you might become a scholar, a divine, a preacher, a journalist, a novelist, or a historian. There will be limits, of course, to your powers. I fear that to you will not be granted the supreme gift of the foremost rank. But you will do what you can ...'.

Thus wrote Walter Besant at the end of his life, imagining the choice offered to him before its beginning. Both as an example of his prose, and as an account of his life, it is just. The style is clear, straightforward and slightly banal; if we exclude 'divine', Besant performed all the other roles listed at some time in his life. Above all, there is a sense in this passage, as so often in the Autobiography as a whole, of a steady, quiet honesty: he had not been of the foremost rank, but he had done what he could. It is a strange valedictory tone for a man who was one of the most popular novelists of his period, and who had been regarded by many contemporaries as the natural spokesman for the professional author.

Walter Besant was born on the evening of Sunday, 14 August 1836 at 3 St George's Square, Portsea, only a few streets away from the house in which Dickens had been born twenty-four years previously. The fifth of ten children, he was sent to St Paul's School, Portsea in 1848 and, in 1851, to Stockwell Grammar School. Between 1854-5 he studied for three terms at King's College, London. During the early 1850s, he spent many of his free hours, as Dickens had done in the 1820s, wandering around a London which

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was to be swept away in the great surge of re-development and sanitary reform of the 1860s and 1870s. He matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1856, and found himself among a group which included J.R. Seeley (who encouraged Besant to read Carlyle, Coleridge and Maurice), W.W. Skeat and C.S. Calverley. Graduating 18th Wrangler in 1859, he made an unsuccessful attempt at journalism, and then retreated to teaching mathematics at Leamington College. He could not, however, reconcile his growing religious doubts with the orthodoxy of the College, and only escaped the obligation to take holy orders by accepting a job as a professor of mathematics at the Royal College, Mauritius in 1861. While in Mauritius Besant wrote a novel (which was rejected) and a number of essays on French literature which were published under the title *Early French Poetry* in 1868 soon after his return to England. The years immediately after 1868 were devoted to journalism (writing leading articles for the *Daily News* and contributing to the *British Quarterly Review*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, *Temple Bar*, *Saturday Review*, etc.), his income from which was augmented by a part-time job as Secretary to the Palestine Exploration Fund, a role which he performed from 1868 to 1886. 'The secretaryship of the Palestine Exploration Fund', Besant commented, '... was the cause—the sole cause—which enabled me to realise my dream of a literary life without dependence, and therefore without degradation... I would urge upon everybody who proposes to make a bid for literary success to do so with some backing—a mastership in a school, a Civil Service clerkship, a post as secretary to some institution or society; anything, anything, rather than dependence on the pen, and the pen alone.' The steady income also allowed Besant to marry Mary Foster Barham (1854-1904) in October 1874, by whom he had four children.

In 1868 an article by Besant on a voyage to Réunion was published, uncorrected and with no acknowledgement, in *Once a Week*, a magazine then edited by James Rice. Rice apologised, praised the piece and invited

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2 'Between 1868 and 1873 inclusive, I do not suppose that I ever made so much as £200 a year for all this work.' *Autobiography*, p. 171.


4 James Rice 1848-82, educated at Queens' College, Cambridge and Lincoln's Inn, called to the Bar 1871; his legal career, as with so many things Rice attempted, never quite took
Besant to contribute a short story to its 1868 Christmas issue. In 1869 Besant wrote the magazine’s major Christmas story, ‘Titania’s Farewell’, and some time later Rice proposed that they collaborate on a three-decker novel, the plot of which he had already devised. *Ready-Money Mortiboy* was published, with great success, in 1872, and was followed in the next ten years by a string of jointly-authored novels and short stories.


In 1882 Rice died, and Besant became the sole author of his novels. In the next nineteen years he produced a full-length novel a year, as well as the occasional shorter novel or collection of short stories. In 1884 he was one of the prime movers in the creation of the Society of Authors, became its first secretary, was chairman between 1889 and 1892, and edited its journal, the *Author*, from its inception in 1890 to his death.

Besant became actively interested in the conditions of the poor in East London and, on the back of his most successful novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), became directly involved in the creation of the People’s Palace in Stepney. After its opening by Queen Victoria in 1887, Besant ran its ‘literary circle’, and edited the *Palace Journal*. In 1884 he initiated ‘The Home Arts and Industries Association’ which was concerned with the creation of a string of evening schools teaching handicrafts. In 1897 he proposed the creation of ‘The Women’s Central Bureau’ to act as an employment agency specifically designed for women. In 1900 Besant was involved in the creation of the ‘Atlantic Union’ whose aim was to improve commu-
nication and understanding between Britain and North America. He was knighted in 1895 on Lord Rosebery's recommendation for his philanthropic work, particularly in the East End.

Besant was a highly clubable man. He became a Mason in 1862 which, though he never cared for its 'rights and ceremonies', satisfied his Christian Socialist desire for a 'religion which requires no priest, no Church standing between man and his Creator'.\(^5\) He became a member of the Savile Club in 1873 and was elected to the Athenaeum in 1887. He founded the Rabelais Club in 1879\(^6\) and the Authors' Club in 1892.\(^7\)

Besant's non-fiction work in the last ten years of his life concentrated on London. He produced a set of popular studies on the subject\(^8\) and was general editor from 1897 of a series of guidebooks and topographical essays entitled 'The Fascination of London'. His greatest efforts, however, were reserved for a monumental multi-volume opus which was intended to provide the modern equivalent of John Stow's work of 1598. Besant began work on the 'Survey of London' (which was to be published by the then publishers of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, A. & C. Black\(^\)) \(^{1894}\) This considerable task was substantially under-funded by Blacks, and represented an enormous drain on Besant's mental energy and material resources. The first of the ten planned volumes appeared only after Besant's death, by which time the whole series was threatened with eclipse by the official LCC survey of London which had been launched in 1900.

Besant died of Bright's Disease on Sunday, 9 June 1901, and was buried in the burial ground of Hampstead Parish Church.\(^9\)

\(^{5}\) Autobiography, p. 239.

\(^{6}\) See Chapter 4; despite its name and what Besant said of it, R.C. Terry seems convinced that it was founded to celebrate Dickens, see Victorian Popular Fiction, 1860-80 (London, 1983), p. 142.

\(^{7}\) For correspondence concerning the Authors' Club see the Sladen Papers, Richmond Public Library.

\(^{8}\) London (1892), Westminster (1895), South London (1899), East London (1901); all published by Chatto & Windus. A school version of the first title was published as The History of London by Longman in 1893 on a royalty basis—see, for instance, Royalty Ledger 1888-1901, fol. 225, Longman Archive, Reading University Library.

\(^{9}\) For further biographical information see Arthur Digby Besant, The Besant Pedigree (London, 1930); Sir Walter Besant's 'Bourbon Journal', August 1863 (London, 1933); and R.E. Besant, 'The Portsea Besants' (unpublished typescript, Broadstone, Dorset,
Today Besant, if he is known at all, is remembered for his work with the Society of Authors, or his books on London. Neither aspect is studied here. His Society of Authors work has been comprehensively recorded by Victor Bonham-Carter and recently reviewed by Peter Keating.\(^\text{10}\) As for the work on London: almost all of it was written late in his career, and very little of Besant's contemporary reputation, and even less of his income, was derived from this source. In his own time Besant was known as a writer of a string of successful novels and, to a lesser extent, as a writer of short stories.

Nevertheless, how can one justify a large-scale publishing history of the longer fiction of a writer who died nearly ninety years ago, and whose works rapidly followed him into obscurity? In Besant's case there are two justifications. Firstly, as founder and prime organiser of the Society of Authors, Besant had a disproportionate amount of influence on how it viewed the business between authors, publishers and literary agents in its early, formative years, an influence that survived much longer than Besant himself. In other words, in order to understand the Society of Authors, we have to understand Besant, and to understand Besant we need to know something about his relationship with other authors, with literary agents (formal and informal) and, above all, with his main publisher, Andrew Chatto. Secondly, as Chapter 6 will prove, Besant's writing career spanned a period of transition during which the British publishing industry accelerated into a state of mass-production and mass-consumption in which cheap books and periodicals serviced a newly-enlarged reading public. Besant can be used as a probe to explore this important period. Unlike so many writers used to illustrate literary historical points, Besant was not a genius, nor was he even highly talented. He was therefore much more typical of his period than were, say, Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Trollope, Gissing, Bennett or Wells. He was atypical in only one respect: he was temporarily much more successful than most. This has the advantage of providing us with much more data than would normally be the case, for he flares more brightly than

\(^{10}\text{Victor Bonham Carter, }\textit{Authors by Profession} (London, 1978); \textit{The Haunted Study} (London, 1989).
many of his contemporaries and, in doing so, casts a wider, brighter light on his surroundings. For this reason, the following study is not exclusively concerned with Besant. Whenever Besant's publishing history raises more general questions, the thesis responds with contextual chapters (i.e. Chapters 3 and 6) which aim to provide a broader answer.

Chapter 1 shows how, like Dickens with John Forster, or George Eliot with George Lewes, Besant needed an informal literary agent to help him market his literary property. In choosing his co-author, James Rice, for that role, Besant condemned himself to a pattern of contracts whose terms, though they guaranteed immediate income, failed to acknowledge the growing commercial significance of the cheap reprint, or the fact that literary property might be a substantial source of profit in the medium term. These points are illustrated by a survey of the Besant-Rice-Chatto agreements between 1876 and 1882. The chapter is supported by Appendix 1 which lists the production history of the major Besant and Rice novels.

The protean nature of a late nineteenth-century bestseller is illustrated by Chapter 2 which follows Besant's first solo novel *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) through all its commercial metamorphoses from three-decker novel to sixpenny paperback. In the process Chatto & Windus's advertising policy is discussed and used as a means of assessing Besant's perceived popularity in relation to other Chatto authors. The remarkable impact of the novel on contemporary readers is explained, and its consequence in terms of the People's Palace is described. This Chapter concentrates on book publication; the periodical publication of Besant's work is discussed in Chapter 5.

Some of the questions about Chatto & Windus's cheap reprint policy of the 1880s, raised in the previous chapter, are set in a broader context and answered in Chapter 3. It establishes that some major novel publishers were, by the 1870s, issuing cheap reprints of three-decker novels only months after the first edition, thus undercutting the circulating libraries' market. By the 1880s, popular novels published at 31s6d were available to the public at 2s (often discounted to 1s6d or 1s8d) only four months after
Chapter 4 re-focuses on Besant, and two issues in his publishing history which emerged in the 1880s and act as bridge between the concerns of Chapter 3 and those of Chapter 5. The first half takes up the theme of premature re-issue again, although this time from the side of the circulating libraries. It follows the fate of Besant’s *All in a Garden Fair* (1883) which, having been serialised in the magazine *Good Words*, immediately reappeared in the bound annual volume of the periodical, volumes of which were bought by Mudie’s as a cheap alternative to the Chatto three-decker. This problem is set in context by discussing similar fates which befell Thomas Hardy, R.D.Blackmore and some lesser writers. The second half looks forward to Chapter 5’s discussion of marketing Besant’s literary property abroad, and explores the difficulties Chatto had with ‘English on the Continent’ rights: in particular his attempt to increase the value of these rights by playing the two contenders, Tauchnitz and Gradener, off against each other. This issue is pursued into the 1890s, and is set in context by reference to a number of other Chatto authors who were being marketed in a similar way. This chapter is supported by Appendix 2 which details the production history of Besant’s major novels.

Chapter 5 complements Chapter 1, in the sense that it is partly a study of literary agency, although on this occasion it was a professional agent, A.P.Watt, who was now acting for Besant. It also complements Chapter 2 by concentrating as much on periodical publication as the earlier chapter had on book publication. It aims to prove that, as had Rice before him, Watt gained more from the relationship with Besant than Besant himself did. In the process we will look at the nature of Besant’s later contracts, the way in which his literary property was exploited (becoming a sort of franchise operation) by the packaging of separate serial, book, dramatic, provincial, continental, imperial and North American rights. It will also suggest that, ironically, Besant’s inclination to bulk-sell his rights which had so disadvantaged him in the early and middle years of his career, may
well have ensured him a better income as his popularity among book-buyers began slowly to decline in the 1890s, and as the 6s first edition took over from the profitable three-decker.

A broad statistical survey of the publishing history of the period is provided by Chapter 6. By looking at annual production rates, the shift in the quantities of books on given subjects published, and the changing price structure of published material, the chapter aims to establish the claim that 1870-1910 marked a unique period of transition in British publishing. This discovery will help us understand the peculiarly favourable climate in which Besant and some of his contemporaries achieved such a remarkable, if ephemeral, success. Appendix 3 provides the sets of data which underpin this survey, and which are illustrated by various graphs throughout the chapter.

The offprint 'Public Libraries and Popular Authors, 1883-1912', which is submitted in support of the thesis and bound in at its end, offers another contextual approach by presenting a quantitative survey of the holdings of public libraries 1883-1912. It presents evidence for the claim that Besant was substantially popular with the borrowers from public libraries at the turn of the century, although more so in London and the South than in the North or in Scotland. As a useful by-product, this chapter offers another means of assessing the relative popularity of many other major writers of the period.
Chapter 1

Negotiating for Besant 1876-82

‘When I’d go to Mr Mudie on Monday morning looking for an order for my own two properties he’d say: “Well, Tinsley, I’m afraid I can’t do much for either of them, but you can send me another twenty-five”—or fifty or a hundred as the case might be—“of your Golden Butterfly”! Same way with Will Faux at Smith’s. He’d give me an order for the Butterfly any time I called, but I couldn’t do much with my other two books. Same way up West. I began to curse the Golden Butterfly’.

William Tinsely, quoted by Edmund Downey in 1902

Introduction

As literary property became more exploitable, and as its value gradually increased, many successful writers in the nineteenth century had found themselves relying on friends and colleagues, acting as informal literary agents, to help them realise their financial worth: John Forster for Dickens, George Henry Lewes for George Eliot, Theodore Watts-Dunton for Swinburne, Moncure D. Conway for Mark Twain, George Meredith for Hardy.¹ In using James Rice, therefore, Walter Besant was placing himself in an honourable tradition. Like Forster and Watts-Dunton, Rice had a legal training and

was himself a writer. Yet despite these propitious parallels, the relationship was a disaster for Besant. It re-inforced his inclination to sell rather than lease his literary property, and it taught him to undervalue reprint rights and to cede initiative to the publisher. The following chapter will explore this theme, and will show how Rice pulling in one direction, and Chatto in another, ensured that Besant would never, even in the years of his greatest success, realise his true financial value.

One of the many paradoxes confronting a study of Walter Besant's contribution to the trade of literature in the later nineteenth century is that, despite the many things he had to say about the relationship between author and publisher, he himself almost never negotiated directly with any publisher about his fiction. Whenever possible he seems to have used an intermediary or agent as a way of distancing himself from the hurly-burly of the market place. This enigma certainly had its positive side: Besant's reluctance led him to encourage and patronise the literary agent in the 1880s, in particular A.P.Watt, and his prestige as an author during that period must certainly have helped Watt to establish himself in what was then a new and deeply mistrusted profession. His lack of much direct bruising experience of publishers and their ways, it might be claimed, gave him a degree of detachment and objectivity not shared by most other writers. On the other hand, it might be argued that all Besant's tough-talking about dealing with businessmen as a businessman, being firm about rights, rings a little hollow when one realises that he did most of these things, if he did them at all, at one remove.2

The extent to which Besant failed to be a businessman can be judged by his attitude to his own copyrights. All the evidence from an extensive survey of his publishing history suggests that, with a few minor exceptions, Besant

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2See, for instance, the list of warnings printed on the first page of each issue of The Author (the journal of the Society of Authors, edited by Besant from 1890 to his death in 1901). The fourteenth and final clause makes the point explicitly:

NEVER forget that publishing is a business, like any other business, totally unconnected with philanthropy, charity, or pure love of literature.
You have to do with businessmen. Be yourself a businessman.
ignored his own advice and sold his rights as soon as he decently could. His willingness to ditch copyright for a single lump sum payment early on in a novel's career cost him dear in the years of his greatest popularity (1872-1890).³

Although Walter Besant began his publishing career as a single author of semi-scholarly essays on literature, he had his first financial success, and learnt his craft as a fiction writer, while co-authoring a set of novels and short stories with Rice between 1872 and 1882. The first four years of this period, 1872-5, are not easy to explore because the archival record is so thin and poor. However, in 1876, the firm of Chatto & Windus⁴ began to take an interest in the novels of Besant and Rice, and from this point on the evidence (in the form of Ledger and Letter Books) becomes much more substantial. By exploring it we shall be able to trace a complicated pattern in which Rice's lack of status as an author, Besant's gentlemanly embarrassment about negotiating his own contracts, and Chatto's steady determination to advance his new firm's interests, all contributed to an under-valuation of Besant's literary property which was to leave a bitter taste in the author's mouth and was to lead, indirectly and as a form of

³Assuming modest royalty rates of 20% on 31s6d, 15% on 6s, 15% on 3s6d, 12% on 2s, and 8% on 6d cover prices: Ready-Money Mortiboy (1872) would have generated an income of £1349.0.0 (excluding the 31s6d edition); The Golden Butterfly (1876) would have produced £2107.5.0 (excluding the 31s6d edition); All Sorts and Conditions of Men (1882) would have netted £2716.17.0; and a later novel, Armorel of Lyonesse (1890), would have returned £1237.4.0. Besant's actual income from these and other such titles was between a quarter and a half of these sums. The royalty rates applied above were based on those offered to Mark Twain by Chatto & Windus (see Dennis Welland, Mark Twain in England (London, 1978), p. 76). To ensure that they did not favour Besant, the rates chosen were always at the lowest end of those offered to Twain. In many ways the two writers' careers in the English market paralleled each other: between 1870 and 1910 Routledge, Hotten and Chatto together issued 'at least 1,150,000 copies of Mark Twain's books' (Welland, p. 231); between 1882 and 1914 Chatto & Windus sold 1,128,450 copies of Besant's works. According to Welland, Twain's English income was 'upwards of £20,500' (p. 231); using the royalty rates above, Besant or his estate would have earned around £20,463.0.0 from Chatto's alone.

⁴The firm was founded by John Camden Hotten (1832-73) in 1855 and was bought and re-named by Andrew Chatto and his sleeping partner, W.E. Windus, on Hotten's death. A year later Chatto wrote to Swinburne (who had been published by Hotten) that 'The retail shop has been done away with and we are laying ourselves out to do a very large publishing business' (1 January 1874, LtB 6: 737). The arrival of Percy Spalding in 1876 marked the beginning of a very active phase in the firm's history.
psychological compensation, to Besant's campaigns for improvements in the financial conditions of authorship. It is unlikely to be a co-incidence that Besant inaugurated what was to become the Society of Authors only a year after his long apprenticeship to Rice had been dissolved by the latter's death in 1882.5

The aim of this chapter is to make a chronological survey of the arrangements and contracts relating to Besant's books during the critical last seven years of Rice's life. Besant had, of course, published many works before 1876, and by that date had accumulated experience of a wide range of publishers and their styles from Bentley to Blackwoods, from Macmillan to the Tinsley Brothers. To what extent this represented direct experience of publishing practice unfiltered through an intermediary is questionable. Suffice it to say for the present that what evidence there is tends to suggest that Besant was certainly using Rice as a business partner for his fiction as early as 1872 in his negotiations with Henry S. King over the cheap reprint rights of Ready-Money Mortiboy.6 If we are to seek for evidence of Besant facing publishers heroically alone, then we shall probably have to look for it in the four years between 1868 and 1872 when he was breaking into print, not as an aspiring novelist, but as an essayist and academic manqué.

Given their earlier histories, it is perhaps only appropriate that neither writer makes his first appearance in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books in the guise of a popular author. On 13 April 1877 Chatto & Windus replied to a letter from Besant written in his capacity as Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund. There is nothing extraordinary in the letter itself, for it merely grants formal permission to the Palestine Exploration Fund to reproduce some extracts from the Gentleman's Magazine (then published by Chatto) in its 'Quarterly Statement'.7 What is extraordinary is that this

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5 A first planning meeting was held in Kensington on 26 September 1883, see Victor Bonham-Carter, Authors by Profession, Volume 1 (London, 1978), p. 119.
6 In Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Henry S. King, edited by Brian Maidment, in The Archives of British Publishers on Microfilm, First Series (Cambridge), H.S.King Publication Book Volume 1. On pp. 36, 38, 45, 47, 433-4, which deal with the publication history of Besant's and Rice's Ready-Money Mortiboy, the only contact mentioned is Rice.
7 Chatto & Windus Letter Book 7, folio 967 (hereafter all such references will be abbreviated to the following form: 'LtB 7: 967').
letter represents the sole written communication between Besant and Chatto & Windus recorded in their Letter Books over a five year period, a period which saw the partnership's greatest literary and commercial successes and which ended only with the death of James Rice and a letter of condolence from Andrew Chatto to Besant dated 27 April 1882.8

It would be absurd to claim that not one letter passed between the two parties, and it is certainly quite possible that the indexing system used in the Letter Books is not fully accurate, and that one or two letters do exist. Nevertheless, the disparity in the number of letters sent to Rice during this time (thirty-six are recorded in the Letter Books) and the two sent to Besant which mark the boundaries of this period, is so great that no reasonable error in the filing or preservation of letters can fully explain it. Part of the explanation for this may be found in the role performed by James Rice himself. Like Besant, Rice does not make his first appearance in the Letter Books in a guise in which we would immediately recognise him. Instead, and rather significantly, he is an agent, in this case as the London representative of the Canadian paper the Toronto Globe. Rice had, by this time, sold his rights in Once a Week, that 'rather languishing magazine' as Percy Fitzgerald was to call it,9 and was now the Globe's London correspondent. This new role probably suited Rice's temperament rather better than the job of magazine editor, for he seems to have been by nature something of a literary fixer and odd job man. Commenting on his talents twenty years after his death, Fitzgerald remembered Rice often recounting:

...some of his commercial efforts to exploit the stories—what elaborate treaties he entered into with colonial booksellers etc. In all these things Rice was the business manager and worked the "show" thoroughly well.10

Besant himself, in an obituary letter on Rice published in the Athenaeum in April 1882, reinforced the point: 'He was also ... an excellent man of business, shrewd, practical, and possessed of a great fund of common sense.'11

The extent to which Besant was prepared to defer to Rice on business

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8LtB 14: 445.
9The Times, 17 June 1901, p. 16.
10ibid.
matters can be judged by the contents of a letter sent to Chatto & Windus by Besant on 20 December 1876. The original seems to have perished and left no trace in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books. What survives is a fragment of it quoted in a letter sent to A.P. Watt by the publishers on 6 November 1914 in order to clarify the status of the copyright of Ready-Money Mortiboy. In this letter Chatto remarked:

...In a letter which we hold from the late Sir Walter Besant under date of December 20th 1876 (he was then Mr. Walter Besant) he sayd [sic] "I beg to inform you that in the matter of the novels written conjointly by Mr. James Rice and myself, I have authorised him to make any business arrangements that he may think best, and to deal with publishers and others in his own name for our joint interests, so that his signature to all bonds and receipts, etc. as regards these novels is sufficient. Subject therefore to his approval and on terms to be arranged between yourselves and him, I assign to you all my interest in the copyrights of the following novels, 'READY MONEY MORTIBOY':" and here follow five other titles.\(^{12}\)

Having been presented with such a formal and thorough washing of hands, it is hardly surprising that Chatto seemed to have concluded that further contact with Besant would be both unnecessary and unwelcome. From this point on to his death, Rice was to carry sole financial responsibility for a set of popular novels and stories to which, if some critics are to be believed, he contributed very little in terms of actual writing.\(^{13}\) To an extent, the collaboration with Besant allowed Rice to become a literary agent and advisor while retaining in part at least the appearance and reputation of an author.

**Rice and the Reprint Deal of 1876**

As with the first surviving communication to Besant, the letter Chatto & Windus sent to Rice on 1 December 1876 was quite unremarkable, being

\(^{12}\)Watt Archives (hereafter abbreviated to 'WA') [B] 41/20 [4].

simply an agreement to sell the Canadian serial rights of Mrs Linton's *The World Well Lost* to the *Toronto Globe* for £25. More interesting, however, is the short postscript signed, unlike the letter, by Andrew Chatto himself and scribbled in (on the Letter Book copy at least) above the date line:

PS. If you are this way in [sic] Tuesday or Wednesday next I should be glad to see you upon the subject of your novels.

This is a peculiarly casual way of introducing what, to judge from the spate of letters which was to follow soon after, was to be quite an important deal. It was certainly important enough for Andrew Chatto himself to sign it rather than leaving it to an anonymous clerk on behalf of the Company. As the letter from Rice which prompted this reply is not extant, we have no means of knowing whether Rice had proposed some form of deal or whether Chatto was initiating the idea in this letter. If it was the former, then this relegation of the subject to a postscript might well be the first move in a bargaining game designed by a potential buyer to reduce the value of the potential seller's goods. If the latter, then a calculated insouciance might be the best way of appearing cool and non-committal, a useful defence against a 'shrewd' businessman.

Whatever the tactics and whatever the motives, the proposed meeting was clearly successful enough to result in another letter being sent to Rice on 18 December 1876 stating the terms for a possible comprehensive agreement:

In consequence of "Ready-Money Mortiboy" having already been published at 3/6 and having been subscribed at 2/- we consider that the prospects of a 6/- edition of that book are so materially injured that we cannot make a better offer than £200 for the entire copyright of the series of six titles viz. "Ready-Money Mortiboy" "My Little Girl" "This Son of Vulcan" "The Case of Mr Lucraft" "With Harp and Crown" and "The Golden Butterfly" to be produced at intervals of about two months commencing at once with "The Golden Butterfly" and payable by two bills @ 4 & 6 months for £100 each.16

14 LtB 7: 836.
15 LtB 7: 850.

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This is interesting for a number of reasons. The negotiation seems to hinge on the marketable state of *Ready-Money Mortiboy*, and the implied exhaustion of its popularity casts a shadow over the other five titles. It certainly was true that, being the first of the Besant and Rice novels, and having been the subject of a four-year cheap reprint contract with H.S.King and Company, *Ready-Money Mortiboy* was not, at first glance, the hottest of properties.\(^{16}\) One wonders whether Rice had mentioned the possibility of a 6s edition in order to make the re-marketing of the novel sound a convincing proposition, or whether Chatto himself had raised it merely in order to dismiss it, thus making a negotiating point.

We must be careful about what is being suggested in this letter. A 6s edition in the mid-1870s was not at all the same thing as a 6s edition produced by Chatto in the mid-1880s. In the 1880s a Besant and Rice novel selling at 6s would be a deluxe, one-volume issue rather confusingly called a 'library edition'. In the 1870s, however, 6s was the standard price for a Chatto & Windus's first cheap reprint. During this period the price of the first, cheaper reprint produced after the three-decker at 31s 6d varied from publisher to publisher.\(^{17}\) H.S.King, for instance, plumped for 3s 6d when marketing *Ready-Money Mortiboy* as a reprint. Sampson Low, on the other hand, seems to have re-issued its more popular three-volume novels in a standard series—'Low's Standard Six shilling Novels'. Chatto & Windus had their 'Piccadilly Library' (named after the location of their offices in the 1870s), volumes of which also sold at 6s. Thus transposing an already selling novel from one publisher's price structure to another's could clearly cause problems, particularly when, as here, the second publisher had a higher initial reprint price.

This consideration may have seriously diminished the attractions of a 6s reprint for Chatto, but in practice it cannot have had much effect on his profits. For one thing, around 8,000 of the 9,275 copies of *Ready-Money*...
Mortiboy that he took over from H.S.King were 2s editions\textsuperscript{18} which fitted snugly into Chatto & Windus's cheapest range of popular reprints. For another, the remaining 1,275 copies were, according to the H.S.King Publication Account Books, sold off to Chatto & Windus at 1s 1d per bound copy and 7.25d per copy in quires.\textsuperscript{19} At these wholesale prices Chatto & Windus were running few risks: they would have made a reasonable profit if they had maintained a 3s 6d cover price, and a handsome one had they raised the cover price to 6s to conform with their other reprints in the 'Piccadilly Library' series. In pursuit of profit, Chatto & Windus could have been found offering \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy} at 2s and 'also in crown 8\textit{vo} uniform with the Piccadilly Novels 6/-' by 31 March in the \textit{Athenaeum}.\textsuperscript{20}

Whatever the truth about \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy}, and ignoring the problem of whether or not Chatto could reasonably have anticipated such a good deal from H.S.King, this one hard case certainly should not have been allowed to determine the sales value of the other five titles. That it clearly did says much for Andrew Chatto's negotiating skills, and very little for the much-vaunted shrewdness of James Rice. The publisher's astuteness was further demonstrated by his handling of what proved to be the prize find in this list of bestsellers. The list given in Chatto's letter of 18 December 1876 is not a strictly chronological one: \textit{With Harp and Crown} (1875), for instance, was published a year before \textit{The Case of Mr Lucraft} and \textit{The Golden Butterfly}, while \textit{This Son of Vulcan} was issued as late as June 1876. Chatto, however, places \textit{The Golden Butterfly} correctly at the end of this rather casual list, and betrays an eagerness to get it out under his own imprint '...commencing at once with "The Golden Butterfly" ...'. This keenness is reflected in the Chatto & Windus Ledger Books for, within four days of this letter (and within one day of a further letter sent on the 21 December partly qualifying the agreement of the 18 December),\textsuperscript{21} they

\textsuperscript{18}H.S.King, Publication Account Book, Volume 1, p. 38. The exact number of 2s copies according to this document was 8,161 in quires.
\textsuperscript{19}ibid., p. 36.
\textsuperscript{20}Athenaeum, 1877, Vol. 1, p. 429.
\textsuperscript{21}LtB 7: 852.
record an order for 2,000 copies of a 6s edition of *The Golden Butterfly.* There is evidence that this edition was being advertised as early as 17 February 1877, and although it was probably not actually available until late March or early April 1877, that still puts publication ahead of the first bill for £100 which, presumably, was not payable until mid-April. In the next twenty years *The Golden Butterfly* was to sell nearly 200,000 copies in one form or another, and was to prove, pace John Sutherland, the partnership's most successful novel.

Selling six novels in a job lot was not extraordinary—what was strange was that these books were not all of a piece. *Ready-Money Mortiboy,* as we have seen, was the odd-man-out. It had been marketed as a cheap reprint for four years and thus could quite reasonably be regarded (wrongly, as it turned out) as at least partly exhausted. In these circumstances a price of roughly £33 for all remaining rights could be regarded as fair if not exactly generous, considering that the authors had been paid just £50 in December 1872 for four year's rights by H.S.King. But three of the five remaining titles had only been published that year, and thus their reprint rights were virginal. Given that, £33 a book for the ‘entire copyright’ seems very little.

That little was made even less for Chatto by the convention of the deferred bill. As Chatto & Windus had the right to initiate reprinting immediately, and yet were only liable to honour the two bills in April and June 1877, there were two or three months during which at least some of the titles could be earning income before the full capital sum had to be paid. In fact, of the six titles, two were probably out by the end of March or early

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22Chatto & Windus Ledger Book 3, folio 120 (hereafter such references will be abbreviated to: 'LgB 3: 120'). The order was dated 22 December 1876.
23See the *Athenaeum* for 17 February 1877, Vol. 1, p. 211. The keenness of Chatto & Windus to identify its name with *The Golden Butterfly* is attested by the fact that this advertisement appears eleven days before the first batch of 750 copies were sent to the binder—see LgB 3:120.
24See LgB 3: 120, 346, 603, 676; LgB 4: 226, 288, 295, 559, 733. Sutherland, in *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (London, 1988) wrongly claims the *Ready-Money Mortiboy* was the most successful.
April just before the first bill matured,\textsuperscript{26} while the other four were issued in June and July 1877 around the time the second bill was payable.\textsuperscript{27} As H.S.King & Co. were paid for their copies of \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy} by a bill which did not mature until 23 August 1877, Chatto & Windus had a clear six months of income with very little capital investment in the novel.\textsuperscript{28}

Apart from the obvious financial advantage of getting at least some of the novels out as soon as possible, there was another reason for the very rapid issue of \textit{The Golden Butterfly}. It is very difficult to establish the precise date on which Tinsley Brothers released the three-decker version of the novel for, although it was announced as late as 8 December 1876 in the editorial columns of the \textit{Publishers' Circular},\textsuperscript{29} it was being advertised a month earlier in that journal,\textsuperscript{30} while the \textit{Athenaeum} carried a Tinsley Brothers' advertisement for the novel billing it as 'now ready at every Library' as early as 9 September 1876.\textsuperscript{31} However, even if we take the earliest date, there is only a five to six month gap between the issue of the first edition at 31s6d and the 6s reprint. Such a contraction of the time between first and cheap reprint editions cannot have been popular with the circulating libraries. Nevertheless, it would have been difficult for them to take retaliatory action against Chatto, because he was not the original publisher, or against Tinsleys, because they had no responsibility for the hasty reprint. As with the early issue of the cheap reprint of \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men}

\textsuperscript{26}The 1,500 volumes of the 2s edition of \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy} bought from H.S.King & Co. were ordered from the binders on 5 March 1877; a further 1,000 were ordered seventeen days later on 22 March. Chatto & Windus had been advertising \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy} in the \textit{Athenaeum} since 24 February. All the evidence points to a middle-to-late March date for the re-launch of the novel. \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy} was not catalogued in the fortnightly listings printed in the \textit{Publishers' Circular}, possibly because it was not, strictly speaking, a new edition but rather a re-issue of an existing edition under a new imprint.

\textsuperscript{27}According to the \textit{Publishers' Circular}, \textit{This Son Of Vulcan} was published between 1-15 June (p. 422), \textit{My Little Girl} and \textit{With Harp and Crown} between 16-30 June (p. 454), and \textit{The Case of Mr Lucraft} between 1-16 July (p. 486). The whole collection was first advertised under the collective title "The "Ready-Money Mortiboy" series' in the \textit{Athenaeum} on 9 June 1877 (Vol. 1, p. 748).

\textsuperscript{28}LtB 7: 919. The acceptance was for £271.2.3.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Publishers' Circular}, 1876, p. 972.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Publishers' Circular}, 2 November 1876, p. 882.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Athenaeum}, 1876, Vol. 2, p. 351.
(see Chapter 2), the 6s *Golden Butterfly* would have gained by being able to ride on the still-existing ‘market awareness’ created by the first edition’s advertising campaign and its reviews, something that a more normally-delayed reprint, with its nine months to a year gap, would have very little chance of doing successfully. The subject of premature reprinting will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

The letters to Rice from Chatto & Windus, dated 21 December 1876 and 4 January 1877, made no major changes in the reprint agreement, but are useful to the historian in the sense that they provide further examples of Rice functioning, not so much as an author, as a general negotiator and go-between. It is Rice Chatto & Windus informed, not King, when they give King & Co. permission to continue selling *Ready-Money Mortiboy* until February 1877, and when they agreed to ‘take the stereotype plates, and remaining stock at fair evaluation.’ When, by 4 January 1877, King & Co. have clearly changed their minds and want to off-load their remaining stock as soon as possible, it was to Rice that Chatto & Windus replied. So completely did Rice seem to be acting the agent that, during the three months of negotiations over *Ready-Money Mortiboy*, the Chatto & Windus Letter Books record only one letter sent directly from one publisher to the other, and this was little more than a covering note for a bill of payment. Even here, however, the ubiquitous Rice makes an appearance as part of Chatto’s excuse for not being certain of the exact amount involved: ‘...as Mr Rice had the a/c away we have not been able to verify this.’

By 22 March the negotiations for the stereotype plates of *Ready-Money Mortiboy* were complete, and Chatto & Windus sent Rice a bill for £30 dated 25 July 1877. In response to a request Rice must have made in a previous letter to them, Chatto & Windus replied:

> We note your instructions respecting the manner in which announcements of the authors names shall be made and will in all future advts. carry out your wishes. Please send us as soon as convenient the

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32 LtB 7: 852, 864.
33 LtB 7: 852.
3421 February 1877, LtB 7: 919.
opinions of the press for all the stories as they are now at press and we
shall publish them at very short intervals in the order you suggest—
with the exception of "Mortiboy" which in consequence of the very
heavy stock we had to take over from King & Co we shall have to
bring out immediately there is no likelihood of our wanting a reprint
of this work for sometime to come.35

This letter is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, unless the
Chatto & Windus Ledger Books are wrong, it was misleading as to the
state of publication. The first order for 1,500 copies to be bound had been
sent to the publisher's binders on 5 March 1877. On the very day this
letter was written, a second order for another 1,000 from the binders had
been placed, not something a cautious publisher like Chatto would have
done without substantial proof of the book's popularity. It is possible that
advance orders were sufficient to justify this second binding order, but the
more likely explanation is that Ready-Money Mortiboy was already out when
this letter was written.36

More importantly, the Chatto & Windus Ledger Books indicate that,
while The Golden Butterfly had been ordered from the printers on 22 De­
cember 1876 and was being bound by February 1877,37 This Son of Vulcan
was not ordered from the printer until 21 March 1877, while My Little Girl,
With Harp and Crown and The Case of Mr Lucraft were not ordered until
24 April, a fact which hardly squares with the phrase 'all now at press'.

James Rice's concern with the proper presentation of the authors' names
and Chatto & Windus's request for 'The opinions of the press' both empha­
sise the apparent importance they invested in advertising, and what might
generally be called 'public relations'. Rice's preoccupation is particularly
interesting: what was it that he wanted changing? In the earliest Chatto
& Windus advertisements Besant and Rice are characterised simply as 'The

35LtB 7: 944. The references in the letter are to the 2s edition.
36The 2s edition of Ready-Money Mortiboy is recorded in the Publishers' Circular as
having been published between 1 and 15 March (p. 205). The matter is somewhat
complicated by H.S. King & Co. being recorded as the publisher. This probably means
that the Circular was sent one of the cancelled title-pages as proof of publication.
37LgB 3: 120.
authors of Ready-Money Mortiboy'. By 17 March 1877 anonymity had been dropped and they were billed as 'James Rice and Walter Besant'.

It cannot be this change Rice was requesting because it was made prior to his letter. The advertisement in the Athenaeum of 24 March is identical in wording to that of 17 March, but then it would have been set up and printed before Rice's letter could have had any effect. It is to the following week's advertisement that we should turn in order to discover the nature of Rice's request. In the full-page Chatto & Windus advertisement printed in the Athenaeum of 31 March 1877 we find both The Golden Butterfly and Ready-Money Mortiboy mentioned, and both now carry the legend 'by Walter Besant and James Rice.' Whether it was Besant's insistence, Rice's modesty, or simply a desire for alphabetic consistency that forced the change, from then on, until the end of their collaboration, in advertisements and on title-pages, Rice was to assume the subordinate position.

Chatto & Windus's wish for 'the opinions of the press' was understandable, although it must have been clear to Rice (for he had obviously seen some of the advertisements) that the publishers had access to at least some press opinions for, by 24 February, a quotation from The Times was already decorating Chatto's advertisement for The Golden Butterfly. If Rice did supply the publisher with press opinions, he must have been very irritated to observe nothing but that single quotation from the Times used throughout the launch of Ready-Money Mortiboy and The Golden Butterfly, and nothing at all printed in the first three advertisements for the 'Ready-Money Mortiboy' series' in the Athenaeum in June 1877.

It would be misleading to suggest that Chatto & Windus's letter of 22 March was part of an elaborate conspiracy to delude and cheat Besant and

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38 See, for instance, the advertisement in the Athenaeum, 24 February 1877, Vol. 1, p. 246.
40 Athenaeum, 31 March 1877, Vol 1, p. 429.
41 Athenaeum, 24 February 1877, Vol. 1, p. 246. Chatto & Windus had probably lifted this quotation directly from the Tinsley Brothers' advertisement for the first edition where it had been used from 18 November 1876 onwards (see Athenaeum 1876, Vol. 2, pp. 646, 739, 851).
42 Athenaeum 1877, Vol. 1, 9 June (p. 748), 16 June (p. 759), and 30 June (p. 848).
Rice. Quite apart from turning Andrew Chatto in a Machiavelli, such a theory would require a motive and that, with the sale of copyrights completed before late March, is clearly lacking. But there is a degree of concern for the authors’ wishes expressed in the letter which appears somewhat hypocritical when contrasted with what was, apparently, actually happening. Chatto & Windus did alter the by-line in their advertisements, but were misleading about the printing state of some of the titles, and about the use of press opinion. Very probably these were little more than trivial failures of communication but, added to the rather low total purchase price for the six titles, they represent a rather unfortunate start to the relationship between Chatto and Besant and Rice.

**Chatto Extends his Interest**

The selling of the entire copyright of six works is, by its very nature, a unique act which requires no continuing commitment from either author or publisher. Thus the relationship between Chatto & Windus might have ended with the completion of negotiations in March/April 1877. To an extent, this seems to be what happened, for there is no record of any correspondence between the two parties for over a year. Besant and Rice seem to have remained with Sampson Low as one of their first edition publishers, issuing the semi-autobiographical (for Besant) novel *By Celia’s Arbour* through Low in 1878. Whether the Besant and Rice books were beginning to be viewed as having definite reprint potential, or whether it was simply a trick of the partial evidence, must remain uncertain, but what is clear is that, whatever had happened in the past, Sampson Low this time took out an option on producing a 6s reprint of their new novel.43 While this story was being published in book form, Besant’s and Rice’s conveyer-belt facility ensured that another novel, *The Monks of Thelema*, was being serialised in

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43 In the absence of most of the Sampson Low archives, we learn this indirectly through a reference in a letter written by Rice to Chatto & Windus: ‘I have got over the difficulty with Messrs S. Low and Co and got them to give up their right to publish the 6/- edition of *By Celia’s Arbour*. 8 July 1878, LtB 9: 493.
the *World*. It is upon the subject of this latter book that Chatto & Windus re-open their correspondence with Rice. On 7 May 1878 they enquire:

...Upon what terms would you be willing for us to publish “The Monks of Thelema” We have a splendid connexion amongst the novel buying public and great power of addressing and pushing the sale of such works.\(^{44}\)

This offer represented a higher level of commitment than a simple reprint arrangement because it inevitably involved the publisher in all the promotional activities related to the launch of a new three-decker novel: the additional advertising, negotiations with the circulating libraries and all the efforts involved in trying to secure copious and favourable reviews. Unlike the 1876 offer, Chatto & Windus clearly felt themselves to be in competition with other publishers and, in consequence, went in for some hard self-advertising by emphasising their strong marketing side, their power of ‘pushing the sale’.

What made Chatto & Windus so keen to step up their level of involvement in the works of Besant and Rice? In trying to do so, were they guilty of exaggerating their ‘great power’? The answer to both questions lies in the same set of statistics. It must have been clear to Chatto by the middle of 1878 that he had acquired a series of books which, if they had yet to prove themselves rampaging bestsellers, had at least already shown themselves to be reliable, steady sellers capable of generating quite substantial profits in the medium term. *With Harp and Crown*, for instance, was already two years old when Chatto & Windus re-issued it, yet it was to sell out its first 2s Chatto edition (of 3,000 copies) within a year of issue.\(^{45}\) The first 2s edition of *The Case of Mr Lucraft* (also of 3,000) was issued in October 1877 and was sold out by September of the following year.\(^{46}\) *The Golden Butterfly* sold 4,000 2s copies between November 1877 and August 1878.\(^{47}\) An answer to the second question lies in the Ledger folio recording the early

\(^{44}\)LtB 9: 418.
\(^{45}\)Roughly between November 1877 and October 1878, see LgB 3: 122.
\(^{46}\)LgB 3: 125.
\(^{47}\)LgB 3: 120.
editions of *Ready-Money Mortiboy*. The 8,000 copies of the 2s edition, which H.S. King had been unable to shift in four years, seem to have been sold off between March 1877 and November-December 1879.\(^{48}\)

Although the offer contained in 7 May letter did suggest a higher degree of confidence in Besant and Rice than the original reprint contract had implied, it was far from being a total commitment. After all, *The Monks of Thelema* had been serialised in the *World* and thus had already had its popularity tested and its title established in the public mind. By 6 February 1879, however, the publishers seemed to have abandoned their final reservations, for now they were actually soliciting an untried work from the partnership for serialisation in one of Chatto & Windus's own magazines (the *Gentleman's Magazine* or, more likely, *Belgravia*):

> Do you think that you and Mr Besant could oblige us with a story for serial publication of about the length of "'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay" or "Such a Good Man" and what would be the terms that you would expect for the English Serial rights only or for the entire English rights for 5 or 7 years including the republication only exclusive of all foreign and colonial rights?\(^{49}\)

The works quoted are examples of the 'long short story', normally about one-third the size of an average three-decker novel, and often written on commission from a magazine for its special 'Summer holiday' or Christmas issues (commissioning publishers often specified the type of fiction required by suggesting a particular length, see Chapter 5). From the correspondence which ensued it is clear that Besant and Rice felt too heavily committed to produce something for Chatto immediately. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the publisher's enthusiasm increased and, by 26 February 1879, he was offering what was tantamount to a *carte blanche*:

> Although we could have immediately used the story we wrote to you about there is no immediate hurry for it and we shall be quite willing to wait your own and Mr Besant's convenience for it; or should

\(^{48}\)LgB 3: 123.
\(^{49}\)LtB 9: 917.
you prefer it we should be pleased to arrange with you for next full
sized three volume story, for one of our magazines.\footnote{LAB 9: 952.}

This eagerness may partly be explained by the sales performance of some
of the Besant and Rice reprints during this period. \textit{The Golden Butterfly},
for instance, having sold its first 2s impression by August 1878, was to sell
out its next two impressions at the same price (both of 2,000 copies) by
October 1879.\footnote{LgB 3: 120.} It must have been clear to Chatto & Windus by early 1879
that the success enjoyed some of the Besant and Rice novels had probably
been limited more by their publisher's absence of vision than by any lack
of marketability in the novels themselves. The two letters referred to above
make it clear that Chatto & Windus were making a bid to take over the entire
production cycle of the novels from commissioning the serial to issuing the
cheapest reprint.

On the whole this bid was successful, although it was limited by a feature
which is evident in the Letter Books, and is even clearer in the Ledger Books,
of the period. Besant observed in his \textit{Autobiography} that Rice had suggested
that they publish the first edition of their first three-decker, \textit{Ready-Money Mortiboy}, as a 'commission book' (a book which the publisher undertakes
to distribute and market as though he were an agent of the author, and for
which he is paid a fixed commission or percentage), but he does not make
it at all clear whether their subsequent novels up to 1878 were issued in the
same way.\footnote{Autobiography, p.187.} Whether or not they were, it is evident that the three novels
produced by Besant and Rice between August 1878 and March 1881 were
issued initially as commission books. In response to Chatto & Windus's
letter of 7 May 1878, Rice must have referred to \textit{The Monks of Thelema} as a
form of commission book, because the firm acknowledged the point in their
reply of 12 June 1878:

\begin{quote}
We shall be willing to publish the 3 volume Edition of your new
novel "The Monks of Thelema" which you have printed, and to account
for all copies sold at 13s/6d a set in cloth 25 copies as 24.
\end{quote}
We will give £80 for the exclusive right for five years of cheap editions of "By Celia's Arbour" and "The Monks of Thelema".53

Rice must have accepted this arrangement, or something very like it, because not only does he, in one of the few letters from him preserved in the Chatto files (dated 8 July 1878), reassure the firm that "...I daresay I shall be able to agree with you for the publication also of The Monks of Thelema in 3 vols etc."54 but also the Chatto & Windus Ledger Books record the transfer of 756 unbound sets from 'Author' to the publisher's warehouse in late August of the same year.55

By now it was obviously Chatto & Windus's policy to buy up every potential Besant and Rice reprint they could. By Celia's Arbour had been issued as a three-decker by Sampson Low in February 1878; Low had also taken an option on the 6s reprint right. For whatever reason, Chatto's offer was more attractive to Rice than Low's, and it encouraged him to approach the original publisher with a request that he relinquish the reprint right. This approach was evidently successful for, in the same 8 July letter, he is able to inform Chatto that 'I have got over the difficulty with Messrs S.Low and Co. and got them to give up their right to publish the 6/- edition of By Celia's Arbour'.56 £40 per novel for five year's reprint rights is clearly an improvement on the £33 per novel for the entire remaining rights that Rice had accepted in 1876, but it remains unimpressive, particularly when one recalls that King had paid the joint authors £50 for five year's rights of Ready-Money Mortiboy in 1872.

Despite an apparent disappointment with the sales of The Monks of Thelema,57 Chatto showed no sign of reducing his commitment to the two authors. By March 1879 he was publishing a collection of Besant and Rice

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53LtB 9: 493.
54LtB 9: 493. This and the preceding letter are listed in the Letter Books under the same number.
55LgB 3: 223.
56LtB 9: 493.
57'We have succeeded in placing up to the present time about 450 copies of "The Monks of Thelema". Notwithstanding the favourable reviews, Smith & Son have not ordered any more than their first subscription'. Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 25 September 1878, LtB 9: 671.
short stories ('Twas in Trafalgar's Bay) and again paying them £40 for five year's rights. In December of the same year Chatto accepts another 'commission book', The Seamy Side, from Rice and offers the same terms 'as for “The Monks of Thelema”'. Not quite the same terms, however, for the first edition, at 971 sets, was over 200 sets larger than The Monks of Thelema print run, and Rice was able to force up the reprint rights fee from £40 to £50. The Seamy Side certainly justified that increase: the first 6s edition and its second impression (1,500 copies in all) were issued early, the first only four months after the three-decker edition, and sold out over the period June 1880-February 1881. The first 2s edition (with a print run of 4,000) sold out in just three months between February and May 1881.

Further evidence of the growing commercial value of the Besant and Rice partnership can be found in a letter from Chatto & Windus to Watt dated 17 February 1881. At this date the firm of A.P. Watt was still in its larval stage somewhere between a publisher and a fully developed literary agent. Watt was clearly hoping to act as an agent selling some of the works of Chatto & Windus's more established authors to country newspapers for re-serialisation (much as Tillotsons of Bolton, the newspaper agents had been doing since 1875). In response, Chatto sent a printed list of their Piccadilly Novels with a re-serialisation price handwritten against each title. There are just two prices: novels by Mrs Linton, Charles Gibbon, Mrs Oliphant, Justin McCarthy, James Payn and Thomas Hardy are priced at £10; only three sets of novels commanded the top price of £15: those of Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, and Besant and Rice.

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58 Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 24 February 1879, LtB 9: 946.
59 Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 8 December 1879, LtB 11: 98.
60 LgB 3: 331.
61 Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 10 February 1880, LtB 11: 202.
62 The three-decker edition of The Seamy Side was issued in February 1880; the first 6s edition was on sale by late June or early July of the same year, see LgB 3: 331.
63 LgB 3: 331.
64 Alexander Pollock Watt had begun his work as a literary agent sometime in 1875 when Dr George MacDonald had asked him to act as his representative; see Hilary Rubinstein, 'A.P. Watt: The First Hundred Years', Bookseller, No. 3619 (3 May 1975), pp. 2354–8.
65 Hepburn, pp. 36–7. See also Chapter 5.
66 LtB 12: 441.
Chatto, Rice and the Later Reprints

Why didn't Rice force a harder bargain with Chatto & Windus on the reprint rights of the partnership's novels? In the earliest days such apparent timidity had some justification: after all, there was precious little evidence from the sales figures of H.S.King & Co. that *Ready-Money Mortiboy* was a strong seller in reprint form. But by 1878-9 there was a wealth of evidence to suggest that the reprint market was a very profitable one indeed. The explanation probably lies in the stress James Rice placed on keeping financial control over both the first serialisation and the first book edition. Given the inflated price of the three-volume novel, and assuming sufficient popularity to encourage the circulating libraries to take up most of the 600-1000 sets which comprised the average first edition, then a reasonably handsome profit could be made even when the publisher was paid a commission as the book's distributor and advertiser. If we take *Ready-Money Mortiboy* as one of the few novels for which Besant gives us some figures for his earnings, albeit very approximate ones, then we can begin to see the financial importance of the first editions in serial and book form. According to Besant, 600 sets of the first book edition were printed and sold.67 This sale, along with the original serialisation in *Once a Week*, reprint rights to King for five years, and the subsequent purchase of all remaining rights by Chatto & Windus, constituted the sources of income from *Ready-Money Mortiboy*. Besant stated in his *Autobiography* that 'I do not think that my own share of the proceeds, from the beginning to the end, of *Ready-Money Mortiboy* reached more than £200 or £250'.68 If we take the mid-point between these two estimates, and assume that Besant's total income from the novel was around £225, and assume further that all proceeds were split equally between the two authors, then we arrive at the sum of £450 as the total income generated by the novel. We know that H.S.King paid £50 for five years' reprint rights, and that the remaining rights were bought for £33 by


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Chatto & Windus in 1876. Thus, of the £450 of total income, only £83 was earned by reprint sales, leaving the substantial sum of £367 earned by serialisation and the three-decker edition. In other words, over 80% of Besant's and Rice's total income from *Ready-Money Mortiboy* came from its two earliest appearances in print, and less than 20% from its subsequent ones. This remarkable imbalance must have created a powerful precedent very early in the life of the Besant and Rice partnership, and must have helped determine their attitude to the marketing of later novels. Such an attitude would certainly help to explain Rice's apparent determination to keep as much financial control as possible over the circulating library editions of *The Monks of Thelema* and *The Seamy Side*. It would also help to account for his apparently careless and unconsidered approach to deals over later reprint rights. Such an insouciance might well have been understandable in the early 1870s. By the early 1880s, with the circulating libraries beginning to falter, and the threat of premature reprints increasing (see Chapter 3), it would have been something of a financial liability.

One might, quite legitimately, ask why, if the commission book system was so financially advantageous, did Besant and Rice not apply it to the reprint editions as well, thus gaining greater financial control over a book's later career? The answer probably lies in the differences in quantity and time-scale between the first and later book editions. As we have seen in the case of *Ready-Money Mortiboy*, a three-volume edition could be as small as 600 sets and still show a considerable profit. The first single-volume reprint edition at 6s (or 3s6d after 1880) and the later 'yellowback' reprints at 2s, had to sell in much greater numbers to realise anything like the same amount of profit. Unless the novel were unusually popular, this meant that the reprint would have to sustain sales over a considerable number of years, and this in turn would imply a sufficient amount of warehouse space to store the stock of unsold books. In contrast, assuming that the circulating libraries took up most of the first book edition, there was hardly any time between the printing of the edition and its sale. Only a relatively unsuccessful book would present serious storage problems.
A corollary of the reprint's extended selling time was the need to invest more in advertising over a longer period in order to keep the work before the public for as long as sales were still likely. Again, the three-decker novel provides an illuminating contrast: although prior to, and at the actual moment of publication, advertising needed to be heavy in order to encourage large numbers of borrowers to ask for the title at the counters of Mudie's and Smith's (and thus increase the size of the libraries' orders), once that had been done the momentum created was probably sufficient to carry the title over a library season successfully. This would certainly be true if the novel had also benefitted from the additional publicity of good reviews and the occasional mention in a Mudie advertisement. From these contrasts it is clear that a reprint edition of profitable size required a greater capital investment over a much longer period coupled with a much more sophisticated marketing system than the conventional three-decker novel; it required, in Andrew Chatto's words, a publisher with '... a splendid connexion amongst the novel buying public and a great power of addressing and pushing the sale of such works.'

If Besant and Rice were not to retain financial control over the later editions, what were they to do in order to capitalise on the proven longer life of their novels? One crude way was to keep pushing up the lump sum payments for five years of reprint rights. We can see this happening when Chatto & Windus ups the sum by £10 to £50 for *The Seamy Side*. Such increases, however, tended to be nominal in the sense that they bore little or no relation to the actual sales figures. The obvious alternative strategy in such a situation was the royalty system, and it was some measure of the partnership's growing awareness of the reprint as a potential profit-maker that Rice suggested this strategy to Chatto & Windus during the negotiations over the last novel on which the two authors collaborated, *The Chaplain of the Fleet*. On 25 March 1881 Chatto & Windus wrote to James Rice:

We find that we sold only 964 copies of the 3vol Edition of "The

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69 LAB 9: 418.
Seamy Side"; and it appears doubtful whether it will be possible to place a larger number of your new story coming as it does so soon after "The Ten Year's Tenant" of which we still have rather a heavy stock of unsold copies; without a very large expenditure in advertising. We shall be willing however to adopt your suggestion of speculating in the whole edition of 1200 copies bound of your new novel "The Chaplain of the Fleet" you allowing an extra 50 free copies for the press & being ourselves at the cost of advertising and paying you for the copies [illegible word] at the rate of 10s/6d each by our bills at 3, 4, & 6 months.

We find in consequence of the great reductions that we have to make and the special terms we have to offer to wholesale dealers and exporters, we are unable to adopt the royalty system with any one series of cheap novels, and that practically it is an impossibility to do so on any 2/- novels. As you expect however a better offer for the cheap edition of "Chaplain of the Fleet" we shall be willing to give £60 for the 5 years right of the cheap edition of it.70

This letter is a fine example of the correspondence between Chatto & Windus and Rice. It is in turns hinting at disappointment and implying heroic confidence, toughly dismissive and then generously conciliatory. The 'only 964 copies' sold certainly sounds disappointing and might well have inclined the publisher to caution, although he might have been less depressed had he consulted his Ledger Books which record that the total number of sets of The Seamy Side received from Rice was just 972.71 Chatto had more genuine grounds for disappointment over The Ten Year's Tenant, which was a three-volume collection of short stories published in January 1881, but, as his correspondence is liberally peppered with dire warnings to authors about the unpopularity of collections of short stories, he could hardly claim to be surprised by sluggish sales.72 As with earlier letters in their correspondence, one senses that these preliminary remarks are designed as a form of 'softening-up' exercise, and are aimed at reducing the opposition's resolve

70LAB 13: 33.
71LgB 3: 331.
72See, for instance, a letter to A.P.Watt about Clark Russell's short stories, 18 April 1890, LtB 22: 906.
and confidence. This may appear to be a rather adversarial way of putting things, but it is difficult to find a more exact metaphor, particularly when one comes to the second paragraph. In this, Chatto & Windus seem to be offering a comprehensive explanation of why they do not offer their authors a royalty arrangement. The syntax is on occasions a little obscure: is, for instance, the phrase 'any one series' meant to imply that individual novels might have had a royalty agreement attached to them, but not a series of novels; in which case, why not *The Chaplain of the Fleet*? Or does it mean that Chatto & Windus cannot offer royalties on anyone's cheap novels? If the latter is correct, how can one explain a letter the publishers sent to A.P.Watt (acting as the literary agent for William Black) just four months previously?

> ...and to publish cheaper editions paying him [Black] a royalty of 15 per cent of the [illegible word] price on all copies sold.73

From the evidence of the Letter Books it is difficult not to conclude that Chatto & Windus were being, intentionally or otherwise, somewhat misleading in this particular negotiation with Besant and Rice. All the firm seemed prepared to offer as an alternative to a royalty arrangement for reprints is a further £10 on the lump sum payment. How inadequate an offer this was can best be judged by comparing the binding rates of the first few reprint editions of *The Seamy Side* (for which the authors received £50) with those of *The Chaplain of the Fleet* (for which they received £60). *The Seamy Side* sold about 2,500 higher price reprints (either 6s or 3s6d) in about three and a half years (June 1880-October 1883);74 *The Chaplain of the Fleet* sold about 6,000 copies at the higher price in exactly three years (November 1881-October 1884).75 Of the 2s edition, *The Seamy Side* sold 10,000 copies in two years (February 1881-January 1883);76 While *The Chaplain of the Fleet* sold 14,000 in twenty-one months (January 1883-October 1884).77

73 Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, 10 November 1880, LtB 12: 248. The letter concerns a possible three-volume novel to be serialised in Chatto & Windus's *Belgravia* in 1882.
74 LgB 3: 331, 590.
75 LgB 3: 423, 643.
76 LgB 3: 331, 590.
77 LgB 3: 423, 643.
These figures alone would suggest what a good bargain Chatto & Windus had negotiated for themselves. An even more graphic demonstration can be produced if we apply a hypothetical royalty agreement to *The Chaplain of the Fleet* figures. If we take a more modest arrangement than that proposed by Chatto & Windus to William Black, and apply a 10% royalty on the cover price, then we end up with an income of £105 for the first three years of the higher price reprint, and no less than £140 for the first twenty-one months of the 2s edition. These figures ignore the fact that *The Chaplain of the Fleet* was to go on selling very well (particularly in the cheaper edition) for the remainder of the contract period, and moderately well for the next twenty years, and was even to be produced in a 6d version in 1901 (50,000 copies of which sold out in about seven years).\(^7\)\(^8\)

In January 1882 Rice seems to have made one more effort to get Chatto & Windus to acknowledge what both parties must by this time have been fully aware of, namely that the partnership's market value had increased dramatically over the 1879-82 period. Although Rice's letter has not been preserved in the Chatto & Windus files, the publisher's response has, and from this we can reconstruct Rice's argument. He tried to shame Chatto into a more generous arrangement by referring to the practice of other publishers: firstly William Ingram, the proprietor of the *Illustrated London News*, had paid them well for 'a long short story' written for the paper's special summer issue and, secondly, Rice had heard of the much better deal offered to William Black by Sampson Low & Co. Despite this moral pressure, Chatto & Windus remained unmoved. Their reply is characterised by another extraordinary mixture of tones from the bland good wishes through the customary cautions about three-volume collections of short stories (a rather effective tactic which moves the reader very rapidly away from the subject of Ingram's generosity) to a stern admonition about listening to misleading gossip. The letter's overall schoolmasterly tone is a vivid demonstration of the old adage that the best form of defence is offence:

> We a[re] pleased to learn that a new story by Mr Besant and yourself

\(^7\)\(^8\)See LgB 5: 833; a further 10,000 6d volumes were printed April-May 1909.
is to appear in the summer number of the "Illustrated London News" and that Mr Ingram has dealt so liberally with you in respect to it. We trust however that you will not want to publish it in book form too soon after the issue of the Library edition of "All Sorts and Conditions of Men" which has to come out this year. Before deciding upon the 3vol. form also it will be well to bear in mind that Mudie and Smith & the other librarians complained bitterly against "The Ten Years Tenant" being published in 3vols.

We shall be glad to treat with you for the reissue of this story upon the same basis as for your previous books. We have never heard what Messrs S.Low & Co are reported to have paid Mr Black; and we should not think it safe to allow any such reports which are often erroneous to influence our own judgement.

Wishing soon to have the pleasure of seeing you again strong and healthy.79

The publisher's comment about not knowing what Low had paid William Black was an example of Chatto's occasional inclination to be economical with the truth. Black's 1882 book was almost certainly the one Chatto was negotiating for in 1880, and for which he had offered £1,200 for serialisation and three-volume book rights, and a 15% royalty on cheaper editions.80 He may not have known the exact terms of the Sampson Low deal, but he could have reasonably assumed them to be even better than the ones his firm had offered Black.

Chatto's concluding wish was a vain one, for within three months of this letter James Rice was dead. Although Rice was involved in the negotiations concerning All Sorts and Conditions of Men during the summer and autumn of 1881, the book itself was written exclusively by Besant.

79Chatto & Windus to Rice, 26 January 1882, LtB 14: 229. In a letter written to Chatto just after Rice's death, Besant gave evidence of the attention he paid to the circulating libraries: 'I have found your note to Rice about the republication of the new short stories— I shall be guided by you in the matter—I am anxious not to offend the libraries again' (2 May 1882, Besant Letters, General Manuscripts Collection, Princeton University Library).

80See Chatto's letter dated 10 November 1880, LtB 12: 248, which is discussed in Chapter 2.
Rice’s Ambivalent Position

If James Rice was the good literary businessman that both Besant and Fitzgerald claimed,\textsuperscript{81} then he was so in a very limited area. As far as the serialisation and first book edition of the novels are concerned he probably did work ‘the “show” thoroughly well’, but he proved conservative and ineffectual when faced with a more recent development such as the cheap reprint market. In part, this ineffectualness can be explained by the canny and determined negotiating techniques of Chatto & Windus, but this can hardly be offered as a full explanation. It could be argued that the distinctive ‘mixed’ tone of Chatto’s letters to Rice provides a clue to an additional factor. The ambiguities of tone reflect fundamental ambiguities in the relationship between Rice and his publisher. Rice was never able to appear before Chatto exclusively as a bestselling author whose increasing popularity lengthened the lever with which he could move the publisher progressively to better deals. To Chatto & Windus at least he was always playing two or three other and much less successful rôles, rôles which the Letter Books faithfully record.

His first appearance in the Letter Books was as the correspondent of, and agent for, the Toronto Globe, though it is likely that Chatto & Windus would also have known of his background as a rather unsuccessful editor of a rather unsuccessful magazine. This sense of Rice as an agent rather than an author would have been reinforced both by the way in which Rice acted for H.S.King in the 1876 negotiations, and by the fact that his Toronto Globe job kept him firmly in the role of agent certainly to the end of 1878, if not later. In itself this would hardly be enough to determine Chatto’s attitude to him but, combined with what was to come, it must have helped to confirm the view that Rice was in a weaker position than was usual for a successful novelist.

It must not be forgotten that Rice was an author before he met Besant,\textsuperscript{81} The myth of Besant’s and Rice’s business acumen is a tenacious one. It can be found as late as 1983 flourishing in R.C.Terry’s Victorian Popular Fiction, 1860-80 (London, 1983), see p. 44.
having published a novel, The Mortimers, in 1870 in his own magazine. By all reports it was a poor piece, so poor indeed that it was never re-issued even in that most generous and forgiving of forms, the three-decker novel.82 Despite his success as a co-author, he still hankered after what Besant was to call an ‘independent literary position’. In September 1879 Rice must have decided to risk it, for he offered Chatto & Windus a collection of his own short stories with the modest suggestion that they might be reprinted in the publisher’s ‘cheap series’. On 18 September he received an unqualified rejection of this work,83 a response which, although probably just, would have done nothing to increase his negotiating self-confidence or enhance his reputation in the eyes of his publishers.

To add to the vulnerability of being a failed editor, a rejected single author, and an agent rather than a principal, the Chatto & Windus Letter Books provide evidence of another subordinating rôle. At the end of 1881 Rice seems to have acquired a bulk load of paper which, in his minor entrepreneurial way, he offered to Chatto & Windus. On 19 December they replied:

If you will cause the 19\(\frac{1}{2}\) reams of unused printing paper to be sent to Messrs Ogden & Co printers 172 St. John Street Clerkenwell we will endeavour to find some use for it, but it will have to be as you suggest at a considerable reduction from the cost price on account of the awkward size and poor quality.84

It seems somehow sadly fitting that the paper should have been of an ‘awkward size and poor quality’, but worse and even more typical things were to happen. Chatto & Windus’s final letter to Rice before his death, dated 23 March 1882, records the anticlimactic end to this deal:

Messrs Ogden report that they have received only 17\(\frac{1}{2}\) reams of the paper you sent, as it can only be used for catalogues we are unable to allow you more than 10/- per ream for it, we therefore have the pleasure

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83LtB 10: 450.
84LtB 14: 154.
of enclosing you our cheque as requested for the amount (£8.10.0) which we trust will prove satisfactory to you.  

It presumably did, or at least he seems not to have complained, for no further letters to Rice are recorded. By this time, anyway, Rice was suffering the penultimate disadvantage of being a dying man amidst the robustly living.

Besant’s first literary agent and mentor in the business of publishing died of cancer on the afternoon of Wednesday, 26 April 1882. It is fitting that the Letter Books, which record so many ambiguities and so many uncertainties over six years of negotiations, should conclude their collection of references to Rice with two letters addressed, for the first time in six years, directly to Besant. The first, dated 27 April 1882, declares Andrew Chatto’s firm intention of attending Rice’s funeral:

I would wish to be afforded the opportunity of performing the melancholy duty of attending in person.  

The second, dated 2 May, reveals that Chatto’s best intentions were unrealised:

I am very sorry that in consequence of my being compelled to serve in [sic] a special jury yesterday I was unable to attend Mr Rice’s funeral as I had fully counted upon being able to do.

One does not have to believe ill of Chatto to consider this final but unfulfilled commitment as a poetically proper end to an unsatisfactory relationship between co-author and publisher.

Besant Alone

If the survivors were inclined to such melancholy reflections they were not to be given time to indulge them, for the pressures of business hurried them
on and away. The day after the letter quoted above, Andrew Chatto was already inviting Besant to what was, presumably, a business meeting. On reflection there was nothing odd in this, for even the timing could be explained by the urgent necessity of getting a man (who had had no significant business contacts with his publishers for over six years) involved again in what was a growingly valuable property. Chatto would have been keen to get to know Besant's attitude to his work and its publishers—after all, it could be said that Rice's dealings had intertwined his interests with those of Chatto & Windus—Besant would have appeared to be a freer agent and, possibly, a less amenable one. Andrew Chatto's concern with these problems, and his recognition of the author's change in status since 1876, can be detected in the tone and vocabulary of his 3 May letter to Besant. The invitation is not in the form of an off-hand postscript inviting him to drop in, instead it is a formal request for an interview, with Chatto also offering to do the dropping in:

I should be very much obliged if you could kindly make an appointment for me to see you either here or at your own address as may be most convenient . . .

Rice had acted as a buffer cushioning Besant from the embarrassments of business; he himself admitted as much in the Autobiography:

The collaboration had its advantages; among others, that of freeing me, for my part, from the worry of business arrangements. I am, and always have been, extremely averse from making terms and arrangements for myself.

For that protection Besant had paid dearly. Whether Besant realised the extent of his sacrifice at this time is uncertain, but it is some indication of his dislike of thinking about personal negotiation, that he could not bring himself to consider any alternative negotiator until absolutely obliged to by Rice's illness. It is significant, too, that when forced he moved very quickly to new cover. We know that Besant had requested A.P. Watt to act for

88 LtB 14: 459.
89 Autobiography, p. 188.
him within a year of Rice's death for, writing in 1900, he referred to Watt as having guarded his interests 'for eighteen years', which places the move sometime in 1882. A more precise date than this is difficult to establish. The Watt archives do not contain any material relating to Besant dated earlier than 1887, so we cannot expect confirmation from that source. The Chatto & Windus Letter Books contain no overt reference to the changeover from Rice to Watt, so we are forced back on to circumstantial evidence.

The circumstantial evidence is itself rather thin for, coincidentally or not, and despite the publication of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, 1882 marks the culmination of a four year period during which Besant seemed to be experimenting with other publishers. It would be dangerous to emphasise the significance of this, because many of the books involved were works of non-fiction in which Chatto & Windus had never expressed great interest. Besant had certainly begun his literary career in the late 1860s with a number of non-fiction works issued by a range of publishers, and so his publication of *Rabelais* (Blackwood, 1879), of *Constantinople; a sketch of its history* (Seely, Jackson & Halliday, 1879), of *Gaspard de Coligny* (1879) and *Richard Whittington* (1881), both published by Marcus Ward & Co. in their 'New Plutarch' series (of which Besant was General Editor), could be seen simply as following the precedent established earlier in his career. This explanation, however, would not account for the next two works not published by Chatto & Windus.

*The Revolt of Man* (1882)

*The Revolt of Man*, a single volume novel which predicted the horrors and disastrous consequences of a future matriarchal society, was issued anonymously by Blackwoods in late March 1882. Like Trollope, though he never declared his motives for publishing anonymously, Besant seems to have tested his popularity, accidentally or otherwise, by initially divorcing his work from his name.91

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90 Iibid. p. 204.
91 See Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 2 Vols. (London, 1883), Vol. 2, pp. 11-15. It is an interesting coincidence that Trollope's experiments in anonymity were also
Although Besant's first letter to Blackwood has not survived in the record, we can guess that he tried to get the publisher to buy outright, for William Blackwood's reply on 20 December 1881 included the sentence 'I do not see my way to making you an offer of a fixed sum for it'.92 As an alternative he offered a half-profits deal which Besant promptly accepted. Indeed, Besant seemed to have accepted everything and anything Blackwood proposed concerning the novel. Even when the publisher asked for advice about the presentation of the book: should it be in two volumes or one? should it be priced at 7s6d or 3s6d? when should it be issued?93 all Besant would say was that he left 'in your hands all questions of price and time of appearance'.94 Even over the vexed matter of anonymity, which he himself had suggested, Besant was prepared to be led one way and then the other. Agreeing to Besant's original suggestion of anonymity, Blackwood commented that 'I hope we shall all have considerable amusement over the surmises of its authorship as we are now enjoying with the "Fixed Period".'95 However, immediately after the death of Rice, Besant wrote to the publisher with the urgent suggestion that:

...the death of my partner may make it desirable for me to assert my individuality in which case I would avow the authorship.96

Blackwood, however, put forward a marketing argument to counter Besant's personal one:

I feel sure it would be a mistake to reveal the authorship at present as people have only begun to talk about it & if the anonymous writer were known their curiosity about the work would be lessened.97

Despite the clear desire to establish his literary independence, Besant's only response to this was a meek 'I am quite in yours hands about the authorship'.98 Twenty-one days later Blackwood changed his mind, and

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92 Blackwood to Besant, ACC 5643/D12, Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland.
93 Blackwood to Besant, 20 December 1881, ACC 5643/D12.
94 Besant to Blackwood, 21 December 1881, MS 4415, Blackwood Papers.
95 Blackwood to Besant, 27 January 1882, ACC 5643/D12.
96 29 April 1882, MS 4429.
97 31 May 1882, ACC/D13.
98 1 June 1882, MS 4429.
suggested a second impression '...with your name on the title-page which would give it a fresh start'. Besant did not demur.

As we have seen, the issue of anonymity was bound up with the business of marketing *The Revolt of Man*. Part of the problem was that Blackwood could not decide on whether it should be in one or two volumes and, if in one volume, whether at 3s6d or 7s6d. Its 'utopian' subject made it a minority interest, and that fact discouraged the publisher from issuing it at too cheap a price. Two volumes might be easier for the circulating libraries, but it would then be difficult to sell the stereoplates to a US publisher, or to reduce the volume's price for a quick sale. Eventually, Blackwood settled on a single volume selling at 7s6d.

Published in late March 1882, sales were at first slow, and Blackwoods had to spend a lot on advertising to push the novel:

> The amount expended in advertising the first edition is quite sickening to look at but you will recollect the book hung fire for a long time & to keep it before the public notice had to be freely advertised with extracts from the notices ...\(^{100}\)

By May 1882, however, things were beginning to move. Only 300 copies remained out of the first impression's 1,050 print-run, and Blackwood was devising strategies to shift even these:

> If they hang fire we should print a new title-page with second edition on it & advertise it as such.\(^{101}\)

By 22 June there was a pressing need for a real second impression and Blackwood, sensing a larger market than he had anticipated, suggested printing on cheaper paper and reducing the price to 3s6d. Producing 2,000 copies would cost £160; with discounts to W.H.Smiths and others the impression would make £210 if it sold out, 'that is not very encouraging but nowadays we have to be content with a small percentage of profit'.\(^{102}\)

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\(^{100}\) Blackwood to Besant, 29 March 1883, ACC 5643/D13. For 1882 alone the advertising costs were £84.17.10 (see ACC 5644/F7, p. 329).

\(^{101}\) Blackwood to Besant, 31 May 1882, ACC 5643/D13.

\(^{102}\) Blackwood to Besant, 22 June 1882, ACC 5643/D13.
Within a year *The Revolt of Man* had gone through six impressions.¹⁰³ By 29 March 1883 Blackwood was able to send Besant £155.18.4 as his share of the profits on the first five impressions. In a covering letter he confirmed that, by late 1882, Besant's name was itself worth substantial sales: 'Wherever the anonymity was withdrawn the success in sales was far beyond my expectations'.¹⁰⁴

After the flurry of interest caused by the serialisation and first library edition of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* had faded, sales of *The Revolt of Man* also began to decline. The seventh impression was not required until August 1883, the eighth not until May 1884, the ninth in August 1890, and the tenth in November 1891.¹⁰⁵ The 425 copies remaining from Blackwood's final print-run were transferred, via A.P. Watt, to Chatto & Windus on 12 October 1896. In the following five years the latter publisher printed an extra 750 copies at 3s6d, and 3,500 copies at 2s.¹⁰⁶ By 1928 just 200 copies were on the stock books. In this later age, with women enfranchised and the first female having sat in the House of Commons, *The Revolt of Man* must have struck contemporaries as a message from an inconceivably remote world.

Although there is no correspondence in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books on *The Revolt of Man*, it could be argued that Chatto would probably not have been keen to market a novel so dissimilar from the usual Besant and Rice product, and with such slight chance of success with Mudie's. One might further justify this anomaly by observing that Blackwoods seemed to have made something of a house speciality of slightly upmarket predictive literature since their unprecedented success with Sir George Chesney's *Battle

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¹⁰³First impression: 7s6d, March 1882, 1,050 copies; second impression: 3s6d, July 1882, 2,100 copies (both ACC 5644/F7, p. 329); third impression: 3s6d, September 1882, 1,575 copies; fourth impression: 3s6d, October 1882, 1,050 copies; fifth impression: 3s6d, November 1882, 1,5050 copies; sixth impression: 3s6d, January 1883, 2,100 copies (ACC 5644/F7, p. 347).

¹⁰⁴Blackwood to Besant, 29 March 1883, ACC 5643/D13.

¹⁰⁵Seventh impression: 3s6d, August 1883, 1,573 copies; eighth impression: 3s6d, May 1884, 788 copies (both ACC 5644/F7, p. 348); ninth impression: 3s6d, August 1890, 788 copies; tenth impression: 3s6d, November 1891, 1,053 copies (both ACC 5644/F8, p. 117).

¹⁰⁶Eleventh impression: 3s6d, November 1896, 750 copies; twelfth impression: 2s, February 1898, 2,500 copies; thirteenth impression: 2s, June 1901, 1,000 copies (LgB 5: 344).
The Life and Achievements of Edward Henry Palmer (1883)

What cannot be explained away by precedents or special circumstances is the publication of Besant's *The Life and Achievements of Edward Henry Palmer*. Palmer, Lord Almoner’s Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, had been killed by a party of Arabs while on a secret mission to secure agreements from various sheikhdoms not to threaten the Suez Canal. As Secretary of the Palestine Exploration Fund, Besant had come to know Palmer quite well, and had collaborated with him in the production of *Jerusalem, the City of Herod and Saladin* in 1871. It must have seemed natural then for Besant to write the obituary letter on Palmer which was published in the *Athenaeum* of 11 November 1882, and equally natural for the same paper to carry an announcement three weeks later that Besant was to write Palmer’s biography. Half way between these two dates Chatto & Windus wrote to Besant:

> We should very much like to publish your Memoir of Professor Palmer; which we think would be most suitable if published immediately as a single volume of about 80,000 words—for this we should be willing to give £100 but if you preferred to make it a work of greater length to be published in two volumes at a higher price we of course should be able to markedly increase our offer.

It is difficult to judge the attractiveness of this proposition, partly because the sum offered is not placed in any context, and partly because the

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107 For instance, Chesney's *The New Ordeal* (1879); Trollope's *The Fixed Period* (1882); W. Minto's *The Crack of Doom* (1886). Besant also wrote another piece of predictive fiction, *The Inner House*, which was published by J.W. Arrowsmith in 1888 in 'Arrowsmith's Bristol Library'.

108 Published by Bentley. Besant had had trouble with the publisher: despite being sold out, the first edition 'showed a loss'. Writing to Bentley on 12 May 1889, Besant recalled: 'At the time it was a very great blow both to Prof. Palmer & to myself. The former never ceased to quote this experience as one which illustrated the difficulties of authors ...' (Bentley Papers, Add. Mss. 46645, ff.272-3). For the reprint Besant acted, through the Palestine Exploration Fund, as his own distributor (see *Autobiography*, p. 175).


110 *ibid.* 2 December 1882, p. 736.

111 Chatto & Windus to Besant, 21 November 1882, LtB 15: 499.
non-fiction works we might use as a measuring scale against which to judge it come from a later time when Besant was fully established as a successful writer of such works. Was the £100 a once and for all payment? Was it an offer for five year's copyright, and thus analogous to the arrangements made for his fiction? Was it simply an advance based on an implied royalty agreement? Whatever the truth of the matter, the deal was clearly not attractive enough to Besant, for we hear no more of the Palmer biography in the Letter Books. Instead, and within two months of Chatto's letter, the work is being announced in the columns of the *Athenaeum*: '[it] will be published by Mr Murray and will consist of eleven chapters and appendices'.

One can understand the sense of urgency expressed by Chatto's phrase 'most suitable if published immediately' for, to succeed, the book needed to capitalise on the public interest generated by Palmer's violent death, and this could not be expected to outlive him by more than half a year or so. Murray must have sensed this too, for each of their three advertisements spread through the April issues of the *Athenaeum* try to sustain expectation by listing *The Life and Achievements of E.H. Palmer* and then adding the tantalising parenthesis: '(next week)'. The speed of production and the pre-publicity clearly paid off for, despite a somewhat lukewarm review in the *Athenaeum*, the book achieved a considerable success. Within two months of publication 'Besant's Life of Professor Palmer' is taking first place in a non-alphabetical list of Mudie's attractions advertised in the *Athenaeum* on 7 July 1883. Even as late as 22 December of the same year the book is still being listed as high as sixth (out of 141 titles) under the general heading often used by Mudie of 'Popular Recent Books in Circulation'. Like *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, *The Life and Achievements of E.H. Palmer* seems to have achieved almost a full year of sustained circulation in Mudie's Library, for as late as 12 April 1884 it still occupied a high position (sev-

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116 *Athenaeum*, 22 December 1883, Vol. 2, p. 801; *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and *All in a Garden Fair* were also listed.
enth out of forty-seven) in the non-fiction ranks in Mudie's advertisement in the *Athenaeum.* Three months earlier, according to John Murray's advertisement in the same journal, the book had already gone into its fourth printing—only eight months after its first publication. The end of its run was then in sight, however, for by 3 May 1884 the biography was being listed for the first time as being on offer through Mudie's Clearance Catalogue.

It is hardly surprising that, with the runaway success of both *The Revolt of Man* and *The Life and Achievements of E.H. Palmer* during 1882 and early 1883, the communications between Besant and Chatto were rather infrequent over this period, particularly after the failure of the publisher's attempt to extend his influence by bidding for the Palmer biography. In fact there is a gap of exactly seven months (5 December 1882-5 July 1883) during which no letters are recorded as having been sent from Chatto & Windus to Besant. This, however, does not imply that communication had ceased, for the gap was filled by a series of letters to A.P. Watt who was by this time acting for Besant. As the first of the Chatto-Watt letters dealing specifically with Besant's work is dated 27 November 1882, we can narrow down his formal transfer from Rice to Watt to between 23 March and 27 November 1882.

Whenever Besant transferred, he took with him to his professional literary agent all the bad lessons and false values that he had learned from his amateur one. The consequences of this we shall explore in Chapter 5.

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118 *Athenaeum*, 5 January 1884, Vol. 1, p. 6. The price was 12s.
119 *Athenaeum*, 3 May 1884, Vol. 1, p. 554. Besant's *All in a Garden Fair*, which was published as late as November 1883, was also included in this list (see Chapter 4).
120 LtB 16: 12.
121 23 March 1882 letter, which was the last sent to Rice, included a reference to 'four acceptances' (each of £200) for *All Sorts and Conditions of Men.*
Chapter 2

All Sorts and Conditions of Men 1882-1918

...I never fail to read any novel upon which I see the name of Mr Besant, the author of All Sorts and Conditions of Men. I was myself horrified at the intensity with which that extremely clever book brought before my mind all those past images which had remained forgotten and buried in the accumulation of the remaining 30 or 40 years of my life.

T.H. Huxley, 1883

Introduction

The aim of this chapter, in conjunction with Chapter 5, is to explore the multitude of evolutionary changes a bestselling novel underwent as its publisher attempted to exploit every environmental niche offered by the late-Victorian book market. Publishing a bestseller in this period had similarities with a modern franchise operation. The piece of fiction could, and normally would, appear in a number of different forms in a number of different places at a number of different times. Most of these separate appearances would have, in theory at least, copyrights (and therefore potential fee-income) attached to them: initial serial rights, re-sale of serial rights to provincial, colonial and foreign periodicals; the right to produce the first book edition, the reprint rights (initially for five years in the case of Chatto & Windus); colonial book rights; English editions on the Continent (particularly Tauchnitz editions);
translation rights; dramatisation rights—and many others. The desire repeatedly to exploit these opportunities encouraged Chatto & Windus to market not only his current novel, but also Besant himself, and present him as an author of many bestsellers, and as a man of letters.

Ironically, Besant’s first solo novel was announced as though it were just another product of the old firm. At the foot of the Chatto & Windus advertisement in the 17 December 1881 issue of the Athenaeum, there is a notice of the forthcoming attractions in one of Chatto’s magazines, Belgravia:

A new serial by Besant and Rice - All Sorts and Conditions of Men

starting in January number.

According to the account in Besant’s Autobiography, Rice had been intermittently ill from early in 1881, and had suffered greatly during his last six months. As the partnership had produced two three-volume works in 1881, it was unlikely that Rice had had either the time or the energy to make a significant contribution to All Sorts and Conditions of Men. Indeed, by the time the Chatto advertisement appeared, he was already seriously ill and within four months of his death. Besant was a loyal friend to his collaborator, and was always quick to rush to the defence of Rice’s limited talents. It may be, therefore, that this billing was simply a courtesy on Besant’s part. However, whatever other reasons lay behind this promise of yet another Besant and Rice novel, it certainly made good business sense. It offered a product which was well known and, within its limitations, reliable and competent.

The context of that first advertisement reinforced the message of reassuring familiarity. Along with All Sorts and Conditions of Men was ad-

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1 A number of Besant’s titles were bought by would-be dramatists (see Chapter 5) and composers of operas: in February 1892, for instance, Besant gave permission to one Arthur Miller to use The Inner House (1888) as the basis for an opera, The Elixir of Life (WA 14/1 [1], [2]). In the 1920s the film rights to The Chaplain of the Fleet and All Sorts and Conditions of Men were sold to a rather optimistic and aptly-named ‘Ideal Film Co.’ (see WA 29/8 [9]).


3 Autobiography, p. 198.

4 Ten Years Tenant in January and Chaplain of the Fleet in April. Admittedly, Ten Years Tenant was a collection of short stories, for the most part already published elsewhere and in different forms, but it would still require editing and proof-reading.
advertised the 3s6d edition of Besant's and Rice's *Chaplain of the Fleet*, a typical product of the partnership which had been first published earlier in the same year.

Indeed, Besant and Rice reprints crop up in most of the Chatto & Windus advertisements of the period. Occasionally they received top billing (when, for instance, a new novel of theirs was first issued) but, more normally, their works received a mention half-way down the spread, frequently under a general series listing such as 'Piccadilly Novels' (at 3s6d) or 'New Cheap Editions of Popular Novels' (at 2s).

The 17 December 1881 advertisement in the *Athenaeum* was a modest affair, occupying no more than one vertical third of a page. By the 7 January 1882, however, the notice of the serialised form of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was occupying a more prominent position (middle of the first column of a two-column spread) in a larger Chatto & Windus advertisement. The January issue of *Belgravia* also carried stories by Wilkie Collins and Ouida, but the Besant and Rice novel gets the leading mention.

From January to August 1882 each monthly part of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was advertised at least once in the *Athenaeum*, and on no less than five of these eight occasions the Chatto & Windus advertisement also includes notices of Besant and Rice novels in their 3s 6d and 2s forms. Thus the firm's advertising policy, as far as Besant and Rice were concerned, shows a marked difference in the first six months of 1882 from what it had been in previous years. Now, more often than not, the names of Besant and Rice occur at least twice in each advertisement, and always take first place in the list of *Belgravia*’s attractions, despite competition from other writers of equal, if not greater, stature.

By 29 July 1882 the regular *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* serial advertisement is accompanied by a new notice (in the prominent top righthand corner of a full-page Chatto & Windus advertisement) for the three-volume edition of the novel: 'to be ready in September, at every library'. It is unusual for Chatto & Windus to advertise a book so far in advance of its actual

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publication date; this alone, therefore, is some indication of the degree of popular interest the novel had aroused.

By the 23 September a full-page Chatto & Windus advertisement in the Athenaeum is leading with the promise that All Sorts and Conditions of Men is to be published 'immediately'. Clearly, Besant is beginning to look like a bestseller to his publishers. At the foot of the same advertisement, the Belgravia Annual is promoted and offers, as its first attraction, 'stories by Walter Besant'.

Unusually for Chatto & Windus, who seemed normally to have contented themselves with one advertisement in the Athenaeum every two to four weeks during 1882, this advertisement is followed immediately by another on 30 September which again leads with All Sorts and Conditions of Men, whose title is now followed by the magical phrase 'at every library'. Throughout October 1882, All Sorts and Conditions of Men dominates the Chatto & Windus advertisements in the Athenaeum, and occupies the first place in Chatto's full-page advertisement in the Publishers' Circular of 2 October, pushing R.L.Stevenson's New Arabian Nights, Bret Harte's Flip and Trollope's Kept in the Dark into third, fourth and fifth places respectively.

The importance of All Sorts and Conditions of Men to Chatto is further emphasised by its place in the list of new Chatto & Windus publications mentioned by the Publishers' Circular in September and October 1882. On 1 September, for instance, Chatto announced that Besant's novel was in preparation, and this notice leads a non-alphabetical list which includes new fiction by, among others, Trollope, Ouida and Wilkie Collins. Again, on 2 October, a further editorial mention of Chatto & Windus's plans lists a reprint of Scott, a new work by George Macdonald and All Sorts and

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7 The exceptions to this rule are the advertisements in the successive issues of 25 March and 1 April 1882 which were promoting Ouida's In Maremma as their leading book (Athenaeum 1882, Vol. 1, pp. 368, 423); and the weeks of 16 and 23 December which were clearly designed to catch the lucrative Christmas market (Athenaeum 1882, Vol. 2, pp. 804, 859).
9 Publishers' Circular 1882, p. 945.
Conditions of Men before all the publisher's other big names.  

A similar sense of priorities, and particularly interesting because it comes from a source unaffected by any particular desire to promote Besant, is reflected in Mudie's advertisement in the *Athenaeum* of 4 November 1882 which, under the heading 'Fifty Recent Novels by Popular Authors' lists George Macdonald first, Besant (distinguished by having two novels listed by his name) second, Trollope third, Charlotte Yonge seventh, R.D.Blackmore ninth, Mrs Henry Wood fifteenth, and Mark Twain nineteenth.

This close analysis of Chatto & Windus's advertising policy as reflected in its advertisements in the *Athenaeum* and other journals can be justified on the grounds that the frequency and flexibility of the magazine advertisement makes it peculiarly sensitive to changing markets and the publisher's perception of them. The point about frequency is self-explanatory: rarely a month went by without some major Chatto & Windus advertisement appearing in, say, the *Athenaeum*; by the late 1880s this frequency had increased to almost once a week. 'Flexibility' needs a little more explanation. Apart from advertisements in the Christmas issue of the *Publishers' Circular*, Chatto & Windus's notices were rarely composed of anything other than letterpress, and thus were easily and cheaply rearranged and re-made. Being usually composed of either a single- or a double-column list of books, these advertisements are visibly hierarchical, and thus provide clear signs of the publisher's assessment of a writer's importance and/or popularity in relation to his contemporaries who happen to be published by the same firm. In Besant's case we are able to compare him with other novelists such as Hall Caine, Wilkie Collins, Ouida, R.L.Stevenson, Mark Twain and, occasionally, Trollope. A final justification for a survey of a publisher's advertisements would be that it provides a useful guide to when and how different editions, impressions and issues of the same work were marketed, and thus can act as a form of control experiment which tests the data provided by other sources. For instance, the Chatto & Windus Ledger Books have an index or 'Stock

Book' which gives no indication that there were any ledger entries referring to 2s impressions before February 1892. A survey of the Chatto & Windus advertisements revealed, however, there were such reprints being offered for sale as early as June 1884. Armed with such information, a search of the ledgers for around this time revealed the relevant, un-indexed entries.

It may be objected that too much attention is being paid to the Athenaeum and the Publishers' Circular at the expense of other journals which might be equally revealing. Of course, a full study of a publisher's advertising policy would have to include advertisements from a wide range of journals; but this was not intended as a full study, merely an indicative survey. The Publishers' Circular was chosen to represent the trade press which could be expected to have a keen interest in how and when Chatto marketed his novels. The Athenaeum was chosen for two reasons: one, because it was one of the most successful and widely-distributed journals of its type and, two, because the Chatto & Windus Trade Ledgers which survive, at least in part, from 1892, reveal how important the Athenaeum was to the publisher. Taking 1893 as an example: Chatto paid £109.11.7 to the Daily Chronicle for advertising space, £80.1.0 to the Daily Telegraph, £109.0.0 to the Pall Mall Gazette, £9.9.0 to the Saturday Review, £7.8.0 to the Academy, £54.8.6 to the Publishers' Circular, and no less than £216.3.0 to the Athenaeum, nearly twice the sum paid to its nearest rival.¹²

In various advertisements, publishers' announcements and library lists, Besant had achieved the high billing normally reserved for a well-established, highly popular author. Would the sales figures justify Chatto & Windus's confidence in him? A degree of uncertainty was still evident, despite Besant's leading position in the advertisements. In the Publishers' Circular for 2 October 1882, for instance, All Sorts and Conditions of Men is acknowledged to be by one author, but that author is described as being 'author of Chaplain of the Fleet' which was, in fact, the final, highly characteristic,

product of the Besant and Rice partnership. At least by October 1882, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* is admitted to be by one author. From 17 December 1881 to 28 October 1882 the *Belgravia* serial was described in the *Athenaeum* advertisements as being by Besant and Rice, a claim which leads to the schizophrenic state evident in the Chatto & Windus advertisement in 30 September issue. Here Walter Besant is announced as the author of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* at the top of the page, and Besant and Rice the authors of the same work at the bottom of the page.

It was common, then as now, to decorate new and successful books with a string of approving critical comments like a row of campaign medals. Two weeks after the book’s issue, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was already sporting eulogies from the *Academy*, the *Daily News* and the *Athenaeum*. By 28 October the *Weekly Dispatch* had been added to the list. Significantly, it was only after the critics had offered this reassurance of success that Chatto & Windus finally dropped Rice’s name from the credits on the *Belgravia* advertisement. The novel and the serial were now formally acknowledged to be by Besant alone.

**The Novel**

What was the nature of the novel on which Besant had staked his reputation as a solo author? *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* opens with Angela Messenger, Cambridge graduate and heiress of the great East End brewing concern of Messenger, Marsden & Co., tired of, and unconvinced by, the abstractions of political economy, and worried by the responsibilities imposed on her by her vast but fruitless wealth. She resolves to find out something of her firm, its property and, above all, its employees:

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13 *Publishers’ Circular* 1882, p. 945.
16 ibid.
I belong to the people...I cannot bear to go on living by their toil and giving nothing in return. What a dreadful thing is a She-Dives!17

Adopting the disguise of a dressmaker, a ‘Miss Kennedy’, Angela Messenger goes to live in a lodging house on Stepney Green run by Mrs Bormalack. The house is occupied by a collection of sub-Dickensian eccentrics: an American schoolteacher and his wife come to England to claim the title to a peerage which they think is rightfully theirs; an Australian convinced that he has the key to the common root of all biblical language and who is determined to get the scholars of the British Museum to recognise his discovery; a ‘professor of ledgerdemain’; a carver of ships’ figureheads; and an aged junior clerk, Josephus Coppin. Here the heroine also meets a young man, Harry Goslet who, as Harry Le Breton, has been brought up by Lord Jocelyn Le Breton almost as his adopted son. In one of the novel’s two prologues, Lord Jocelyn reveals Harry’s actual origins to him; namely, that he is really the son of a Sergeant Goslet of Stepney, and has received a gentleman’s education as part of a benevolent social experiment to prove that nurture is all, and that nature is nothing. On hearing this, Harry decides to renounce his upbringing, at least for the time being, and return to his social origins. He takes up the job of cabinet-maker, a training for which Lord Jocelyn had thoughtfully included among the more orthodox subjects in Harry’s gentlemanly education.

Despite various subplots, mostly provided by the assorted eccentrics at Mrs Bormalack’s, the main plot singlemindedly pursues its theme of the growing awareness, on the part of the hero and heroine, of the social and political problems of the East End and its people. Involved in this plot is Harry’s rascally uncle, Benjamin Bunker, an unscrupulous property dealer and general fixer. With the expensive and corrupt help of Bunker, Miss Kennedy sets up a dressmaking business which, to the disapproving surprise of the employees and the anger of her competitors, she runs as a sort of paternalistic co-operative. The sweatshop is replaced by a well-lit, well-

ventilated house with a gymnasium, a recreation room (for dancing), and a tennis court in the back garden. This, clearly, has a special significance for, as Harry comments 'That it [tennis] should descend to you and me and the likes of us is nothing less than a social revolution.' While this small-scale social revolution is going on, the hero and heroine have a series of discussions on the problems of the East End and what might be done about them, if either had enough money. Harry envisages an institution which would transform the area physically and morally. For him the problem is neither poverty nor wickedness:

What we want here . . . is a little more of the pleasures and graces of life. To begin with, we are not poor and in misery, but for the most part fairly well off . . . When all our works are in full blast, we make quantities of money. See us on Sundays, we are not a bad looking lot; healthy, well-dressed, and tolerably rosy. but we have no pleasures . . . Now, if this young heiress wanted to do any good, she should build a Palace of Pleasure . . .

By the time they meet again, Angela has already elaborated many of the plans unwittingly suggested to her by Harry. There are to be six public schools, three for boys and three for girls; a College of Art; and the Palace of Delight itself. In her imagination Angela already sees the transforming effect of these reforms:

In blissful reverie she saw already the mean houses turned into red brick Queen Anne terraces and villas; the dingy streets were planted with avenues of trees; art flourished in the houses as well as out of it; life was rendered gracious, sweet and lovely.

The conscious aim of these reforms was not that they should provide the East End with a thin imitation of West End culture, but that they should help to generate a new and independent East London style. Of the proposed College of Art:

\[\text{\small{18\textit{ibid.}, Vol. 1, p. 212.}}\]
\[\text{\small{19\textit{ibid.}, Vol. 1, pp. 135-6.}}\]
\[\text{\small{20\textit{ibid.}, Vol. 1, pp. 138-9.}}\]
They finally resolved that there should be professors, lecturers, or teachers, with convenient class rooms, theatres and lecture halls in dancing . . . Skating, bicycling, lawn tennis, racquets, fives, and all kinds of games; rowing, billiards, archery, rifle shooting. There was to be acting, with reading and recitation; there were to be classes on gardening, on cookery, and on the laws of beauty in costume. ‘The East End shall be independent of the rest of the world in fashion,’ said Angela; ‘we will dress according to the rules of Art!’ . . . there were to be lectures, not in literature, but in letter-writing, especially love-letter-writing, versifying, novel-writing, and essay-writing; that is to say, on the more delightful forms of literature—so poets and novelists should arise, and the East End, hitherto a barren desert, should bloom with flowers . . . there was to be a Professor of Grace . . . Professors of Painting, drawing, Sculpture and Design; and lectures on Furniture, Colour and Architecture. The Arts of photography, china painting were to be cultivated . . . classes for the encouragement of leather work, crewel work, fret-work, brass work, wood and ivory carving . . . ‘There shall be no house in the East End,’ cried the girl, ‘that shall not have its panels painted by one member of the family; its wood-work carved by another, its furniture designed by a third, its windows planted with flowers by another.’

This astonishing list, with its Ruskinian obsession with handicrafts, would not shame today’s most revolutionary WI group or most ambitious Further Education College. Having generated this autonomous culture of social graces and fret-work, Angela Messenger’s reforms would also provide the ideal place in which such arts and crafts could be practised—the Palace of Delight:

‘It shall have many halls,’ she went on, ‘One of them shall be for concerts, and there shall be an organ: one of them shall be for a theatre . . . one shall be a dancing hall, one a skating rink, one a hall for lectures, readings and recitations: one a picture gallery, one a permanent exhibition of our small Arts. We will have our concerts performed from our school of Music: our plays shall be played by our amateurs taught at our School of Acting; our exhibitions shall be supplied by

21ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 143-5.
our own people... It will be governed by a Board of Directors, elected by the people themselves, to whom the Palace will belong. And no one shall pay or be paid for any performance. And the only condition of admission will be good behaviour, with exclusion as a penalty.'

Harry's sense of the need for a new self-sufficient East End culture, a sense which he has successfully passed on to the heroine, is explained by his attitude to popular politics. His cousin, Dick Coppin, is a working class radical who frequents the 'Stepney Advanced Club'. In one of the few episodes where Angela is shown disagreeing with Harry, she upbraids him for adopting such a supercilious attitude to the Club's enthusiastic membership:

"They are real and in earnest, while you—"

"No, Miss Kennedy, they are not real... they are quite conventional. The people like to be roused by red-hot, scorching speeches; they want burning questions, intolerable grievances; so the speakers find them or invent them. As for the audience, they have had so many sham grievances told in red-hot words that they have become callous, and don't know of any real ones. The indignation of the speakers is a sham; the enthusiasm of the listeners is a sham...

"And they are not discontented," asked Angela, "with their own lives?"

"Not one bit. They don't want to change their own lives. Why should they?"

In Harry's view, an unthinkingly conventional attitude to politics has led to a combination of stoic and complacency. The only thing that would unlock the East Enders from this mental prison is genuine discontent. For Harry, and for Besant behind him, such discontent would flow from the vision of a better life offered by the Palace of Delight:

"Ah!" cried Angela, with a sigh. "The Palace of Delight: we must have it: if it is only to make the people discontented."

This theme, of generating a proper discontent rather than a conventional one, is taken up later in the novel when Harry himself addresses the 'Ad-

24ibid., Vol. 1, p. 312.
advanced Club':

'You are an irresistible giant who has only to roar in order to get what he wants.

Well, why don't you roar? Because you don't know what you do want. Because your leaders don't know, any more than yourselves; because they go bawling for things which will do you no good, and they don't know what it is you do want ... It comes of your cursed ignorance ... you know nothing: you understand nothing of your own country ... Another thing you want is Pleasure ... But you—you do not know how to enjoy yourselves. You don't know what to do. You can't play music, nor sing, nor paint, nor dance: you can do nothing. You can get no pleasure out of life ... the working man is master, provided the working man knows what he wants. The first thing ... is good lodging; the second is good food; the third is good drink ... the fourth is good and sensible education; the fifth is holiday and pleasure; and the last which is also the first, is justice for your girls ... It goes to my heart every time I come to see so many clever men, and able men, wasting their time over grievances which don't hurt them, when they are surrounded by a hundred grievances which they only have to perceive, in order to sweep them away.'

The novel concludes, almost inevitably, with the marriage of the hero and heroine, an event which is celebrated by a wedding supper held in the newly-opened hall of the Palace of Delight. In Harry's final speech to the assembled multitude, Besant again returns to his theme:

'It is not by setting poor against rich, or by hardening the heart of the rich against the poor, that you will succeed: it is by independence and by knowledge. All sorts and conditions of men are alike. As are the vices of the rich, so are your own; as are your virtues, so are theirs. But, hitherto, the rich have had things which you could not get. Now all that is altered: in the Palace of Delight we are equal to the richest: there is nothing which we, too, cannot have ... Brothers and sisters,

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26Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 222-3, 229, 233-4. The exploitation of women workers, particularly in the clothing industry, was a theme to which Besant was to return in a later and somewhat more sombre novel of social reform: The Children of Gibeon (1886). His founding of the 'Women's Central Bureau' in 1897 to assist women seeking employment was another response to this problem.
we will no longer sit down in resignation: we will take the same joy in
this world that the rich have taken. Life is short for us all: let us make
the most of it for ourselves and for each other...

A serious ending to the feast; but Life is serious.26

It is not difficult to assess the intellectual quality of most of the argu-
ments contained in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*. Despite its tortuous
plot and gallery of characters, it is essentially a rhetorical novel, as many
of the speeches quoted might suggest. What can one say for an argument
that bases itself upon the complacent assumption that, in the 1880s, there
was nothing very much wrong economically with the East End and East En-
ders? There is enough contemporary evidence to suggest that Besant was
fundamentally wrong on this point.27 Why did he under-stress poverty so
much?

It is one of Besant’s great strengths as a writer and, sadly, also one of
his great weaknesses, that he is often able to expose a current platitude
or conventional way of thinking by insisting on the truth of its opposite.
He, for instance, despised what he thought of as a liberal sentimentalist
assumption that virtue was often to be found at the bottom of society and
rarely at the top. In itself, this tactic can be refreshing and stimulating
but, unfortunately, Besant rarely leaves it at that. What was a minor truth
(that in some cases the opposite, or at least the alternative, is also valid)
becomes for him a major discovery whose value cannot be overrated. It is
after all true, as both William Morris and D.H.Lawrence were to argue, that
ignorance, aesthetic deprivation and the toleration of ugliness are themselves
part of the destructive experience of poverty. It is, however, not true that
these represented the primary cause of misery in the East End. For Besant,
the narrow insight becomes a vista, and a utopian vision is constructed by
a process of rhetorical elaboration. This process of small-scale truths being
turned into large, incredible generalisations is not exclusively a feature of

27See, for instance, Peter Keating, *Into Unknown England* (London, 1976); Anthony S.
1988).
Besant’s novels. As chairman of the Society of Authors, he was frequently making sweeping denunciations of most publishers on the grounds of narrow or highly-selective evidence.

In the case of All Sorts and Conditions of Men, the overstatement of the argument might have been more acceptable had Besant gone on to develop its implications in an original and rigorous way. After all, it is at least worthwhile taking the point of cultural independence for the working class seriously; but what does Besant offer us? A mixture handicrafts, gymnastics and dancing imposed on the East End by a lady and a gentleman in disguise.

What is to the modern critic a weakness, may well have been one cause of the novel’s enormous contemporary success. Its analysis must have appeared excitingly new, and must have seemed to offer a simple and refreshingly different solution to an old social problem. That the solution required only one major investment and then would be, as it were, self-seeding, must have been an added attraction. Moreover, the cultural autonomy recommended to the working class was something the average Besant reader would have believed his class to have achieved already. To this should be added the fact that the specific examples of the new culture offered by the Palace of Delight were accomplishments which would either have been admired by a middle class reader, or would have been thought particularly appropriate to a class which could, given a measure of romantic license, be regarded as a group of potential artisans and craftsmen.

Besant’s treatment of the heroine would also have appeared at once radical and reassuring. She is recognisably a ‘New Woman’: educated at Newnham (founded 1871), independent and with a forceful social conscience. Yet she allows Harry Goslet to take almost all the initiatives, and ends up in a perfectly conventional marriage with him.28

28 For a discussion of the ‘New Woman’ in the late-nineteenth-century novel see Peter Keating, The Haunted Study (London, 1989), pp. 175-216. Besant, although deeply concerned with the plight of exploited women, was strongly anti-feminist: apart from writing The Revolt of Man (1882) and ‘The Doll’s House—and After’ in the English Illustrated Magazine, VII (January 1890), he frequently attacked the advanced woman in such novels as The Rebel Queen (1893). In an unpublished and undated poem, Besant imagined a group of young women full of intellectual ambition marching towards Newnham. As they near the gates a voice seems to speak to them:
A radicalism which had the advantage of being undisturbing; a hearty, robust attitude to social problems which nevertheless had no hint of cruelty in it; a reforming programme which actually seemed practical, and yet also involved exciting architectural gestures rather than plodding good works; and, perhaps above all, the reassurance that, despite calls for cultural independence, we are all the same under the skin, and that a sergeant’s son, brought up a gentleman, will remain a gentleman in whatever circumstances he is placed—all these factors played a part in the novel’s success.29

The Early Editions

The first, three-volume edition was of 1500 sets, quite a large number for a form that traditionally was sold almost exclusively to the circulating libraries;30 750 to 1000 sets was the more normal size (even the later Besant and Rice novels never justified such a print-run: Chaplain of the Fleet, for instance, had a first edition of 1200 sets).31 The sale of the three-decker edition of a novel, however, was on its own a poor indication of the likelihood of sustained popularity. At best it provided an oblique indication, through

'Look not for love and wedding rings
The Muses nine are passionless
To speak of kisses and such things
Is out of form and fashionless.'

... Then shrieked that goodly company
Then turned and fled ad unam
Although the moon showed fair to see
The gates and towers of Newnham.

Manuscript from the Sheppard Collection. I am grateful to Mrs Barbara Sheppard, a granddaughter of Walter Besant, for showing me this and other private documents of the writer.

29 As with most of Besant’s other gentlemanly heroes, the presentation of Harry Goslet is flawed by ambivalence. Harry withstands the revelation of his origins and a transplantation to Stepney, but Besant ultimately lacks the courage of his official convictions, and rewards his hero not only with an heiress but also with a reprieve from his working class name. He may no longer be Harry Le Breton but, due to a clause in Angela’s marriage settlement, neither is he Goslet. He ends the novel with the respectably middle class and symbolic name of ‘Messenger’.

30LgB 3: 582.
31LgB 3: 423.
the number of copies taken up by the major circulating libraries (particularly Mudie's), of the estimated immediate demand. The actual immediate demand is best calculated by observing the length of time these library sets were kept in circulation, and the rate at which they were sold off through such outlets as Mudie's monthly list of *Surplus Recent Novels*. The longer a novel kept out of the surplus lists, and the fewer the copies offered when it did finally make its first appearance in that list (assuming a standard size of order), the more popular the novel.32

Assuming, however, that the novel was not just the vogue of a three or four month season, the best way of assessing popularity is to study the size and speed of sale of the first cheap reprint and subsequent editions. In Chatto & Windus's case this was invariably, from 1880 onwards, a single volume edition priced at 3s6d, and issued normally nine to twelve months after the first edition. This delay was originally instituted to give the libraries a chance to satisfy the borrowing market before a cheap reprint undermined their monopoly. By the 1880s, however, many publishers were beginning to put the squeeze on the circulating libraries by progressively reducing the time gap between first and second edition (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this subject). *The Chaplain of the Fleet*, for instance, which was first published in April 1881, was issued in its cheap reprint form in November 1881, a mere seven months later.33

But even this example pales into insignificance when compared with the indecent haste with which the cheap version of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was marketed. Published in three-decker form in October 1882, its 3s 6d version was ordered from the printers by Chatto & Windus early in January 1883, and was bound up and on sale within a month.34

32In practice, with the absence of any Mudie archive, and the fact that very few of these *Surplus Recent Novels* monthly lists seemed to have survived in any library, this method is very difficult to use. Mudie's and other circulating libraries do seem to have advertised surplus novels in such journals as the *Publishers' Circular* (certainly in the 1840s) and the *Athenaeum*, and there are a few surplus lists in the W.H.Smith archive. None of these lists, however, give the number of sets available so, at best, they could be used only to time the first appearance of the novel in surplus form, and not to chart the speed with which those surplus copies grew. More work needs to be done in this area.

33LgB 3: 423.

34LgB 3: 582. The stereotype plates for this edition were available as early as October
Although this must have seriously threatened Mudie’s and Smith’s investment in the three-decker edition, there is no record of any correspondence on the matter. This is puzzling, because the lack of reaction on Mudie’s part cannot be explained by the circulating libraries having already exhausted the novel’s popularity. As late as 17 February 1883, Mudie’s advertisement in the *Athenaeum* lists *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* fourth in a non-alphabetical list of the most popular novels at the libraries. Nor was Mudie always as quiescent as this. The Chatto & Windus Letter Books records the Librarian cutting his order in October 1883 for Besant’s subsequent novel, *All in a Garden Fair*, from 500 sets (one-third of the entire first edition) to 300 copies because of the early release of the annual volume of *Good Words* in which the novel had originally been serialised. Perhaps *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* had an appeal to borrowers which a cheap edition did not eclipse. Certainly, the continuing popularity of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* as a library book can be seen reflected in the fact that it does not appear in the advertisement for Mudie’s clearance catalogue until October 1883, a good year after its original publication.

The size of the first 3s6d edition was, by Besant and Rice standards, exceptional. Again, *Chaplain of the Fleet* provides a useful yardstick. The first impression of the 3s6d edition of *Chaplain of the Fleet* was of 2,000 volumes which sold out quickly over November and December 1881. This was followed by a second impression of exactly the same size which was exhausted by August 1882. In contrast, the first impression of the 3s6d edition of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was three times the size—6,000 volumes—and sold out in three months flat (January to April 1883). In the face of this obvious success Chatto & Windus remained cautious. The second 3s6d impression was of 3,000 copies which was exhausted by June 1882, for they were probably used to print the ‘G.R.’[George Robertson?] edition (for the Australian market) which was ordered on 11 October 1882.

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35 *Athenaeum* 1883, Vol. 1, p. 205.
36 Letter from Andrew Chatto to Besant, 18 October 1883. LtB 17: 290. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of this subject.
38 LtB 3: 423.
1883. A further impression of 3,000 sold out by October 1883.\textsuperscript{39} Despite the evidence of sustained demand for \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men}, Chatto & Windus stuck, with characteristic caution, to their modest print runs, apparently unable to bring themselves to believe in the book's success. The fourth cheap impression (3,000 volumes) and the fifth (2,000 volumes) were issued in October 1883 and March 1884 respectively.\textsuperscript{40}

Quite often, when Chatto & Windus issued a novel as a 3s6d reprint, its sole advertising consisted of a mention within a list of new volumes of 'The Piccadilly Library', this being the general title under which most of Chatto's reprinted fiction selling at 6s (up to 1880) or 3s 6d (after 1880) made its first appearance. \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} clearly justified better treatment. That the 3s6d edition's imminence was thought worthy of announcement is some indication of Chatto & Windus's special treatment of the novel. Usually such a promotional build-up was reserved for the forthcoming season's three-deckers. On 13 January 1883 Chatto & Windus's advertisement in the \textit{Athenaeum} has \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} conventionally classified under the 'Piccadilly Novels' heading, with a promise that it would appear 'shortly'.\textsuperscript{41} By 17 February the novel had been issued and now seemed to warrant a special, separate billing unconnected with the 'Piccadilly Library'.\textsuperscript{42} Right through March 1883 (to be precise: the 3, 17 and 31 March) Chatto & Windus's advertisements in the Athenaeum feature \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} billed separately from the 'Piccadilly Novels'.\textsuperscript{43} By the time we reach the full-page advertisement of 31 March, Besant's writings have assumed even greater prominence within the publisher's offerings. By now a newly-issued three-volume edition of Besant's short stories (\textit{The Captain's Room}), a contribution to the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} entitled 'An East End Chapter' (clearly aimed at the audience captured by \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men}), \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} itself, and a 2s reprint of \textit{Chaplain of the Fleet} were all

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{39}LgB 3: 582.
  \item \textsuperscript{40}LgB 3: 786
  \item \textsuperscript{41}\textit{Athenaeum} 1883, Vol. 1, p. 37.
  \item \textsuperscript{42}\textit{Athenaeum} 1883, Vol. 1, p. 227.
  \item \textsuperscript{43}\textit{Athenaeum} 1883, Vol. 1, pp. 270, 332, 421.
\end{itemize}
competing for attention on a full-page spread.44

With All Sorts and Conditions of Men well-established by the end of March 1883, its advertising slackened off, as did the frequency of the Chatto advertisements in the Athenaeum (down to one every three or four weeks). When All Sorts and Conditions of Men did reappear, it did so as an ordinary ‘Piccadilly Novel’, although even then it tends to occupy first or second place in a non-alphabetical list of between nine and sixteen novels (e.g. Athenaeum 20 October or 22 December 1883).45

After the fifth impression of the 3s6d edition sales seem to have declined, with the sixth impression taking eighteen months to sell its 2,000 copies (November 1884 - May 1886).46 Ever-cautious Chatto responded to this warning by reducing the seventh impression, issued in September 1886, to just 1000 copies.47 This reduction is not, in fact, a reflection of declining popularity, but rather an effect of the appearance of the next stage in All Sorts and Conditions of Men’s triumphal progress through all the states enjoyed by a late-Victorian bestseller. The ‘yellowback’, or ‘railway edition’ or, more prosaically, the 2s reprint, was normally first issued eighteen months to two years after the original three-volume edition. Until the 1890s, this 2s edition represented the cheapest version of the standard novel offered by Chatto & Windus. That the 6d reprint was no part of Chatto’s policy in the early 1880s can be seen both in the publishing history recorded in the firm’s Ledger Books and advertisements, and in the occasional reference made to such editions in the firm’s correspondence. On the 5 December 1882, just two months after the original publication of All Sorts and Conditions of Men, Andrew Chatto wrote to Walter Besant in response to a letter from a ‘Mr Horsfall’ which had been passed on to him by Besant:

I am very much obliged for the sight of Mr. Horsfall’s very flattering letter and for his suggestion concerning a cheap issue of All Sorts and Conditions of Men. We are now purposing[sic] the edition in one volume uniform with your other novels to sell at 3/6 and will follow in due course with the railway edition at 2/-. We believe that the recent fashion on the part of some publishers of bringing out very cheap

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44 Athenaeum 1883, Vol. 1, p. 421.
46 LgB 3: 786.
47 LgB 3: 786.
editions at 6d has had its day, and it is being found a better policy to
publish books in a more enduring form.48

As far as Besant’s novels were concerned, that policy was to stand until
1895 when The Golden Butterfly was issued as a 6d paperback novel. The
remainder of Besant’s novels, or at least those whose popularity had not
been dimmed by ten or fifteen years of cheapish reprints, were to appear in
the 6d format between 1897 and 1912.

The first 2s impression of All Sorts and Conditions of Men was ordered
on 23 April 1884 and was bound up and on sale in late May or early June of
that year. The 2s edition appears to have used the same stereotype plates
as the 3s6d edition, but re-imposed to allow for printing on a different paper
format.49

The 2s reprint’s first appearance in the Chatto & Windus’s advertise­
ments in the Athenaeum occurs in the 28 June 1884 issue where, on a full­
page spread, it is listed under the general heading ‘2/- Popular Novels’. Significant­ly, it is listed first in a non-alphabetical group of fourteen titles.50

The first 2s impression consisted of 8,000 volumes, a large but not excep­
tionally large print run. Again, taking Chaplain of the Fleet as a standard:
its first 2s impression was also 8,000 in size, and was issued in January 1883,
selling out by July of the same year. Following their standard pessimistic
pattern, and despite the clear success of the first impression at this lower
price, Chatto & Windus decided on a much smaller second impression of just
3,000. As if justifying this pessimism, the second edition took six months to
sell out (July 1884 - January 1885).51 In contrast All Sorts and Conditions
of Men’s first 2s impression sold its 8,000 copies in just two months (May-
July 1884). Despite this, Chatto & Windus still drastically reduced the size
of their second yellowback impression to just 4,000 copies. Like Chaplain
of the Fleet, this second impression took a similar length of time to sell
roughly half the number of copies of the first 2s impression, although in the

48LtB 16: 67.
49LgB 4: 23
51LgB 3: 643.
case of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* that was still an impressively short time—July to August 1884. Cautiously, Chatto raised the third impression to 5,000 copies but, by this time, the first, full flush of enthusiasm was over. The fourth 2s impression was not called for until May 1885 although, at 5,000 copies, it was still of a healthy size. The fifth 2s impression, ordered 31 August 1886, was for just 3,000 copies.52

The 2s impressions seem to exhibit the same sort of sales pattern as the 3s 6d, if one ignores the slightly larger print runs of the former. In the case of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* each began with a relatively large impression which sold out quickly. The second was half the size of the first but took roughly the same length of time to sell out. The third impression of the 3s 6d sold faster than the corresponding 2s impression, but this could be explained by the early release of the 3s 6d still being able to benefit from the stir of publicity created by the original three-decker edition and its reviews (after all, this third 3s 6d impression was published only ten months after Mudie's subscribers had first laid their hands on the novel). Although the fourth impressions of both types were as large as their respective third impressions, they both took longer to sell out. Both fifth impressions were smaller.

*All Sorts and Conditions of Men* and the People's Palace

*All Sorts and Conditions of Men* might have continued in the way of all brief bestsellers, selling a gently-diminishing number of 3s 6d and 2s copies as the years went by, but for one thing. By 1887 the 'Impossible Story', as Besant had subtitled *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, had, astonishingly, become not just a possibility but a fully-fledged reality. The great cultural and recreational centre of the Palace of Pleasure envisaged in the novel had taken, with the help of the Beaumont Trust and the Drapers' Company, actual shape in the form of a 'People's Palace' on the Mile End Road in Stepney. In the May of her Jubilee year, Queen Victoria drove through the streets of the East End to open it. Among those presented to the Queen on that occasion was Walter Besant who, by now, was thoroughly identified

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52LgB 4: 23, 245.
with his influential novel. It must have seemed only proper that, in his address to the Queen, Sir Edmund Hay Currie (Chairman of the Trustees) should refer specifically to Besant:

...the Trustees ought not to omit the record of their great indebtedness to the gifted writer, with whose 'Palace of Delight', framed by a generous and glowing imagination, the institution which they were endeavouring to bring into actual existence has, to its great pecuniary advantage, been largely identified in the public mind (Cheers). 53

_The Times_, which devoted six columns in its 16 May 1887 issue to a description of the occasion, reported Besant's presentation to the Queen (amid loud cheering), and went on to detail the procession route through the East End:

One of the most original of the mottoes was exhibited just opposite the London Hospital, where underneath the words 'All Sorts and Conditions of Men', were inscribed the following lines:

The people possess, as well as the Queen,  
A Palace they claim as their own;  
May Beaumonts and Besants in numbers be seen,  
To add further grace to the Throne. 54

It must be a rare and salutary experience for a reforming novelist to witness his theories being put to the practical test. Years afterwards, Besant was to reflect on the 'People's Palace' and the social experiment that took place in and around it. Of two of the cultural experiments so enthusiastically advocated by Angela Messenger, Besant said:

Everything did not go on quite well. At the billiard tables, which were very popular, the young men took to betting, and it was thought best to stop billiards altogether. The literary club proved a dead failure; not a soul, while I was connected with the Palace, showed the least literary ability or ambition. 55

These disillusions were, however, for the future. The immediate result of all this publicity was a sudden increase in demand for both types of cheap reprint. The small seventh impression of the 3s6d reprint (just 1,000 copies)

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53 *The Times*, 16 May 1887, p. 10.
54 Ibid.
had been exhausted by April 1887, and was followed by an eighth (of 2,000 copies) published in the very month of the Palace's opening. This sold out within three months. The ninth impression, again of 2,000 copies, was cleared by April 1888.\textsuperscript{56}

As one might expect, the 2s reprint experienced a similar boost to its sales. As with the 3s6d, a new impression was produced in May 1887 (the sixth, of 4,000 volumes) and sold out even more rapidly, the seventh impression being called for in August of the same year. This, too, saw its 4,000 copies disappear in two months.\textsuperscript{57} After the Jubilee year things did settle down again for both types of reprint, although the acceleration in sales was neither immediately nor completely lost. Sales were maintained at a higher level than in previous years. 8,000 volumes of the 3s 6d form were sold between June 1888 and August 1893; 16,000 copies of the 2s version were sold between August 1888 and April 1894.\textsuperscript{58}

Strangely enough, this rejuvenation of \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} had no direct effect on Chatto & Windus's advertising policy as exemplified in the \textit{Athenaeum}. In fact, \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} is not mentioned at all in the Chatto & Windus advertisements during 1887. Perhaps Chatto thought that the book was doing well enough on its extensive free publicity; perhaps the mental habit of assuming that most novels had a brief, meteoric career, which ended in their dimly glowing in the obscurity of ‘Cheap Editions of Popular Novels’, was too strong to break. Whatever the reason, the novel remained uncelebrated.

This is not to say that Besant's enhanced fame had no effect on Chatto & Windus's advertising. It was usual for Besant's name to lead a Chatto advertisement whenever he published a new novel, but in the first seven months of 1887 he did much more. Of the twelve advertisements published by Chatto & Windus in the \textit{Athenaeum} between 8 January and 23 July, Besant leads in no less than seven of them, and this at a time when Chatto

\textsuperscript{56}\textit{LgB} 3: 786; \textit{LgB} 4: 306.

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{LgB} 4: 245. Significantly, the sixth 2s impression was originally to consist of 3000 copies, but a further 1000 were added by a supplementary order dated 17 May 1887, just three days after the People's Palace ceremony.

\textsuperscript{58}See \textit{LgB} 4: 306, 490 for 3s 6d impressions; see \textit{LgB} 4: 394, 743 for 2s impressions.
is also publishing Hall Caine's Son of Hagar, R.L. Stevenson's The Merry Men and other Tales, Mark Twain's Life on the Mississippi, and new books by James Payn and Wilkie Collins. Most of these advertisements concern the promotion of Besant's newly-published historical novel The World Went Very Well Then. By 21 May, a week or so after Victoria's visit to Mile End Road, the first three places in a full-page advertisement are occupied by the new Besant novel, the 3s 6d edition of Children of Gibeon, and the first volume of a proposed 'Library Edition' of the works of Besant and Rice.\footnote{Athenaeum 1887, Vol. 1, p. 688. This edition was a deluxe, one-volume version of the novel selling at 6s. It should not be confused with the first, circulating library edition published in three volumes at 31s 6d.} By 23 July this prestige venture is receiving the top billing, with Ready-Money Mortiboy as the first of the series on offer.\footnote{Athenaeum 1887, Vol. 2, p. 132.} Chatto had clearly decided to use the People's Palace opening as an opportunity to promote Besant as a man of many novels rather than of one: of a new novel, of a prestigious 'Library Edition', and of the popular reprint: Besant, in fact, as a man of letters.

**Critical Reaction to All Sorts and Conditions of Men**

A really successful novel would not only be given prominence in a publisher's advertisements but, as soon after publication as possible, would also be decorated with a bouquet of quotations from approving critics. In the case of All Sorts and Conditions of Men, such acclaim appeared within three weeks of publication date. The Chatto & Windus advertisement in the Athenaeum of 14 October 1882 carried quotations from the critics of the Academy, Daily News, and the Athenaeum itself. A fortnight later a comment from the Weekly Dispatch was added. What then was the critical reaction to Besant's first single-handed novel? One answer might be: mixed, but not in the usual sense of that term, for the critics were almost unanimous in their approval. What were mixed were the reasons for that approval.

For the Athenaeum, All Sorts and Conditions of Men was important
because it was a novel 'with a purpose', and one that had 'many serious passages'; it managed, nevertheless, to be 'as lively and sparkling as any reasonable reader could wish'.\textsuperscript{61} In other words, Besant was a serious reformer with a light touch. For the \textit{British Quarterly Review}, however, seriousness is what would have ruined \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men}: '...our interest would fail the moment we regarded him [Besant] as thus seriously suggesting methods for practically dealing with them [social problems] on a broad scale.'\textsuperscript{62}

The \textit{Westminster Review} was determined to have it both ways. While acknowledging in the first sentence that, as the subtitle of \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} admits, '...the story is impossible', and that Walter Besant's schemes 'are somewhat utopian', the reviewer goes on to praise the novel's advice to workingmen as '...eminently sound and practical ...it is replete with truth and good sense'.\textsuperscript{63}

The \textit{Spectator} picks up this theme of the novel as a vehicle for education, but sees its advice as being more directed towards its middle class readership than the novel's working-class subjects. Arguing that \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} is not, at least morally, as impossible as its subtitle claims, the critic reasons prophetically that

\ldots there is no absolute impossibility in Miss Messenger's scheme for making the sons and daughters of toil happy, in a civilised, and elevated, yet practical way; her Palace of Delights [sic] need not be the unsubstantial fabric of a vision. It might interfere with the rules and practices of certain trades and industries, but there is nothing made more clear in this book—which abounds with instruction in the problems of life that lie around us, but which we rarely try to solve—than that those rules and practices demand interference and reform, in the interests of the community.\textsuperscript{64}

The terms chosen by the \textit{Spectator}'s critic are clearly intended to encourage readers to view Besant's work as more than just a good read. He is presenting

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61] \textit{Athenaeum}, 7 October 1882, Vol. 2, pp. 460-61.
\item[64] \textit{Spectator}, 21 October 1882, p. 1349.
\end{footnotes}
him as a sage, a social critic in the tradition of Carlyle and Ruskin who, while recognising the power of economic laws, argues for the superiority and priority of a humane moral order.

The Westminster Review makes a much more modest claim for the didactic aspects of the novel: 'It is a charming story and by no means uninstructive'.65 As far as the Westminster is concerned, the instruction offered is about the nature of life in the East End, the portrayal of which is discussed by the journal in terms not unlike those used by readers and critics alike to describe the impact of the 'Condition of England' novel in the 1840s. Here, forty years on, is the Westminster anticipating the wonderment of some readers:

To many readers the East London here so vividly portrayed, with its two millions of inhabitants, will be a new revelation; to nearly all it is more completely a terra incognita than some of the remotest regions of Europe, or even of America ...66

The critic's amazement may be conventional, his imagery is certainly tired, but he does express what many felt: that Besant and other writers (notably Booth and Gissing) were revealing a second unknown land within the familiar world to add to the northern industrial slums described by Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell and (occasionally) by Dickens. For the Westminster's critic, the force of this new land's impact on the reader is accounted for by Besant's 'realism': 'The chapter headed Sunday in the East End is very striking and too sharply realistic not to have been drawn from life.'67

The Athenaeum makes the same claim for the novel's realism, and clinches it with the inevitable image, this time in a version quoted directly from the book itself:

Mr Besant has made many wanderings in 'that great and marvellous unknown country which we call East London', and his studies bear the impress of nature.68

The novel's 'realism' appealed to the Spectator too, although its critic's use of the term displays a comfortable lack of rigour about its definition:

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66 ibid.
67 ibid.
...the ‘inauguration’ of the ‘Palace of Delights’ [sic], is serious, carefully-studied realism. The incidents are numerous, but not extravagant; the humour is never farcical, all the talk is natural, pleasant, attractive; and if the pictures of working-men and working-life are sombre and puzzling, the good angel’s plans and power are at hand to suggest a bright side.69

How all the talk could be both natural and exclusively ‘pleasant’ and ‘attractive’ is not explained. ‘Realism’ clearly requires that the ‘sombre and puzzling’ aspects be offset by an optimistic anticipation of the future. ‘Realism’ for the Spectator was a matter of a measured amount of moral tension firmly underwritten by vigorous optimism.

The British Quarterly Review remained, however, unimpressed by the claims for the novel’s realism. Accepting Besant’s admission, that the story is impossible, on its face value, the Quarterly went on to ask how it could ‘...go on feeling an interest in these characters which are either so unreal in themselves, or are placed in circumstances so improbable and outré ...?’, and answers by making a distinction which is echoed by many other critics:

Mr Besant interests us and makes us believe in them; he is here the romancer rather than the novelist. He sets out with certain things taken for granted, and finds a unity in the atmosphere which he creates. The illusion is maintained, even though he is fain to glance at some of the social problems of the day ...Great ingenuity is shown in working up to the dénouement without any collapse, and in reading we are not infrequently reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short summary of the qualifications of a romancer to the effect that his power was seen in walking on the slippery edge of a precipice and never tumbling over.70

For the British Quarterly Review, Besant’s charm lay in the absolute opposite of the ‘natural’ and the ‘real’. It was found in the creation of a hermetically-sealed world of attractive improbabilities which, once set in motion, functions coherently and consistently. It is this view of the novel which justifies the otherwise inexplicable linking of All Sorts and Conditions of Men with George Macdonald’s work in Chatto & Windus’s announce-

69 Spectator, 1882, p. 1350.
70 British Quarterly Review, 1882, p. 225.
ments in the autumn of 1882, and Mudie's listing of the novel directly after Macdonald's fiction in the Library's autumn advertisement.  

'Romance' seems to have been an irresistibly convenient equivocation, for many other critics used it as well, though not in the mildly patronising way of the British Quarterly Review. The Academy, for instance, confidently declared that 'All Sorts and Conditions of Men may . . . be described as a romance constructed from the materials of an ordinary novel. . . ', although the question of whether or not the 'ordinary novel' is realistic is comprehensively begged. Does the term 'romance' here mean anything more than a book with an improbable plot? Neither reviewer offers a more detailed explanation of the word, and one is left with the feeling that in these two cases the term simply hides the critics' slightly guilty enjoyment of a piece of escapism. The Spectator, however, takes the concept much more seriously:

If, instead of accepting Mr. Besant's story as 'impossible', one reads it from the author's own point of view, it gains very much in interest, and the flavour of its half-cynical, half-religious humour is brought out much more effectively than if it be taken merely as a romance of that unknown land, East London.

In this modern romance of philanthropy, fancy, fact, toil and love, which does not belong to any class of fiction, and has, in common with its predecessors, only the real seriousness and the unflagging interest that are characteristic of them all, there is imagination of a high order, very much above mere ingenuity.  

Romance augmented, then, not merely by the elements of the ordinary novel as the Academy would suggest, but by 'philanthropy' and a 'real seriousness'; a seriousness, however, which is entertaining. This combination of earnestness and entertainment was something that also struck the Saturday Review:

...it is one of the author's great merits that he has struck an entirely new and very fascinating vein of modern romance... The motive of the book... is worked out through the three volumes with an evident seriousness, with unfailing vivacity, and with a lightness and bright-

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71 See the Publishers' Circular, 2 October 1882, p. 882; and 'Fifty Recent Novels by Popular Authors' in the Athenaeum, 4 November 1882, Vol. 2, p. 585.
72 Academy, Volume XXII (7 October 1882), p. 255.
73 Spectator, p. 1349.
ness of touch and style which never degenerate into facetiousness. One charm of the work is that the seriousness, though present, is never self-assertive ... the interest never flags ... 74

This Victorian idea of fusing moral intensity with reader-engrossing interest is seen at its best, for the reviewers, in the characterisation of the heroine, Angela Messenger. For the Saturday Review the philanthropic Miss Messenger is ' ... amongst the most charming personages of modern fiction' 75 while, carried away by enthusiasm, the Spectator declared that ' ... the girl's grace, loveliness of person and mind, enthusiasm, good sense, ardent generosity, womanly tenderness, and girlish fun, make up a figure as attractive as it is unconventional'. Attractive it may be, but to claim that these utterly orthodox virtues of Victorian womanhood were unconventional, is to display a myopia which can only be explained by a complete abandonment of critical dispassion. The next sentence tends to confirm this:

She is like no other young lady in any novel within our knowledge, but she is unlike exceptional heroines of fiction in this, that she would be charming in real life,—a delightful 'sweetheart', an inestimable daughter, a wife to be coveted by all sorts and conditions of men. 76

Criticism has here been reduced to an exercise in wish-fulfillment.

The strength of the novel's conclusion was the subject of comment in a number of the reviews. The Academy, echoed by the British Quarterly Review, observes that ' ... the third volume ends after the manner of third volumes [in a love match and a wedding] but rather more impressively than is usual.' 77 The Saturday Review is more precise about what it admires in the novel's ending. In particular, Besant's treatment of the villain, Bunker; a treatment which, the reviewer claims, enhances the novel's realism:

It is an indication of the author's fidelity to nature that when the crash comes and Harry confronts Bunker with proofs of his villainy, Bunker ... gets off remarkably cheaply, and probably finds himself tolerably well set up in whatever district he selects as a new field for the

74 Saturday Review, 14 October 1882, p. 51.
75 ibid.
76 Spectator, p. 1349.
77 Academy, p. 255.
exercise of his powers.\textsuperscript{78}

The robustness of the villain is indeed one of the few strikingly convincing details in the novel, and would have been even more impressive had the evil Bunker been presented as a serious threat to the moral order gradually being established by the hero and heroine. Sadly, like many of Besant's other bad characters (notably James Carey in \textit{Children of Gibeon}), Bunker threatens and cajoles, and tries a bit of bullying; but he never gets within real striking distance of the virtuous. Besant is able to reprieve many of his villains, and even to suggest that they continue to flourish in a modest way, simply because they offer no serious challenge to the new order.

The reviews united to praise Besant's minor characters. Of these the \textit{British Quarterly Review} said:

\begin{quote}
Mr Besant contrives to get much amusement out of them without the least touch of unkindliness.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

This theme of comedy without contempt also occurs in the \textit{Athenaeum}:

\begin{quote}
His vivacity and humour, which often rise to pathos and never sink to caricature, tinge the whole story and make even his most serious passages delightful.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

The \textit{Spectator} goes further, and makes explicit what some other critics, when discussing Besant's characterisation, only vaguely imply:

\begin{quote}
There are two characters which, without being in the least imitative, remind us of Dickens. One is Bunker ... The humour of the old villain's tricks and talk, the delightful \textit{équivoque} of the situation, are very like Dickens, and would be telling on the stage. The other is Josephus ... a kind of 'Mr Carker junior' ... \textsuperscript{81}
\end{quote}

Although generally contemptuous of what he called 'criticasters',\textsuperscript{82} Besant would have been gratified by this sort of praise. Gratified firstly because,
apart from the long list of accidental similarities between him and Dickens, Besant did make one or two conscious efforts to imitate the Inimitable. When, for instance, he came to edit the Society of Authors' journal, the Author, he took the parallel so far as to print in bold type, directly under the title, 'Conducted by Walter Besant', a by-line redolent of Household Words and All the Year Round. However, it is in the presentation of his minor characters that Besant makes his strongest claim to literary descent from Dickens or, rather, what he imagined Dickens's achievement to be. In All Sorts and Conditions of Men Besant fills an entire boarding house with idiosyncratic, whimsical figures, each with his own particular mannerism or obsession. The reader is reminded of this particular mannerism each time the given character appears; it is attached to him like an Homeric epithet. Typically, however, Besant seems to have missed not only the point of Dickens's characterisation, but also the way it worked. There is no development, as there is for instance in the character of Pancks in Little Dorrit, from a vivid simile which, through repetition and elaboration, becomes a progressively richer and more complex metaphor for both the character's personality and its relationship to the society in which it has its being. From Pancks sounding like a steam tug to Pancks as a mechanical device, a subordinate mechanism of the huge social machine, is a step Besant's imagination cannot take. He is content simply to repeat the original image unmodified, so gradually reducing it to a decorative device, a sort of re-assuring catch-phrase which is comically static, changing neither the character nor his relationships. It has ever been the fate of a minor novelist to misread a great one, and Besant's characters, with their stagnant idiosyncrasies, are a dismal monument to this fact.

83 These include: place of birth (Portsmouth); a strong anti-Evangelical bias due to childhood experiences; an intimate knowledge of London gained from lonely wanderings through it when young; the battle for the recognition of an author's literary property, particularly in the USA; being involved in attempts (successful in Besant's case) to set up a society for the protection of authors' rights. Besant even managed to die on 9 June 1901, the thirty-first anniversary of Dickens's death. Others, too, seemed to perceive certain parallels: a cartoon, featured in the Chicago Herald in 1898, showed the squat figure of Besant wearing a pair of enormous shoes, one labelled 'Shakespere' and the other 'Dickens'.
Besant and the Art of Fiction

Besant would also have been pleased with the reference to Dickens because it placed him firmly in the line of what was described by the Athenaeum, in a review of one of his later books, as '... the best traditions of the older school of fiction',84 and what Besant in his Autobiography called '...the art of Fielding, Smollet, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Reade.'85

Whatever else this art did, it eschewed, according to Besant,

...analysis of character ...mere laborious talks— attempts to do on many pages what should be done in single strokes and in easy dialogue.86

He was determined that his characters should reveal themselves exclusively by their 'act and word' unconfused by authorial abstract speculation. The inclusion of Fielding and Dickens on his list indicates that Besant did not object to authors intruding into their works as interlocutors, but for Besant such intrusions were an opportunity for the writer to generalise his characters’ experience into broad social and moral essays. Authorial speculation and the portrayal of character were to be kept firmly apart:

For my own part I like my characters to tread the stage speaking and acting so that all the world may understand them and their revelation of themselves in works and ways, in thoughts and speech. Mine, it will be objected, is a simple form of art. Is it not, however, the art of Dickens, Scott and Fielding? Let me belong to the school of the Masters; let me be content to follow humbly and at however great a distance in the lines laid down by them.87

84 From a review of the Children of Gibeon in the Athenaeum, 20 November 1886, Vol. 2, p. 668. This is a somewhat ambiguous compliment for, in the same article, the critic observes that Besant's sense of tradition is beginning to have a deleterious effect on his style

Something of lightness of touch and something of invention seem now to be wanting, and Mr Besant is inclined to adopt the mannerisms of the great masters who have such an attraction for him. So much may be said without diminishing the gratitude which is due to Mr. Besant for preserving the best traditions of the older school of fiction.

85 Autobiography, p. 213.
86 ibid.
87 ibid., p. 214.
This is a typical piece of Besant's prose, combining an honest humility when talking of his own achievements with a series of grandiose half-truths when discussing broader issues. It is the same faulted tone which he used in his lecture and subsequent essay on the *Art of Fiction*, whose theories prompted Henry James to write his more famous rejoinder. In this lecture, Besant makes the claim that a good novel must have a 'story', and that such stories must consist of 'adventures'. Now, it is not that this is necessarily untrue, although its simple-minded phrasing certainly suggests naivety, but that, when inquired into, the crucial words evaporate into ambiguity. As James says of Besant's remarks:

...they seem to me to contain a singular ambiguity ... I do not think that I understand them. I cannot see what is meant by talking as if there were part of a novel which is the story and part of it which for mystical reasons is not ... The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread.

The 'guild' image is a neat piece of Jamesian satire for, at the time of writing, Besant was struggling to form the Society of Authors, and would have been particularly sensitive to the idea of a trade guild attempting to impose ludicrous regulations on its members. James was right. As soon as you made a close examination of what Besant was arguing the simple, apparently robust, no-nonsense critical language he employed condensed into platitude or evaporated into uncertainty. By all means let the characters reveal themselves through their acts and words—but who selects their words and, worse still, how much describing of their actions are you allowed before your descriptions become excessive and fall into 'mere laborious talks'?

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88 *The Art of Fiction* was delivered as a lecture at the Royal Institution on 25 April 1884, and subsequently published by Chatto & Windus in May 1884 at £1. By 14 June 1884 the pamphlet was into its second impression; see the Chatto & Windus advertisement in the *Athenaeum* (Vol. 1, p. 748) of that date. Unabashed by James's refutation, Besant returned to his argument in *The Pen and the Book* (London, 1899)—see 'Critic and Essayist' and 'The Life of the Imagination'.

In many ways Besant, despite his obsession with gentlemanly heroes, was a genuine egalitarian, convinced of the power of education and certain that one of the most important parts of education was what would now be called ‘demystification’. Besant stood for robust, no-nonsense common sense. In his novels and in his critical essays he is forever, implicitly or explicitly, appealing to the reader by claiming common ground with him against those who pretended to know better:

Consider, for instance, the way of the world in a picture gallery. The crowd go round the rooms from picture to picture; they stop before any canvas that tells a story; they do not greatly care for, nor do they inquire too closely into, the method of telling the story - most of them never ask at all how the story is told; they are entirely ignorant about grouping and drawing, about light, shadow, colour, and harmony. Presently the professed critic comes along. Then we hear the art jargon; there is talk of ‘values’, of ‘middle distance’, and all the rest of it; but not a word of instruction. This kind of critic is like the man who writes ‘studies’ and ‘appreciations’: he has developed a jargon . . . For my own part I have always belonged to the crowd who read the story in the canvas; and this is whether I am studying a picture, a poem, a drama, or a novel. It is the story that I look for first.90

This tone of honest, uncomplicated common sense was part of Besant’s undoubted appeal. To a novel-reading public progressively more baffled by the sometimes shocking and often embarrassing realism of Gissing or Hardy, and confused by the subtleties of a Henry James, a novelist writing in ‘the old style’ (with a hint of Dickens), who wrote ‘realistically’ without being sordid, and who offered gentlemanly learning without complexity, must have seemed like a godsend. Particularly if, like Besant, he could claim to be talking, not just as a single writer, but as a distinguished spokesman for many professional writers.91

Cheaper Editions

For all these reasons, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* went on selling. By the end of 1900, 99,500 copies in various editions had been produced. Yet this figure was easily eclipsed when Chatto & Windus finally went against its own policy, so firmly advocated by Andrew Chatto in 1882, and produced the first 6d paper-cover edition of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*. Such editions (pioneered, ironically, by Andrew Chatto among others) were large octavo books of around 160 pages printed in double-column on cheap paper. They were almost certainly produced on web rotary machines to gain the advantages of large-scale, fast, cheap printing that had been enjoyed by periodicals since the 1870s. Their covers, originally monochrome, were by the early twentieth century appearing in full colour.

So confident were the publishers of the high demand for the novel that, instead of the usual initial print-run of 50,000 or less, Chatto had 100,000 copies run off. This suggests that Chatto & Windus considered *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* to be in the same league as Besant’s and Rice’s most successful novel, *The Golden Butterfly*, which had managed to sell its first 100,000 6d copies in just under three years. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* actually took somewhat longer to clear. Published in June 1897, it took almost exactly four years before another 6d impression was called for. To put it another way: *The Golden Butterfly* was the first novel associated with Besant to be published in Chatto’s ‘Popular Edition’ series, and it sold at the average rate of 35,294 copies per annum. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was the second, and sold at the average annual rate of 26,087.

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93 Of the twelve Besant and Rice, and Besant, novels issued in 6d editions, only three had initial runs which exceeded 50,000 copies; these were *The Golden Butterfly* (issued as a 6d novel in February 1895), *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, and *The Orange Girl* (issued in April 1901). 100,000 copies seems to have been the standard run only for those novels which had proved themselves bestsellers, e.g. Ouida’s *Under Two Flags* was issued in 6d edition with a print run of 100,000 in February-March 1896 (LgB 5: 282); her *Moths* received the same treatment in February-March 1897 (LgB 5: 353).

94 LgB 5: 157.

95 LgB 5: 384.

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The failure to bring out *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* in the 'Popular Edition' format earlier than 1897 can be regarded, with some justification, as an error in marketing on the part of Chatto & Windus. Due to innate conservatism, it had taken a long time for 6d issue to become acceptable to Chatto but, when it was, a steady bestseller—*The Golden Butterfly*—was chosen as a pathfinder. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* had been boosted by the events of the Jubilee, but its sales were, by the 1890s, in slow decline again. A novel of such topicality would have benefitted from the earliest possible release of its cheapest form. A corollary to this is that the longer such a perishable piece of fiction had to wait before appearing in a 'Popular Edition', the less impressive its sales were likely to be. *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* did not do badly by any means, but that it did not sell as well as the novel issued before it was a significant pointer to the future.

By June 1901 the first impression of the 6d edition had been exhausted and another was called for, although this time it was to be of a more modest size—20,000 copies. A third impression of 20,000 was published in February 1903, and two more of 10,000 each followed in March 1908 and July 1915. In all, 160,000 copies of the 6d edition had been produced by 1915, these, coupled with an assortment of small 3s6d and 2s impressions, and a 'St. Martin's Library' (fine paper) issue of 5,000 copies, raised the total number of copies produced by Chatto & Windus alone to well over a quarter of a million by the end of the First World War.

It would, however, be wrong to think of Walter Besant's popularity purely in terms of a home market. The international franchising of a bestseller meant that there were a number of lucrative markets abroad. Potentially the most important of all was the right to publish in book form in

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96 This relatively small second impression again illustrates the economic conservatism of Chatto & Windus. Whatever the speed of sale enjoyed by the first impression, Chatto almost invariably produced a second impression of 20,000 copies or less. This is true of *The Golden Butterfly, The Orange Girl*, and of Ouida's *Under Two Flags* and *Moths*.
97 LgB 5: 384; LgB 6: 116; LgB 8: 466.
98 LgB 6: 58.
99 To be exact: 272,500 copies.
the USA. Much has been written about the confused state of copyright law in nineteenth century USA and Canada—at least as far as British books were concerned. These conditions made it almost impossible for a British author to realise more than a fraction of his or her potential income from this huge market. The unregulated and unpaid-for reprinting of British books was the rule rather than the exception, and the best a popular UK author could do, until the Chace Act of 1891, was to find a reputable American publisher, guarantee that publisher 'early sheets', and hope that these would give him a head start over the unauthorised publishers.

In this Besant was lucky. Chatto & Windus had a good working relationship with Harper & Brothers, New York, a firm frequently cited in the UK trade press as, on the whole, an honourable exception to the general rule of American publishers. In the case of All Sorts and Conditions of Men, Harpers brought out a cheap paper-bound version in their 'Franklin Square Library' series immediately. This sold at twenty cents and may have been an attempt to undercut the cheap unauthorised editions produced in the same year. Whatever its aim, it clearly did not succeed in stopping such unauthorised issues of the novel. The National Union Catalog lists two editions produced in 1882 by other New York-based publishers (Grosset and Dunlap; Clarke, Given and Hooper).

According to the NUC and the American Catalogue, Harpers produced another five issues of All Sorts and Conditions of Men in the twenty years between 1882 and 1902. This should be compared with the much larger

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100 See, for instance, James J. Barnes, Authors, Publishers and Politicians (London, 1974).
101 As there was no clear law governing the copyright relations between the two countries at that time, one cannot talk of 'piracy' because unauthorised reprinting was not, strictly speaking, illegal.
102 See, for instance, the debate conducted in the correspondence columns of the Athenaeum between 28 October and 16 December 1882. Another battle over the probity of Harper & Brothers can be found in the Athenaeum in October 1890, when Kipling denounced the publishers, and Besant, William Black and Thomas Hardy defended them. See also F.W.Boege, 'Sir Walter Besant: Novelist', Part 2, Nineteenth Century Fiction, XI, (June 1956), pp. 45-6.
103 Probably in November 1882; see Archives of Harper & Brothers 1817-1914, Chadwyck-Healey microfilm, Publication List (Reel 22). Besant seems to have been paid just £10 for early sheets; see ibid., Priority List (Reel 22).
number of illegitimate editions produced over the same period. By their very nature these editions tend to be rather reticent or downright misleading about their places and dates of publication but, as far as a brief survey can discover, there seem to have been some fifteen such editions and impressions issued in the period 1882-1902. Most of these versions claim New York as their place of publication, but Boston, Philadelphia and Toronto also feature in the list. With this number of unauthorised editions of just one of his novels, it's hardly surprising that Besant was in the forefront of the campaign to establish an effective system of international copyright.\textsuperscript{104}

The sum total of legitimate and illegitimate American editions over the last two decades of the nineteenth century should be enough to suggest the level of Besant's popularity in the international English-speaking market, even if one would need to do more to establish the claim made in his \textit{Autobiography} that he had '...a name known all over the English-speaking world'.\textsuperscript{105}

\section*{Besant's Income from the Novel}

What such figures do not help us to do is to discover the income Besant earned from such an international bestseller. This is not as irreverent or as irrelevant as it sounds. Like Trollope, Besant was not a man to underestimate the importance of money in the calculation of a writer's success or significance. He was like Trollope, too, in that he readily acknowledged that he was not of the first rank of writers,\textsuperscript{106} and that such 'second-rankers' could, quite legitimately, look to their income for a reflection of their worth. What, then, did Besant earn from \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men}? Nothing, obviously, from all those unauthorised editions. But what about publication in the UK?

\textsuperscript{104}Bibliographical information of this sort gathered from the \textit{NUC} must be treated with caution. By its very nature, a large union catalogue houses a number of bibliographical ghosts. The figures given in this paragraph are intended to be indicative rather than precise.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{Autobiography}, p. 215.

\textsuperscript{106}ibid., p. 2.
All Sorts and Conditions of Men was first serialised in one of Chatto & Windus's magazines, and then issued in book-form. In such cases it was common practice for the publisher to make a single agreement to cover both modes of publication. Unfortunately, neither the contract nor the correspondence leading up to it seem to have survived. However, enough material does exist (including Chatto & Windus’s Author Statement Ledgers for the relevant period), for us to build up a pretty complete picture. Let us start by looking at the typical Besant-Chatto & Windus contract of the mid-1880s: this involved payment in the form of two to four bills of exchange often dated at two, three or four-month intervals. This payment would normally be for the right to first magazine serialisation and for the right to produce book editions in the UK for five years from the date of the first cheap reprint. These arrangements gave the publisher certain clear advantages: the bills of exchange allowed the spreading of the capital cost over a longer period and, in certain circumstances, enabled him to recoup part of his investment through income derived from the sale of the first, three-decker edition before the final bill was payable. Dating the five-year period from the first cheap edition, rather than from the three-volume edition, insured that the publisher did not pay for the fallow time between his supplying the circulating libraries and reprinting for the buying market. This period could sometimes be as long as nine months to a year, although in the case of All Sorts and Conditions of Men, as we have seen, it was much less. As far as All Sorts and Conditions of Men was concerned, the formal contract seems to have been initialled on or around 2 August 1881 and involved the payment of four bills due between 31 January and 31 August 1882, each

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107 See, for instance, the letter from Chatto & Windus to Besant’s literary agents, A.P. Watt, dated 29 September 1885, in which the terms for Besant’s novel Herr Paulus (serialised in 1887, published in book-form in April 1888) are specified, LtB 18: 739. Chatto & Windus Author Statement Ledger (1881-92), folio 47, indicates that the agreement for All Sorts and Conditions of Men was for ‘Mag. right [and] copyright for the United Kingdom and its dependencies’ for ‘5 years from the date of publication of 3/6 ed.’.

for £200.\textsuperscript{109} This would give the authors (Rice was still alive on 23 March 1882 when the August-dated bill was delivered, and was continuing to act as Besant's unofficial agent), £800 for the serial and five year's book rights. The bills were all dated before publication in book form for the simple reason that Chatto & Windus were already benefitting from serial publication in their magazine \textit{Belgravia}.

£800 sounds a considerable sum of money, certainly when compared with the sort of deals Rice had been negotiating for the partnership in previous years. In July 1880, for instance, Rice had accepted, on behalf of himself and Besant, just £50 for five years copyright of the cheap reprints of \textit{The Seamy Side}\textsuperscript{110} while, in January 1881 he had accepted £150 for five years' copyright of a new three-volume collection of their short stories, \textit{The Ten Years Tenant}.\textsuperscript{111} Despite the apparent increase in the partnership's income represented by the \textit{All Sorts and Conditions of Men} contract, Rice was clearly not satisfied. He must have written to Chatto & Windus complaining of the contract and comparing it unfavourably with an arrangement drawn up between Sampson Low & Company and William Black for a similar-length novel. As we saw in Chapter 1, Chatto & Windus replied rather magisterially on 26 January 1882:

\begin{quote}
We have never heard what Messrs S.Low & Co are reported to have paid Mr Black; and we should not think it safe to allow any such reports which are often erroneous to influence our judgement.\textsuperscript{112}
\end{quote}

Whatever the arrangement between Sampson Low and Black, and however James Rice got to know of it, Chatto & Windus were being somewhat disingenuous in their reply. Preserved in one of the Letter Books of the publisher's archive is a letter dated 10 November 1880 and addressed to the literary agents A.P.Watt, at that time acting as William Black's representative. In this letter the publishers detail a possible contract with Black:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{109}LtB 14: 195, 385. The bills of exchange were due on 31 January, 31 May, 31 July and 31 August 1882; see Author Statement Ledger (1881-92), folio 47.
\textsuperscript{110}See Chatto & Windus to Rice, 5 July 1880, LtB 12: 24. See also LtB 14: 459.
\textsuperscript{111}Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 31 January 1881, LtB 12: 404. Collections of short stories commonly attracted much lower sums than full-length novels. The Chatto & Windus Letter Books are full of complaints about the unmarketability of short story collections.
\textsuperscript{112}Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 26 January 1882, LtB 14: 229.
For the use in 'Belgravia' and the right of republication in three volume from of a serial story by William Black, we should be willing to pay twelve hundred pound and to publish cheaper editions paying him a royalty of 15 per cent of the [illegible word] price on all copies sold. We understand that the story would be of the ordinary three volume length, would extend through twelve monthly issues of the magazine commencing in January 1882 to be published in complete book form six weeks before the issue of the last part in the magazine; and that Mr Black reserves to himself the right of issuing it simultaneously with its publication in the magazine in certain county newspapers as well as all his American, Foreign and Colonial rights . . .

It might be argued that as All Sorts and Conditions of Men was originally intended to be completed in eight instalments, Black's story was one-third longer and therefore justified an additional one-third payment. However, there is no evidence that All Sorts and Conditions of Men was ever anything other than a standard full-length, three-decker novel which, on the original plan, would have been divided into eight rather than twelve equal parts. In any case, All Sorts and Conditions of Men was eventually published in twelve parts and there is no evidence of any additional payments being made to the authors. The separate royalty payment for editions beyond the first was not only an extra source of revenue, but also represented a much more sensible and sophisticated arrangement than the lump sum payment, at least for the writer of a potential bestseller.

As Black, presumably, did not finally accept Chatto & Windus's offer, but instead made an alternative arrangement with Sampson Low, we can reasonably assume that this second contract was better than the first. No wonder Rice felt aggrieved.

In fact it is surprising that Chatto & Windus felt able to offer Black such good terms for the right to serialise in Belgravia. One glance at the Chatto & Windus Ledger Books is enough to show that the magazine's circulation was declining alarmingly during this period. In May 1876 12,000

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113 LtB 12: 248.
114 See Chatto & Windus to James Rice, 11 October 1881, LtB 13: 472.
copies of that month's issue were printed, in June of the same year 11,000, and in July 10,500 copies.115 From August 1876 to May 1879 there was a print run of 10,000 copies per month.116 By the time the *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* contract was signed the monthly print run was down to 8,000.117 The next reduction of the *Belgravia* print order occurs at a most significant moment. In September 1882 the monthly printing is reduced by the largest step so far, by 3000 copies to just 5000 per month.118 At first glance this appears to suggest that *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* was not holding its audience and that, by two-thirds of the way through its run, it had shed three-eighths of its readership. In fact, the opposite is likely to have been the case. September 1882 was the month in which *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* first made its appearance in the circulating library lists. The autumn-published three-decker gave the subscriber a chance to get to the end of a novel a good three months before the magazine reader saw its final instalment. It looks as though it was Besant's novel that sustained *Belgravia*'s sales and, once this attraction was available in a less episodic form, the magazine's circulation collapsed.119

It is perhaps not too extraordinary that neither Besant nor Rice pushed very hard to get a better deal for themselves over the original contract for *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*; after all, it was more than they had ever got before. Rice had done a lot of hack work and was thus used to negotiating like a hack; he was, anyway, almost permanently ill by this time. Despite his tough-talking as a crusader for the Society of Authors, Besant was peculiarly unable to negotiate successfully for himself; as a gentleman he preferred to leave the bargaining to players like Rice and, later, A.P.Watt.120 Above all, one might argue, neither writer could possibly have guessed how successful

115LgB 3: 799-801.
116LgB 3: 803-841.
117LgB 3: 842-858.
118LgB 3: 860.
119Chatto & Windus sold *Belgravia* to F.V.White & Co. at the end of 1889.
120In a letter to his mother-in-law, from the Sheppard Collection and dated 21 April 1878, Besant admitted to a financial incompetence which was to dog the rest of his career: 'I wish I was not a fool as regards business—but we are as the Lord made us.' See the Conclusion for a further discussion of this document.
the novel was going to be.

If such an explanation makes perfect sense in 1881, it cannot be said to do so in 1887. If the original contract was in the form we have conjectured, that is, for full book copyright for a term of five years, then we might expect to find evidence of a re-negotiation of terms in 1887 or 1888. And this, indeed, is what we do find. In Letter Book 19 there is a short note, addressed to A.P.Watt from Chatto & Windus and dated 21 February 1887, which refers to a '...P/Note due July 24 for the remaining copyright of Mr Besant's All Sorts and Conditions of Men...'.121 Unfortunately, no actual sum is mentioned but, as with the original contract, it is possible to reconstruct the likely form of the agreement by looking at the arrangements Besant made with Chatto & Windus for the copyrights of similar novels around the same time. A note relating to the purchase of the remaining rights to Dorothy Forster (1884) refers to 'the sum of £150' as 'the figure we have paid for the similar rights of Mr Besant's other stories'.122 This would mean that Besant had agreed, for £150, to the outright sale of the remaining copyrights of a book that had sold vigorously for five years, and whose sales were about to take off again with the opening of the People's Palace! It seems an amazing blunder, a blunder which was to be repeated time and time again with novel after novel throughout his professional life. As his popularity increased, Besant was able to negotiate marginally better deals for himself but, in the U.K. at least, these were invariably for single sums rather than an 'advance plus royalties' arrangement that would certainly have been to his financial benefit during the larger part of his writing career. The most likely explanation for this strange behaviour is to be found in the paradox which lies at the very heart of Besant as a writer. Despite his vigorous, even heroic, campaigning for authors' rights, he often seemed almost to collude with publishers in under-selling himself. Despite his public insistence that writing in general, and the writing of fiction in particular, was a respectable profession, he often viewed the novel as little more than

121 LtB 19: 843.
122 Chatto to Watt, 26 November 1889, LtB 22: 377; this letter is discussed in Chapter 5.
an exercise in entertaining escapism for writer and reader alike. That the known income from Besant's most successful novel was no more than £950 is, in part at least, the consequence of his ambivalent attitude to the art of fiction.

123 Besant's views on novel-writing can be summarised by two quotations. Writing to Dr. Henry Allon (Editor of the British Quarterly Review) on 8 August 1876, Besant apologised for not writing another paper for him, and giving as his excuse that 'I have been very busy on "potboilers" for some time.' (Dr Williams Library, Ms 24. 110 (37)). In the Autobiography he confessed that novel-writing was pleasant because 'to dream one's life away is pleasant ... What should I have done had it not been for this pageant of Dreamland, which has kept me perfectly happy, though sometimes careless and oblivious of the outer world?', p. 205.
Chapter 3

The Three-Decker Novel and its First Cheap Reprint, 1862-94

'And the three-volume novel is doomed'—Daily Paper

Full thirty foot she towered from waterline to rail.
It cost a watch to steer her, and a week to shorten sail;
But, spite all modern notions, I found her first and best—
The only certain packet for the islands of the Blest.

Rudyard Kipling, 1894

Introduction

Before pursuing Besant's publishing history, we should attempt to answer an important contextual question raised by the preceding chapter: was the very early issue of the first cheap reprint of All Sorts and Conditions of Men an unusual event, or was it simply another example of what had become common practice among fiction publishers by the 1880s?

The ultimatum issued by Mudie's and Smith's which finally brought about the rapid collapse of the three-decker novel after 1894 mentioned two particular grievances.1 The first, the high price of first editions (usually 31s6d), needs no explanation; critics had been complaining about the in-

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1The ultimatum is quoted in G.L.Griest, Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel (Newton Abbot, [1970]), p. 171. For Chatto & Windus's positive response to this (dated 29 June 1894) see LtB 28: 880, 881.
flated price of original novels almost since Scott's novels had established it
as the norm in the 1820s. The second, the rapid issue of cheaper editions,
needs some amplification: how cheap and how rapid? How important a fac­
tor was the first cheaper, reprint of a popular novel in the collapse of the
three-volume version?

Turning to some of the authorities who have commented on the rela­
tionship of the first edition to its first, cheaper reprint, one finds a number
of contradictions and a number of uncertainties. Richard D. Altick in The
English Common Reader seems to imply that the system he describes as op­
erating in the 1850s continued essentially unmodified until the 1890s, when
it was reformed by the Circulating Libraries' edict of 1894. According to
Altick:

The interval between the original, high-priced edition and the first
cheap reprint varied considerably. As a rule, so long as demand for the
original edition continued at the libraries and the booksellers, a reprint
was out of the question ... Some more aggressive houses, though, ex­
ploited the initial success of a book by issuing a less expensive reprint
within a year or two ... But many readers who were willing to pay 6s
for a current book resented having to await the publisher's pleasure
before it became available at this price. There were many more who
would pay 3s or less, but not 6s.2

If this account is correct one wonders why Mudie was making such a fuss
about cheaper reprints; after all a 6s book issued a year or two after its three-
decker version could not have threatened that version's library circulation
which, unless it was an enormously popular novel, would have slowed down,
if not stopped, within a year of its issue. In fact it is clear from Mudie's and
Smith's 1894 announcement that a year's grace between the two editions
would have been perfectly acceptable, a declaration which carries the un­
mistakable implication that, by the 1890s at least, the period between issue
and re-issue was much shorter than a year. Confirmation of this impres­
sion comes from John Carter and Michael Sadleir in their Victorian Fiction
where they observe that:

The interval between the original three- or two-decker and its first cheap edition, whether in one of the reprint series or independently, was normally much shorter than has become customary in the present century—often less than a year, sometimes no more than six months. Similarly revealing of the deliberate exploitation of the library market was the reduction in price—31s6d or £1.1s to 6s or 5s.3

In fact, of the twelve examples of first reprints Carter and Sadleir list, only five were published within about a year of their first editions, but the point is nevertheless made.4

A more recent discussion of this subject can be found in G. L. Griest's Mudie's Circulating Library and the Victorian Novel. For the 1860s and 1870s Griest seems to accept the pattern of about a year's gap followed by a single-volume reprint at 5s or 6s. Given the examples she cites this seems to have been standard practice until at least the mid-1880s or later. Nearer the time Mudie and Smith came to issue their ultimatum, Griest suggests, the period between first and reprint editions was down to 'a few months' though, apart from one example (Mrs Humphry Ward's Marcella, which was issued in a 6s edition only three months after its first edition), we are offered little evidence of this.5

Even N.N. Feltes, writing in 1986, believed that 'cheap reprints in any form [were] delayed, usually for a year', and claimed that the collapse of the three-decker was deferred until the mid-1890s because then, and only then (with the Net Book System, the Booksellers' and Publishers' Associations in place), was the time right for the move from the primitive, protective capitalism of the three-volume novel to the production of 'commodity-texts by the new, rampant, fully capitalist literary mode of production'.6

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4 Victorian Fiction, pp. 8-9. The other novels listed had reprint gaps ranging from three years (Florence Marryat's Love's Conflict, 1865) to eleven years (Mrs Craik's The Head of the Family, 1852).
5 Griest, pp. 168, 170. On its own Marcella is not a very convincing example. It was first published in the April of the very year in which the ultimatum was issued, and its 6s reprint was first advertised in July some two weeks after the ultimatum had been announced: see the Publishers' Circular (hereafter PC), 1894 (Vol. 1) p. 330; 1894 (Vol. 2) p. 26.
6 N.N. Feltes, Modes of Production of Victorian Novels (Chicago, 1986), pp. 78, 98.
Clearly the two factors, price and the gap between the first and reprint edition, although distinct, are interdependent. If the average gap was a year or more the reprint could be as cheap as the publisher pleased and it would still offer no significant threat to the library edition. After all, publishers (particularly Routledge) had been producing yellowback editions of popular novels selling for one or two shillings from the 1850s with little complaint from the librarians: a cheap-looking, insubstantially bound book produced two or three years after its three-decker version was simply not competing for the same market. Similarly, a reprint published within a year of the first edition would nevertheless fail to capture a slice of Mudie's market if it carried a cover price of much more than 6s.

It is, perhaps, misleading to talk about 'Mudie's market' for, in fact, there were two: his subscribers and those who bought from his Surplus List of books that were no longer popular with borrowers. Even with the massive discounts Mudie could expect from publishers (often 40% or 50% off the nominal price) buying many sets of a new novel was a highly speculative venture and one that often did not pay for itself through borrowings alone. In order to put himself into the black Mudie often had to re-sell those books whose days were passed (at prices ranging from 2s6d to 15s) through his Secondhand Department. A cheapish reprint issued early, as Griest points out, could easily threaten both markets. Although the average surplus Mudie novel might sell for 1s or 1s6d less than a 6s reprint, it was secondhand and it was in three volumes, a considerable drawback for the average middle-class customer with limited storage space for books.

A price of 6s and at least a year's delay probably represented the closest competition the library volume could stand and still provide sufficient profit for the circulating libraries. A shortening of the time-gap, particularly if it was reduced to eight months or less, would dramatically threaten the circulating life of a new three-decker. A drop in price would cut into the resale market of the Surplus List. Most authorities would agree that both were

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7 Griest, pp. 29, 169-70.
8 Griest, p. 74.
occurring by the 1890s, and that together they contributed to the collapse of the novel in its three-decker form after 1894. What these authorities do not seem to be at all certain about is when this ultimately successful challenge began, or on what scale it was conducted. Was it a sudden panic reaction in the early 1890s to a sense of the imminent doom of the three-decker? Was it an occasional tactic of an unscrupulous publisher sensing the chance of a quick killing to be made by the premature re-issue of a popular novel? Was it the enterprise of one publisher attempting to modernize the venerable tradition of the cheap re-issue of near-contemporary novels, a tradition established by Bentley’s *Standard Novels* in the 1830s?

**Methodology**

To answer these questions, or at least gain a more comprehensive idea of what was going on in the first-reprint market in the 1870s, 1880s and early 1890s, we must turn to the various forms of the *English Catalogue* which cover this period. The first stage of the present survey concentrated on an extensive random search of the four cumulated volumes of the *Catalogue* (vols II-V) which together, in the Kraus Reprint edition, cover the years 1863-97. The technique employed was simple: whenever the *Catalogue* recorded the publication of a three-decker at 31s6d, the entry was checked to see whether the title had been reprinted and, if so, at what price. Whenever possible an accurate calculation of the time gap between first and first reprint editions was also made. All further reprints were ignored so as to avoid confusing the first cheap reprint with later, even cheaper issues such as ‘Yellowbacks’ or ‘Railway editions’. In order to avoid the danger of ascribing one publisher’s reprint policy to another, it was decided that novels whose first reprint was issued by a house other than the one which had produced

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its first edition should, on the whole, be ignored even if, as more often than not it did, the reprint in question happened to substantiate the case. There are certain exceptions to this rule in the following discussion, but when these occur they are fully noted.

If the cumulated volumes failed to provide sufficient detailed information, or if a particular entry was suspected of being inaccurate, then the title was checked during the second stage. This consisted of checking the entry in the relevant annual volume of the English Catalogue which was produced by Sampson Low each year and usually bound in with the appropriate annual volume of the Publishers' Circular.10

If, after this, ambiguities still remained, then resort was made to a third stage. This involved looking up the title in question in the appropriate fortnightly issue of the Publishers' Circular. As each issue printed a list of those books published in the preceding fourteen days, it was possible to date a given novel with some precision.

Just occasionally a fourth stage was called for. If there was a question over the exact date of issue which the Publishers' Circular entry could not resolve, then reference was made to the relevant issue of The Times and its daily column 'Publications To-day'. A combination of these four stages was normally sufficient to give a reasonably accurate idea of the re-issue price and the 'reprint gap' of any particular novel.

The Price of Cheap Reprints

Despite certain limitations and certain crudities of the technique, one can draw some conclusions from such a survey. The first is that the idea of a consistent first reprint price is something of a myth. Even Chapman and Hall who, on the whole, retained the 6s price throughout the 1880s could and did issue first reprints at 2s (in 1872 and 1874) and at 3s6d in 1880 (Trollope's The Duke's Children).11 Similarly, Hurst and Blackett,

10 In subsequent notes references to the annual volumes of the English Catalogue take the form EC 1862, EC 1863, etc.
11 ECB III, 503, 509, 464.
although favouring the 6s version, were quite happy to issue both 5s (in 1863 and 1884)\textsuperscript{12} and 2s6d novels (in 1881, 1884 and 1889).\textsuperscript{13} Smith, Elder & Co. issued the majority of their reprints between 1880 and 1891 at 6s but also produced first reprints at 3s6d (1884), at 2s6d (1884, 1887) and at 2s (1889).\textsuperscript{14} However, even if there were no internal consistencies of reprint pricing in these three publishers' lists, at least the majority of the novels they re-issued were at 6s until the early 1890s.

This is more than can be said for the next group of publishers whose pricing policy goes a long way to challenge the assumption that 5s or 6s were the standard first reprint prices until 1894. Tinsley Brothers had a highly flexible reprint policy. Often the firm seems to have left the first reprinting to other publishers, one favourite being Routledge. Occasionally (as in 1875 and c.1885)\textsuperscript{15} a Tinsley reprint would come out at the standard 6s but, more commonly, such reprints appeared with a cover price of 2s. or 2s6d and did so, moreover, at a very early date. The \textit{English Catalogue} records these cheap first reprints occurring as early as 1873,\textsuperscript{16} a good twenty years before the final collapse of the three-decker novel. But Tinsley Brothers was not alone. F. V. White & Co. were issuing first reprints at 3s6d at least as early as 1882 and were to drop their cover price still further to 2s6d and 2s by 1885.\textsuperscript{17} If anything, F. V. White seem to have been more radical than Tinsleys in the sense that they seem not to have issued 6s editions at all.

A similar comprehensive policy of cheaper first reprints can be seen in J. and R. Maxwell's entries in the \textit{Catalogue} which seem to record few prices higher than 2s6d from 1873 onwards.\textsuperscript{18}

Perhaps the most striking example of early cheap first reprints, however,
comes from the list of Chatto & Windus. Chatto’s first reprint series, ‘The Piccadilly Novels’, was a perfectly orthodox series of one-volume works carrying the standard price of 6s throughout the 1870s. As we have seen in Chapter 1, during this period Andrew Chatto was working hard both to establish the respectability and to extend the scope of the list he had inherited from that rather dubious entrepreneur, John Camden Hotten. One means he used to do this was the purchase of job lots of copyrights of the past books of popular authors such as Wilkie Collins, James Payn, and Besant and Rice. In 1876 Andrew Chatto bought six titles from James Rice who, at the time, was acting as his own and Besant’s agent. Of these titles all but one were originally issued as three-decker novels (the sixth being a three-volume collection of short stories). Of the five, one had been issued in the form of a cheaper reprint, the other four had not been reprinted at all. All six titles were issued in the Piccadilly Library within six months of their purchase and all sold healthily during the next three years. If the deal with Rice was typical of the way in which Chatto stocked his ‘Piccadilly Library’, then the publisher must have been making a considerable profit out of his reprint series for, as we have observed, the writing partnership of Besant and Rice received no more than £200 in all for the six copyrights. Perhaps it was this substantial profit margin which allowed, and encouraged, Chatto & Windus to take a radical step in July 1880.

The Publishers’ Circular of 15 July 1880 carried a terse note under the heading ‘Books Reduced in Price’ to the effect that the seventy-three volumes of the Piccadilly Library were reduced from 6s to 3s6d each. Thus at a single stroke the cover price of Chatto & Windus’s first reprints was virtually halved, and this a full fourteen years before the price revolution which marked the end of the three-volume novel. Chatto & Windus’s list now contained a quite enormous cover-price differential between the first and second editions of a given novel. The first reprint of a Besant and Rice book could now be bought for just one-ninth of the cover price of its first edition. Few modern paperbacks could claim a comparable price advantage over their hardback counterparts. The advantages did not stop at price. The
Piccadilly Library was issued in uniform crown octavo blue cloth bindings with an elaborate black-stamped design on the front cover, and gilt lettering on the spine. Thus the 3s6d edition was more compact, though no less visually impressive, than the three-decker version, at least on the outside.

The Chatto & Windus announcement does not seem in itself to have prompted a price-cutting war among publishers; why, indeed, should it have, considering that other publishers had been issuing 3s6d reprints long before 1880? What the announcement did do was to illustrate the strength of the downward pull on book prices which was operating in a market freer than that of the three-decker. It is widely acknowledged by economic historians that the period 1873-95 was characterised by a steady fall in prices and, as a corollary of this, an increase in the value of money. In such circumstances a commodity with a fixed price (e.g. the three-decker novel at its artificially high cover price of 31s6d) would actually be more expensive in 1894 than in 1870. If one assumes, and there is much evidence to support such an assumption, that most of the elements which went to make up a book (apart from the labour) were experiencing the benefits of falling prices, then it becomes clear that, potentially at least, publishers’ profit margins on the three-decker were actually increasing during this period. As the libraries always got massive discounts, and it was a commonplace that virtually no-one else bought a three-decker, the mutually beneficial, benevolent conspiracy seems to have survived this downward pressure on price. But the 6s first reprint was not so well defended. It had no guaranteed corporate purchaser except, perhaps, among the Public Libraries which were, in the early 1880s at least, too few in number to create a market on their own. The first reprint was in an open market and thus was vulnerable, and responsive, to price fluctuation. The low prices offered by such publishers as Tinsleys,

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20 See ‘Public Libraries and Popular Authors, 1883-1912’ submitted with this thesis.
F.V. White and Maxwells in the 1870s, and the dramatic cut by Chatto in 1880 are the first signs of a response to this downward pressure. It would be absurd to suggest that there was a simple causal mechanism which linked falling general prices to a cut in first reprint prices, but it would be equally crass to ignore the possibility of some correlation.

The fall in prices was at its steepest in the middle 1880s and this seems to have been marked by more publishers issuing first reprints at 3s6d or less. By 1884-5 Smith, Elder were beginning to issue first reprints at 3s6d and 2s6d, while Vizetelly published a 3s6d reprint in 1885.

The real thaw, however, occurred at the end of the 1880s. Ward and Downey started issuing some 3s6d reprints in 1888, Ward Lock and Simpkin, Marshall in 1889. By 1890 Macmillans was issuing first reprints at 3s6d, and by 1891 Heinemann had started to follow suit. Some publishers, however, held out to the bitter end: Hurst and Blackett, Longmans, Cassell and, most significantly, Bentley and Son retained 5s or 6s as their standard first reprint price right through until 1894.

The Reprint Gap

The cover price of a first reprint in the 1870s, 1880s and early 1890s was, thus, highly variable. What we can say with some certainty, however, is that by the middle to late eighties a significant number of popular novels were being reprinted at prices which threatened the circulating libraries resale market. How substantial this threat was depends not just on price, but also on speed of reprinting. How soon after their three-decker version did these reprints occur? Given Mudie's and Smith’s insistence on a minimum of a

21 ECB IV, pp. 219, 326, 354 and 407.
22 ECB IV, p. 401. The book in question was George Moore’s Modern Lover. Given Moore’s views on the three-decker and the circulating libraries which supported it (exemplified by Literature at Nurse (London, Vizetelly, 1885)), it is not surprising that he should encourage Vizetelly into an uncharacteristically cheap reprint.
23 ECB IV, pp. 135, 587.
24 ECB IV, pp. 49, 66.
25 ECB V, p. 699.
26 ECB V, pp. 149, 357.
year between the two issues we can safely assume that the gap was often less than this by 1894. But for how long had it been less than this? For how long had Mudie's time margin, as well as his price margin, been under pressure from publishers?

Writing in *The Author* in, significantly, 1894, R. English observed that:

The second and cheap edition of the novel, in regular succession, either at 6s or 3s6d or less, is a thing of not more than thirty years' existence the two-shilling novel, for which Miss Braddon is chiefly responsible, began the cheap edition.27

This provides us with some useful contemporary confirmation that '3s6d, or less' was a quite usual price for a first reprint in the 1870s and 1880s. It also directs our attention to the works of M.E.Braddon, a popular writer whose publishing history helps illustrate not only the cheapness of first reprints but also the often indecent haste of their appearance.

The novel which established Miss Braddon as a major popular novelist, *Lady Audley's Secret*, was published in its three-decker form by Tinsley in 1862, and received its first cheap reprint in the following year. Because of its astonishing popularity, the novel went through a number of three-volume editions before emerging as a cheap reprint, a fact which makes it particularly difficult to establish the gap accurately between the two forms. What evidence there is suggests a margin of between seven and nine months between the first 31s6d edition and the first 6s issue.28 This could hardly be said to represent an adequate margin of safety as far as the circulating libraries were concerned, whatever the precise relationship was between the first and first reprint editions. There is less uncertainty about Miss Braddon's subsequent novel, *Aurora Floyd*. Published by Tinsley at 31s6d in January 1863, it was reissued at 6s in August of the same year, a mere seven months after the library edition!29 These apparent anomalies were followed by others. *Eleanor's Victory*, 31s6d from Tinsley in September 1863,
could be had for 6s six months later, in March 1864.30 *John Marchmont's Legacy*, published by Tinsley in three volumes in December 1863, was on sale in one volume at 6s by June 1864.31 These were not simple sports of publishing nature, nor were they the product of a single idiosyncratic publisher. Of the nineteen full-length novels written by M.E.Braddon in the ten years between 1863 and 1873 no less than thirteen, all originally issued at 31s6d, were reissued in radically cheaper forms within nine months or less. Of these, Tinsley was responsible for the first three, Maxwell for one32 and Ward, Lock & Tyler for four.33 The remaining five were shared between the two last named publishers, Maxwell issuing the first edition and Ward, Lock & Tyler following up with the cheaper reprint.34

Thus, by the mid-1860s, at least three publishers had begun to encroach on that crucial buffer zone of twelve months which protected the interests of the circulating libraries and their subscribers. So far, however, the encroachment had only been in terms of time, not money. The aptly named *Birds of Prey* was to change all that. Originally published in September 1867 by Ward, Lock & Tyler, it followed its predecessors by being reissued at 6s six months later.35 What happened next distinguished this novel from those which had gone before it, and established a new and more radical challenge to the three-decker novel. Five months after the first reprint, in August 1868 to be precise, the novel experienced a second metamorphosis and emerged as a 2s reprint. Within eleven months of its first Library edition, *Birds of Prey* was on sale at less than one-fifteenth of its original cover price.36

*Run to Earth* reinforced this double challenge to the three-decker. Pub-

30 *EC* 1863, p. 7; *EC* 1864, p. 7.
31 *EC* 1863, p. 7; *EC* 1864, p. 7.
32 *The Doctor's Wife*: 31s6d October 1864 (*EC* 1864, p. 7); 6s July 1865 (*EC* 1865, p. 8).
33 *Birds of Prey* (1867); *Charlotte's Inheritance*: 31s6d February 1868 (*EC* 1868, p. 8), 6s September 1868 (*EC* 1868, p. 8); *Run to Earth* (1868); *Fenton's Quest* (1871).
34 *Only a Clod*: 31s6d May 1865 (*EC* 1865, p. 8), 6s April 1866 (*EC* 1866, p. 7); *The Lovels of Arden*: 31s6d October 1871 (*EC* 1871, p. 8), 2s April 1872 (*EC* 1872, p. 7); *Robert Ainsleigh*: 31s6d April 1872 (*EC* 1872, p. 7), 2s September 1872 (*EC* 1872, p. 7); *To the Bitter End*: 31s6d September 1872 (*EC* 1872, p. 7), 2s March 1873 (*EC* 1873, p. 8); *Lucius Davoren*: 31s6d October 1873 (*EC* 1873, p. 8), 2s April 1874 (*EC* 1874, p. 7).
35 *EC* 1867, p. 7; *EC* 1868, p. 8.
36 *EC* 1868, p. 8.
lished in three volumes in October 1868 by Ward, Lock & Tyler, it seems to have been the first novel of Miss Braddon’s to bypass the 6s reprint completely, appearing as a 2s version in July 1869, nine months after its arrival on the shelves of Mudie’s and Smith’s. This experiment must have been a success, for her next book, again exclusively issued by Ward, Lock & Tyler, reduced the gap between 31s6d and 2s editions still further. Fenton’s Quest is recorded as having been published in its Library version in January 1871; its 2s edition went on sale in June of the same year. A gap of just five months separated the two editions.

Fenton’s Quest ended the long run of Braddon novels issued exclusively by one publisher. For her next four titles the novelist returned to the arrangement she had had for Sir Jasper’s Tenant: John Maxwell publishing the three-decker version, and Ward, Lock & Tyler producing the first cheap reprint. This, however, seems to have had no effect on this pattern of issue. The Lovels of Arden (1871) displays a six-month gap between its first and first reprint editions; Robert Ainsleigh (1872) a five-month gap; Milly Darrell, and other Tales (1873) five months, and Lucius Davoren (1873) six months.

By the end of the 1870s the gap had become even smaller. An Open Verdict, published by John Maxwell at 31s6d in April 1878, was being offered by the same publisher at 2s and 2s6d in August 1878, no more than four months after its three-decker version had seen the light of day.

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37 EC 1868, p. 8; EC 1869, p. 8.
38 EC 1871, p. 8.
39 See respectively EC 1871, p. 8, and EC 1872, p. 7; EC 1872, p. 7; EC 1873, p. 8; and EC 1873, p. 8, and EC 1874, p. 7.
40 EC 1878, p. 9. In 1895, in a last desperate attempt to defend the three-decker novel, M.E.Braddon issued Sons of Fire in that, by then, rather outmoded form. Mudie’s refused to stock it, preferring to wait for the arrival of the one-volume reprint which, the librarian wryly observed, ‘(judging from past experience) will be in a very few weeks’. This provoked Miss Braddon to write to The Times (23 September 1895) claiming that she had always allowed a reprint gap of at least six months. The evidence suggests that her memory was somewhat faulty, for between 1871 and 1880 the Publishers’ Circular recorded no less than nine Braddon Novels which had reprint gaps of five months or less. Even if M.E.Braddon’s claim had been correct, six months could hardly be regarded as an adequate safety margin, a fact she tacitly admitted by offering the circulating libraries, in the same letter, a reprint gap of at least eleven months for Sons of Fire. See Robert Lee Wolf, Sensational Victorian, The Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon (New York,
In M.E. Braddon we have a remarkably fine and consistent example of a popular novelist issuing first reprints at very low prices significantly less than twelve months after the Library edition. Breaking, in other words, both minimum conditions necessary for the healthy survival of the three-decker, and doing so some thirty years before its final collapse. Had this been an isolated case it could have been viewed merely as an interesting anomaly, an example of how, very occasionally, a really popular novelist could impose her own idiosyncratic publishing pattern on an otherwise conservative and rather inert system, Mary Braddon attempting to what George Eliot had done with *Middlemarch* in 1871-2. But this was not an isolated case. We have already seen that three publishers were involved in the cheap early reissue of Braddon's fiction. At least one of these, Tinsleys, published other authors under similar conditions. B.L. Farjeon (1838-1903) was one such writer. Tinsley Brothers issued his *London's Heart* at a guinea and a half in March 1873 and followed it up with a cheap reprint at 2s and 2s6d eleven months later in February 1874. In the case of his *At the Sign of the Silver Fлагon* (1876), the gap was somewhat shorter: nine months. By the 1880s, when Farjeon was being published by Ward and Downey, the breathing space allowed to one of his Library editions was down to little more than a short gasp. *Great Porter Square* was only offered to the borrowing public in December 1884, and yet was tempting the buying public at 6s just three months later (in March of the following year).\(^4^1\)

The mid-1870s seems to have been a busy time for Tinsley Brothers, at least as far as premature cheap reprints were concerned. The *English Catalogue* also records Mrs Fleming's *Mad Marriage* (1875) as having been reprinted seven months after its first edition, and James Grant's *Morley Ashton* (1876) as having been re-issued by Routledge at 2s nine months after its original publication at 31s6d by Tinsley Brothers.\(^4^2\)

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1979), pp. 359-60. The promise of an eleven month reprint gap was unusual enough to feature in advertisements for the book—see, for instance, *The Times*, 24 September 1895, p. 10.

\(^4^1\)For the publication details of Farjeon's novels, see *EC* 1873, p. 21, and *EC* 1874, p. 20; *EC* 1876, p. 21; *EC* 1884, p. 28, and *EC* 1885, p. 26.

\(^4^2\)For the publication details of Fleming's novels, see *EC* 1875, p. 22, and *EC* 1876, p.
In large measure the history of the early issue of cheap reprints in the 1860s and 1870s can be traced in the publishing record of three eminently successful women writers. We have already surveyed M. E. Braddon’s output during this period. If we now turn to Mrs Henry Wood we can see a similar pattern emerging, though mostly from publishing houses other than Tinsley, Maxwell, Routledge and Ward and Lock. Even Mrs Wood’s first and most famous novel, East Lynne, seems to have put the circulating libraries under some pressure, albeit slight. Published by Bentley at 31s6d in September 1861, it was on sale as a 6s reprint ten months later in July 1862.43 A ten-month gap would probably be just about tolerable as far as the libraries were concerned if the novel in question had been a mild success: a few hundred copies bought-in and steadily borrowed over that period would have cleared the costs and even generated some profit. But East Lynne’s considerable success would probably have involved the libraries in large second orders (perhaps at a higher unit price), costs which might well have needed more ‘circulating time’ to pay off.44 In this context ten months would have squeezed the libraries’ profit margins quite tightly.

The author’s next two three-decker novels must certainly have increased the pressure on Mudie’s and Smith’s. The Channings, Mrs Wood’s second most successful novel according to Altick,45 was published by Bentley at 31s6d in April 1862. In November of the same year it was being offered at 6s by the same publisher.46 In the same month her next novel, Mrs. Halliburton’s Troubles, was making its first appearance in the catalogues of the circulating libraries; it too was hotly pursued by its 6s reprint which was issued just six months later, in May 1863.47

For her novel Vem er’s Pride (1863) Mrs Wood switched publishers, moving from Bentley’s system of early reprints to the more conservative practice

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22; for Grant, see EC 1876, p. 25, and EC 1877, p. 28.
23 EC 1861, p. 67, and EC 1862, p. 51. Most of Bentley’s first reprints of Mrs Wood’s work were issued in the series ‘Bentley’s Favourite Novels’.
44 At least two impressions at 31s6d are recorded by the English Catalogue between 1861 and 1862.
45 The English Common Reader, p. 385.
46 EC 1862, p. 51.
47 EC 1862, p. 51; EC 1863, p. 51.
of Bradbury and Evans. In the absence of firm evidence it is very difficult to identify who determined the early reprint policy, particularly in the case of an established popular author who could be assumed to have some leverage on his or her publisher. Certainly the sheer consistency of M.E. Braddon's reprint policy, strung as it was over three separate publishers, suggests a considerable degree of authorial influence. When Mrs Henry Wood changed publisher, however, the policy changed. From the seven- and six-month gaps of The Channings and Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles respectively, we move to a more conventional spacing of fourteen months between the first and second editions of Verner's Pride.48

1864 saw Mrs Wood again on the move between publishers. Oswald Cray was published in December of that year in three volumes by Longman. Ignoring the conservative precedent established by Bradbury and Evans, Longman had the novel re-issued at 6s in June 1865, six months after initial publication.49

By the end of the 1860s, after a period with Tinsley, Mrs Henry Wood returned to Bentley. The time difference between the first and first reprint editions for her Tinsley novels had been between six and eight months;50 periods of this order were typical of the majority of the novels produced for Bentley and Tinsley by Mrs Wood in the late 1860s and early 1870s. However, neither Bentley's nor Tinsley's policy was totally consistent. If Bentley could produce a cheap edition of Within the Maze (1872) within eight months of the first edition and The Master of Greylands (1873) within nine months, he could also delay the 6s editions of Bessy Rane (1870) and Dene Hollow (1871) for sixteen or more months.51 Similarly, Tinsleys re-issued Trevlyn Hold (1864) and Elster's Folly (1866) six and seven months respectively af-

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48 EC 1863, p. 51, and EC 1864, p. 58. Mrs Wood's other Bradbury and Evans novel of this period, Lord Oakburn's Daughters (1864), had a slightly less conservative reprint gap of eleven months. See EC 1864, p. 58, and EC 1865, p. 60.
49 EC 1864, p. 58; EC 1865, p. 60.
50 Trevlyn Hold (1864): six months (EC 1864, p. 58); Mildred Arkell (1865): five months (EC 1865, p. 60; PC 1865, p. 698); St. Martin's Eve (1866): eight months (EC 1866, p. 60); Elster's Folly (1866): seven months (EC 1866, p. 60; EC 1867, p. 57).
51 See, respectively, EC 1872, p. 62, and EC 1873, p. 66; EC 1873, p. 66, and EC 1874, p. 60; EC 1870, p. 62, and EC 1872, p. 62; EC 1871, p. 65, and EC 1873, p. 66.
ter their first editions. However, they could also wait thirty months before publishing a cheap edition of *Red Court Farm* (1866). These occasional longer delays may have been the result of pressure from the libraries or, more likely, from the lack of perceived demand in the market. The latter would not be surprising given the prolific Mrs Wood's ability to churn out titles at the rate of something more than a novel a year, thus continually threatening her readers with a surfeit. There are two things we should notice about these occasional longer delays in reprinting: one, on the whole they tend to be the exception rather than the rule and, two, they did not involve the most popular of the novelist's books. It is not true, in other words, that only Mrs Wood's less popular books were issued cheaply and early. Of the four novels listed by the *Publishers' Circular* in 1898 as being Mrs Wood's most successful (in terms of sales), only one, *Roland Yorke* (1869), was not reissued in a cheap form within a year of its first publication.

The third of the three authoresses, Ouida, enables us again to extend the list of publishers who were systematically undercutting the three-decker and the circulating libraries which depended on it. Her immensely popular novel, *Under Two Flags*, was first published in December 1867 at 31s6d by Chapman and Hall. By October 1868 it was being offered to the public as a reprint selling for 5s. This ten-month margin represented the first phase of a reprint policy by Chapman and Hall which was gradually to reduce the gap between first and second book editions of Ouida's work from about a year to less than six months by the mid-1870s. The next step in this process was represented by *Puck* which, issued as a three-decker in December 1869, was on sale at 5s eight months later in August 1870. *Folle Farine* (1871) was reprinted some nine months after its first edition. *Pascarel* (1873) marked a further contraction of the gap, being reprinted some seven months later.

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52 See, respectively, *EC* 1864, p. 58; *EC* 1866, p. 60, and *EC* 1867, p. 57; *EC* 1868, p. 60, and *EC* 1870, p. 62.

53 See *The English Common Reader*, p. 385. *Roland Yorke* was first published in September 1869 by Bentley, and reprinted at 6s in May 1871 (*EC* 1869, p. 62; *EC* 1871, p. 65). Nor was it just Mrs Henry Wood whose works Bentley re-issued early: Wilkie Collins's novel *Poor Miss Finch* (first published in February 1872) was on sale at 6s before the year was out (in December, see *EC* 1872, p. 13).
The process was completed by the publication of *Signa* in July 1875, for its three-decker version was given only four months to establish itself before being displaced by a 5s version which was issued in November of the same year.54

It would be an error to assume that this policy of premature reprinting was applied exclusively to Ouida by Chapman and Hall for, by the late 1870s at least, the work of other novelists was being reprinted with equal celerity by the firm. In May 1878 Chapman and Hall published Miss Grant's *My Heart is in the Highlands* in three-volume form; by November of the same year it was on sale for less than one-fifteenth of its first edition's nominal price. Captain Hawley Smart's novel *Sunshine and Snow* was issued in its library edition in July of the same year; five months later it was being offered in a 2s edition.55

Chapman and Hall's reprint price was clearly variable during the 1870s: 5s for Ouida in the early years of the decade, 2s for less popular novelists in the later 1870s, and 6s for the really big names like Trollope. Trollope's work, too, was subject to early reprinting. In April 1878 Chapman and Hall published *Is he Popenjoy?* at 31s6d, only to come out seven months later with a 6s reprint. Two years later they did much the same thing, issuing *The Duke's Children* at a guinea and a half in May 1880 and following it up in November of the same year with a reprint, this time at 3s6d.56

Chapman and Hall were not the first to reprint Trollope with indecent haste. Chatto & Windus had done so two years previously. In July 1877 Chatto had published *The American Senator* in three volumes only to see Chatto, presumably by agreement, set a 6s reprint on its tail just five months later. As Trollope moved from Chatto & Windus to Chapman and Hall for his reprints, so Ouida went in the opposite direction. By 1877 her novels were being issued almost exclusively by the former firm. But this change of publisher seems to have had no major effect on the pattern of

54 For publication details of these titles see, respectively, *EC* 1867, p. 54, and *EC* 1868, p. 57; *EC* 1869, p. 46, and *EC* 1870, p. 47; *EC* 1871, p. 23, and *EC* 1872, p. 20; *EC* 1873, p. 46; *EC* 1875, p. 57.
55 *EC* 1878, pp. 30, 67.
56 *EC* 1878, p. 73; *EC* 1880, p. 80.
reprinting developed in her Chapman and Hall days. For instance, *Ariadne*, first issued in June 1877 was reprinted at 5s five months later. *Moths*, whose library edition started its circulation in March 1880, was on sale at 5s by October of the same year.57

This brings us neatly back to Chatto & Windus, the publishers who made that dramatic reduction in the price of its reprints in the very year *Moths* was issued. It might be appropriate, then, to conclude this survey with a brief look at their reprint policy as it applied to Walter Besant's novels. Let us take *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* as an example. It was clear that Chatto expected the novel to be a success because he ordered an unusually large library edition (some 1500 sets) to be produced. The circulating libraries must have agreed, for the whole edition, according to the firm's Ledger Books, was bound up by October. Here, one would think, is a clear case where the libraries' considerable capital investment would have to be given time to pay a good return, and a case where a publisher's long term self-interest would dictate a cautious reprint policy. After all, if Chatto wanted the libraries to take as many sets in the future, he would not want to undercut their investment in Besant's novel too soon. Surprisingly, the publisher's Ledger Books tell an unexpected story. A 3s6d reprint edition of some 6,000 volumes was ordered on 3 January 1883, was being bound by late January, and was on sale by mid-February.58

This early reprinting was not a unique event in Besant's publishing history. A later novel, *Children of Gibeon* (which, like *East Lynne*, had at least two three-decker editions) was first issued in September 1886 and was followed by a 3s6d reprint in May 1887.59 Indeed, of the eleven three-volume novels by Besant published by Chatto in the period 1882-92, two had reprinting gaps of five months or less, one of six months, four of seven months, one of ten months and three of eleven months.60

By the late 1880s, with twenty-five years of substantial precedents behind

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57 For publication details of these three titles see, respectively, *PC* 1877, p. 489, and *EC* 1877, p. 70; *EC* 1877, p. 3; *EC* 1880, p. 56.
58 LgB 3: 582.
59 *PC* 1886, p. 111; *PC* 1887, p. 626.
60 LgB 3: 582, 775; LgB 4: 9, 345, 372, 433, 474, 522, 617, 668, 809.
it, the premature issue of cheap first reprints had become commonplace. Even Mrs Humphrey Ward’s bestseller Robert Elsmere (1888), of which the library form comprised no less than three impressions (March-May 1888), was, according to the English Catalogue, on sale in a reprint edition at 6s by August of the same year.\textsuperscript{61} Macmillan published Mrs Oliphant’s Kirsteen at 31s6d in October 1890; five months later it was being offered in one volume at 3s6d. Gissing’s New Grub Street, published by Smith and Elder at 31s6d in April 1891, was on sale at 6s by October. J.M.Barrie’s The Little Minister, published at 31s6d by Cassell in October 1891, had just a few months to establish itself with the circulating libraries before it was over-taken by its 7s6d reprint in early March 1892. Conan Doyle’s Refugees, offered at 25s6d by Longmans in May 1893, was having to compete with its own 6s reprint as early as August of the same year.\textsuperscript{62} One might conclude by offering an example of this contracting gap taken to its logical conclusion. In late August 1894, two months after the libraries’ ultimatum, Sampson Low published R.D.Blackmore’s novel Perlycross. There was no gap to measure. The 31s6d and 6s editions were issued simultaneously.\textsuperscript{63}

What conclusions can be drawn from this survey? First, that when, in their ultimatum, Mudie’s and Smith’s required publishers to ‘undertake that no work appear in a cheaper form from the original price until twelve months after the date of its first publication’\textsuperscript{64} they were asking the impossible. To reverse a practice which had been followed by some publishers for three decades, and by many for at least one, a practice, moreover, which was clearly highly profitable, was beyond the power even of the two great circulating libraries. They probably knew it. Most authorities agree that the 1894 ultimatum was designed not so much to reform the three-decker novel as to destroy it. It has been recognised that their first demand (that

\textsuperscript{61} PC 1888, p. 235 has Robert Elsmere published between 15-29 February; on p. 927 the 6s reprint is recorded as having been issued between 1-15 August 1888.

\textsuperscript{62} For publication details of these four titles see, respectively, EC 1890, p. 60, and PC 1891, p. 311; ECB V, p. 385; The Times, 27 October 1891, and PC 1892, p. 278; and ECB V, p. 277.

\textsuperscript{63} PC 1894, p. 199 (25 August 1894).

\textsuperscript{64} Quoted by Griest, p. 172.

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the price of new novels should be no more than 4s a volume) was unlikely to be widely accepted. We can now confirm that the second condition was designed to be equally unacceptable to most publishers. 65

The second conclusion must be more tentative because it deals with the way in which the circulating libraries were financed, a subject on which little substantial research has been done. The fact that the main circulating libraries were able to flourish during the 1860s, and survive during the 1870s and 1880s, despite the steady increase in the number of apparently premature reprints, suggests either that profits could be recouped much more quickly from a three-decker novel than has been supposed, say within five months or so; or that the libraries were losing money on most of the novels which were re-issued prematurely, and only survived by the profits made on novels, and other works, whose publishers did not jump the gun. Given the rather rigid economics of the three-volume novel, the number of times or the length of time it had to be borrowed, coupled with Mudie’s famous and unchanging basic subscription of one guinea, it is highly unlikely that a three-decker could ever be regarded as a quick profit-maker. This leaves us with a model in which Mudie’s and Smith’s margin of profit from novels, broad in the 1850s, gradually begins to contract in the 1860s, narrows rapidly in the 1870s and 1880s, and disappears in the 1890s as more and more publishers opt for the premature cheap reprint.66

In *The Haunted Study* Peter Keating seems to be claiming that cheap current fiction was an invention of the 1890s.67 Evidence of the wide availability by the 1870s of rapidly-reprinted novels at discounted prices as low

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65It should be noted, however, that Chatto & Windus, officially at least, seemed prepared to go along with the libraries demands, even to the extent of not issuing cheaper editions ‘without your sanction within twelve months; unless at the time of subscription you are informed that we may wish to do so at a shorter interval’ (Letter to Mudie’s Select Library, 29 June 1894, LtB 28: 880). The three-volume novel was a secure source of income to Chatto and clearly justified some sacrifices of other forms of profit in an attempt to save it.

66Current research by the author on the W.H. Smith archives suggests that between 1885-92 Smith’s Circulating Library was only able to stay in the black because it re-sold unwanted books. In 1893-4 the Library actually made a loss of £160.10.9. (see W.H. Smith & Son Archives, File DDD 704). Although mentioned, the significance of this loss is not fully appreciated by Charles Wilson in *First With the News* (London, 1985)—see p. 363.

as 1s6d or 1s8d suggests that this view needs qualifying. The 6d reprint of near-current fiction was indeed a product of the last decade of the nineteenth century but, as this chapter has shown, there had been a full dress rehearsal for it twenty years before in the shape of the versatile and ubiquitous 2s reprint.68

Working through the Chatto & Windus Letter Books of the 1880s, and being conscious of the growing pressure exerted by premature reprinting, one became aware of a striking absence: despite many examples of outrageously early reprinting, there was no evidence that Chatto had been obliged to write to either Mudie or Smith in defence of his policy. Perhaps by the early 1880s the Librarians were on the whole resigned to this somewhat sharp practice. We would need evidence from the archives of many more publishers, and from an earlier date, before this lack of reaction could be considered typical, but as it stands it is an interesting indicator.

The Libraries may have been resigned to be undercut by some publishers, but that does not mean they were totally stoical, or that they were completely unable to strike back. In certain circumstances, for instance, given a magazine publisher's willingness to issue his annual volume slightly earlier than usual, Mudie's and Smith's could opt to buy it at a discounted price of 4s6d simply for the serialised novel it contained, rather than buying the novel in its three-decker form at a discounted price of around 15s.69 Such a practice claimed many distinguished victims: Wilkie Collins, Trollope, Besant, Hardy and R. D. Blackmore were all caught out. This will be one of the subjects discussed in Chapter 4.

68 As with the collapse of the three-decker, the rise of the 6d reprint could be regarded in part as the inevitable consequence of generally falling prices (which were at their lowest in the mid-1890s, see Table C9, Appendix 3). The first two 6d editions of Besant were issued in 1895 and 1897.
69 For a reference to this practice, see Griest, p. 53.
Chapter 4

Good Words and Continental Rights
1882-96

'Never,' said Mr Hoopdriver. He did not wait for her comment, but suddenly broke out with an account of his literary acquirements. 'The fact is—I've read precious little. One don't get much of a chance, situated as I am. We have a library at business, and I've gone through that. Most Besant I've read, and a lot of Mrs Braddon's...'

H.G.Wells, The Wheels of Chance (1895)

Introduction

Although Watt seems to have taken over most of Besant's literary business by the end of 1882, the Watt archives themselves contain no relevant material earlier than 1887. This archivally fallow period allows us time to tackle two major issues which first arose in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books of the early 1880s. Both are concerned with literary property, and illustrate the problems of defending and exploiting it.

The crisis precipitated by the rapid issue of the annual volume of Good Words suggests one way in which the circulating libraries could react to the premature cheap reprint problem discussed in Chapter 3. Despite these
difficulties, however, initial serialisation offered many advantages to author and book publisher alike, and not merely financial ones: it invited reader response, allowed illustrations to be commissioned and tried out, and provided a useful copy-text from which the book edition could be set (this last practice clearly has implications for the bibliographer).

Chatto's attempts to sell 'English on the Continent' and translation rights raises the whole question of the marketing of literary property overseas, and sets the scene for Watt's promotion of Besant's fiction in North America and Australia, which is one of the subjects discussed in Chapter 5.

All in a Garden Fair and Good Words

Watt appears to have played a rather secondary role in relation to the two novels published immediately after All Sorts and Conditions of Men. Certainly most of the letters about All in a Garden Fair and Dorothy Forster are addressed by Chatto & Windus to Besant directly. Perhaps this simply shows Chatto's very understandable desire to carry on with Besant where he left off with Rice: certainly the agreement he offers for the next novel has the stamp, as he himself admits, of Rice upon it:

We have the pleasure of enclosing in duplicate, an agreement modeled upon those drawn up by Mr. Rice, for your new story "All in a Garden Fair" which we trust will be found to contain all essentials.2

Lacking the Watt archives contemporary with this letter we can only conjecture on the contents of the agreement. It would be unlike the contract for All Sorts and Conditions of Men to the extent that Chatto & Windus were not serialising the novel and would therefore be paying exclusively for the rights of book publication. It would probably be similar in the sense that it would be concerned with book rights for a five year period from the first printing of the 3s6d edition. One thing that is certain is the sum of money involved. On 29 October 1883 Chatto & Windus sent Besant 'two

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2 Chatto & Windus to Besant, 5 July 1883, LtB 17: 56.
acceptances amounting to £500 in accordance with our agreement for "All in a Garden Fair".³

All in a Garden Fair was probably the first novel in which Watt was directly involved as an agent. If, as is suggested in Chapter 5, UK serialisation and UK five years' book rights were roughly equal in value, then £500 represented an increase of £100 over the book rights of All Sorts and Conditions of Men. Under pressure from Watt, Chatto had partially acknowledged Besant's increasing market value.

What would also have been clear to both publisher and author by 1883 (if only through advertisements and bookshops) was the enormous success Chattos had experienced with reprint editions of the early Besant and Rice novels.⁴ By this time many of the partnership's later books were at, or were coming to, the end of their five-year reprint contracts with Chatto & Windus. The books' surviving author was in a very different position from the uncertain one he had occupied in 1876 and, to his credit, Chatto recognised this. On 11 July 1883 the publisher wrote to Besant:

As we are very desirous to obtain in the [future?] the whole of the "Besant and Rice novels" and as we find that we are always able to offer better terms and thus extend the market for those books over which we have the entire control, we are willing to offer for the entire remaining rights in the six undermentioned stories the sum of one thousand pounds (£1000) payable by our bill at 6, 12, and 18 months from October next.

By Celia's Arbour
The Monks of Thelema
Twas in Trafalgar's Bay
The Seamy Side
The Chaplain of the Fleet
The Ten Years Tenant⁵

³LtB 17: 319.
⁴For instance, combining the sales of 6s, 3s6d and 2s issues to the middle of 1883: Ready-Money Mortiboy had sold 25,000 copies (LgB 3: 123, 436); With Harp and Crown had sold 14,000 copies (LgB 3: 122, 592); My Little Girl 15,500 had sold 15,500 copies (LgB 3: 124); and The Golden Butterfly had sold 30,000 copies (LgB 3: 120, 346).
⁵LtB 17: 75.
There is now no argument about any of the books having exhausted their market despite the fact that at least one (By Celia’s Arbour) had been selling in various cheap editions for nearly five years, which was over one year longer than Ready-Money Mortiboy when its claimed over-exposure had been used to reduce the purchase price in 1876. £1,000 for six titles meant a per book price of £166.13.4 which contrasts very favourably with the £33 per title offered and accepted in 1876. The contrast can be further sharpened when one recalls that, of the six 1876 titles, only one was a collection of short stories (collections of short stories never attracted the large payments a novel could command) whereas this 1883 set of six contained two such collections (’Twas in Trafalgar’s Bay, The Ten Years Tenant).

This offer certainly represented an attempt to deal more fairly with Besant as a writer of bestsellers, but it does not require a sophisticated calculation to show that it is still not doing him full justice. Let us take just one of the titles mentioned above, say the semi-autobiographical By Celia’s Arbour, which was by no means the most popular of the six, and which already had five years of sales behind it. If we combine its sales in various editions over the period 1883-1908, and then apply a hypothetical (and conservative) ten per cent royalty agreement on the various cover prices, then we produce an income of around £295.0.0 for this one novel alone. Even if we deduct something to allow for a lower royalty on the cheapest editions (and this would normally apply only to 6d issues and below), this still represents a considerably larger sum than the once-for-all payment Chatto & Windus were offering. However, unused to thinking in terms of royalties for fiction, and probably still uncertain about his ability to remain popular, Besant was in no mood to query the improved terms, and accepted them without demur.

During these negotiations, All in a Garden Fair had been running serially in Isbister’s magazine Good Words. As with most magazines of this type, including Chatto & Windus’s own Belgravia, an annual volume containing the complete versions of their main serialised stories (among other material)

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6See LgB 3: 222, 570.
7See LtB 7: 850 and Chapter 1.
8Figures derived from LgB 3: 570; LgB 4: 113, 298, 312, 544; LgB 5: 703.

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would normally be issued sometime in December. As these bound versions of the magazine sold for much less than the standard three-volume novel they represented a serious challenge to the sales of the three-decker. This could certainly reduce the number sold to private individuals but, as this was never a very large market, the effect on overall sales was likely to be small. More seriously, the annual volume could affect the major circulating libraries’ orders, particularly repeat orders of books proving popular with readers. If, for instance, Mudie’s original order for, say, three hundred sets of a particular work had proved insufficient, and the annual volume of the magazine in which it been originally serialised had been published between his first order and his second, then it made much more sense for him to buy the magazine volume discounted to 4s or 5s than the three-decker version, even at its circulating library discount price of 15s to 20s. For this reason it seems to have been common practice, for Chatto & Windus at least, to come to some form of arrangement, formal or informal, with the magazine publisher which allowed them to publish the first book edition six weeks or so before the final serial part (and the annual volume) appeared in December. From the correspondence the publishers had conducted with Besant in October 1883, it is clear that no such formal arrangement had been agreed between the serial and book publisher of All in the Garden Fair. Nevertheless, given common practice, it was a fair assumption on Chatto’s part that, if he made sure that the book form of the novel was out by October, he would be financially safe. But Isbister, it seemed, were not inclined to respect common practice. By October 1883 they were offering the annual volume of Good Words for sale to Mudie. The effect of this sharp practice is clearly described in the rather breathless letter sent by Andrew Chatto to Besant on 18 October 1883:

I called at Adam St. yesterday to confer with you about the effect that early publication of the Good Words volume for 1883 containing the whole of your story “All in a Garden Fair” is having on the sale of our Library Edition of the same work. A day or two after taking

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9 In the case of Good Words and its sister magazine The Sunday Magazine, 7s6d as opposed to 31s6d.
Mr. Mudie's order for 500 sets of the Novel and before the copies were delivered to him the "Good Words" volume was offered to him and the consequence is that he has reduced his order to 300, and as he can now buy the Good Words volume containing the story complete for about 4/- or 5/- there seems to be little prospect of his wanting a further supply of our edition. We of course knew that the "Good Words" would to a certain extent compete with our Library edition, and we thought that by bringing it out in October that we should be securing a sufficient start for us to get it into circulation at the Libraries, but it now appears that even in this we are frustrated. I do not of course know whether this may not be in accordance with your arrangements with "Good Words" or whether you think it advisable to make any remonstrance with the publishers or to request that your story should not be issued complete in the volume so greatly in advance of the publication of the December no. in which I believe the last chapter is to appear.10

This incident vividly illustrates two things. Firstly, that it was much safer for the first serial and book rights to be under the control, or at least the supervision, of one firm capable of co-ordinating the various phases of publication and thus insuring maximum profitability by minimising the overlap of different editions. Secondly, the appalling vulnerability of the three-decker novel whose life was as brief as a butterfly's, and whose success was a matter of such precise timing that four weeks could make it or mar it. One might argue that the emergence of the premature cheap reprint was in part a response to the challenge posed by the annual volume of a magazine functioning as an unofficial cheap edition.

The blow to Chatto must have been particularly hard for, as with All Sorts and Conditions of Men, he had risked an unusually large first edition—1,500 sets—encouraged, presumably, by the former novel's success.11 If we assume that Smith's took a slightly smaller (as Smith's favoured the single-volume novel) number of sets, then Chattos were faced with the daunting task of trying to dispose of roughly 800-900 sets before they were rendered

10LtB 17: 290.

11The edition was delivered to Chatto & Windus in October, see LgB 3: 775.

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unsaleable by the advent of the firm’s own 3s6d edition.\textsuperscript{12}

**Besant, Hardy and Blackmore versus Isbister**

Whatever Chatto & Windus’s response, it could hardly have been stronger than Besant’s own. On 20 October 1883 he replied:

> ...In the meantime—pray do not have anything to do with the “Good News” people—I shall try to get compensation from them—but meantime it may be necessary to return you their bills & tear up the agreement and temporarily to take the book into my own hands. But I do not anticipate actually going to law. Exposure will do them quite enough damage and they are afraid of it.\textsuperscript{13}

On 26 October Besant reported the results of his initiative to Chatto:

> I’ve got a very conciliatory letter from Dr MacLeod and a [illegible word] & impudent letter from the assistant manager. They propose to publish next Wednesday—but my lawyer shall pay them a visit before that day—I will report in due course.\textsuperscript{14}

It was probably just a simple coincidence that this egregious abuse should have occurred within twenty days of Besant chairing the meeting (at Sheffield Terrace, Kensington)\textsuperscript{15} which was to lead to the founding of the Society of Authors but, if it was, then it was a particularly fitting one. It must have seemed to Besant a dramatisation of what was to become a major theme in his campaigning years with the Society: the author as victim of an unscrupulous publisher. The conflict also had the advantage of immediately involving another hurt party (Chatto) on whose behalf Besant could be seen

\textsuperscript{12}A reflection of Chatto & Windus’s problem can be seen in the time span over which the first edition of *All in a Garden Fair* was bound. The normal period was between one and two months: *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*: one month (LgB 3: 582); *Dorothy Forster*: two months (LgB 4: 9); *Children of Gibeon*: one month (LgB 4: 218); *Herr Paulus*: one month (LgB 4: 372). The binding of the three-volume edition of *All in the Garden Fair* was spread over no less than four months, October 1883-February 1884 (LgB 3: 775).

\textsuperscript{13}Besant Papers, General Manuscript Collection, Princeton University Library.

\textsuperscript{14}ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}On Friday 28 September 1883, see Victor Bonham-Carter, *Authors by Profession* (London, 1978) Volume 1, p. 119.
to be fighting. Certainly in this early battle Besant was already beginning
to devise some of the tactics that he was to employ so successfully in later
crusades: the accumulation of case histories, the encouragement of collective
response, the threat of legal action and, above all, the use of publicity.

In pursuit of the first two aims, case histories and collective action, Be­
sant contacted both Thomas Hardy and R.D.Blackmore, both of whom had
also suffered at the hands of Isbister & Co. On 29 September 1883 he wrote
to Hardy:

My dear Hardy

I sent you a telegram this morning which I am afraid bothered you
a little. The history is this: I have been running a story in Good
Words. I, in bringing out my 3 Vol. form as usual, 6 weeks before their
December number find that they are going to bring out their volume
for the year at the end of this month, October, that the libraries are
refusing to buy any of my novel in 3 vols because they can get it for
4/6 in the vol. of Good Words for 1883. Of course I expostulate. They
reply that they did it last year and Trollope did not mind. Did they
do it to you? I believe not ...16

In his final assumption Besant was wrong, as is made clear by the second
letter to Hardy which followed on 31 October 1883. It is some indication
of the importance of this case that Hardy must have responded to Besant’s
telegram and letter within a day of receiving them, thus allowing Besant to
reply on the following day:

My dear Hardy

A thousand thanks for your note. My solicitor is now at this very
moment making things hot at the office of Good Words. I am going to

16 Manuscript from the Thomas Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum, Dorchester.
I have to thank Professor John Archer Carter, Jr. of Wake Forest University for drawing
my attention to these Besant letters to Hardy and Blackmore. No letters relevant to
this correspondence are included in The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Volume 1
1840-1892, edited by R.L.Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford, 1978), nor is the matter
mentioned in Florence Emily Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891 (London,
1928) or in Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy (London, 1975). Michael Millgate
makes no allusion to it in either Thomas Hardy His Career as a Novelist (London, 1971)
includes no references to the issue.
ask for compensation—the circulating libraries making no secret that they will not take any more of my books on account of the volume of the magazine being ready. If I can't get compensation I am going first to write a letter which shall be published all over England and Scotland and which will do the paper and its managers a pretty considerable mischief. How sorry I am that Blackmore and you sat down quick under your wrongs!17

Besant was not a man to sit down quick under such a public wrong. His great strength in debate was a quickly stirred and irrepressible sense of moral outrage, a sense which banished timidity and forced him to rush in where other authors had feared to tread. Unfortunately, this self-righteousness occasionally betrayed him into exaggerations or simplifications which sometimes weakened or tarnished his case. That this could occur even in a private letter to a fellow author who was, presumably, in no need of being convinced indicates the compulsiveness of Besant's desire to view things in terms of black and white. From Chatto's original letter of 18 October,18 it is clear that although Mudie had reduced his order to three hundred sets he was not 'refusing to buy any of my novel in 3 vols.' as Besant had asserted in his first letter to Hardy. By his second letter Besant's passion had calmed sufficiently for him to forget his original claim and to state the position more accurately '...they will not take any more of my books ...'.

Having been alerted by Hardy to the parallel case of R.D.Blackmore, Besant wrote to the latter on 6 November:

My dear Mr.Blackmore

I am having a little dispute with the conductors of Good Words and I learn from Hardy that both he and you have suffered from the same treatment as myself. Will you kindly tell me whether, at the beginning of your agreement with them for the production of "Christowell", or at any subsequent time they gave you to understand that it was their intention to destroy your 3 vol. form by early publication of their yearly volume?

17ibid.
18LtB 17: 290
This is what they have done to me and I am trying to find out what is best to do. Exposure in the papers seems at first the wisest course.

You see here is a systematic fraud practised upon the novelists who are unlucky enough to fall into their clutches.\(^{19}\)

Were Hardy's and Blackmore's cases really similar to his own predicament, or was Besant simply trying to impose a spurious parallel in the cause of a much-needed solidarity among authors? To take them chronologically: Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major: a Tale* was serialised in *Good Words* between January and December 1880, and was issued in three-volume form in late October of that year by Smith, Elder & Co. The publication was announced in the *Publishers' Circular* of 1 November 1880 as having occurred between 15 and 30 October.\(^{20}\) In the same issue there is a full-page advertisement from Isbister announcing that the *Good Words* volume for 1880, a 'Handsome presentation volume', was 'now ready, price 7s6d ...'.\(^{21}\) The advertisement makes explicit the attractions of the annual volume by appending a list of seven of them, the first being *The Trumpet-Major*. Sharing this full-page with *Good Words* is an announcement of the annual volume of its stablemate, *The Sunday Magazine*, which also carried a full-length novel—Andrew Harvey's *Wife* by L.T.Meade. It looks as though the gap between the issue of Hardy's novel at 31s6d and *Good Words* at 7s6d could have been measured in weeks or possibly days. Given the discounts available to the large circulating libraries (about 3s according to Besant and Chatto),\(^{22}\) the annual volume of a magazine would carry a price which was about a quarter to a fifth of the discounted price of a conventional three-decker novel. This was indeed a formidable challenge to the delicate economic system of the three-volume novel and, given his interest in it (derived from the traditional training he received from Rice), Besant was fully justified in rising to defend

\(^{19}\) Box 3, Accession 5252, Hench-Blackmore Collection, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.


\(^{21}\) *Publishers' Circular* 1880, p. 946.

\(^{22}\) Andrew Chatto to Besant 18 October 1883, LtB 17: 290; Besant to Hardy, 29 October 1883, Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum.
What then of Besant's case, how similar was it to Hardy's? If we turn to the issue of the Publishers' Circular dated 15 November 1883, we find that both *All in the Garden Fair* and *Good Words* for 1883 are listed as having been published between 1 and the 15 November, while on another page of the same issue Isbister is again taking a full-page spread to advertise the annual volumes of *Good Words* and the *Sunday Magazine*. On this occasion the wording makes even more explicit the currency of the stories: '...and containing the new stories *All in a Garden Fair* by Walter Besant Author of *Chaplain of the Fleet...*'. The *Sunday Times* also pushes the spanking newness of its novel: '...and containing The New story *How it all came round* by L.T.Meade'. Besant's predicament was at least as bad as Hardy's, if not worse.

Besant must have received a reply from Blackmore within two days of writing to him, because he was then able to write to Hardy on 8 November that:

*I will not drag your name into this row at all without your full permission. I've got a most appalling letter from Blackmore. His case is far worse than mine. He wants to get counsel's opinion on it for all three of us. When are you coming to town? They refuse me compensation and I am today writing a letter to MacLeod letting his [sic] clearly understand that I am going to show him up as a party to a fraudulent and dishonourable transaction. I will let you know the result of my letter and what I propose to do next.*

In what way was R.D.Blackmore's case far worse than Besant's or Hardy's?

*Christowell: a Dartmoor Tale* was serialised in *Good Words* between January and December 1881. By the 1 November Isbister was ready to advertise the annual volume of his magazine with Blackmore's novel featured prominently in its list of contents. The volume seems to have been issued sometime in mid- to late November and was followed up by a full-page illustration from

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24 *Publishers' Circular* 1883, p. 1161.
25 Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum.

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Christowell printed as Isbister's contribution to the special Christmas edition of the *Publishers' Circular* on 6 December 1881. One looks in vain, however, through the November and early December issues of *The Publishers' Circular* for any mention of the three-volume edition of the novel. Finally, in the issue of 31 December, *Christowell* is mentioned as having been published by Sampson Low between 19 and 31 December.

This announcement marks a small anomaly in the publishing history of *Christowell*. Sampson Low's advertisement in the *Athenaeum* of 26 November referred to the novel as 'now ready', while the novel itself was reviewed in the same journal on 10 December. However, the subject of this may have been an early review copy, or even the serialised version of the story, and thus may not be a good indicator of the moment at which the bulk of the first book edition became available. Advertisements in themselves are not necessarily a reliable guide to the precise date of issue, certainly not without some other corroborative evidence. Too often they were used (as they are now) to excite an appetite or build up expectation weeks and sometimes months in advance of actual publication. One should be particularly alert to this unreliability when the phrasing of the advertisements reveals a desperate desire to reassure the reader of the imminence of a book's publication. Of *Christowell*, Sampson Low's advertisement in the *Athenaeum* for 29 October declared that it would be ready 'Early in November'. By 19 November the novel is 'just ready'; by 26 November it is 'now ready'. One wonders if these carefully-graded statements were Sampson Low's only means of countering the threat to sales posed by Isbister's premature annual volume and its advertisement on 1 November?

Whether they were or not, it is clear that the evidence suggests strongly that the annual volume of *Good Words* was actually issued *before* the 3s6d edition, rather than at the same time or a few days later. How long before is uncertain; it could have been a matter of a few days, it might have been

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28 *Publishers' Circular* 1881, p. 1306.
as long as three or four weeks.

It may just have been the arrival of two good reviews that prompted Sampson Low to take out a full-page advertisement in the *Publishers' Circular* on 16 January 1882 extolling the virtues of *Christowell.* Lacking the archives of Sampson Low (most of which were destroyed by enemy action in 1940) one cannot go much further. However, one suspects that this rather unusual step had at least something to do with the publisher’s need to stimulate demand for an edition anticipated, and cruelly undercut, by the *Good Words* annual volume. All the available evidence does suggest that Blackmore’s case must indeed have been worse than Hardy’s or Besant’s.

In letters to both Blackmore and Hardy, Besant announced his intention of giving the apparent malpractice of *Good Words* wide publicity. In a letter to Hardy, dated 6 November 1883, he repeated this plan and proceeded to elaborate it:

> My dear Hardy: I am still pegging away at the Good Words people.
> I want to expose them thoroughly and I am glad of your case to help me. Will you tell me *if they gave you to understand that they were going to publish their volume a month before the time?*

> You see that is the important thing. If not, they committed a fraud on you as they did on me. My idea is to write a letter simultaneously for the Athenaeum and a few of the better class country papers—or for the Athenaeum and request the country papers to copy it. I have to take great care not to be libellous and yet to tell the whole truth. the best way would be for magazines to buy 3 vol. rights as well. Then no one would quarrel. But of course they would try to cheat even then.32

The legal language (the worry about libel in particular) reminds us that Besant was in communication with his solicitor. If it really was fraud, and compensation had been refused, why didn’t Besant take legal action? Such action, or at least the threat of such action, would have enhanced any publicity campaign, even if their details, being *sub judice*, could not be discussed. But no law suit is ever mentioned. Clearly Besant, Hardy and Blackmore

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31 *Publishers' Circular* 1882, p. 64.
32 Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum.
had either a weak case or no case at all in contract law. The alternative might have been to try the case as a matter of equity, but then writers with long memories (and particularly Besant who understandably welcomed parallels drawn between himself and Dickens) would remember the problems Dickens had had in Chancery over the pirate editions of *A Christmas Carol*, and would recall the dire warning contained in *Bleak House*. Chancery proceedings had been reformed in the intervening period, but they were still long, costly and uncertain. Evidently the law was no answer (as Besant’s comments in his 20 October 1883 letter to Chatto implied), and remedy would have to be sought elsewhere.

In fact, after the letter to Hardy dated 8 November 1883 in which Besant mentions both Blackmore’s desire to get counsel’s opinion and the fact that Isbister had refused compensation, the evidence for any action drains away, and we are left with just one relevant letter extant from a later date. This was written to Blackmore when Besant was in the process of launching the Society of Authors:

> My dear Blackmore
> I am sorry not to have had a word with you at the meeting of the Authors’ Society which is now incorporating itself.
> If you hear from this creature Donald MacLeod I hope you will take the same line as I did that you were made to sell what you did not intend to sell viz. a large part of your 3 vol rights and that this was deception *deliberate*. As of present instance I have told MacLeod that I hold him to be a confederate in acts done by his agent.33

There is no mention here of compensation, law or exposure—just a general denunciation of ‘this creature Donald MacLeod’. Who then was Donald MacLeod, and what was the nature of the publishing firm of Isbister whose practises Besant so roundly condemned?

It comes as something of a surprise to learn that the object of Besant’s righteous anger was not a shady, semi-criminal hack but, as the title-page of each annual volume of *Good Words* proudly declared, ‘Donald MacLeod

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3313 March 1884, Box 3, Accession 5252, Hench-Blackmore Collection.
D.D. one of Her Majesty's Chaplains for Scotland'. If Besant was a self-appointed moralist on publishing practises, MacLeod was no less a moralist on literature, and was quite prepared, as Michael Millgate pointed out, to specify exactly the sort of tone he required in Thomas Hardy's *The Trumpet-Major*: it had to be '... healthy, manly, and frank, but it must avoid "anything likely to offend the susceptibilities of honestly religious and domestic souls"'. As neither honesty of belief nor domesticity of soul is a guarantee either of vigour or intelligence, this prescription is like so many others applied to literature at the time in that what it offers with one hand it takes away with the other.

Ironically, Besant himself was equally culpable in this respect. Sometime in 1879 Besant had founded the Rabelais Club whose members were meant to celebrate not merely 'The Master' but 'virility in literature' generally. As Robert Gittings points out, 'virility' in this context meant the portrayal of sex, with the implication that those members of the Club who were novelists were more outspoken on the subject than most. It was certainly a small group, the founding members being no more than twelve in number. The sense of exclusivity is reflected by Thomas Hardy's rather excessive self-satisfaction in being included as one of the founder-members. The Club met, ate and drank 'The Master's' health for some ten years without having the slightest visible effect on contemporary fiction. The one result of all this clubmanship was *Recreations of the Rabelais Club*, a collection

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34 Donald MacLeod in a letter to Thomas Hardy dated 20 June 1879 and quoted in Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy, his Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971), p. 149.
35 Besant himself was rather vague about the founding date of the Rabelais Club. In the *Autobiography* he dates it as being sometime 'In 1879 or 1880 ...' (p. 240). The inaugural dinner was in fact held in December 1879 (see Florence E. Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928* (London, 1962), p. 132). Besant had been working on the scheme for at least eight months prior to this first meeting, however, for he had written to Hardy as early as 7 March 1879 inviting '... the creator of the Native—the author of the most original the most virile and most humorous of all modern novels' to become a member. Hardy agreed in a letter dated 17 March 1879 (See *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, edited by R.L. Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford, 1978), Volume 1 1840-1892, p. 63).
38 *ibid.*
of, to use Besant’s own words ‘...literary triflings’.\textsuperscript{39} The Club finally collapsed in 1889. Yet what had Besant, this celebrator of virility in literature, produced in these ten years? A string of novels whose heroes and heroines display an unremitting purity of thought and deed which results in a vapid-ity of character of which only the driest of governesses could approve. It is clear that for Besant robust declarations of literary virility were for the smoking rooms of gentlemen’s clubs; the business of fiction required much more circumspection.

In some ways, then, Besant and MacLeod shared the contradictory desire that literature should both be ‘...manly and frank’ and yet somehow totally inoffensive. This parallel could be extended. If both men were prepared ultimately to be rather pusillanimous about literature in its social context, both were tough-minded enough, as we have seen, when it came to the matter of literature in its commercial context.

Isbister seems to have been a highly respectable publisher, producing not only two eminently moral and Christian magazines (\textit{Good Words} and the \textit{Sunday Magazine}), but also considerable numbers of general educational works and text books.\textsuperscript{40} The one blot seems to have occurred sometime in 1879 or early 1880 when Messrs Daldy, Isbister & Co. had suspended payments of their debts. This was obviously a temporary difficulty for, by 15 May 1880, the \textit{Publishers’ Circular} was able to report that the firm was in a position to pay ‘...twenty shillings in the pound to all the creditors ...whose claims amount to £100 or less ...’.\textsuperscript{41} By December 1883 the same journal is reporting approvingly of the contributors and the contents of \textit{Good Words} for January 1884:

\begin{quote}
Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice has contributed to the January number of \textit{Good Words} ... a series of “Pictures from Aix-les-Bains” ... this exceptionally interesting number contains a contribution from the Duke of Argyll ... the illustrations are specimens of careful
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Autobiography}, p. 241.
\textsuperscript{40} See, for instance, Isbister’s advertisement in the \textit{Publishers’ Circular} 15 August 1883, pp. 712-13.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Publishers’ Circular} 1880, p. 366.
conscientious work, on which no expense has been spared.42

Despite this formidable combination of good works and good connections Besant did not waver, denouncing both Her Majesty’s Scottish Chaplain and his publisher as systematic frauds. It might be objected that, as he did so only in private correspondence and not in public debate, Besant’s courage and tough-mindedness is hardly proved. It could, however, be argued that the lack of printed correspondence on the matter had much more to do with the law of libel than a lack of courage on Besant’s. He was certainly less inclined to tolerate sharp practice than either Hardy or Blackmore had been when subject to similar or greater abuse.

Perhaps, in the end, Besant was prepared to put the whole matter down to experience, at least once it was evident that there were no strong legal grounds on which to pursue the matter. The time and field of battle might not have been quite right, but Besant’s vehemence, in a cause of whose justice he was certain, could not be doubted. When the time and place were right, Besant was certainly prepared to do battle publicly, even with such an august and apparently unimpeachable as the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. In some ways, perhaps, Besant’s unsuccessful struggle with Good Words can be seen as an early rehearsal for his Literary Handmaid of the Church (1890).43

During the time that Besant was learning these hard lessons he was also practising a skill which was to prove most useful to him in later disputes. One may scan the columns of the Athenaeum or the Publishers’ Circular for 1883 and 1884 without once coming upon a reference to Isbister’s bad publishing habits, but it would not be possible to escape the name or the doings of Besant. In the Athenaeum in late 1883 there are various references to Besant’s forthcoming lecture on ‘The Art of Fiction’;44 from late January 1884 onwards there are frequent references in both journals to the ‘Company

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42 Publishers’ Circular 31 December 1883, p. 1432.
of Authors’ (as it then was) and its formation. Clearly, Besant had a finely-tuned sense of publicity which was to stand him in good stead later.

There is, however, evidence of something more specific and unusual than a mere nose for publicity. Besant seems to have had a genius for originating subjects which then reveal themselves to be controversial and capable of provoking lengthy debate. For instance, on 24 November 1883 the Athenaeum published a letter from Besant on the introduction of typewriters and typewriting to the production of novels. This promptly generated a correspondence which continued intermittently for three months. The example may be trivial, but its very lack of importance suggests how permeating was Besant’s sense of the potentially controversial. From the most central to the most marginal he always had an eye for an issue.

**Premature Issue of the Annual Volume 1880-96**

Given that this disagreement over the premature issue of a magazine’s annual volume remained, for whatever reason, unventilated in public, we cannot expect to see any dramatic or general changes occurring in the years following 1883, though we might well expect to see certain adjustments taking place in the practices of those immediately concerned. The first thing to remark is that Isbister’s procedures appear to have been almost totally uninfluenced by Besant’s objections. Due either to an unshakeable confidence in their own rectitude or a complete disregard for authors’ rights, Isbister was able to sail calmly on. In the four years from 1880 to the publication of All in a Garden Fair, the annual volume of Good Words was published between either 1-15 November (1880, 1883) or 16-30 November (1881, 1882). In the six years following the dispute (1884-9) the magazine was invariably

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published in the second half of November.\textsuperscript{49}

If Isbister remained unmoved, and Besant powerless, what about one of the other aggrieved parties—Chatto & Windus? Interestingly enough, one of their other novelists—Sarah Tytler—had her new three-volume novel serialised in \textit{Good Words} the year after Besant's ill-fated book. True to form, Isbister were advertising their annual volume by 1 November 1884, the contents of which included:

\begin{quote}
...two complete new three volume stories \textit{Between the heather and the Northern Sea} M.Linskill and \textit{Beauty and the Beast} Sarah Tytler.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Chatto & Windus had learnt their lesson, however, and had published the three-volume edition of Mrs Tytler's novel two months before, in September 1884.\textsuperscript{51}

But what of Mary Linskill's book? This was issued at 31s6d by Bentley between 1 and 15 November 1884 only about fourteen days before the annual volume of \textit{Good Words} was issued.\textsuperscript{52} It is likely therefore that it faced a threat similar to the one that had confronted \textit{All in a Garden Fair} the year before. It is unlikely to be a mere coincidence that, when Mrs Linskill again serialised a three-decker in \textit{Good Words} (\textit{The Haven under the Hill}, 1886), Bentley took a leaf out of Chatto & Windus's book and issued the three-volume edition sometime between 16 and 30 September 1886.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite Isbister's bad publishing habits, there were a number of writers who habitually published in their columns. Mary Linskill seems to have been one and L.T.Meade another. Meade demonstrates clearly the sort of defensive tactics required if one was to live symbiotically with Isbister. Between 1880 and 1887 Meade published three stories in \textit{Good Words}' sister magazine the \textit{Sunday Magazine}: \textit{Andrew Harvey's Wife} (1880), \textit{How It All Came Round} (1883), and \textit{Daddy's Boy, a Tale for Children} (1887). As none

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{49} Publishers' Circular, 1884, p. 1295; 1885, p. 1318; 1886, p. 1478; 1887, p. 1517; 1888, p. 1578; 1889, p. 1648.
\textsuperscript{50} Publishers' Circular 1884, p. 1162.
\textsuperscript{51} English Catalogue 1884, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{52} Publishers' Circular 1884, p. 1210.
\textsuperscript{53} Publishers' Circular 1886, p. 1113A.
\end{footnotes}
of them were standard three-volume novels they were less vulnerable to pressure from the circulating libraries and much less restricted as to selling price. With Andrew Harvey’s Wife Meade seems to have used the tactic suggested by Besant in his letter of 6 November 1883 to Thomas Hardy (that the magazine publishers should buy the first book edition rights as well as the serial rights), for the book edition appears under Isbister’s imprint at the same time as the Sunday Magazine annual volume, but at a cover price of just 2s6d.54 How it all came round was issued at 5s by Hodder two weeks before the magazine’s 1883 volume came out.55 Daddy’s Boy, again at 5s, was published by Hatchards and issued at the same time as the 1887 volume of the Sunday Magazine.56 A combination of early or simultaneous publication with a low cover price was probably sufficient to protect the book edition of a novel from at least some of the competition represented by an annual volume.

With James Payn’s The Luck of the Darrells (serialised in Good Words in 1885) we can observe another way of coping with the potential challenge of the premature annual volume. Longmans published the three-volume edition of Payn’s novel early in October 1885, but rendered it more competitive by pricing the set at 21s rather than the more usual 31s6d.57 Anticipating a threat to the cheaper reprint market, Longmans then went on to take the the progressively more common step of issuing the 3s6d edition of the novel within three months of the first book edition (January 1886).58

The most dramatic example of defensive anticipation comes, appropriately enough, from Chatto & Windus. The main story in Good Words for 1887 was Old Blazer’s Hero by D.Christie Murray, very much a Chatto au-

54 Publishers’ Circular 1880, p. 1003.
56 Publishers’ Circular 1887, p. 1517A.
57 See the Longman’s advertisement in the Publishers’ Circular 1 October 1885, p. 987. Around this time Longmans seem to have been making something of a habit of publishing novels of varying lengths at unorthodox prices. For instance, in their advertisement of 28 November 1885 in the Athenaeum (Vol. 2, p. 690) where ‘four new novels’ are mentioned: two of the titles are in two volumes and are priced at 14s per set; one is in one volume at 6s; and the final title is Payn’s three-volume novel at 21s.
58 English Catalogue 1886, p. 59.
thor. The first book edition (in two volumes) was published in May 1887 at 12s, six months before the Good Words volume.⁵⁹ Mounting a second strike before the crucial late November period, Chatto & Windus issued a new one-volume edition at 6s in September of the same year.⁶⁰

Chatto, when he could, also applied his new-found wariness to other journals. In 1886 Besant had serialised his Children of Gibeon in Longman's Magazine. Anticipating an early annual volume, Andrew Chatto had clearly asked A.P.Watt to negotiate the right to release the three-volume edition somewhat earlier than usual, around 20 October. On 18 May 1886 Watt replied:

...I am sorry I cannot get him to agree to allow you to publish
'Children of Gibeon' on Oct 20. His last instalment wont appear till
Nov 25, so that you will have at least 3 weeks start of him ...⁶¹

Clearly Chattos were anticipating trouble with Children of Gibeon, because their original order for the 31s6d edition was only of 1,000 sets (this should be compared with the 1,250 sets for Dorothy Forster (1884), and the 1,750 sets for The World Went Very Well Then (1887)). However, they need not have worried. These first 1,000 were all bound by October 1886, forcing the firm to order another 500 sets on 21 October. These in turn seemed to have been bound up and dispatched within a month.⁶² In this case, at least, the three weeks' grace suggested by Watt was clearly sufficient.

On the whole, however, Chatto & Windus did not regard three weeks as providing an adequate buffer zone between a three-decker novel and the annual volume of a magazine, particularly if that magazine happened to be Good Words. That these problems continued to plague the firm into the 1890s is attested by letters exchanged between Chatto and Watt. On 21 February 1894 Chatto & Windus wrote to A.P.Watt concerning the publication of an unspecified title:

⁵⁹English Catalogue 1887, p. 58.
⁶⁰ibid.
⁶¹LtB 19: 231.
⁶²LgB 4: 218.
... As "Good Words" volume containing sometimes novels in complete form circulates in the libraries we think that it will be necessary in completing your arrangements with the proprietors of the Magazine to stipulate for liberty to publish complete in book form at least six weeks before the issue of the last instalment in Good Words...63

The sequence of letters on this subject ends with Chatto & Windus's negotiations with A.P.Watt on the subject of Besant's *The Master Craftsman* (1896). By July 1895, with the circulating libraries' ultimatum on the three-decker novel already more than a year old, the problems are not quite as they were when *All in a Garden Fair* was published. Nevertheless, the threat from the annual volume still remained. On 17 July 1895 Chatto & Windus wrote to Watt:

> We sincerely hope it may not be necessary to disturb the date of our publication in book form of Sir Walter Besant's "Chambers' Journal" story as already fixed on by Messrs Tillotson & Son for the 1st May 1896, as noted in your letter to us of June 18th. The threatened extinction of the library novel by the subscription libraries makes it imperative that not only should publication be made in advance of the completion of the story in "Chambers' Journal", which periodical might be supplied in place of our issue, but also that the book season ends in May and it would be impossible to find a sale for any book published in July when everyone is away holiday making.64

It is noticeable that, even as late as the middle of 1895, Chatto & Windus were not convinced that the three-decker was doomed, its extinction being only 'threatened'. In fact, the firm went on producing three-deckers until at least 1896, one of the last being Besant's own *The City of Refuge* which was published in October 1896 at 15s, thus conforming to the new maximum price set by Mudies and Smiths in 1894 (or almost, the per volume price being set at 4s).65 The 18 June letter referred to is missing from the files, but the conditions it specified would have represented a significant change

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63 LtB 28: 336.
64 LtB 30: 327.
65 *English Catalogue* 1896, p. 21.
in the arrangements originally negotiated between Watt and Chatto. In the 'Memorandum of Agreement' signed on 11 June 1895 specified that:

_Messrs Chatto & Windus_ will publish this novel in book form after the conclusion of Messrs Tillotson & Son's first serial publication, but before the end of the year 1896...66

An earlier part of the agreement had referred to Tillotsons having:

...disposed of a portion of their [serial] rights to Messrs W & R Chambers, it being understood that that firm will publish the story serially in this country in their "Chambers' Journal" some time in the early part of next year (1896).67

Assuming that serialisation in _Chambers's Journal_ was the 'first serial publication', and it is difficult to imagine Chambers paying much for anything else, then Chatto and Windus must have changed its mind almost immediately after the contract had been signed, and needed Watt to confirm that the book form might be published during, rather than after, the _Chambers's Journal_ serialisation.

During the period of price and format experimentation that followed the circulating libraries' ultimatum in 1894, Chatto & Windus tried many variations on the old library novel. In the case of _The Master Craftsman_ it was a two-volume novel of around 70,000 words priced at 10s. Even assuming a discount of between 40% and 50%, this would still make the two-volume set more expensive than a six-monthly single volume of _Chambers' Journal_ similarly discounted. It is quite possible that, with the multitude of format experiments and with library borrowers' expectations less exact and exacting than in the days of the uniform three-decker, a borrower would have even fewer objections to the magazine version of the novel.

As Chatto & Windus's letter to Watt suggests, the fact that they were planning to publish in May also put them under a new pressure. Besant's three-deckers that came out in October or November could rely on the progressively more important Christmas season (now extending a good three

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66WA [B] 18/11 [1].

67ibid.
months from October to December) to boost demand. Publishing in May meant coming in at the end of the Spring book season with only about a month before demand dipped towards the traditionally low summer period stretching from June to August.\footnote{See Simon Eliot, \textit{Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing, 1800-1919} (London, 1990), Section 2.}

As the price of library editions fell to 10s and below, and with the Net Book system still only a voluntary code followed by a limited number of publishers and applied to a limited range of books,\footnote{Although, in this case, \textit{The Master Craftsman} was a net book and thus would not have been discounted to individual purchasers.} the individual purchaser became more important even in relation to the so-called 'library edition'. Chatto & Windus's worry about publication at any time later in the book-buying season than May clearly reflects this.

Surviving evidence suggests that Chatto & Windus made their point, and that a May publication was approved by all parties. The eagerness of the publisher to get the novel out just as soon as possible is evidenced by the fact that Chattos had ordered the novel from the printer as early as 26 February 1896 and had begun binding as soon as it was delivered in April.\footnote{LgB 5: 246.} The novel's publication was recorded by the \textit{Publishers' Circular} as having taken place on or around 2 May.\footnote{\textit{Publishers' Circular} 1896 (1), p. 473.}

Even as late as the mid-1890s, and in a novel-publishing world that was very different, the lessons taught by the fate of \textit{All in a Garden Fair} in 1883 seem to have been well remembered, by Chatto at least.

The Advantages of Magazine Serialisation

As we have seen, the prior publication of a novel in serial form could occasionally threaten its success as a circulating library book. These dangers were, however, frequently compensated for by the advantages initial magazine serialisation offered the book publisher. Apart from the main and obvious benefit to the author of having an additional source of income and
the chance of having the novel's title dangled in front of the reading public for nine months to a year before publication in book form, there were certain minor advantages, particularly technical ones, which would have eased and speeded up the production of the three-decker edition and, by doing so, reduced its costs. There were two main ways in which this could occur, and both can be illustrated by material drawn from the Chatto & Windus Letter Books which cover the mid- and late 1880s.

The first and probably more important for an author whose handwriting was difficult to read, was that the publisher's printer could use the relevant issues of the magazine both as a copy-text and, if necessary, as a form of preliminary proof. This process can be seen at work on the production of the three-decker edition of *Children of Gibeon* which was first serialised in *Longman's Magazine* in 1886. On 25 March of that year, Chatto & Windus wrote to Besant:

> We are about to start the printing (or rather, the putting into type, only: we shall print later) of the first portion of *Children of Gibeon*. Will you kindly say if we may consider that [illegible word] your final corrections have been made in *Longman's Magazine*: or shall we send you cuttings from the magazine for further corrections? We should then not need to trouble you with proofs of the 3 vol. edit.  

A recently-discovered, undated letter from Besant, presumably in reply to Chatto & Windus's enquiry, confirms that the author did use the *Longman's Magazine* text as an informal proof:

> "Children of Gibeon"
> In reply to your letter about the copy of this novel I think you can print from the Magazine. Please make one correction April No. p. 566 line 28 from top For "women's education" read "woman's education". The context will show why the correction had to be made.

What is also clear is that Chatto & Windus started setting up the novel very early in the year using the magazine text, as it became available, for

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72Being shortsighted, even Besant found his own handwriting difficult, see WA 8/9 [1].  
73LtB 19: 110.  
74Besant Letters, General Manuscript Collection, Princeton University Library.
copy. The process of 'putting into type' was still going on in September 1886 although, by that time (and with a publishing date in late October), Chatto would no longer be waiting for the magazine issues. By 7 September he was asking the author for 'the concluding parts of Children of Gibeon at once'. Whether these final parts would have been in the form of Longman proofs or Besant manuscript is impossible to say with any certainty but, as Longman seem to have issued the monthly number on or around the twenty-fifth of the preceding month, it is likely that the October issue would have been in galley form by September. Had Chatto's printers had access to Longman proofs then, at worst, they would have had only two out of twelve monthly parts to contend with in their original handwritten form.

Chatto & Windus's letter of 7 September 1886 also illustrates another advantage of prior magazine publishing, albeit a minor and probably infrequent one. The reaction of the magazine's readers to the story could be monitored and acted upon, if it was thought necessary, before the three-decker saw the light of day:

We have masked out the words "of a Jew" from the volume. The super sensitiveness of your correspondent is somewhat amusing. Had you said "of a Welshman" how many Jones's might not have written to you to remove the prejudicial allusion to "Welshers & Taffy"?

This was not the only occasion on which Besant and Chatto responded to criticism from the Jewish community provoked by an initial periodical serialisation. Besant, no anti-semite, wrote The Rebel Queen (1893) to explore:

...the greatness and the littleness—of Sephardim and Askenazim—but also the possibilities, the aspirations, and the hopes of this ancient race. Above all, the intense humanity which abides in all their hearts.

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75 A.P.Watt to Chatto & Windus, 18 May 1886, LtB 19: 231A.
76 LtB 19: 464.
77 LtB 19: 231A.
78 LtB 19: 464.
79 From the Dedicatory Preface (To Thomas Chaplin M.D.) of The Rebel Queen (London, 1893).
The novel had been serialised in the *Illustrated London News* between January and June 1893. Clearly, at least one Jewish reader had picked up a detail and had written to Besant about it; this Besant reported to Chatto. On 2 May 1893, Chatto replied:

> Thank you very much for the sight of Mrs Davis’s interesting and appreciative letter which I return. The correction she suggests of substituting the word ‘dripping’ for ‘butter’ seems to be trivial at first sight but her explanation of the importance attached by the Jews to it shews that it will be desirable to have the alteration made in any case, and I have instructed the printers to make a cancel if necessary.80

The novel turned out to be so successful with Jewish readers that, in 1906, Chatto & Windus were asked to grant permission for it to be translated into Yiddish and serialised in the *Jewish World*.81

Like any businessman vulnerable to the vagaries of the market, Chatto seemed disinclined to promote any contentious view which in any way might harm sales or produce adverse publicity. In 1887 Besant serialised *Herr Paulus* which was, in part, the story of the exposure of a bogus spiritualist. In response to the serialisation, the author received a letter from Pearsall Smith (possibly Logan) extolling Besant’s exposé. As usual with such letters, he passed it on to Andrew Chatto. If Besant expected unadulterated enthusiasm he was to be disappointed. The firm was just in the process of having the three-decker version of the novel bound up,82 and Chatto’s caution could see problems everywhere:

> Thank you very much for the sight of Mr Pearsall Smith’s appreciative letter concerning “Herr Paulus”. I hope however that the general public may not take so seriously as he does your exposure of spiritualism.83

What Besant thought of a publisher who hoped that the author’s readers would not take him too seriously is, perhaps fortunately, not recorded.

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816 July 1906, LtB 49: 218. The sum paid was £12.
82The three-volume edition consisted of 1,500 sets ordered on 16 February 1888 and bound in April, see LgB 4: 372.
83Andrew Chatto to Besant, 4 April 1888, LtB 20: 741.
The uncertainty over whether the magazine texts were used exclusively as copy by Chatto's printers, or whether Besant also used them as a ready source of correctable proof, can be resolved if we turn our attention to Besant's next novel, *The World Went Very Well Then*, which was serialised in *The Illustrated London News* in 1886. On 24 October 1886 Chatto & Windus wrote to Besant:

*We send with this all of The World went very well then that has yet appeared—with the exception of the three numbers* that we can get whenever you may want them—*will you kindly mark in these pages any corrections that you may think necessary—so that, when the printers get forward with the novel, they may not need to trouble you with proofs.*

* July 10:Aug.14,21.84

Here, clearly, time and money are being saved by treating the serialised parts as galleys which could, prior to re-setting, be amended and corrected without much cost. As it was common practice not to expect authors to correct the compositor's literals,85 there would then be no further need for Besant to see the proofs.86

This practice seems to have become standardised by the mid-1880s, at least as far as Besant's serialised novels were concerned. Of *Herr Paulus* Chatto wrote to Besant on 31 January 1888:

*I have sent the first four corrected instalments of "Herr Paulus" to the printers, and have arranged to have it carefully read for the press so as to avoid troubling you with the proofs again.*87

Similar arrangements were made for *Armorel of Lyonesse* (serialised in the *Illustrated London News*) in 1890,88 and for *St. Katherine's by the Tower*

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84LtB 19: 560.
86Simon Gatrell has pointed out that the imposition of the magazine's printer's house-style could result in a process of familiarisation of the text in which 'the contemporary reader should find his grammatical expectations fulfilled'; see 'Hardy, House-Style and the Aesthetics of Punctuation', *The Novels of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Anne Smith (London, 1979), p. 177.
87LtB 20: 593.
88LtB 22: 903, 916; LtB 23: 262.
(serialised in the *Graphic*) in 1891.89

So standard did this practice become for Chatto in the mid-1880s that, when it failed, the publisher felt it his right to put moral pressure (via Watt) on the magazine’s proprietors. On 18 June 1886 Chatto & Windus wrote to Watt about an unspecified novel (possibly Grant Allen’s *In All Shades*) and, in doing so, made explicit the unwritten rules implied by the use of Besant’s magazine proofs discussed above:

Surely Chambers ought to supply us with the proofs: it is always understood that proprietors of periodicals shall so far oblige the authors of serials as to supply proofs in advance to the publishers of the book-form—Perhaps if you were to write & explain this to them (to Mr. Robert Chambers), they might be willing to oblige us. It is of importance that we soon set the book in train.90

The only other exception to this rule recorded in the Letter Books which cover the period was that *For Faith and Freedom* (serialised in the *Illustrated London News* in 1888) was not set up up, unlike *The Children of Gibeon*, as the numbers came out, but more normally some three months prior to publication. There had clearly been some failure of communication over this novel for, despite the fact that it was already running in the newspaper, and was within three months of publication, Chatto & Windus still did not know its length. Perhaps due to pressure on the printers, Besant was not given a chance to correct from magazine numbers but, instead, was offered the more conventional book edition proofs:

We have sent the chapters that have already appeared of “*For Faith & Freedom*” in the Illustrated London News, to the printers to be set up for the 3vol. edition and will shortly forward you the proofs. Can you let me know [how] it compares as regards length with “Herr Paulus”? or how many [illegible word] instalments it will run to in the Illustrated News of the present length? so that I may get the printer to cast off for volumes of equal length.91

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89LtB 24: 51, 89, 90.
90LtB 19: 308.
91Chatto & Windus to Walter Besant, 25 October 1888, LtB 21: 175.
This letter contains an additional paragraph which effectively demonstrates the second major advantage to a book publisher of an initial magazine serialisation:

We should like to give 8 of the full sized illustrations... if you could obtain the loan of this number of Mr Forrestiers admirable plates for us.92

As with the use of magazine text as a cheap source of proofs, the re-using of magazine illustrations did not represent a completely costless exercise. As the text had to be re-set, so the illustrations might have to be reduced or in some other way adapted,93 certainly they would have to be paid for. Nevertheless, certain costs or risks were reduced by re-cycling existing material. The capital investment involved in commissioning an artist and producing and storing electroplates was avoided, while the pictures, like the text they illustrated, could be tested on the periodical-reading public before being incorporated, as a proven success, in the library edition and, subsequently, in the first cheap reprint.

This use of the periodical serialisation as a test bed for the first book edition could and did work negatively, that is, not all periodical illustrations were automatically accepted. On 29 August 1882, for instance, Besant wrote to Chatto:

I will try to call on you in a day or two about the selection of Barnard's pictures. I didn't like one or two at all and I do not think they will improve the book. But some are admirable.94

Chatto, too, could object. In January 1888, for instance, during the production of the three-volume novel of *Herr Paulus*, Besant suggested that

92Ibid. *The Illustrated London News* finally loaned Chatto & Windus twelve drawings which were returned via Watt on 21 December 1888; Chatto commented that 'I think that both they and he [Besant] will be pleased at the very successful reproductions we have been able to make'; LtB 21: 311.

93In a letter to Besant dated 10 December 1886, Chatto identified the illustrations taken from the *Illustrated London News* for *The World Went Very Well Then*: 'July 3, 17, 31 Aug 14, Sept 4, Oct 30, Nov 13, Dec 4', mentioned that Besant might suggest substitutes if he objected to any of them, and added: 'To fit our book the reproductions should be reduced to 6 x 3 1/3 in'.

94Besant Letters, General Manuscript Collection, Princeton University Library.
they should use the illustrations commissioned by Tillotsons for the serial run of the novel but Chatto, having seen them printed in conjunction with the story, replied firmly that:

...after carefully looking at them again they do not seem to me to be worthy of your story, nor likely to help it in the book form. I therefore would advise your omitting them.95

Rejection, however, was relatively rare. More normally Chatto & Windus was delighted to accept the offer of electros from the magazine publishers although, interestingly, these offers rarely went directly from one publisher to the other. More usually an intermediary would be used, either Besant himself (as in negotiations with the Illustrated London News over The World Went Very Well Then96 and For Faith and Freedom)97 or Watt the (with Graphic over St.Katherine’s by the Tower).98

However the negotiations were initiated, they would have to be carried on in a spirit of close co-operation between periodical and book publisher. If the three-decker novel was to come out around the time of, or just before, the final instalments Chatto & Windus could rely on the printed copies of the magazine for only the first two-thirds to three-quarters of the novel and its illustrations; the final portion would have to come either from the author’s manuscript or, more usefully, from proofs of the magazine version. This process of pooling resources and co-ordinating efforts can best be seen in the correspondence between Besant, Chatto and Watt over St.Katherine’s by the Tower in 1891. On 10 March 1891 Chatto & Windus wrote to Watt:

Thank you for your work in regard to St.Katherine’s by the Tower.
We are extremely obliged to the Graphic for their offer in regard to the date of its publication in Library form—and should the date suit them, we will make May 22 our publication day[,] With a view to this, we will ask you to kindly let us have complete copy of the story for

95 Andrew Chatto to Walter Besant, 31 January 1888, LtB 20: 593.
96 LtB 19: 464, 692.
97 The negotiation actually involved both Besant and A.P.Watt, although it was Besant whom Chatto approached first. LtB 21: 175, 267, 311.
98 LtB 24: 38, 89, 104.
the printers, as soon as possible: and if we can see proofs of the later as well as the earlier illustrations we may hope to be able to buy some for use in this 3 vol edition.99

There is no doubt that it was in the periodical publisher's interest to co-operate in this type of arrangement if, by doing so, he could recoup part of his investment in the novel by selling some, if not all, of the plates to the book publisher.

The 'complete copy of the story', which Watt must have sent Chatto & Windus, was a composite made up partly of copies of the Graphic and partly of slip proofs provided by the periodical. This is made clear in a letter sent by Chatto & Windus to Watt on 20 March 1891:

We send with this the whole of the slips given us by the Graphic. From these you will be able, kindly, to take what is needed to complete the set of corrected slips for the printers.100

Chatto seemed to have assumed that the already-issued material had the author's full approval, for he only asks for corrections to the later, slip proofs in a letter to Besant dated 12 March 1891:

We are about to start the printing of St. Katherine's by the Tower, with a view to its publication in May. We have the Graphic pages to part 7 inclusive and slip proofs of all the rest. Will you kindly say if these slips are finally corrected—or shall we send them to you for revision before putting into type?101

By the 20 March Chatto had made a choice of plates and was returning the remainder via Watt to the Graphic. On the same day he sent Besant all the slip proofs for correction.102 Four days later Chatto & Windus were in a position to confirm via Watt both the date of the Library edition's publication and the terms on which the selected plates were to be used.103

Thus, within a fortnight, by use of pre-existing proofs of the text and blocks

99LtB 24: 38.
100LtB 24: 90.
101LtB 24: 51.
102LtB 24: 89, 90.
103Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, 24 March 1891, LtB 24: 104.

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of the illustrations, Chatto & Windus was able to set up the materials from which the first book edition could be run off.

That Chatto & Windus and, by implication ('It is always understood'), other fiction publishers of the period used a shifting combination of published serial parts, serial proofs and author manuscript as copy-text for the first book edition of a novel is a fact of some bibliographical significance. At some points in his *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, Philip Gaskell seems to imply that, until typewriting became common, the book-printer's copy-text was always manuscript. At others (as in his discussion of Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*) he recognises that a book edition might be set up from published serial parts. What is not acknowledged is that novels sometimes had multiple-sourced copy-texts which would result in a text composed of materials at different stages of maturity. According to how early the book was set up, two-thirds to three-quarters of the text would have been subject to the scrutiny of the author, the serial's proof-reader, the house style of the magazine's compositors, possibly editorial censorship, and certainly the magazine's readership (with all the feedback that promised). The remainder of the copy text would be an amalgam of serial proof untested by reader-response, and of virginal author manuscript. The textual critic needs to be alert to these possibilities.

**Chatto, Gradener, Tauchnitz and Continental Rights**

The Chatto & Windus-A.P.Watt correspondence in the early 1880s was much concerned with the exploration and exploitation of the minor rights inherent in a literary property. The first six letters sent by Chatto & Windus to Watt concerning Besant's books all refer to the continental and transla-

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104 LtB 19; 308.
106 The novel was serialised in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1880-1, see Gaskell, pp. 355-7.
tion rights of the earlier Besant and Rice novels, those which Chatto had purchased en block in 1876, and from which he was clearly determined to have his money's worth—and more. On 27 November 1882, Chatto wrote to Watt about the firm of Gradener and Richter\textsuperscript{108} which, like Tauchnitz, specialised in producing editions in English of popular works for sale exclusively on the continent of Europe:

\ldots Sometime since we offered him [Gradener] the continental rights of the first six novels by Besant and Rice who are now in the front rank of English Novelists and whose first works comprising "Ready-Money Mortiboy" "Golden Butterfly" "My Little Girl" "This Son of Vulcan" "With Harp and Crown" are still the most popular of their productions, at the very low rate of £30 each. We think it would be well for you to direct their attention again to these works, as well as the earlier stories of James Payn not yet published on the continent and of which we own the copyright.\textsuperscript{109}

One minor oddity evident from this letter is that, clearly, Watt was acting, and had acted, for Chatto & Windus as an intermediary between them and Gradener in a deal which involved the work of another of his clients, Besant. Of course, the property was now exclusively the publisher's own, so no conflict of interests could have arisen in this case; but it does alert one to potential dangers inherent in a double arrangement of this kind.

More striking still is the way in which Chatto & Windus are intensively farming their copyrights. If we recall that Chatto had originally bought these titles for just over £33 each, and had already made considerable profits out of their 3s 6d and 2s reprints, then £30 a book represented a chance to recoup virtually all the capital laid out in the original purchase of the copyright. One wonders whether the James Payn stories were another example of Chatto's entrepreneurial skills. One wonders, too, about the position of Watt: did he know of the 1876 deal and, if so, how did he feel about being

\textsuperscript{108}Gradener and Richter of Hamburg took over the 'Asher Collection' (a rival to the Tauchnitz series and founded in Berlin in 1871) a few years after its establishment. The series was discontinued in the 1890s. See S. Nowell-Smith, \textit{International Copyright Law and the Publisher in the Reign of Queen Victoria} (Oxford, 1968), p. 59.

\textsuperscript{109}LtB 16: 12
the servant of two masters with contrary aims?

Chatto's purchase of the 'entire copyright' in 1876 would normally have meant that Besant would have had no further financial interest in the fate of those early works. However, the letter that was sent by Chatto to Watt on 20 December 1882 would suggest otherwise:

I have just heard from Mr Besant that (in ignorance of our having again brought the earlier novels of himself and Mr Rice through you under the notice of Mr. Gradener) he has sold the continental rights in "The Golden Butterfly" to Baron Tauchnitz and also offered him "Ready-Money Mortiboy". Will you please inform Mr Gradener that we shall not therefore be able to dispose of these two stories; and also that it will be necessary for him to decide immediately should he wish to secure the three remaining stories . . . He can have the three for £60.111

Either 'the entire copyright' did not, despite its apparent comprehensiveness, include continental rights, in which case Besant was entirely within his rights to intervene, and Chatto very much remiss in not informing him of the new approach to Gradener; or it did include continental rights, in which case why wasn't Chatto much more annoyed about Besant's meddling in something which no longer concerned him? What was the precise legal and moral position of Watt as the dual agent in this ambiguous situation? Whatever the convolutions, the two plum titles had gone to a rival firm and thus the price per volume had, inevitably, to come down.

It is clear from these two letters that both Tauchnitz and Gradener were competing for certain Chatto authors, and that Chatto himself seems to have been using Besant to put pressure on Gradener. To understand both the sense of urgency, and the element of confusion indicated by the 20 December letter to Watt, we shall have to consider the context in which these negotiations took place.

As early as May 1881 Chatto and Gradener were in correspondence about a continental edition of Mallock's *Romance of the Nineteenth Cen-

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110 See letter from Chatto & Windus to James Rice dated 18 December 1876, LtB 7: 850.
111 LtB 16: 85.

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tury which was at that time being serialised in Chatto & Windus’s magazine Belgravia.112 Sometime between May and early August of that year Gradener must have proposed a more ambitious and long-term arrangement between the two firms, because on the 9 August Chatto replies:

We shall be very happy to enter into a [illegible word] and more extensive [illegible word] [illegible word] with your house, and we are inclined to think favourably of the proposal you suggest of taking all the novels we publish on our own account at a certain fixed rate; but exempting those works of fiction we may publish to which the author reserves the control of his continental rights, and also every novel we might publish on the author’s risk and account although it is contrary to our established rule to undertake the publication of any work on commission for the author.

The arrangement for the new work of fiction for the coming season is [illegible word] in new novels by
Mrs Alexander
Julian Hawthorne
Robert Buchanan
Mrs Castel Hoey
D. Christie Murray
and G. Augustus Sala, in addition to those for which we have already arranged with you for the republication . . .113

There are many interesting features of this letter. The firm pronouncement about it being ‘contrary to our established rule’ to publish commission books should help us gauge Chatto’s enthusiasm for Besant’s and Rice’s work, in that he was prepared to accept the majority of them on those terms, or something very like them. The fact that only commission books, and those works whose authors retained their continental rights, were excluded from the deal suggests just how extensive and just how undiscriminating such an arrangement might be. This point is re-inforced by the list of authors appended by Chatto. None of them are front-rank writers, either in terms of quality or sales, but they are precisely the sort who would have

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112See, for instance, 13 May 1881, LtB 13: 118.
113LtB 13: 338.
been prepared to, or obliged to, sell off their copyrights cheaply, quickly and comprehensively.

Had Gradener been prepared to see a significant number of older works in his list, no doubt Chatto would have been able to supply him with some big names but, on the whole, Gradener seems to have wanted early sheets of new novels, and few bestselling authors would abandon their continental rights to Chatto before five years were up.\footnote{Early sheets—that is, sending sheets straight from the press to a foreign publisher so that he could set up and print his version and have it on sale simultaneously with the home edition—was a common means of forestalling unauthorised publishers, particularly in the USA before the Chace Act of 1891 (see Chapter 5).}

One can see the attractions for Chatto in such arrangement as the one proposed: the chance to off-load a large number of undistinguished titles year after year for a guaranteed minimum unit price, and without the need for individual negotiations with either authors or European publishers. What, however, was Gradener hoping to get out of such an unpromising contract? The answer to this is twofold, and lies in the next three letters which pass between Chatto and Gradener. On the 13 August 1881 Gradener replied to Chatto & Windus’s letter, accepting the novels mentioned in it and adding:

We are well aware that authors in many cases reserve the control of continental right, and have therefore resolved on appointing an agent in London to treat with authors directly, in all such cases where it seems impossible to get at them otherwise. But it would be far more acceptable for us to deal with publishers without troubling about authors demands. We shall be always ready to take, as in this instance, whole lots of books from you, without exception and without regard as to separate claims from authors. Before entering into an engagement such as intimated in my last letter, we should expect you to arrange with authors beforehand for English and continental rights; and to give us a list of such authors as would not come within the limits of our mutual arrangement.\footnote{LtB 13: 347.}

Why Gradener should have been so keen to avoid direct contact with authors is uncertain. It may simply have been a matter of efficiency, avoiding
time-consuming separate negotiations with each author by turning Chatto & Windus into informal agents. Possibly it was this, and a little more. During the first two to three years of the 1880s Gradener and Tauchnitz seem to have been locked in a gentlemanly struggle over the right to reprint the latest works of Chatto's most popular authors. Tauchnitz seems to have been able to inspire great respect and loyalty in the authors whose books he reprinted, and there is much evidence in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books to suggest that writers such as Mark Twain, James Payn, Justin McCarthy and Wilkie Collins were determined always to give Tauchnitz first refusal and, in some cases, to accept less from him than they might have got from some other source. It is highly likely that Gradener knew this, and thus realised that a direct approach by him to the authors concerned would have been counter-productive. But if Chatto and Windus could negotiate the continental rights from these authors as part of a larger deal (thus cushioning them from issues of personal loyalty), and then sell them to Gradener in a separate arrangement, he would stand a much better chance of breaking Tauchnitz's near-monopoly of Chatto & Windus's most popular authors. The strength of Gradener's desire to do this can be measured by the rewards offered to Chatto. Apart from offering to take 'whole lots of books from you without exception', there is the implication that Chatto might function as an agent mediating between Gradener and his potential authors.

Despite the substantial and wide-ranging implications of this note, Chatto & Windus seemed not to have taken the hint, and proceeded in their next letter as though Gradener really were devoted to the idea of reprinting a whole string of mediocre titles:

We have already completed arrangements with the authors of the undermentioned 14 novels, by which we shall have the disposal of the Continental rights in them, and if you are willing to take them all we are disposed to let you have them one with another at the very low rate of 50£ each payable on delivery of the complete copy of each story...

[Here follows a list of fourteen novels]

In addition to the before mentioned we shall probably publish new works of fiction by Justin McCarthy M.P., "Ouida", Besant and Rice,
James Payn, and Wilkie Collins, but these authors reserve to themselves the control of their continental [rights].\textsuperscript{116}

Perhaps there was a subtle intention lurking behind this obtuseness, the letter being designed to test Gradener’s eagerness and, perhaps, to force him into a more explicit declaration of his aims. It was certainly true that the suggested price of £50 was a piece of kite-flying, for the average rate paid by Tauchnitz was probably much less than this (he paid only £75 for a guaranteed bestseller such as Mark Twain’s \textit{The Prince and the Pauper} in November 1881\textsuperscript{117}, and only £20 for \textit{The Golden Butterfly} in December 1882).\textsuperscript{118} For the lesser sorts of novel listed by Chatto in his letter of 16 August, £50 could only be regarded as the first price of a man who expects to haggle.

If Chatto was expecting to bargain he was to be disappointed. Gradener, in his reply dated 19 August 1881, accepts the price, but does so in a way which implies that he knows that it is inflated. His acceptance is a display of good faith and of being in earnest. Whether or not Chatto intended his letter to provoke Gradener into an explicit declaration of policy, this is certainly what he got:

\begin{quote}
I am in receipt of your favour of the 16th inst. and am much pleased to see that you are entering more fully into our views. But there are still some further considerations. The chief motive of our proposal was to induce you to arrange with your authors once for all, so that you would be in a situation to sell us the Continental copyright of all novels published by you. The 14 novels indicated in your letter are all acceptable, but the additional list of excepted authors contains exactly such names as would be of the highest importance for us, viz J.Payn, Ouida, W.Collins, McCarthy. It would not serve our purpose were some other firm to acquire the Continental right of this class of novels, leaving us to reprint works though very good in themselves, yet of a minor importance and less sure of a pecuniary success. If you could devise the means to acquire those first-rate works as well, or even if
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{116}16 August 1881, LtB 13: 347, 348.
\textsuperscript{117}1 November 1881, LtB 14: 39.
\textsuperscript{118}See LtB 16: 85 and LtB 17: 602.
you could induce the authors to deal directly with us, you would find us always ready to come to a binding agreement with you for all works of fiction which you may deem fit to publish on your own account.

To prove our earnest wish to establish a lasting business relation with your firm, and with the hope that you will do your best to procure us those excluded first-rate authors, in some way or other, we accept, for the present, your offer of the 14 forthcoming novels named in your letter of the 16th inst., we engage to pay £50- (Fifty pounds) for each novel on receipt of the complete set of advance sheets, to be sent before your publishing the book in England.

If you succeed in securing for us, directly or indirectly, the works of the mentioned novelists, then we shall with pleasure enter a binding contract with you concerning all your future publications.

In the course of September I shall come over to London, when I shall have the pleasure of calling upon you and discussing the whole affair in all its particulars.\footnote{LtB 13: 359.}

It is difficult to establish whether the leaving out of Besant and Rice from Gradener’s list of ‘first-rate authors’ was simply an oversight or a matter of deliberate policy. In their reply dated 22 August 1881, Chatto & Windus again mentioned their names but did not actually offer any practical suggestions as to how Gradener might contact them, unlike the other listed authors. What is clear is that Chatto does not share Gradener’s teutonic confidence that all his popular authors could be marshalled into an arrangement over continental rights which would comprehensively exclude Tauchnitz. All he can do is promise his best endeavours and push another couple of second-rate novels in Gradener’s direction.

... We forward herewith copies of R.E.Francillon’s “Queen Copenhelia”; and Mrs Alfred Hunt’s “Leaden Casket” which are already issued in the 3 volume form.

With regard to those authors “Ouida”, Wilkie Collins, Besant and Rice, James Payn and Justin McCarthy whose works we publish but who reserve the control of their continental rights we shall always be happy to use our best endeavours to obtain for you the offer of their new
novels. We already secured for you Mr Justin McCarthy's new novel
"A Comet of a Season", and we when have the pleasure of meeting
you in September we shall be very glad to discuss with you the best
means of obtaining the others. In the mean time we will see Mr Payn
and Mr. Wilkie Collins on the subject. "Ouida" we think it would be
better for you to write on the subject direct ...120

Gradener leaves one in doubt as to his seriousness (he was, after all,
investing a considerable amount of money in the project), but how gen-
unely committed were Chatto & Windus? They do indeed contact James
Payn about Gradener and arrange a meeting between the two, commending
Gradener to Payn with some (justified) enthusiasm

We have been doing quite a large business with him lately and
have found him much more liberal and more prompt in his decision
than anyone else. We think he would not hesitate to give £60 each for
both your new stories...or perhaps a little more.121

For 'anyone else' read 'Tauchnitz'. This desire to bring the two together,
however, probably had as much to do with Chatto's desire to capitalise on
his purchase of Payn's earlier copyrights as with providing Gradener with
first-rate new novels from a popular author.

The remaining evidence suggests rather strongly that Chatto was not as
committed as a superficial reading of his earlier letters to Gradener might
imply. For instance, within twenty-two days of Chatto promising 'to use
our best endeavours' he is writing to Tauchnitz promising to send him early
proofs and information about the date of publication of Ouida's new novel
'...the title of which is not yet fixed upon'. The Letter Books also reveal
that the novels of Francillon and Mrs Alfred Hunt had been on offer to
Tauchnitz since April122 but, despite a series of letters (29 April, 20 June,
9 August 1881) on the subject, had not been bought by him.123 Only when

12022 August 1881, LtB 13: 359.
12130 August 1881, LtB 13: 372.
122LtB 13: 396.
Tauchnitz's lack of enthusiasm had been proved beyond all reasonable doubt were the books offered to Gradener.

Even if, despite the evidence to the contrary, Chatto still hoped to be able to deliver his major authors to Gradener, he was to receive ample proof over the next year that such a scheme was unworkable. As early as 7 November 1881 Chatto was obliged to write to Gradener to inform him that Mark Twain had turned down his offer to publish *The Prince and the Pauper* in favour of Tauchnitz because:

...his business relations with Baron Tauchnitz have been throughout of so cordial and friendly a nature that he cannot do otherwise than give him the first offer of it.\(^{124}\)

On the 13 March 1882 Chatto had to admit that even James Payn, so carefully cultivated by Gradener, had felt obliged to offer his new novel *For Cash Only* to Tauchnitz. Chatto ends this letter rather lamely by adding that, of course, Payn's earlier novels were still on offer.\(^{125}\) By the 14 September 1882 Gradener can have been in no doubt as to Chatto's total inability to deliver the goods:

...We have already endeavoured to obtain for you Mr. Trollope's "Kept in [the] Dark" but found that the Continental rights had already been disposed of. Mr Wilkie Collins also told us in reference to his new story "Heart and Science" that his relations with Baron Tauchnitz were of so cordial and long standing that he did not wish to disturb [them].

We have the copyrights of Besant & Rice's first six and most popular novels for [which] we shall be willing to treat with you upon liberal terms. Please also bear in [mind] the stories by James Payn we offered you—he is rapidly rising in popularity.\(^{126}\)

Even when Chatto did succeed in pushing Gradener's claims he often subsequently came under direct or indirect pressure from other quarters. On 5 February 1883 Chatto & Windus are obliged, presumably at Justin

\(^{124}\) LtB 14: 54.
\(^{125}\) LtB 14: 356.
\(^{126}\) LtB 15: 289.
McCarthy's insistence, to write to Tauchnitz '...to express his regret that he [McCarthy] did not sooner receive your reminder of your desire to arrange for his new story "Maid of Athens"...’ which instead had been bought by Gradener.127

Twenty-one days later Tauchnitz himself wrote to Chatto & Windus to express his deep regret ‘...that you did not think of us in disposing of the Continental copyright of Mr Trollope’s “Scarborough”...’.128

By early 1883 Chatto & Windus and many of their authors are in a state of some confusion over continental rights, a confusion neatly illustrated by the case of Robert Buchanan’s novel God and the Man. Buchanan is first mentioned in a letter from Chatto to Gradener dated 9 August 1881. Confusingly, and in order presumably to excite competition, he is also referred to in a letter of the same date to Tauchnitz.129 By 11 May 1882 Chatto was sending early sheets of the Buchanan novel to Gradener, having clearly sold the continental rights to him.130 That this was not apparent to either the author or Tauchnitz is made clear by what happened next. Buchanan, imagining that he still had control over his continental rights, sold them to Tauchnitz.131 By August 1882 both Gradener and Tauchnitz were preparing continental English editions of God and the Man. In a display of unforced gentlemanly conduct which goes a long way to explain why his authors were so loyal to him, Tauchnitz withdrew his edition which Chatto then offered (perhaps motivated by a sense of being partly to blame) to buy in toto.132

Why were Chatto & Windus prepared to risk such damaging confusions with their consequent loss of confidence and reputation? Certainly the rewards of such a contract as the one Gradener was offering could be considerable. In a letter dated 7 January 1883 Chatto lists nineteen books which Gradener had agreed to buy.133 Only two out of these nineteen were

127 LtB 16: 195; LtB 16: 165 (26 January 1883) contains a list of the titles so far sold to Gradener; the first item listed is Justin McCarthy’s Maid of Athens.
128 26 February 1883, LtB 16: 265.
129 LtB 13: 338 (Gradener); LtB 13: 334, 337 (Tauchnitz).
130 LtB 14: 491
131 See Chatto & Windus to Gradener, 31 August 1882, LtB 15: 245.
132 9 September 1882, LtB 15: 272
133 LtB 16: 120; see also A.P. Watt to Chatto & Windus, 29 January 1883, LtB 16: 166.
by authors specifically requested by Gradener (Anthony Trollope's *Mr Scarborough's Children* and Justin McCarthy's *Maid of Athens*), the rest were by standard second—and third—rank authors. Yet even with a 5% reduction on fourteen of the titles Chatto still received £886.10.0. It is probable that the deal with Gradener represented, as had the bulk purchase of the earlier Besant and Rice copyrights, a form of publishing opportunism motivated less by a far-seeing machiavellianism than by a pressing sense of immediate financial advantage. Whatever else it promised or required, the deal gave Chatto the chance to off-load on to the English-speaking continental market a number of mediocre books of the sort characteristically produced by the three-decker novel system. It would have been almost a matter of definition that any new book over which Chatto & Windus exercised continental rights from the moment of publication would be the product of a second-rate writer obliged to sell his work outright. It is significant that when Chatto does try to improve the quality of Gradener's list he does so by offering the bestsellers of past seasons (Besant and Rice, James Payn) whose copyrights were purchased later under a separate deal.  

The other major advantage of such a deal was that it allowed Chatto to play Tauchnitz and Gradener off against each other, presumably in the hope that such competition would stimulate a general increase in the value of continental rights. That this strategy, if that is what it was, signally failed was due more to his major authors' intransigence than lack of negotiating ability on the part of Chatto. Apart from the case of Francillon and Mrs Alfred Hunt referred to above, Chatto was quite happy to list (in his letter to Tauchnitz on 9 August 1881) the very authors whom he had mentioned to Gradener on the very same day:

P.S. We have an opening for the continental rights of most of our forthcoming works of fiction amongst which will be numbered new works of fiction by
Mrs Alexander
Julian Hawthorne
Robert Buchanan

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134 See, for instance, Chatto & Windus to Karl Gradener, 19 December 1882, LTB 16: 79.
Mrs Castel Hoey
Charles Gibbon
D. Christie Murray
G. A. Sala and others

...but before accepting any offer we should like to know as soon as possible your wishes concerning them.  

Although Gradener was more often disappointed than Tauchnitz, Tauchnitz himself could be a victim of Chatto's copyright confusions. On 4 September 1882 he is informed that his inquiry about *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* comes to late for '...we find that the author has already arranged with Herr Gradener for it', while on 23 February 1883 he learns that Trollope's *Mr Scarborough's Children* is also to be issued under Gradener's imprint.  

The one way in which Chatto & Windus could have both insured themselves of a good and continuous income from continental rights, and behaved responsibly to Gradener and his list, was to convince him that he should take bestselling reprints rather than new novels. Two sets of works within Chatto's control would have performed both these tasks admirably: those of Besant and Rice and those of James Payn. To do them justice, Chatto & Windus pushed hard for each in turn. The first campaign began on 11 October 1881 with Chatto urging the threat of competition from Tauchnitz as a lever:  

Overleaf we send you a list of novels by "James Payn" not included in Tauchnitz's list. Mr Payn is of the opinion that Tauchnitz most likely would wish to add them to his list, but after mentioning the subject to you we feel bound to let you have the first offer of them. We find Mr Payn's popularity steadily increasing and we have now acquired the copyright of all his stories. We shall be willing to accept £20 each for the stories named overleaf if you will take all of them.  

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135 LtB 13: 334, 337.
136 LtB 15: 255; LtB 16: 255.
137 LtB 13: 473.
Gradener must have misunderstood the ambiguous sentence about Chatto having acquired the copyright ‘of all his stories’, and optimistically assumed that Chatto had done what was requested of him, namely the prior negotiation of continental rights of Payn’s forthcoming and future novels. It is certainly the case that Chatto had to write back only nine days later to disabuse Gradener of his wishful-thinking:

...Although we have now the copyright of all his stories in our own hands and will doubtless publish all his future works, he still retains the disposal of the continental right in the forthcoming stories but we do not abandon the idea of your obtaining some more in the future.138

Despite these reassurances, the promotion of James Payn was not much of a success. Gradener did buy two of Payn’s back titles in November 1881 at £30 each139 (rather than the eleven offered to him in 11 October letter), but one suspects that even this modest purchase was motivated more by a desire to create in Payn a sense of obligation (which might encourage him to offer his next new novel to Gradener) than by a genuine interest in his earlier work. After it became apparent that this tactic had failed to produce the desired effect, Gradener seems to have lost interest in James Payn and, despite frequent reminders from Chatto & Windus,140 bought no more of his novels.

The promotion of the works of Besant and Rice as an alternative to James Payn does not seem to have occurred to Chatto & Windus until they learned from Besant himself that he had sold the continental rights of All Sorts and Conditions of Men to Gradener. It must then have struck the firm that this was a more promising start, for here at least Gradener had gained a new and popular novel for his list before being asked to consider taking some of the author’s past works. On 12 September 1882 Chatto wrote:

We are pleased to learn from Mr Besant that you have secured his new story All Sorts and Conditions of Men which we hope to have

138 20 October 1881, LtB 14: 3.
139 Chatto & Windus to Karl Gradener, 17 November 1881, LtB 14: 88.
140 See, for instance, LtB 14: 256, 325, 356; LtB 15: 279, 289; LtB 16: 79-80.
ready in a few weeks. We have the copyright of the first and most popular works by Besant and Rice viz the Golden Butterfly Ready Money Mortiboy etc which we think have not yet been reprinted on the Continent and which we think you would find more in demand even than the later stories you publish by them. We shall be glad to let you have them at a moderate rate as well as some more of Payn's stories.\textsuperscript{141}

Two days later (14 September 1882) Chatto repeats the offer of the early Besant and Rice novels to soften the blow of his letter to Gradener which records the sale of Trollope and Wilkie Collins copyrights to Tauchnitz.\textsuperscript{142}

There then follows the two letter to Gradener via A.P.Watt quoted at the beginning of this section, the second of which (20 December 1882) can now be seen as being another example both of the attempt to induce competition between Tauchnitz and Gradener and of the confusion of publishers and authors resulting from it.

Despite the clear risks involved in this tactic, Chatto & Windus pressed on. The day before this second letter to Watt, Chatto had sent a long letter to Gradener complaining that the German publisher was not abiding by the spirit of their agreement in not accepting another second-rank novel for his approval. At the end of this amazing exercise in self-righteousness, Chatto offered both a carrot and a stick in the form, respectively, of Besant’s new novel and Tauchnitz’s desire for it.

We have given a letter of introduction to Mr Watt to Mr Besant recommending your firm for his new story. We believe that influence is being bought to bear upon this author in another direction, and that if you do not decide upon publishing the earlier works of this author that they will eventually be published elsewhere. We may tell you in confidence that the two first works upon which the authors first made their popularity “Ready-Money Mortiboy” and “The Golden Butterfly” are still in greater demand than their more recent works. We think that there cannot be a doubt a continental edition of the earlier works of Besant and Rice proving very remunerative at the low prices at which

\textsuperscript{141}\textit{LtB} 15: 279.
\textsuperscript{142}\textit{LtB} 15: 289.
we offer them to you besides giving you a greater claim on the authors' consideration in respect to future works. Please also do not forget the earlier works of James Payn.\textsuperscript{143}

The statement about the earlier novels being more popular than the later ones was true as far as it applied to the co-authored works. It was, of course, written before the first 3\$6d edition of All Sorts and Conditions of Men had been issued.\textsuperscript{144}

Despite the hard sell Gradener seems to have remained unmoved, for the Letter Books record no further deals on this matter, despite the fact that by this time Gradener had appointed A.P.Watt as his representative in England.\textsuperscript{145} One suspects that this appointment, prefigured as it was in his letter of the 13 August 1881,\textsuperscript{146} was an indication of Gradener's disillusionment with Chattos as his informal agent, and was intended to mark the end of their 'special relationship'. Certainly the frequency of letters in the Letter Books would bear this out. In Letter Book 13 (15 March-18 October 1881) there are eight entries for Gradener and only five for Tauchnitz; in Letter Book 14 (19 October 1881-16 May 1882) there are ten for Gradener and six for Tauchnitz. By Letter Book 15 (18 May-21 November 1882), at the height of the competition, Gradener had fourteen entries, Tauchnitz ten. In Letter Book 16 (21 November 1882-6 June 1883), which covers the

\textsuperscript{143}Chatto & Windus to Gradener, 19 December 1882, LtB 16: 79-80.
\textsuperscript{144}Sometime in late January 1883, see Lgb 3: 582.
\textsuperscript{145}James Hepburn records a Watt advertisement dated 2 December 1882 announcing his appointment, see \textit{The Author's Empty Purse & the Rise of the Literary Agent} (London, 1968), p. 50. A letter sent by Watt to Chatto & Windus on 29 January 1883 was written on writing-paper carrying the heading 'LITERARY AGENT for "Asher's Collection of English Authors", Hamburg', see LtB 16: 166. Three days earlier Chattos had written to Gradener confirming his order for the fourteen novels listed in their letter (7 January 1883) and congratulating him on appointing Watt as his agent:

\begin{quote}
We feel sure that you have done wisely in securing the services of our highly esteemed friend Mr Watt. You could not have a representative who is more highly respected alike by authors and publishers, and from the high regard we have formed for his character during the many pleasant business transactions we have had with him we feel confident that he will be able to develop the connection of your firm in this country. (23 January 1883, LtB 16: 166)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{146}Karl Gradener to Chatto & Windus, LtB 13: 347.
period during which Watt became Gradener's formal agent, Gradener has six and Tauchnitz sixteen. By the time of Letter Book 17 (7 June 1883-10 October 1884) correspondence with Gradener was being classified under Watt's name; again, six letters mention Gradener (two of these suggest that Watt should offer the titles in question to both competitors '...to either Herr Gradener, or Baron Tauchnitz, for continental publication');¹⁴⁷ in the same book there are fourteen letters to Tauchnitz. Letter Book 18 (11 October 1884-22 January 1886) recorded only two titles offered exclusively to Gradener, three letters mention both continental publishers, and twelve are devoted exclusively to Tauchnitz. During the period 22 January 1886 to 5 May 1887, covered by Letter Book 19, Tauchnitz receives three letters from Chatto & Windus, and Gradener none.

By 17 March 1883 Chatto & Windus seemed to have abandoned any hope of convincing Gradener of the merits of Besant and Rice's early novels, and to have switched their attack to Tauchnitz who at least had the advantage of having proved his interest in the earlier novels by having bought The Golden Butterfly in December 1882.¹⁴⁸ It was clearly irritating to Chatto that Besant had, due to his naivety in business matters, undervalued his work and had sold the continental rights for just £20.

...We think they are all well worth the £[30] each asked Mr. Gradener, but as Mr. Besant was willing to accept £20 for "The Golden Butterfly" we think he may not be inclined to give more for the others ...¹⁴⁹

Despite this low price Tauchnitz bought only one novel, Ready-Money Mortiboy, which he issued in April 1884.¹⁵⁰

The reluctance of both Gradener and Tauchnitz to buy even proven successes once they had appeared as cheap reprints on the home market is significant. In theory, the market supplied by the German publishers

¹⁴⁷Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, 15 February 1884, LtB 17: 541.
¹⁴⁸See Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, 20 December 1882, LtB 16: 85.
¹⁴⁹Chatto & Windus to Watt, 17 March 1884, LtB 17: 602.
was hermetically sealed from the UK market, and thus a cheap edition for English-speakers abroad should not have been threatened by a cheap domestic edition. In practice, as enforcement of strict segregation was impossible, there must have been a considerable amount of interchange with Tauchnitz and Asher’s Library editions entering the UK and cheap British reprints finding their way into the European market. The market for an English edition on the Continent was probably a very specific and rather limited one, and would be profitable only if fully-exploited. Any marginal reduction of demand would have had serious effects on profits. The availability of a cheap reprint at home would stop the holiday-maker from increasing his return luggage with a Tauchnitz or two. The Anglophone French or German businessman might pick up a 3s6d version of *The Golden Butterfly* and lend it to friends on his return without the need to buy a Tauchnitz. By such means a narrow profit margin could be squeezed until it virtually disappeared. The keenness with which Gradener and Tauchnitz pursued early sheets of new and expensive novels is a possible measure of the cross-channel traffic in cheap English reprints. Such a traffic was only possible because virtually all the Tauchnitz editions were issued before the first cheap English reprint.\(^{151}\)

It is clear that Besant, in company with many other popular authors of the day, had a problem with cheaper editions from Europe and the USA competing with the more expensive British editions in the British, Canadian and Colonial markets. On 19 May 1889 he wrote to Chatto:

> Are you aware that the only way to protect your books published by Tauchnitz is to give notice to the Custom House authorities? A friend of mine brought back yesterday from Italy “Herr Paulus” (Tauchnitz). The people stopped it but on finding that it was not on “the List” they let it go.\(^{152}\)

Chatto replied on 28 May:

> Thank you very much for your [note] concerning the introduction of Tauchnitz copies of “Herr Paulus”. I have now had all your novels

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\(^{151}\) Tauchnitz himself condemned the importation of his editions into the UK, see the *Athenaeum*, 7 April 1883, Vol. 1, p. 443.

\(^{152}\) Besant Letters, General Manuscript Collection, Princeton University Library.
entered at the Custom House, and this will I hope stop American copies
from going into Canada and the other Colonies.153

Besant's Continental Rights 1884-1892

The evidence to be derived from Chatto & Windus's Letter Books and the
files of A.P.Watt suggests that Besant's and Rice's work never did manage
to establish itself on the Continent, certainly not, at least, on the scale that
it did in Britain and the USA. Tauchnitz did, however, bring out many of
Besant's solo works, intermittently in the early and middle 1880s,154 and
more consistently between 1888-1891.155 Encouraged by this sudden flurry
of interest, Chatto & Windus again tried to interest Tauchnitz in the earlier
novels. On 19 March 1891 they wrote to Watt:

It has always been a matter of some surprise to us that so few of Mr
Besant's novels as well as the earlier stories by Besant and Rice, are to
be found in Baron Tauchnitz's collection of English Authors. Surely
the time has now come for him to secure if not all of these novels, at
least the greater number of them ... certainly some of the earlier col-
aborated stories, which still maintain their original popularity ...

and, clearly forgetting the earlier price offered, suggested £50 per title. In a
reply dated 9 May 1891, Tauchnitz agreed to take one of the novels and asked
Chatto's advice as to the most popular. In questioning the proposed price
Tauchnitz gave clear evidence of Besant's limited appeal to English-reading
Europeans:

153LtB 21: 772.
154In the following lists the first Tauchnitz edition is in round brackets, the first cheap
UK edition in square brackets: The Revolt of Man No. 2108 (November 1882); Dorothy
Forster Nos. 2259-60 (July 1884) [November 1885]; Children of Gibeon Nos. 2433-4
(December 1886) [April 1887]; The World Went Very Well Then Nos. 2464-5 (July 1887)
[October 1887].
155Katherine Regina No. 2503 (February 1888); Herr Paulus Nos. 2541-2 (September
1888) [September 1888]; The Inner House No. 2553 (November 1888); The Bell of St.
Paul's Nos. 2621-2 (January 1890) [September 1890]; For Faith and Freedom Nos. 2666-7
(August 1890) [August 1890]; Armorel of Lyonesse Nos. 2702-3 (March 1891) [August
1891].
156LtB 24: 85.
...the price you name I find is Fifty Pounds. We do not wish, under the circumstances, to bargain with you, but you will permit me the remark that, though we are well aware the Mr Besant has a great reputation in England and America, the sale of his novels—even of quite new ones—in our Continental Series has remained rather limited. If you will take this fact into consideration in our present transaction, we leave to you to decide.\footnote{LTB 24: 200.}

Chatto & Windus accepted the point and reduced the price to £40 in
'...the hope that your success with it will encourage you to very shortly secure the others ...'\footnote{Chatto & Windus to Tauchnitz, 11 May 1891, LTB 24: 302.} Despite Chatto's infinitive-splitting enthusiasm, Tauchnitz never did make a bid for the remaining Besant and Rice novels, so it is reasonably safe to assume that his recommendation\footnote{By Celia's Arbour Nos. 2887-8 (February 1893).} fared no better than previous titles had done.

It is difficult to know how significant a failure this was for avowedly popular novelists. Financially, at least, it was relatively unimportant, being on a par with the normally small sums paid for early sheets by American publishers such as Harpers.\footnote{For instance, Harpers paid James Rice £30 on 31 December 1877 for early sheets of By Celia's Arbour and £40 to Besant in 1889 for similar rights to The Bell of St. Pauls. It is important to note that these low prices applied only when Harper was buying the book rights alone. When the deal included serial rights, early sheets commanded much higher prices: on 4 November 1886 Harpers paid £175 for the book and serial rights of The World Went Very Then and another £175 on 28 December 1888 for similar rights to For Faith and Freedom (see The Archives of Harper & Brothers 1817-1914 (Chadwyck-Healey/Somerset House), 'The Priority List', Reel 22. The system was to change radically after the Chace Act of 1891—see Chapter 5.} The failure to sell their backlist successfully abroad does, however, mark a distinct limit to Besant's and Rice's appeal, a limit, moreover, which was apparent at the very time their popularity was at its height in Britain and the USA.

If the Besant and Rice backlist seems to have been something of a dead-letter on the Continent, the same cannot be said of the current Besant book, whatever it happened to be. According to the Watt archives, and Todd and Bowden, Tauchnitz continued intermittently to buy Besant's new

\footnote{By Celia's Arbour Nos. 2887-8 (February 1893).}
novels throughout the 1890s, although never for very large sums. The Watt papers do, however, record one attempt to break out of this pattern of non-uniform, small-scale returns on continental rights. Very much in the tradition of Chatto's original deal with Gradener (which was characterised by a relatively unqualified acceptance of any title offered and a standardised high price for each book), Watt negotiated a contract with Heinemann and Balestier which was signed on 28 February 1891. In it Heinemann and Balestier agreed to purchase

... during a period of five years from the date of this agreement, the sole right to publish in the English language on the continent of Europe each and every ['3 volume' inserted here in handwriting] novel (about 130,000 words) or collection of shorter stories (about 130,000 words) which he may produce in the time specified and for which arrangements shall have been made for production in book form in this country...

For this privilege the publishers were to pay £100 for the advance sheets of every novel and £75 for collections of short stories. These rates represented a significant advance on what Chatto and Besant had been receiving from Tauchnitz: twice as much for each novel and about three times as much for each collection of short stories. This was a very generous arrangement even with the various stipulations added. Apart from making sure Besant was not able to palm them off with material which was unpublishable in the UK, Heinemann and Balestier insisted that publication on the continent should '... be as nearly as possible simultaneous with the issue in book form in England ...' and that Besant should also offer them first refusal of continental rights of all his other books not directly covered by the agreement but nevertheless published during the five years specified by the contract.

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161 Beyond the Dreams of Avarice Nos. 3070-1 (August 1895) [February 1896]; The Master Craftsman Nos. 3147-8 (August 1896) [March 1897]; A Fountain Sealed No. 3227 (September 1897) [April 1898]; The Orange Girl Nos. 3388-9 (September 1899) [April 1901]; The Fourth Generation No. 3447 (September 1900); The Lady of Lynn Nos. 3512-3 (August 1901) [November 1904].

162 William Heinemann established the firm in Leipzig in 1889-90. It was active in the field until 1904-5. See Nowell-Smith, p. 60.

163 WA 11/9 [1].

164 ibid.
Ominously, the contract shows no sign of having any form of penalty clause which could be invoked in the case of either party not fulfilling its part of the bargain. The nearest thing to it is a toothless clause which gives Besant the right to withdraw from the arrangement should the other party default. The whole tenor of this suggests that the contract tacitly assumed that Besant would do nothing but gain from the arrangement and therefore would not be the party who reneged on the deal.

Like the Chatto-Gradener arrangement, this contract seems to have been based on a wild over-estimation of the profitability and appetite of the European English novel-reading market. Unlike the Gradener deal, it does not seem even to have got off the ground, for there is no evidence in the remaining Watt archives that Heinemann and Balestier issued any of Besant’s work in English on the Continent. Besant himself was presumably left to exercise his rather unrewarding right to withdraw from the arrangement and return to Tauchnitz. He had certainly done this by June 1892, for in this month the Watt archives record Tauchnitz buying the Continental rights of *Verbena Camellia Stephanotis* for £25.165

**Besant’s Translation Rights**

Another right normally associated with the European market which authors and publishers might capitalise on, at least theoretically, was that of translation. In practice, certainly with a novelist such as Besant whose works (on the evidence above) seemed to have had a distinctly limited appeal outside the native English-speaking world, this appears to have been difficult to realise fully. This was partly due to the additional problem of having to find not only an enthusiastic publisher but also a committed translator. Another difficulty was the unreliability of the translators, many of whom, it appears, were amateurs of limited resources and stamina.166 The third problem was

165 25 June 1892, WA 14/7 [1]; it was numbered 2844 and was announced in August 1892.
166 See, for instance, the letter sent by Andrew Chatto to Besant, 29 July 1885, LtB 18: 644:

Many thanks for the letter from the Electrotype Agency concerning a translation of “By Celia’s Arbour” which we will very willingly give as I
the tendency for translation and 'English on the Continent' rights to become confused in the minds of authors, thus leaving the publisher in some doubt as to whether or not the former right had been sold. This last difficulty generated a considerable amount of correspondence which appears to have done little to clarify matters, but much to create a sense of uncertainty strong enough to undermine all but the most confident of translators and all but the most phlegmatic of publishers. The confusion over *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* will serve to illustrate the point. On 18 May 1887 Chatto wrote to Watt, presumably in response to an inquiry from a potential translator:

> I believe Gradener printed [illegible word] edition of *All Sorts* for the Continent: but I do not find any record of the rights of translation having been sold: but he may have bought that at the same time that he bought the English rights from Mr. Besant. If not I suppose the translation right should be worth £15 or £20.¹⁶⁷

As Chatto & Windus had said during an earlier inquiry about translation rights, translators 'seldom pay large sums'.¹⁶⁸ This low valuation of the translation right was probably a key factor in keeping the area under-exploited and poorly monitored. Unlike 'English on the Continent' editions, translations seem rarely if ever to have been proposed by Chatto & Windus to European publishers. Instead the initiatives, such as they were, came from the translators themselves. This was not just because the rights were worth £15 or £20, rather than £30–£50 (after all, some of Besant's earlier copyrights were offered at £20), but also because it was much less likely that Chatto's could sell a collection of such titles to one publisher as a package deal, and it was the bulk deal (particularly relating to backlists rather than current lists) which was most likely to generate large profits.

Four years later, Chatto & Windus were again expressing uncertainty about the German translation rights of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*:

> I think it helps advertise your name. ... The other translator working from Penzance came to nothing.

¹⁶⁷LtB 20: 28.
¹⁶⁸Chatto & Windus to A.P. Watt, 25 October 1886, concerning a translation of *Children of Gibeon* into either French or German, LtB 19: 582.
Can you kindly let us know whether the right of translation into German of Besant's *Katherine Regina* or *All Sorts and Conditions* has ever been sold—Have you any note of such a translation existing?169

As the translation right tended to be retained by Besant unless he had sold the entire copyright, Watt certainly should have known, particularly as the first book mentioned had been published after he had become Besant's agent, and the second was Besant's most famous work. Clearly, however, Watt himself was sometimes uncertain of the status of the translation right. On 11 June 1888, for instance, Chatto & Windus had had to write to Besant's agent gently correcting him as to the legal standing of the translation rights of a recent novel:

> If you can sell the translation right of *The World Went Very Well* Then on Mr Besant's account we shall be very pleased. The right is his, we think, rather than ours.170

A year and a half later (16 December 1892) the translation of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* is still unrealised, or at least uncertain:

> We have been applied to by E. von Baltz for permission to translate into German Mr. Besant's "*Verbena Camellia Stephanotis*" etc. and "*All Sorts and Conditions of Men*" which we take it we are free to dispose of (as we have acquired the remaining rights in these stories) unless the right of issuing German translations had already been already conceded to anyone.

> Will you kindly oblige us by informing us whether any arrangements have already been made for translating either of these volumes into German?171

This letter highlights another problem with minor rights when there was a likelihood of a major change of ownership of copyright during the selling life of a popular novel. Normally Besant would retain control of all the rights unspecified in the original contracts with the serial and book publishers for

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169 Chatto & Windus to A.P. Watt, 21 April 1891, LtB 24: 220.
170 LtB 20: 882; see also LtB 27: 103.
171 Chatto & Windus to A.P. Watt, LtB 26: 730.
the first five years, after which he would sell all his remaining interests to Chatto & Windus. Unless a strict record was kept during the first five years, it might be very difficult for the firm to know exactly how many of the minor rights had already been disposed of by the time the firm came to purchase the remaining copyright. This area of potential uncertainty goes a long way to explain the edgy, tentative tone of the final letter in this sequence which was written on 30 November 1893:

We bought the entire remaining rights in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* on Feb 11 1887 and do not think we have sold the rights of translation to anyone since then. *Before* then, we have no knowledge of what was done with outside rights. Of course, in offering such rights now to anyone on our behalf, it will be necessary that the person to whom offer is made should ascertain clearly that no other translation has been authorised.¹⁷²

If nothing else, this proliferation of potentially exploitable rights was a strong argument for the professional literary agent. He could be expected to protect, cultivate and oversee not merely the broad acres of a literary property, but its weed-infested corners as well. It is to Watt's performance as Besant's literary agent that we shall now turn.

¹⁷²Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, LtB 27: 984.
Chapter 5

Negotiating for Besant 1882-1902

'Honest journey work!' cried Jasper. 'There are few men in Lon­
don capable of such a feat. Many a fellow could write more in quantity,
but they couldn't command my market. It's rubbish, but rubbish of a
very special kind, of fine quality.'

Jasper Milvain in New Grub Street (1891)

...his career illustrates the advantages to be derived from accepting
the existing conditions and trading upon them.

Walter Besant on Jasper Milvain, in the Author (1891)

Introduction

This chapter aims to establish a number of points concerning Besant's later
publishing history; in particular, the way in which serial rights were mar­
keted and overseas book rights sold. It will ask whether or not Besant’s
claim that A.P.Watt1 tripled his income can be substantiated,2 and why
Watt did not, or could not, stop Besant selling his literary rights wholesale.
It will prove that Watt himself benefitted considerably from his association
with Besant: he was not obliged to do anything innovatory or too aggres­

1 A.P.Watt’s history is described in Hepburn, pp. 51-5, and by Hilary Rubinstein in
2 Autobiography, p. 204.

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sive, and thus could seem conciliatory and unthreatening to publishers; in being identified with such a respectable and distinguished figure, Watt could acquire dignity and status by association. In selling bulk serialisation rights, and then acting as agent for the purchaser of those rights, Watt was able to 'double-crop' Besant’s literary property. This chapter will seek to prove that, as with Rice and Chatto, Watt gained more from his literary relationship with Besant than Besant himself did. As a subsidiary theme, we shall see Besant, at what should have been the high point of his career, caught in a trap of static prices and operating under formal (contractual) and informal constraints which helped to govern what he wrote. That these constraints were often invited merely serves to demonstrate the extent to which Besant was a prisoner of his own preconceptions.

Although it is impossible to make a proper study of Besant’s contracts until we reach the period covered by the existing A.P.Watt files, it is important to have at least an overall grasp of how Besant disposed of his literary property between All in the Garden Fair (1883) and Armorel of Lyonesse (1890)—the first full length novel comprehensively covered by the Watt archives. For this period our only consistent sources of information are the Chatto & Windus Letter and Ledger Books, so it is to these we must turn once again.

The first thing which strikes one about the Besant-Chatto & Windus contracts during the period 1884-9 is their innate conservatism. Each contract proposed tended to be modelled on its predecessor both in terms of its clauses and the sums of money involved. Perhaps we should not be too surprised by this because, on the whole, it was Chatto who proposed each deal and it was clearly in his interest, with an apparently increasingly marketable novelist on his hands, to stick to a pattern of contract which had been developed at a time when Besant had yet to establish himself as a pop-

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3In an undated letter (probably written in the early 1890s) to a 'Mr Morison', Besant suggested that 'The great thing for us to do is to make authors insist on agreements with publishers. This will end in the better sort of them trying to buy up books altogether—a favourable arrangement, at first, for authors.' (Ms Album 89, University of Newcastle Library.) The 'at first' suggests that Besant acknowledged the need for established authors to avoid contractual inertia and to move on to something better.
ular single author. Although not wholly successful in this endeavour—for the sum Besant earned for the sale of five year’s of book rights did gradually increase over the period—Chatto must be regarded as having achieved more than a measure of success in putting the brakes on whatever contractual ambitions Besant might have entertained. It would be an act of extreme naivety wholly to condemn Chatto for this. As Besant was so fond of reminding his fellow authors, publishers were, whatever other loyalties they professed, first and foremost businessmen, and one should deal with them as such. The impression gained from the Chatto & Windus archives is that neither Besant nor his agent fully appreciated this or, if they did, then they failed to act upon it. One gets the feeling that Chatto was tougher than many accounts of him might suggest, though he was never unjust. Had he been pushed more, he would have given more. Besant, however, as was made clear in Chapter 1, was not the man to do it.

Book Rights 1883-1890

How did this conservatism in contract manifest itself? We have already seen that the arrangements for All in a Garden Fair were modelled ‘upon those drawn up by Mr Rice’, and that their rather ungenerous terms might be partly explained by Chatto & Windus lacking proof of large sales of All Sorts and Conditions of Men. A year later, as we observed in Chapter 2, this could no longer be true and yet, on 11 March 1884, Chatto & Windus proposed a contract which again made no concession to the fact that Besant’s status had in the meantime changed from untried single author to bestseller:

I enclose in duplicate a memorandum of agreement for your new novel “Dorothy Forster” on the same lines as All in the [sic] Garden Fair, one copy signed by ourselves the other for you to kindly execute

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4 Chatto & Windus to Besant, 5 July 1883, LtB 17: 56.
5 By February 1884 the 1500 sets of the three-volume edition of All in a Garden Fair had been bound up; in the same month Chatto & Windus had ordered a first 3s6d edition of the novel; by the end of 1884 some 4,000 copies of this edition had been sold. See LgB 3: 775.
At this point Besant (or possibly Watt) does seem, at last, to have consulted his convenience, for the contract was not immediately endorsed, in fact it was not signed for another week. When finally initialled, the sum for five years' book rights was £600 rather than the £500 paid for *All in a Garden Fair*. It is just possible that the phrase 'on the same lines as *All in the [sic] Garden Fair'* might simply mean a contract having the same structure as the one referred to, and that £600 rather than £500 was suggested by Chatto & Windus. Against this interpretation we might put two characteristics of Chatto's common practice: one, for each new contract in the mid- and late 1880s Chatto tended to offer what had been accepted previously and only increased it if it was challenged; two, when an increased sum was agreed, the letter of agreement tended to include a formula which mentioned both the form of contract and the new sum as the only exception. In other words, the contract took the form: 'Upon the same terms . . . excepting that the payment is to be . . .'.

Although the contract for Dorothy Forster raised the value of five years' reprint rights, it seemed to have been able to do nothing for the value of what were called 'remaining rights'. These were those that were bought once the five-year reprint contract had expired, and usually marked the point at which Besant ceded all future interest in his creation to the publisher. Underlying the usually low price offered by Chatto & Windus for remaining rights was the pessimistic assumption that, as most titles were close to exhaustion after five years of reprinting, little profit could be expected from such burnt-out cases. Some of Besant's (and many of Besant's and Rice's) novels were to prove more robust than this, and were to sell tolerably well

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6LtB 17: 592.
7'Five years' rights' usually meant five years' reprint rights, for the period was dated from the issue of the first 3s6d edition.
8Chatto & Windus to Besant, 6 June 1884, LtB 17: 749. The contract was dated 18 March 1884; the £600 was paid by means of two promissory notes worth £300 each and payable at four and six months.
9See, for instance, the acknowledgement of contract letter sent by Chatto & Windus to Watt, 24 October 1887, LtB 20: 355.
over a longer period. However, there was a Catch 22 lurking for a successful but self-doubting author like Besant: selling all remaining rights after five years of reprints gave some immediate income, but cut one off from all further interest in the work. Having no rights meant that finding out how well a novel was selling was virtually impossible. The author lacked proof, therefore, of a book's value beyond five years and thus had to accept the publisher's low valuation. Such low valuations undermined Besant's confidence, and made him more likely to accept equally low offers in the future.

Chatto & Windus's five years rights on *All in a Garden Fair* expired in May 1889, and Besant was offered, through Watt, £150 for the remaining rights. He accepted without demur.10

The initial payment for five years’ rights to *Dorothy Forster* was, as we have seen, raised from £500 to £600. However, no such increase was offered for the novel's remaining rights when they came up for negotiation in November 1889:

We see that our lease of Mr W.Besant's "Dorothy Forster" is expiring in December. We shall be pleased to acquire the remaining copyright in the story for the sum of £150. This seems to us to be somewhat beyond what the sales of the volume would justify our offering but we strain a point in order to keep up to the figure we have paid for the similar rights of Mr Besant's other stories.11

There have been earlier examples of Chatto over-stating his case for tactical reasons. Should we include the complaint about the sales of *Dorothy Forster* in the same category? How had other Besant and Besant and Rice books fared during their first five years of reprints? The best way of answering this is to take the novels which had been published in the four years before *Dorothy Forster* and thus which would have provided Chatto with his most relevant and immediate evidence. For each title we should look at the number of copies ordered in the first five years of their publishing history.

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10 See Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, 16 October 1888, LtB 21: 159; and WA 2/16 [1]. The Bill was for £250, but this was because it also included a payment for similar remaining rights for a collection of short stories (*Uncle Jack* (1885)).


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and compare these with the same figures for *Dorothy Forster*. *The Seamy Side* (1880) notched up 3,500 copies at 3s6d and 18,000 at 2s, a total of 21,500.\textsuperscript{12} *The Chaplain of the Fleet* (1881) had 11,250 at 3s6d and 20,000 at 2s, a total of 31,250.\textsuperscript{13} *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) chalked up 26,000 at 3s6d and 37,000 at 2s, a total of 63,000.\textsuperscript{14} Finally, *All in a Garden Fair* (1883) scored 8,000 at 3s6d and 13,000 at 2s, a total of 21,000.\textsuperscript{15} Over the same time-span the Ledger Books record that *Dorothy Forster* was issued in 12,750 copies at 3s6d and 20,000 at 2s, a total of 32,750.\textsuperscript{16} In other words, of the four novels immediately preceding *Dorothy Forster*, only the exceptional *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* exceeded its print run in the first five years of reprinting. Even if we allow for the inevitable inaccuracies involved in computing these figures, we can still say that there is nothing in the production record of the novel which would justify its being singled out as a particular failure. Indeed, of the nineteen major novels written by Besant between 1882 and 1901, *Dorothy Forster* was to end up with the third largest print run.\textsuperscript{17}

Quite apart from all the statistical evidence, of which Besant would have been totally ignorant, there was the novelist’s own frequently-expressed conviction that, of all his novels, ‘by far the best, in my own judgment, is *Dorothy Forster*’.\textsuperscript{18} Holding such a belief, it is hardly surprising that Besant reacted strongly to Chatto & Windus’s letter of 26 November which Watt must have passed on to him. On 30 November 1889 he wrote to Watt:

> Let us take Chatto’s offer. There will always be a steady demand for “Dorothy Forster” the best written of the whole set—I should like to see how much he has made out of me altogether—If I were able to do over again—I would have no publisher.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{12}LgB 3: 331, 590; LgB 4: 84.  
\textsuperscript{13}LgB 3: 423, 643; LgB 4: 69.  
\textsuperscript{14}LgB 3: 582, 786; LgB 4: 23, 245, 306.  
\textsuperscript{15}LgB 3: 775; LgB 4: 127, 385.  
\textsuperscript{16}LgB 4: 9, 205, 272, 485.  
\textsuperscript{17}103,500 copies; the two most successful were *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882): 272,500 copies; and *The Orange Girl* (1899): 150,250 copies; see Appendix 2.  
\textsuperscript{18}Autobiography, p. 205.  
\textsuperscript{19}WA 6/20 [2].
It is clear from both the tone and the content of this that Besant felt that Chatto was exploiting him, hence the heart-felt cry 'I should like to see how much he has made out of me...'. Of course, in having leased and then sold almost all his copyrights, Besant had also sold his right to know. The final bitter comment about having no publisher contrasts strongly with his much publicised comment that 'I should like to see my friend Chatto driving in a gilded coach!'\textsuperscript{20}

Yet despite this undisguised bitterness and sense of long-term exploitation, what did Besant do? He might have refused the sum and instructed Watt to re-negotiate for a larger payment. He might have proposed a half-profits or royalty arrangement for his reprints. He might have withdrawn from Chatto and sought a better deal elsewhere or, as he suggested in the letter, have no publisher but commission publishers on a fixed 10%. He might at least have voiced his complaints to Chatto directly. In fact he did none of these things, combining instead meek acceptance of a poor offer with a bitter, but indirect, denunciation of it. Chatto can hardly be blamed for assuming that Besant accepted his spurious arguments, for Besant's paralysing dislike of financial self-promotion ensured that he could never honestly confront the publisher. The tone of moral outrage in the letter was a substitute for effective action.

Besant's next major novel, \textit{Children of Gibeon} (1886), provides a contrasting arrangement. Unfortunately, most of the evidence about the exact nature of the contract is missing. The Watt archives include nothing on it, and the Longman archives are no more forthcoming. The only material available consists of three letters in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books. All three are dated 8 December 1884 and none involve Besant directly. The first, from Chatto & Windus to A.P. Watt, explains the nature of the deal over the novel:

\begin{quote}
We send our best thanks for the trouble you have so kindly taken in the matter of Mr Besant's new novel. We appreciate very highly the
\end{quote}

consideration [evinced?] by Mr Longman to you as well as to our own susceptibilities regarding our relationship with Mr Besant.

We have much pleasure in accepting Mr Longman's offer of all rights in the story except the magazine rights in this country for £1000 payable on delivery of the complete copy.21

From this we can deduce that Besant sold all his rights in *Children of Gibeon* to Longman at a very early stage, and that Watt was now acting as a go-between re-selling all the rights, excepting that of first serialisation, to Chatto & Windus.

Clearly, after *Dorothy Forster* Besant had sensed the need to experiment with a different marketing strategy. Unfortunately, it does not seem to have been different enough. It was still a lump-sum sale (although we do not know for how much), but this time to a different publisher, and on a different basis. From what we can deduce from this letter, Longman had complete rights over the book. This is confirmed by the total absence in the Chatto & Windus and A.P. Watt archives of any sale of remaining rights after five years. A thorough search around the years 1889-91 when these rights would have been bought had they been outstanding, has revealed nothing.22

The only major change, apart from the very early total sale of rights, was that it was made to Longman rather than Chatto & Windus. Did Besant expect Longman to publish the novel in book form? Was he disconcerted by his old publishers buying back the book rights? Was Chatto's phrase 'our own susceptibilities regarding our relationship with Mr Besant' an edgy reference to some strain in the relationship? We do not know. What we can say is, if it was an attempt to break the mould, it was a singularly unsuccessful one. In selling all rights Besant had yet again forfeited any control over the novel's fate.

One further unresolved problem surrounding the publishing history of *Children of Gibeon*, centres on the role of Watt. We have had occasion

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21 LtB 18: 148 (a).
22 A comment on a Ledger Book folio concerned with *Children of Gibeon* confirms this: 'Copyright entire bt of Longmans'; see LgB 4: 218.
earlier to point out that Watt, in functioning simultaneously as an agent for Besant and as a go-between for Chatto & Windus, might well have seriously compromised his position. The second letter in this 8 December 1884 group confirms Watt’s facilitating role between the two publishers (as well as suggesting that the confusion between ‘verbal’ and ‘oral’ has a long history):

I have seen Mr Longman today & informed him verbally as well as by letter that you accept his terms for Mr Besant’s story. The only right he holds is that of publication in “Longman’s Magazine” for 1886. He will write you confirming this.23

The final letter in the sequence is the one referred to by Watt above. Its main interest is in providing another vivid example of the inertial pressure on writers to go on producing other versions of their early successes. Dickens faced this with *Pickwick Papers*, resisted it and took his readers with him; Harrison Ainsworth faced it, could not resist it, yet failed to keep his readers:24

...When I spoke to Mr Besant about writing a novel for my magazine he asked me what sort of a novel I wanted. I replied that one like *The Golden Butterfly* would be good enough for me. To which he replied “The deuce it would”! If it turns out as well as that capital book we shall both benefit under the present arrangement.26

Had it been so, both Longman and Chatto (but not Besant) would indeed have benefitted. But it was not. Instead the novel was a grimmer version of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* without the yeast of utopianism. It sold well, around 40,500 3s6d and 2s reprints in the first five years,26 but it proved to have much less staying power than *The Golden Butterfly*.27

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23A.P.Watt to Chatto, 8 December 1884, LtB 18: 148 (b).
25C.J.Longman to Chatto & Windus, 8 December 1884, LtB 18: 148 (c).
26See LgB 4: 218, 345, 389.
27Chatto & Windus were able to dispose of 100,000 6d copies of *The Golden Butterfly* in three years (January 1895-December 1897); they took over nineteen years to sell 50,000 6d copies of *The Children of Gibeon* (March 1909-October 1922), see, respectively, LgB 5: 167; LgB 6: 67.
The evidence does suggest, however, that Chatto & Windus were able to recoup their investment in ways additional to selling cheap reprints. The Ledger Book folios dealing with *The Children of Gibeon* are full of such entries as 'Tauchnitz right £50', 'Serial right in Australia £100', 'Serial right in Calcutta £20', '20/6/01 German translation offd. through the Northern Newspaper Syndicate for £15', '25/6/01 Offered to run once serially through the Northern Newspaper Syndicate for £105'.

Given the rather abortive nature of Besant's experiment, it is not surprising to find him retreating to a more conventional arrangement for his next major novel, clumsily titled *The World Went Very Well Then* (1887). His vague gesture of independence over *The Children of Gibeon* had won him nothing in terms of improved contractual conditions:

> We are extremely obliged to you for your kind offer of the remaining ['for five years' inserted in pencil] copyright which is to be commenced in the "Illustrated London News" in June 1886 and have much pleasure in accepting it upon the terms you mentioned viz that we shall pay £600 by our bills at 3 & 6 months from the date of publication in book form which we shall be entitled to [illegible word] six weeks before the completion of it in the "Illustrated News" Mr Besant reserving all rights of first serial publication in Great Britain, America and the Colonies together with the American book rights and the rights of translation and publication in English on the Continent.

This was no more than a reversion to the arrangements established at the time of *Dorothy Forster*.

*Herr Paulus* (1888), which was first syndicated through Tillotson's in 1887, and *For Faith and Freedom* (1889) were subject to identical arrangements. *The Bell of St.Paul's* (1889), first serialised in *Longman's Magazine* in 1888, marked a minor improvement in the sense that Chatto & Windus paid £650 rather than the more usual £600 for five year's book rights.
Despite his inclination to caution, and his 'talking down’ of the value of *Dorothy Forster*, Chatto obviously felt sufficient confidence in the long-term market value of these middle novels not to wait until the end of the five-year probationary period before offering to buy the remaining copyrights. Within two months of the letter concerning *Dorothy Forster* which had provoked Besant to such justified bitterness, Chatto was sending Watt:

> Our bills at 8, 9 & 10 months for £200 each for remaining copyrights of 4 novels by Mr Besant “The World Went Very Well Then”, “Herr Paulus” “For Faith and Freedom” and “The Bell of St Pauls” and a form of receipt for Mr Besant’s signature.³²

By the end of the 1880s a pattern of £650 for five years' book rights followed by £150 for all remaining book rights was well established.

*Armorel of Lyonesse* and the Triple Agreement of 1890

With Besant's strong disinclination to enter the hurly-burly of direct negotiation or to risk gambling on his continued popularity by arranging a royalty agreement, he was doomed to a very limited income from his book rights. The only strategy available to him was to exploit the other rights associated with his literary property. The most important of these were first (or simultaneous) and subsequent serialisation rights. As we might expect, Besant was not interested in commissioning Watt to go out and sell the rights of serialisation to individual newspapers in Britain, its Empire and North America. What he was looking for was another large lump sum for which he would part with all rights of serialisation. If we consider a recent study which has suggested that, by the end of the nineteenth century, the net value of periodical publication was probably two to three times that of book production,³³ we should not be surprised to find the value of syndication

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³²20 January 1890, LtB 22: 577.
rights was at least equal to, and sometimes higher, than those associated with book rights.

Let us turn to the first Besant novel for which there are reasonably full records in the A.P.Watt Archives, *Armored of Lyonesse* (1890). There is a 'Memorandum of Agreement' between Walter Besant and Chatto & Windus dated 19 July 1888:

> Mr Walter Besant cedes to Messrs Chatto & Windus the sole and exclusive right of publishing in book form at 31/6 3/6 and 2/- but not less for the term of five years from the date of the publication of the 3/6 edition after which term the copyright shall revert to the Author, a new three volume novel to be written by him and to be first published in serial form in the "Illustrated London News" in the course of the year 1890.

> ...Messrs Chatto & Windus agree to pay Mr Walter Besant the sum of £650 six hundred and fifty pounds by two bills one for £300 at 4 months & one for £350 at six months from the date of the first publication of the novel complete in 3 volumes.34

This is, in fact, a standard, late-1880s Besant book rights contract. We might confidently expect him, in five years time, or somewhat less, to abandon all remaining rights for £150. However, we have already seen that, by early 1890, Chatto was prepared to buy up four remaining copyrights as a job lot without waiting for five years to elapse. What was happening to the contractual relationship between Besant and Chatto & Windus in the early 1890s, and how did it affect the apparently traditional arrangements for *Armored of Lyonesse*?

The answer is, to the latter question at least, substantially and dramatically. At some time in January 1890 the original July 1888 Memorandum of Agreement was cancelled, and was then replaced on the 29 January 1890 by another contract whose scope was much larger.35 By now it must have

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34 WA [A] 2/12 [2].
35 There had, in fact, been an intermediate stage in which the 1891 and 1892 novels were negotiated for together but on the old principle of £650 each for five years of book rights. No record of this transitional form exists in the Watt archives, but a letter of contract survives in the Chatto & Windus Letter Books dated 30 December 1889:
been clear to Besant, Chatto and Watt that distinguishing 'five years' rights' and 'all remaining rights' by means of payments separated by four or five years was, a genteel and unnecessary fiction. Besant always did sell his remaining rights after five years, usually for £150, and invariably without protest. More than that, since his ineffectual flirtation with Longman over *The Children of Gibeon* in 1884-6, Besant had stuck loyally, or inertly, to Chatto. Why not cut through the constitutional fictions, combine the two payments into one lump sum as an immediate and once-for-all payment for all book rights and, furthermore, why not make it a multiple book contract which covered not one but two or even three titles? In January 1890 that was precisely what happened:

*Mr Walter Besant* having arranged for the first serial publication of three new novels of the usual three volume length, the first now in Course of publication in the Illustrated London News entitled *Armored of Lyonesse* the second novel to be published serially in the Graphic in 1891, and the third novel in Chambers Journal in 1892, cedes to *Messrs Chatto & Windus* the entire remaining copyright and all other interest (other than the right of first serial publication which is reserved by Mr Walter Besant) in consideration of the sum of Eight Hundred Pounds (£800) for each of the aforesaid novels payable by Messrs Chatto & Windus by their bill at six months from the date of the publication of each novel in book form.\(^{36}\)

An additional clause underlined the importance to a book publisher of the author serialising a novel prior to its book form publication, a matter already discussed in Chapter 4:

> We have the pleasure of confirming the arrangement made with you this morning regarding Mr Besant's two new serial stories of the usual three volume length which are to be published in *The Graphic* in 1891 and in *Chambers Journal* in 1892. The exclusive rights of republication in book form for 5 years from the date of the issue of the 3/6 edition, we are to acquire for the payment of £650 each upon the same conditions as settled in our agreement for Mr Besant's novel *Armored of Lyonesse* commencing in the Illustrated London News in January 1890.

(Chatto & Windus to A.P.Watt, LtB 22: 511.)

\(^{36}\)Memorandum of Agreement, 29 January 1890, WA [A] 2/12 [6].
Mr Walter Besant agrees to furnish corrected proofs of each novel in time for publication in book form immediately upon the completion of the serial publication of the stories in the Illustrated London News and in the Graphic. And in the case of the novel to be published in Chamber's Journal in time for publication in book form six weeks before the publication of the last instalment.  

It is a sad reflection on Besant's career as an author that, after nearly twenty years of novel-writing, he was entering into a long contractual commitment which offered no improvement in terms over what he was receiving in the late 1880s, and which recognised no increase in the value of his work over the next three years. The contrast with Dickens is perhaps too cruel to explore in detail: sufficient to say that it was only right at the beginning of his career that Dickens entered into multiple-title contracts with publishers like Bentley; by the end he was down to making specific arrangements for specific editions.

Chatto must have regarded this agreement, which committed Besant to a three-novel contract at a fixed and unimproved price, with considerable satisfaction. The conventional delay in payment by means of a bill dated six months after first publication in three-decker form would ensure, with as bankable a name at the circulating libraries as Besant's, that a significant portion of the £800 would be recoverable before payment became due.

There is, however, an historical irony haunting this contract of which, in the very nature of things, none of the parties could possibly have been aware. Besant's solo career had begun on a high note with *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, a novel which was to have an ultimate print run of around 272,500. Despite one or two comparative flops (*Herr Paulus* at 24,500, *Bell of St. Pauls* at 23,750), the 1880s were characterised by a string of successful

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37Ibid. *Chambers's Journal* would, of course, have had a bound volume which might have threatened Chatto's three-decker edition, hence the need to publish prior to the last instalment. The contract also has an additional clause added after Chatto & Windus's endorsement, to the effect that 'Mr Walter Besant reserves the right of publication in book form in America and on the Continent'.


novels with large total print runs (Dorothy Forster at 103,500, The Children of Gibeon at 98,000, For Faith and Freedom at 82,250). The 1890s, on the other hand, were for Besant a period of decline with sales slipping away disastrously by the middle 1890s. The Master Craftsman (1896) had a total print run of 12,000; The City of Refuge (1896) was down to a total print run of 9,500; by A Fountain Sealed (1897) sales had reached their nadir (total print run of 7,500). Armorel of Lyonesse maintained the momentum of the 1880s, and sustained a total print run of 70,000. St. Katherine's by the Tower (1891), the second of the novels covered by the 29 January 1890 contract, had a total print run of no more than 23,250, the lowest of all the Besant novels to this date. The third and final work, The Ivory Gate (1892), struggled back to a total of 26,000, but that was still way below the 1880s average. In other words, for the first time in Besant's solo career, a guaranteed lump sum payment for each of three novels over three years represented a deal in which he lost little and might actually have gained something.

The Syndication of Armorel of Lyonesse

If Besant were to maximise his literary income, he could not rely exclusively on the sale of book rights. Serial rights offered a potentially lucrative additional source of income. How did Besant exploit this? In much the same way, it appears, as he exploited book rights.

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40 Dorothy Forster: LgB 4: 9, 205, 272, 485; LgB 5: 45, 442; LgB 6: 56, 287, 962; LgB 8: 712. The Children of Gibeon: LgB 4: 218, 345, 389; LgB 5: 61, 721; LgB 6: 67, 814. For Faith and Freedom: LgB 4: 433, 656; LgB 5: 443; LgB 6: 175; LgB 8: 472.
41 See, respectively, LgB 5: 246, 568; LgB 5: 318; LgB 5: 377.
42 See LgB 4: 617; LgB 5: 68, 470, 758; LgB 6: 237, 864; LgB 8: 83, 263.
43 See LgB 4: 668.
44 Using the hypothetical royalty rates discussed in Chapter 1, Armorel of Lyonesse would have earned Besant or his estate £1,237.5.0, St Katherine's by the Tower £792.15.0, and The Ivory Gate £800.5.0. Unlike the earlier Besant novels, where bulk sales were rapid and thus royalty income would be quickly earned, these novels tended to sell more slowly over a longer time span, and thus royalty income would be equally drawn out. In these circumstances a lump sum paid at the start, even if it were marginally less, might make more economic sense.
On 10 July 1888, nine days before the original, aborted contract with Chatto & Windus for Armorel of Lyonesse, Watt had negotiated a deal for the serial rights of the novel with William Ingram on behalf of the proprietors of the Illustrated London News:

The said Mr Walter Besant agrees to sell, and the said Proprietors agree to purchase, all serial rights in Great Britain and Australia of a new novel to be written by the said Mr Walter Besant, to run 26 weeks, commencing the first Saturday in January and ending the last Saturday in June, 1890, for the sum of Nine Hundred Pounds (the Proprietors of the I.L.N. to have the refusal for serial use in the United States of America.)

Payment to be made as follows: One half on delivery of the first half of the manuscript, and the remainder on delivery of the second half.46

Serial rights, in this case at least, were more valuable than total British book rights.

A further advantage to Besant was that the money was paid, in part, prior to publication. It is significant that he cedes all British and Australian rights to the Illustrated London News and gives it an option on US serial rights. Quite clearly, as in book publishing, there were separate, and separately exploitable, markets for serialisation, but Besant chose not to ask his agent to exploit them on his behalf. He preferred selling bulk rights which the buyer might then farm as best he could.

£900 was a substantial sum, and clearly the Illustrated London News expected to recoup part of its investment by re-selling rights to various other periodicals. For this purpose the proprietor used Watt who acted as a syndicating agent. One wonders whether this was part of the deal which allowed Watt to extract such a good price for Besant. Was the agent in some way guaranteeing the purchaser his services in order to defray costs? Did Watt commit himself to recouping a certain percentage of the original price? The 10 July 1888 contract is not explicit about this, but Watt certainly behaved as though that was what he was doing.

46WA [A] 2/12 [1].
Between August 1888 and March 1889 Watt was actively marketing *Armorel of Lyonesse* as a serial to a variety of regional papers. The Watt archives do not record any of the out-letters of this period, but do preserve at least some of the in-letters from the editors and proprietors solicited.

Sometimes the response was straightforward and positive, such as the reply from W.E. Adams of the *Weekly Chronicle* (Newcastle on Tyne) who promptly accepts Watt's price of £70 for serial rights,47 or from D. Barron Brightwell of the *Birmingham Daily Post* who agrees immediately to a price of £40.48 More normally, however, the newspapers cavilled, and hedged, and bargained their way to a lower price. Sometimes it was just a matter of clarifying what was on offer, and ensuring that Watt was not going to sell similar rights to a local competitor:

> I rather like your offer of a story by Walter Besant but I don't know whether in offering us that story for our district & for say the sum of £75 you know that our district comprises *all Yorkshire*. Upon that understanding I feel inclined to say *Yes*.49

Watt must have confirmed Pebody's monopoly of Yorkshire, because the archive contains a telegram with a laconic 'Yes Pebody' dated a day later.50

Sometimes the negotiations combined geographical and financial considerations. On 8 January 1889 the editor of *The Weekly Scotsman* (Edinburgh) wrote to Watt:

> Your note regarding Besant's novel to hand. There is a possibility of entertaining your proposal, but do you not think more moderate terms might be agreed upon? The price for Glasgow was £50. Glasgow practically means the whole of Scotland; for one Scotch paper will not take what another publishes. Might not another £10 or £15 cover the difference? if so, arrangements might be made for accepting the story.51

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474 August 1888, WA 4/8 [2].

4828 January 1889, WA 4/8 [14].


5016 August 1888, WA 4/8 [4].

51WA 4/8 [12].

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Watt must have taken the hint, added £20 rather than £15 and offered the Scottish rights to The Weekly Scotsman for £70. The arrangement was duly accepted the following day.\textsuperscript{52}

Most frequently, however, the objection was just a matter of money. Quite apart from a negotiator's natural inclination to bump up an initial asking price, Watt's prices do seem to have been inflated by the assumption that Besant's popularity was as strong in the north as it was in the south. This is discussed at length in the submitted article 'Public Libraries and Popular Authors, 1883-1912'. It is sufficient to say here that northern editors tended to disagree, and that their disagreement was based on more than a natural wish to pay as little for syndicated stories as possible.

The diminished popularity of Besant in the Midlands and the North was used by W.H. Hatton of the Midland Evening News, the Midland Wednesday News, the Midland Weekly News, and the Dudley Herald & Wednesbury News. He also indicated that long-term planning of serialisation was not something with which he felt comfortable:

There are two difficulties in the way of my deciding about Mr Walter Besant's Story. The first is the long distance ahead; the second that the price is much in excess of what we are paying for similar work.\textsuperscript{53}

Watt countered by reminding Hatton that he had paid £35 for a Wilkie Collins novel. Hatton remained unmoved:

There was a special reason for giving £35 for Wilkie Collins—he is still a great favourite here. Amongst the mass of readers Mr Besant is comparatively unknown & therefore we considered that our regular rate—£25—should not be overstepped. Though the date is a long way ahead you may, if you can reach something like that amount, book us for W.Besant.\textsuperscript{54}

The arrangement was finally confirmed in a third letter from Hatton dated 15 October 1888.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52}J.B.Machachlan to Watt, 10 January 1898, WA 4/8 [13].
\textsuperscript{53}W.H.Hatton to Watt, 10 October 1888, WA 4/8 [9].
\textsuperscript{54}Hatton to Watt, 12 October 1888, WA 4/8 [10].
\textsuperscript{55}WA 4/8 [11].
A.G. Jeans, the manager of the *Daily Post*, the *Weekly Post* and the *Echo* in Liverpool, was, like Hatton, unused to thinking so far ahead. On 11 September 1888 he wrote to Watt that:

I am not disposed to pay £100 for a story by Walter Besant. Besides I have now pretty well arranged for the next twelve months stories.\(^5^6\)

It seems that generally newspaper proprietors, managers and editors were unused to thinking more than six to twelve months in advance, for many of them thought Watt was offering *Armorel of Lyonesse* for 1889 rather than 1890. Watt must have disabused Jeans of this assumption, and taken the opportunity to offer him a lower price, for on 28 September Jeans responded:

I really don't think Walter Besant is worth £85 to us. But if you are willing to accept £50 I think I might take the story—of course you must give us all Lancashire Yorkshire Chester & W[?] Wales—[our?] Leeds paper [illegible word] excepted.\(^5^7\)

Watt may have countered with an amended deal, because the arrangement was not finally approved by Jeans until October of that year.\(^5^8\)

All these syndications were for first serial rights of *Armorel of Lyonesse*, and were therefore on behalf of the *Illustrated London News* as owners of those rights. One could, however, argue that indirectly they were for Besant, because he would not have been offered such a large single payment without the proprietors of the *Illustrated London News* being confident that a proportion of their investment could be recouped by ‘sub-letting’ the British first serial rights. Watt could therefore be regarded as serving the Besant interest at one remove.

The remaining two letters concerned with the syndication of *Armorel of Lyonesse* do not, however, fall into this category. On 12 November 1889 Thomas Edwards writes to Watt from the offices of the *Englishman* in Calcutta accepting

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\(^5^6\)WA 4/8 [6].

\(^5^7\)WA 4/8 [7].

\(^5^8\)WA 4/8 [8]. The precise date is unclear because the acceptance telegram from Jeans in the Watt archives has had its date-stamp damaged.
Mr Besant's story for £1 0 to run for 26 weeks from Jany/90 under the same conditions as noted in this office [sic] letter of 6 July 1889 in which we agreed for the serial right of Mr Haggard's "Beatrice". The right being sold here is not a first serial right in Britain or Australia, so it belonged rather to Chatto & Windus than the *Illustrated London News*, Chatto having bought the 'entire remaining copyright and all other interest (other than the right of first serial publication which is reserved by Mr Walter Besant)'.

The phrase 'first serial publication' is important in this document, for it is not explicitly mentioned in agreement between Besant and the *Illustrated London News* which simply refers to 'all serial rights'. The distinction between 'first serial rights' and others explains why, in response to a letter dated 21 February 1890 from the *Illustrated London News* office reporting that 'We shall be prepared to commence "Armorer" in the "Penny Illustrated Paper" in about one month's time...', Watt sought the advice of Chatto & Windus. On 26 February Chatto & Windus replied:

> In answer to your inquiry, we think the serial use of Mr Besant's *Armorer of Lyonesse* for the *Penny Illustrated Paper*—the publication to begin in about a month's time, should be worth £25.

As the serialisation was to begin in March 1890 rather than January 1890, even though it was scheduled for a sister paper of the *Illustrated London News*, it was not the exercise of a first serialisation right, and therefore the income from it belonged quite properly to the book, rather than the newspaper, publisher. This is confirmed by a brief note from the *Illustrated London News* dated 28 February 1890 agreeing to pay £25 to Chatto on behalf of the *Penny Illustrated Paper*.

This same letter also included a cheque '...value £1050 for the use of Mr Besants story Armorel'. As the original agreement was for £900, the *Illustrated London News* must have exercised its option and bought the serial...
rights for the USA. This is confirmed by an earlier document, a memorandum from Goodacre of the *Illustrated* dated 13 June 1889 asking Watt to call on him the next day. On this memo are two additional comments clearly written in another hand (probably Watt’s) at two different times. The first gloss indicates the outcome of the 14 June meeting:

> will give £150 for American Serial use of Besant’s story to begin Jany 1890.\(^{65}\)

The second note states

> Sold to Harpers for £100 with right for News to use it a fortnight afterwards with illustrations.\(^{66}\)

This is explained by two letters written by Watt in the late summer and autumn of 1889. The first, to Osgood (Harper’s London agent), was dated 12 August 1889:

> I should be glad if you would transmit the offer of the following stories to your firm the next time you are writing.

1. A new story by Mr Walter Besant, the author of “ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN” ETC. This story will be of the author’s usual three volume length and will run in this country for 26 consecutive weeks in the Illustrated London News commencing the first Saturday in January 1890. It will also appear in the American edition of the Illustrated London News but as this is not issued until a fortnight after the English one, and you would be allowed to publish simultaneously with the publication here, it would not matter to you. the price asked for the American serial use of this story is £150 ...\(^{67}\)

There seems to be slight contradiction here, for the second note on the 13 June 1889 memorandum mentioned £100. This is resolved by the second letter, this time sent directly to Harpers & Brothers by Watt and dated 8 October 1889:

> I have pleasure of herewith accepting your offer for the serial and book rights in America in Mr Besant’s new story; you to be allowed to commence it in your weekly on January 5th. 1890. The other

\(^{65}\)WA [A] 2/12 [3].

\(^{66}\)ibid.

\(^{67}\)WA [A] 2/12 [4].
conditions to be as specified in my letter to you of the 12th. August—
which you mention.68

Presumably Harpers were prepared to offer only £100 for first serial rights in the USA, and would only pay £150 if the book rights were included. As Besant had reserved the American book rights, Watt would, one assumes, have transmitted £100 to Goodacre and £50 to Besant, less commission, of course. The Illustrated London News's American edition would thus have paid £50 for secondary serialisation rights.

The only other direct payment Besant seems to have received for Armorel once he had completed the bulk sale of serial and book rights, was from Tauchnitz. On 23 January 1891 he was paid £40 for the novel's Continental rights.69

It is difficult to give an exact account of Besant's income from Armorel of Lyonesse because we cannot be sure that we have a complete set of financial documents. However, adding all the known sources together we come to a figure of around £1,790 (less Watt's commission), with book income accounting for £890 of that figure. Again, from the known figures it would appear that the Illustrated London News was able to defray £340 of its original investment of £900 in the first British serial rights.

**St. Katherine's by the Tower (1891)**

In the last section it was assumed that Watt was committed to the syndication of Armorel of Lyonesse in order to off-set the substantial sum of money invested by the Illustrated London News in its serial rights. It was a reasonable assumption, and all the circumstantial evidence supported it. However, nothing in the existing letter of agreement between the two parties actually made such arrangement explicit. The serialisation arrangements for the second novel covered by the triple-title agreement of 29 January 1890, however, allow us to explore such issues in greater depth.

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68WA [A] 2/12 [5].
69WA [B] 2/12 [8].
"St. Katherine's by the Tower" was serialised in the Graphic in 1891. On
21 March 1889 the first of a sequence of three contractual letters was sent
from L.A. Heaton of the Graphic to Watt. As it was both more specific
and more comprehensive than the Armorol of Lyonesse contract, it is worth
quoting in full:

I write to say that we shall be glad to make an arrangement with
you to publish a story of the ordinary three volume length by Mr
Walter Besant in the "Graphic", commencing Jan 1st 1891, upon the
following terms; viz:—
1st—The price to be £850, for use in the "Graphic" alone.
2nd—With respect to America, you will offer the story & the illustra-
tions, in the first place, to Messrs Harper & Bros, & if you are able to
arrange with them or anyone else in America for the purchase of our
electros, you shall be paid the usual 10% commission.

With respect to Australia, the first offer to be made to Messrs
B.S. Lloyd & Co, 8 George Yard, Lombard Street, E.C., the commission
in this case for electros sold or indeed anywhere in Australia to be paid
as above.

With respect to India, we shall be glad if you will offer the story first
to Messrs Wilson Calder & Co, 11 Queen Victoria Street, E.C. They
may possibly take our illustrations as well as the story, as they have
done on previous occasions. The commission, of course, for electros
sold to them or anyone else in India to be as above.

The price of electros for America to be at the usual rate of £10 per
page of the "Graphic" or 1s/10 1/4d per sq: inch; to Australia £8 per
page or 1/6 per sq: inch; & to India 6d per sq: inch if not published
under a fortnight after the "Graphic" arrives in India, or if published
before then the price to be 1/- per sq: inch. (With respect to this
Firm, Messrs Wilson Calder & Co, we must ask you not to deal with
them for anything beyond this particular story, as they are customers
of ours with whom we hope to do future business.)

3rd—With respect to the period of Mr Besant's story, we shall be
glad to hear from you what Mr Besant's views are. We gathered from
you in our conversation a few days ago, that Mr. Besant preferred to
write his story in a period other than the present, & that would be
more agreeable to us, but we should be glad to know what Mr Besant's

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views are on this point.  

Attached to this letter is a further sheet in what appears to be Heaton’s own handwriting (the main letter having been written by a clerk and merely signed by Heaton):

With regard to the delivery of the copy half of the M.S. should be delivered by March 31 1890 and the remainder by June 30 1890.

We also accept as part of this arrangement your proposition that the story should be offered to some of the country newspapers by which you say that we should be able to reduce the cost of the story by about £450, and we should be glad if you will consult with us upon this point.

Please consider that our acceptance of the story at the price of £850 depends upon your selling the country rights on our account to the extent of £450.  

There are a number of interesting features in this letter. The price of £850 is £50 less than the sum paid for the First British and Australian serial rights of Armored of Lyonesse by the Illustrated London News. A small reduction in income, admittedly, but significant at a time when Besant’s book sales were just about to falter. The serial rights in the USA, Australia and India are rather uncertain. It may be that Besant reserved these (in which case the £50 reduction would be understandable), but that the Graphic hoped to cash in on whatever rights were sold by using Watt as an agent for their electroplates of the novel’s illustrations. In any case, it is clear that the Graphic had an already existing system of agents handling the republication of serials in the main overseas markets and, associated with this, a very precise idea of what the electros were worth to any given market.

However, the most important detail is contained in the postscript which makes clear the understanding on which Besant was paid £850, namely that Watt, acting as a syndicating agent, should sell about £450 of rights to country newspapers to off-set the Graphic’s investment. Being over half the original outlay, this seems a very substantial sum, and one that Watt might have found rather difficult to achieve. After all, even the relatively

\[\text{WA 4/8 [18].} \]
\[\text{ibid.} \]
successful *Armorel of Lyonesse* had only managed to net some £340 from similar sources.

Watt clearly thought the conditions too tough, for his reply to this contractual letter elicited the following response from Heaton:

> I am sorry to say that we shall be unable to accept the offer you make us of a story by Mr Walter Besant, in the form in which the proposition now stands.

> We understood from you, when you called, that we should be able to recover about £450 of our outlay of £850, from country newspapers, but as you are not able to guarantee that sum, the whole amount we should have to pay is uncertain.

> We shall however be willing to make the arrangement provided that you can sell the story to suitable Country Papers for not less than £350, allowing us to choose such Papers before concluding any arrangements.72

In other words, the *Graphic* was willing to drop the expected sum by £100 but, to save its own face, claimed the right to choose the country papers to which the story might be offered. As Watt had already entered into a similar arrangement over the *Graphic*’s electroplates for serialisation of the novel abroad, he was not likely to object this. What he might object to was giving a guaranteed level of syndication income. As we have seen in the case of *Armorel of Lyonesse*, country newspapers could be tough bargainers in what was clearly a buyer’s market (according to the existing evidence, Watt always accepted a newspaper’s offer, however low). In such circumstances, although one could be assured of some income, one would not be disposed to guarantee it at some prescribed level.

The evidence suggests that Watt did object to giving a cast-iron guarantee. To avoid such rigidities, he was prepared to reduce the lump sum payment to £800 in order to weaken the guarantee to a point where it was no more than a confident expectation. The final letter in this sequence, dated 5 April 1889, makes this explicit:

> I write to inform you that we shall be willing to accept your last proposal with respect to Mr Besant’s story; viz:- that the price should

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72Heaton to Watt, 26 March 1889, WA 4/8 [19].
be reduced to £800, & that you should then endeavour to sell for us the right to publish the story in provincial newspapers, in as many cases as you can, subject to our approval. I understand that you expressed yourself as having little doubt but that you will be able to dispose of the story at any rate to the extent of £350.73

Watt managed to sell _St. Katherine's by the Tower_ to the _Yorkshire Post_ for £75,74 to the _Birmingham Daily Post_ for £40,75 to the _Newcastle on Tyne Weekly Chronicle_ for £70,76 the _Ipswich Journal_ for £15,77 and the _Liverpool Courier_ for £70.78

It is evident that the record of correspondence relating to the country newspaper syndication of _St. Katherines_ is not complete. On the original letter of 21 March 1889 from the _Graphic_, one of Watt's clerks has listed the newspaper titles and sums:

- Glasgow Cit 50
- Newcastle Chron 70
- Yorks Post 75
- Liverpool 70
- Mid News 30
- Birmingham. Post 40
- £335
- less 10%.79

If we add the £15 from the _Ipswich Chronicle_, we achieve the magic sum of £350. Of course, as the final line of the clerk's gloss indicates, Watt was

73Heaton to Watt, 5 April 1889, WA 4/8 [20].
74Letters of 9, 13, 14 August 1889, WA 4/8 [24]-[26]. As with _Armorel_, before accepting the offer, the editor wanted to establish that no Yorkshire rival was to be offered the serial.
75Letters of 9 and 15 August 1889, WA 4/8 [23], [27].
76Letters 17 and 20 August 1889, WA 4/8 [28]-[30]. The _Weekly Chronicle_ agreed to pay for the novel '£35 on receipt of one half the copy, the other £35 on receiving the whole.'[30].
77Letters 23, 26 and 28 August 1889, WA 4/8 [31]-[33]. As with one or two correspondents during the negotiations for _Armorel of Lyonesse_, the editor of the _Ipswich Journal_ was not used to buying serials more than a year in advance, wrongly thought Watt was offering him the novel for 1890, and pointed out that Watt had already syndicated a 'new novel of Mr Rider Haggard' to him [31].
7831 October 1889, WA 4/8 [34]. The _Courier_ required the 'exclusive newspaper rights for Lancashire'.
79WA 4/8 [18].
taking a commission of 10%, so out of the syndications listed Watt would have earned £35 and the Graphic £315.

If we assume that Besant was paying Watt a similar commission on his earnings, then we can see that, by selling Besant’s serial rights for a lump sum (from which the author pays the agent 10%) and then acting as a syndication agent for the journal to whom the serial rights were sold, Watt seems to have been gaining two commissions from one set of rights. Of course, the mention of a commission might have been the clerk’s error, or it may have been a matter of confusing the arrangements for the sale of electros to Empire and foreign markets with the sale of rights to country newspapers. If it was neither of these things, then we have another example of Watt serving two masters where a conflict of interests might be involved.80

There is no evidence in the Watt archives of the sale of St. Katherine’s to either Australia or India. However, a record of Watt’s approach to Harpers via their agent (a Mr Slater acting for James R. Osgood) does exist, and it helps answer a question raised earlier about whether the Graphic could claim serial rights abroad as well as at home:

...I shall be glad to let you have the serial and book rights of this story for America for the sum of £200—two hundred pounds—. “The Graphic” would also be pleased to sell you electros of their illustrations at the usual rate of £10 per page of the “Graphic” or one shilling and tenpence farthing per square inch.81

Clearly the rights were Besant’s, and the Graphic was using Watt on this occasion merely as an agent for its electrotype illustrations to the story. The sum asked of Harper’s this time was £200 rather than £150 asked for Armorel of Lyonesse. Yet Harpers did not cavil. They accepted the deal and bought the electros from the Graphic.82 Again, though more legitimately on this occasion, Watt would have gained a commission both from Besant and the Graphic.

80*Double agency* was a matter of debate at the time, see Hepburn, p. 75.
81Watt to Slater, 16 April 1889, WA [A] 2/12 [1].
Publishers and the Period Setting of the Novels

There was one other comment contained in the Heaton letter of 21 March 1889 which requires some discussion:‘...that Mr Besant preferred to write his story in a period other than the present, & that would be more agreeable to us ...’. The Graphic’s choice was a wise one. Those reasonably well-acquainted with Besant’s output as a solo novelist would have known that any novel of his with a contemporary setting would almost certainly attempt to tackle social or moral issues of the day. Of course, that might strike a chord in his readership, as it had done during the vogue for All Sorts and Conditions of Men, but, even if successful, it might prove a heavy read. On the other hand, Besant’s solid grasp of the material details of eighteenth century life (he was almost a topographical writer in that sense), and his skills as a popular historian, would guarantee a lively read. He also seemed to feel less obliged to confront great issues when writing historical novels, so his readers would be spared many an earnest disquisition.

This was not a unique case. In 1899 Chatto & Windus expressed a similar preference when consulted by Watt over what was to become The Lady of Lynn (1901):83

Thank you very much for your favour of the 13th inst. respecting the choice of subjects for Sir Walter Besant’s new novel—whether it should be an 18th Century story the scene of which is to be laid in/around London; or a Modern Story of today the scene to be laid somewhere in East London[..] We are ourselves inclined to give the preference to the first named—the 18th Century Story—we hope too that you will find that this choice will recommend itself in the placing the serial issue of it.84

What is most extraordinary about this is not that Chatto & Windus should be asserting a preference, but that Besant should, through his agent, actually be seeking for such direction.

On the 14 October 1899 Chatto seemed to be back-tracking, but only as

83 The contract for this novel had been signed by Chatto & Windus on 2 February 1899, see LtB 35: 801.
84 Chatto & Windus to Watt, 17 July 1899, LtB 36: 735.
far as conceding that the *Queen* (in whose columns the novel was first to be serialised) had an equal right to a voice:

Although I believe that a [illegible word] historical story of the 17th or 18th cent. would be likely to find greater favour with Sir Walter Besant’s readers than a tale of modern life we shall be quite willing to leave this point to be decided by himself and Mr Cox.85

Cox was clearly of Chatto’s opinion, for *The Lady of Lynn* when it appeared was set firmly in the mid-eighteenth century.

*The Ivory Gate* (1892)

There are very few documents concerning this third novel of the contractual trilogy. For some reason the Watt archives have no correspondence concerning the syndication of the novel among the country papers. What does survive is a letter from W.R.Chambers confirming the serialisation deal, dated 22 April 1889:

We will be glad to have a novel from Mr Walter Besant to be published in Chambers Journal in 1892. the story to be of the usual three volume length and to treat of modern life. The price to be £1000, and all English [and] foreign rights to be kept by Chambers. The whole of the M.S. of the novel should be in our hands by October 1st 1891.86

Despite the fact that serial rights, unlike book rights, had not been tied down by a single contract, in negotiating the three serial contracts so close together and so early (*Armorel* 10 July 1888, *St. Katherine’s* 5 April 1889, *Ivory Gate* 22 April 1889) Watt gave himself little chance of using a first success to increase the sums offered for the subsequent novels. Because each of the three serial contracts were somewhat different in their natures, direct comparisons are not easy. The *Illustrated London News* ultimately bought British and US rights for £1050; the *Graphic* bought British rights for £800; Chambers bought all serial rights for just £1000. The third was clearly less good than the first, and certainly not much better than the second.

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85 Chatto to Watt, 14 October 1899, LtB 37: 159.
86 W.R.Chambers to Watt, WA [A] 4/10 [I].

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The absence of letters of syndication may be a quirk of the archives, but equally it might be an indication that Chambers chose to do their own syndication, or appoint their own agent, rather than use Watt.

Evidence for this latter interpretation comes a letter from J.R.Osgood acting in his capacity as Harper & Brothers' agent:  

...with reference to Mr Besant's stories of 1892 and 1893. The serial right of the former Messrs. Harper & Brothers have, as you are aware, already purchased from Messrs. Chambers ...

The letter goes on to specify a royalty arrangement for the American edition of *The Ivory Gate*. Knowing Besant, he would no doubt have preferred a single lump sum but, given that royalties were common practice in the USA, and given that the terms were quite generous, he would have little ground for objection:

For the book-rights for the United States and Canada they are to pay Mr Besant a royalty of fifteen per cent on the retail price of all copies sold, coupled with an advance One Hundred Pounds on account of such royalty.

It is clear from the remainder of this letter that Besant's marketability, although stagnant in the UK, was increasing on the other side of the Atlantic. For the 1893 novel (*The Rebel Queen*) Harpers offered the following:

...Messrs. Harper are to pay Mr Besant the sum of Four Hundred pounds for the serial rights for the United States and Canada and for the book-rights for the United States and Canada a royalty of fifteen per cent on the retail price of all copies sold, coupled with an advance of One Hundred Pounds on account of such royalty.

If Harpers had paid anything like this sum to Chambers for the North American serial rights of *The Ivory Gate*, and Chambers had managed to make roughly what had been made by the earlier novels from country newspapers, then their income from syndication would have been at least £750. Had he

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87 He was also by this time a publisher in his own right as the letter head indicates: 'James R. Osgood, McLlvaine & Co., Publishers, 45, Albemarle Street, London, W.' See WA [B] 4/10 [1].
88 Osgood to Watt, 15 May 1891, WA [B] 4/10 [1].
89 ibid.
90 ibid.
known, Besant might legitimately have resented a large publishing company gaining his serial rights for around £250 net. In abandoning his serial rights as he abandoned his book rights, Besant bought temporary security at a high cost: he lost a lot of income in the medium term and added to his vague, undefined and frustrating sense of being exploited, a sense no doubt made worse by the intermittent and temporary realisation that he himself was at least partly responsible for his own predicament.

Harpers’ confidence in *The Ivory Gate* was not misplaced. It was a successful enough book in the US to justify being brought out in their ‘75 cents’ series in 1900, and have its US copyright renewed in 1919.

**Besant’s Income 1893-1902**

**US Earnings and the Chace Act 1891**

We have seen that between *St. Katherine’s by the Tower* and *The Rebel Queen* Besant’s US income rose from £200 for book and serial rights to £400 for serial and £100 advance on royalties for book rights. This was almost certainly due to the new opportunities to establish the US copyright of British publications offered by the Chace Act (which became effective from 1 July 1891). This allowed the protection of works ‘printed from type set within the limits of the United States’. For the first time publishers such as Harper, Stokes and Collier could issue Besant’s works without the fear of unauthorised editions competing in the same market. Secure US copyright

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91 Along with *All Sorts and Conditions of Men*, *The Children of Gibeon*, *The World Went Very Well Then*, *The Rebel Queen*, *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* and *In Deacon’s Orders*. For this cheap series Harpers offered a royalty of 10%. See Harper & Brothers to A.P. Watt, 9 April 1900, WA [B] 4/10 [2]. This letter also contains the information that Harpers were currently paying a royalty of 10% on the retail price of the cloth edition of the first three works listed, and a 15% royalty on the others. Besant accepted this offer on 22 April 1900, see WA [B] 4/10 [3], [4].

92 See letters Slater to Watt (24 November 1919), Barham to Watt (5 December 1919), and Watt to Slater (9 December 1919), WA [C] 4/10 [1]-[3].

encouraged the value of British literary property to rise, in Besant's case by over 150%. Although *St. Katherine's by the Tower* was published in 1891 (and thus in theory should have benefitted from the Chace Act) it was negotiated for in April 1889 and so fell, at the time, under the old dispensation; *The Rebel Queen* (1893) was sold to Osgood in May 189194 and so came under the new. From this point on Besant's income was higher not because his popularity in the US had suddenly increased, but because he could, for the first time, realise the full monetary value of his existing popularity through the exercise of secure copyright.

**Earnings from the Major Novels 1893-1902**

Never again were Besant's novels to be the subject of a multiple contract for their book rights. Chatto & Windus usually bid for such rights, and usually got them, but now on a case-by-case basis. In practice this seems to have little effect on the lump sum price Besant was offered for his literary rights. By the early 1890s these prices had become stagnant: varying slightly from title to title, but in no clear or consistent way. In most cases the most important factors which determined price were the word-length of the novel and the precise nature and scope of the rights purchased. The introduction of the 6s first edition after 1894 does not seem to have affected Besant's income, probably because he was not on a royalty-based contract, and because his books usually sold enough copies to guarantee an income to the publisher, albeit a smaller one partly dependent as it now was on the narrower margins offered by the 6s edition. Had his books consistently made a loss, Chatto would no doubt have insisted on a royalty arrangement. On the whole book rights represented the most consistent feature of these deals. 'Book rights' almost invariably meant all rights excluding publication in book form in the USA and the publication of an English edition on the Continent. Serial rights, on the other hand, varied from just British rights, through British, Australian and other British Dependencies rights, to full serial rights including the USA and Canada.

94WA [B] 4/10 [1].
Such income inertia in the 1880s would have been, and was, the subject for comment and ground for resentment. In the 1890s this was no longer true. Given that this period saw total print runs slide from an unimpressive 19,500 (The Rebel Queen (1893)) to a dismal 7,500 (A Fountain Sealed (1897)) a system more responsive to the market place might well have responded by reducing the novelist’s income. In fact, the slow and conservative system which had worked against Besant in the heady 1880s was now working in his favour. Whether credit should go to Watt for keeping the pressure up despite falling sales, or should be given to Chatto for doing the honourable thing in paying over the odds as much as he had paid under them in the previous decade, or whether it should be put down as the inevitable consequence of a system in which cost accountancy played a very small role, is a matter which cannot be resolved on the evidence available.

What at first sight might be more surprising is that, despite the different serial rights being sold at different times, the overall value of these did not change either. Of course, the periodical and newspaper proprietors would not have had the book sales figures to hand. Nevertheless, in the more highly volatile world of journalism one might have guessed that feedback from readers could have influenced the proprietors’ view of Besant’s worth. One might argue that perhaps the readership of newspapers and magazines responded more positively to Besant in the 1890s than did book readers, but that is to posit a dichotomy for which there is little evidence. After all, there was no such apparent difference in the 1880s when All Sorts and Conditions of Men was serialised in Belgravia and then published with equal success in book form. The answer probably lies in the nature of the periodicals in which Besant was being serialised in the 1890s, and which had come to dominate the ephemeral end of the market. Many were the product of the ‘New Journalism’—an exciting blend of stories, competitions, pictures, factual pieces, letters pages and gossip. It was a heady mixture, and one in which no constituent part predominated. In magazines such as Dickens’s Household Words or All the Year Round, or in many of the journals which copied them in the 1870s and early 1880s (such as Belgravia or Longman’s
the serialised story was central. One could surround it with most entertaining material, but if the story didn’t catch on, the circulation declined. In the new magazines, where stories were no more important than the correspondence columns, and the ‘Causeries’ no more significant than the ‘Did You Know?’ pages, if one element failed the others would carry it and thus, usually, there would be no dip in the circulation. In such a turbulent pool, a particularly weak, or a particularly strong, Besant novel would hardly cause a ripple. A writer with a good name and solid reputation could go on asking, and probably go on getting, a standard fee, whatever happened to his novels once they had appeared in book form.

Despite minor fluctuations, the overall income Besant derived from each of his major novels published after 1890 almost always came to between £1,700 and £1,800.

The Disputes of 1895-6

Given the often vague and imprecise arrangements Watt entered into on Besant’s account, it is perhaps surprising that relatively few difficulties arose from them. The firm, however, did not escape unmarked. Foreign rights particularly (as we have already seen in Chapter 4 over ‘English on the Continent’ editions) could occasionally create problems. Although neither is fully documented in the Watt records, the disputes over serial publication in Australia and the USA in the mid-1890s are good examples of what could go wrong with an agreement based on gentlemanly imprecision.

Beyond the Dreams of Avarice in Australia

On 19 May 1894 Watt wrote a letter of confirmation to T.S.Townend, the London Agent of the Argus and the Australasian in Melbourne:

95In Modes of Production of Victorian Novels (1986) N.N.Feltes argues that magazine serialisation is a more ‘socially-controlling’ form than part-publication, and gives as an example the simplifying, familiarising effect the illustrations had on Tess of the D’Urbervilles when it was serialised in the Graphic in 1891, see pp. 63-5, 68. Unfortunately, the same argument could be used in relation to the illustrations in certain, much earlier, novels published as part-works. It is the verbal, rather than visual, context which distinguishes the magazine serial from the part-novel.
Referring to our conversation of yesterday afternoon, I beg to confirm your acceptance of the exclusive Australasian serial use of Mr Walter Besant’s new story which is to begin publication here in “Tit-Bits” on the first Saturday in July next. I understand that you will run it in one of your papers in Melbourne beginning about the end of September, and will continue using it thereafter for three or four months. The story is entitled “A Crown Windfall” and complete ‘copy’ I shall hope to be able to deliver to you very shortly. Price for the above mentioned rights to be the sum of £70.0.0 payable as usual on delivery of MS or ‘copy’.

Two days later Townend replied confirming the arrangement and specifying a serialisation running between September and December 1894. As with the Collier deal discussed below, the arrangement, judged by the contractual letter alone, seems an unfavourable one as far as the purchaser was concerned. £70 was a considerable sum for serial rights which were not simultaneous. As Watt’s first letter states, Tit-Bits was to publish from early in July, so the Australian serialisation might lag up to two months behind the British one. The reason for this time-lag was explained in a second letter from Watt to Townend on 29 June 1894: one of the papers was already serialising another Watt author’s work, Mrs W.K.Clifford’s A Flash of Summer, and planned to run Besant’s novel directly after it. Whatever the reason, Townend was rendering the journals he represented very vulnerable.

The original deal with Newnes for the novel’s serial rights was perhaps not quite explicit enough:

... serial use in Great Britain ... That publication of the above mentioned story shall first take place in “Tit-Bits” or some other of the publications of the said George Newnes, Limited ...

The vagueness as to which publication was to carry Besant’s serial precipitated the problem. Certain of Newnes’s journals had Australian editions,

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96 This provisional title was later changed to Beyond the Dreams of Avarice.
97 Watt to Townend, 19 May 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [1].
98 Townend to Watt, 21 May 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [2].
99 In July 1894 the first Saturday fell on the 7th.
100 Watt to Townend, 29 June 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [3].
101 WA [A] 12/20 [1].
others did not. Had *Tit-Bits* been specified exclusively, the Memorandum of Agreement might have explored the implications more thoroughly. As it was, a substantial ambiguity existed in its clauses. The serial rights were British, but *Tit-Bits* had an Australian version. Clearly Newnes felt himself entitled to sell copies containing *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice* in Australia. To compound the difficulties, the Melbourne paper had decided not to run the novel until the end of September. The consequences were inevitable. An anguished telegram was sent to Townend on 17 September and was immediately passed on to Watt:

> Australian Edition Titbits commenced Besant eight September anticipates Argus three weeks can you cancel...102

The two men met a day later, and Townend then wrote a confirmatory letter to Watt:

Referring to our conversation today, I am sure that our manager will not care to publish a story which is running simultaneously in a small penny popular paper in the same colony. The existence of that paper was clearly not known to your son [A.S.Watt], as it was also unknown to me, when the sale and purchase of Mr Besant's story was negotiated. We both arranged for the story upon this basis: that it should appear simultaneously in the *Australasian* and the London *Tit-Bits*, and the date for commencement was fixed for Sept. 8. According to this arrangement the London *Tit-Bits* would arrive in Australia six weeks after the story had been running in the *Australasian*; supposing publication had commenced together. As a matter of fact we did not wish to commence the story till the 22nd and this would have kept us a month ahead of the *Tit-Bits* as starting from England.

It seems however that there is an Australian Edition of *Tit-Bits*, and the story was commenced in that journal on September 8. I assume the London *Tit-Bits* began publication of the work on the same date.

Had we known that W. Newnes intended issuing the story in an Australian edition, we should not have purchased it. The course he has adopted has spoilt Mr Besant's market, and deprived us of a valuable contribution. Of course he has not done this, I presume, of intention: but it is very disappointing and annoying to us.

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102 17 September 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [4].
When arranging, if you can possibly do so, for the cancelling of this story will you inquire of Mr Besant when his next novel is likely to be ready? If the date does not clash with any stories for which we have already arranged we shall be glad to accept his story, and in settling upon terms we shall not forget our indebtedness to him for relieving us of this current story—assuming that he can see his way to do so.

When selling any future stories to us, I hope you will be careful to let us know whether they are to be published in the Australian Editions of the Illustrated News or Tit-Bits, so that we can avoid such contretemps in future.103

Viewed as an exercise in diplomacy, in making a weak case look stronger than it was, the letter was a triumph. In his confirmatory letter of 19 May 1894, Watt had made it clear that Tit-Bits was to begin publishing in July, yet Townend assumed a simultaneous publication agreement based on a September start. He implied an equal weight of guilt over not knowing about the Australian version of Tit-Bits, yet he or his principals should have had the advantage of local knowledge. Finally, he shifted responsibility for acting generously from Watt to Besant thus, presumably, obliging Besant to be consulted. Given that Besant was a much easier 'touch' than Watt, this was a sensible tactic. A.S.Watt clearly knew how weak Townend's position was, for in a telegram sent to his own office a day after Townend's letter he commented:

Townend is mistaken. He bought Besant to follow Clifford knowing he would be late in beginning; if Newnes only started Australia Sept 8 they were four weeks later than we bargained for as they begun here July one.104

Tantalisingly, the archive records no further communications on the matter. There is enough, however, to illustrate the dangers of failing to spell out in contractual terms the timing and the context of serial and subsidiary rights. There is little doubt that Townend was fatally muddled over the decision to wait until the completion of the previous serial, and was woefully uninformed about possible competition in the colonial market. Watt, however, cannot be completely exonerated: he should have been more alert

103 Townend to Watt, 18 September 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [7].
104 19 September 1894, WA [D] 12/20 [8].

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to the implications of publishing in one Newnes's periodicals rather than another, he should certainly have been aware of colonial editions of *Tit-Bits*, and he should have spelled out to Townend the consequences of the decision to defer serial publication in Australia to September.

Whatever the outcome of this wrangle, it was, unlike the Collier affair (see below), amicable enough not to affect future relations with Watt. In 1895 we find Besant agreeing to write two articles for the *Melbourne Argus* with Townend as its agent. More significantly, in 1898 Watt and Townend arranged the Australian serialisation of *The Orange Girl*. The letter of agreement sent by Watt indicates that he had learnt his lesson, for the clauses concerned with the timing of publication are precise and unambiguous:

(2) That you will publish the story simultaneously with its issue in this country in "The Lady's Pictorial" which is commencing it in the first week in January 1899 and concluding it the last week in June 1899.

**The City of Refuge in the USA**

The right to serialise Besant's *The City of Refuge* (1895) in the USA were sold to Peter Fenelon Collier. These rights were somewhat unorthodox because, strictly speaking, they were not serial in nature. As Watt explained to Collier, William Waldorf Astor (the proprietor of the *Pall Mall Magazine* in which the novel was to be serialised in Britain), '...paid us the sum of £400 in consideration of our not selling the ordinary serial rights of the story'. Indeed, it was clear that Watt anticipated the *Pall Mall Magazine* being sold in the USA, for he introduced a specific copyright clause to cover this eventuality in the original contract with Astor:

THAT the said Proprietor shall print at the bottom of the first page of each instalment of the said story as it appears in the *Pall Mall Magazine* (in all editions) the following words "Copyright 1895 In the

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105 Besant to Watt, 16 March 1895, WA 21/5 [1]; the two articles in question were 'On Colonial Copyright' and 'The Future of the Literary Life'.

106 Watt to Townend, 24 February 1898, WA [C] 23/2 [1]. The fee paid for these rights was £90.

107 Watt to Collier, 14 March 1896, WA [C] 16/6 [2].
Collier’s ‘Once a Week Semi-Monthly Library’, in which *The City of Refuge* was to be published in two consecutive volumes, was apparently a cross between a magazine and a book. The contractual terms were strict, and treated the issue as though it were a serial one: both volumes had to be issued between 1 November and 1 December 1896 (this was later changed to 1 October-1 November 1896), and Collier had to deliver ‘...the plates and all unsold copies of the said new novel to the said Walter Besant ...’ four weeks after the issue of the second volume.109 This, presumably, was to allow Watt to sell the more conventional book rights to Stokes, who would issue a cloth-bound book edition soon after. In other words, Collier had to make a quick killing after copies of the *Pall Mall Magazine* had appeared in the USA but before Stokes came out with a conventional book edition, and all within four weeks. It is difficult to understand why Collier thought that such narrow rights were worth the $2,000 he paid for them. He must have reconsidered the matter a few months later because, by the 14 March 1896, Watt was writing to him in response to a new proposal, namely, to publish the work as a genuine serial in *Collier’s Monthly Magazine*. Such a proposal clearly threatened the *Pall Mall*’s rights, and Watt had approached the proprietors with a proposal that Collier be allowed to publish in his magazine in eight monthly instalments one month after the corresponding episode had appeared in the *Pall Mall Magazine*. The proprietors responded by proposing that Collier publish in instalments no larger than those in the *Pall Mall* and that the gap between the first and Collier’s serial publication should be two months rather than one. Watt also warned Collier that, if he went ahead with a belated serial publication, he could not also issue the novel in his ‘Once a Week’ or ‘Fortnightly Library’ for

...Messrs Frederick A. Stokes have purchased the American book rights of the story ...they have no objection to the story appearing in your monthly magazine instead of “The Fortnightly Library” or the “Once a Week” Library, but they do object to publication both in the

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108 Memorandum of Agreement, 15 April 1893, WA [A] 16/6 [1]. The *Pall Mall*’s ownership of the US serial rights was acknowledged by Watt in a letter to Sir Douglas Straight, 18 December 1894, WA [A] 16/6 [2].

109 See Memorandum of Agreement between Walter Besant and Peter Fenelon Collier of New York, signed 10 April 1895, WA [C] 16/6 [1].
“Library” and the monthly magazine.110

By this time Collier must have been fully conscious of the problems of buying a time- and form-limited copyright hedged in on both sides by larger copyright holders. Under this pressure he reverted to his original scheme. If he did so in hope that this would end his troubles, he was mistaken. Collier wrote to Watt on 4 November complaining that Stokes's issue of the novel had anticipated his own.111 Watt replied on the 14 November, clearly puzzled as to what precisely had happened.112 He recalled that their agreement had stipulated a publication between 1 October and 1 November, and that he had told Stokes that he could not publish before 1 November. Watt stressed that he had been assured by Stokes's London agent that the publishers had abided by that agreement.113 Watt assumed that Collier had not published The City of Refuge by 4 November, and pointed out that he was in breach of a contract which had required publication on or before 1 November 1896. Although a cheap edition could hardly be harmed by an expensive one, he argued, Stokes's one-and-a-half dollars edition might well be undercut by a cheap paperback version. Watt concluded that the only

110 Watt to Collier, 14 March 1896, WA [C] 16/1 [2].
111 The letter is lost, but it is referred to in Watt's reply dated 14 November 1896, WA [C] 16/6 [4].
112 Watt to Collier, 14 November 1896, WA [C] 16/6 [4]. Only the first two sheets of this letter are extant.
113 There is in the Watt archives a 'Copy of Extract' (date-stamped 8 December 1896), clearly from the London agent of Stokes & Co., which confirms Watt's account:

We did not ship a copy of "The City of Refuge" until November 2nd, with the exception, of course, of the small number of copies in the paper edition of the book that we got out for copyright purposes.

We wanted to distribute our edition before 1st of November, but, as you remember, Mr Foster saw Mr Collier in the matter, and Collier declined to allow this. But we did publish immediately after the 1st, owing to the fact that you had distinctly instructed us that we could publish at any time after the 1st of November.

In addition to this, the copies that went out as early as the 2nd of Nov. were those only to customers at a considerable distance; as people in New york and other near-by places did not get books until after [the] election, and we did not advertise the book until about the 5th or 6th of Nov, as nearly as I remember it. (WA [C] 16/6 [6]).
explanation of Collier allowing his rights to lapse was that he had lost his copy of the contract. He pointed out that Collier had twice (28 July, 7 August 1896) written asking when they might publish the novel, despite it having been clearly stated in the contract and a subsequent letter (dated 12 October 1895).

Collier’s indignant reply to this was dated 1 December 1896:

... I certainly adhered to the letter of my agreement, as I published the book on October 28 1896. The understanding between us was that any book I bought from you would not be published by any other house within four (4) weeks of the time I issued it. Messrs. Stokes Company’s representative called here and asked my permission to publish the “City of Refuge” at once, which, of course, was refused. Notwithstanding this, they went ahead and had the book on the market at least one week prior to the date our edition was issued. Do you think you have treated me fairly in this matter? I paid Sir Walter Besant Two Thousand Dollars ($2,000) for the right of the first publication of the story in this country, besides paying Five Hundred Dollars ($500) for making the plates, and yet I did not have the first issue of the novel in consideration of which this sum was paid.

It is rather strange that you should say “The publication of the story by Messrs. Stokes in cloth binding and at a high price would not hurt my business in any way.” I do not think you have a right to judge such matters for me and I claim that Sir Walter Besant ought to recompense me for the loss sustained. I had nothing whatever to do with Messrs. Stokes Company as my dealings were directly with you and Sir Walter Besant, and I expect you to treat me as one gentleman and business man should treat another. I have lived up fully to the letter and spirit of my agreement and you and Sir Walter Besant should do likewise.\(^{114}\)

Watt may have been correct in suggesting that Collier had either lost or not read the contract. The two enquiries about the timing of publication are suspicious, given the precise timing mentioned in the contract. The contract did not guarantee Collier four weeks grace from whatever day he

\(^{114}\)Collier to Watt, 1 December 1896, WA [C] 16/6 [5].
published (although, as Stokes was not allowed to publish before 1 November 1896, Collier would have had a de facto four weeks had he published in the first few days of October). But Collier had referred to 'The understanding between us was that any book I bought from you would not be published by any other house within four (4) weeks ...', which suggests that there was some prior, more general agreement or understanding into which the Besant contract should have been fitted. Whether or not this was the case, the contract made no explicit mention of it. Indeed, it is a curiously contextless affair. In the arrangements for both the English book edition and the US book edition, the origin of the novel and the fact that it was being serialised elsewhere were made quite explicit. In the Collier contract, where the context was more than usually important because the publication was to be sandwiched between the Pall Mall serialisation and the Stokes book edition, no reference to the nature or timing of other versions was mentioned. It may well be that Watt wished to avoid this for the simple reason that, had it been stated explicitly, Collier might have been aware of the very limited value of what he was buying. On the other hand, it might have encouraged him to publish in early October and thus to have gained the four weeks' grace he sought.

Collier may have been naive, or he may just have been flanneling in order to see if he could recoup part of his ill-invested $2,000. In either case, he took the principle of caveat emptor to heart. In a copy of a note, presumably again from Stokes's London agent, we see, even as early as September 1896, an embittered Collier:

Mr Foster was told by Collier yesterday that he will never again pay the price that he has formerly paid ... He said that he would not be the “pudding” for the English Author, agent and publisher that he has been heretofore in connection with serial rights.116

115 Collier had entered into a similar agreement with Watt over the publication of The Master Craftsman between 1 May-1 June 1896. This contract does mention Tillotsons as the owners of the British serial copyright, but has no suggestion that Collier was to have four weeks' grace. It may be that Collier published early in May and thus achieved the gap required. See ‘Memorandum of Agreement, between Walter Besant and Peter Fenelon Collier’, 10 April 1895, WA [A] 18/11 [1].

11611 September 1896, WA [C] 16/6 [3].
The Watt archives contain no record of Collier ever bidding for a Besant novel again.

Besant's Last Bestseller: *The Orange Girl* (1899)

On 11 June 1895 Chatto & Windus agreed to buy the serial rights for Great Britain and Ireland and its Dependencies (excluding the USA and Canada) of an unnamed novel of some 120,000 words. It was to be delivered by 31 March 1898 for serialisation during the second half of that year. For this Besant would receive £800.117 The serialisation was, in fact, delayed for a further six months in order that, as Chatto & Windus emphasised to Watt '...this extension of time may enable you to complete the arrangements for the first serial issue of it, which as you know we consider very essential.'118 Getting a periodical to serialise the novel seems to have been more difficult than Watt had anticipated. On 12 August 1897 he had written to W.P.Chew of the *Lady's Pictorial* encouraging him to make a decision about *The Lady of Lynn*, as it was by now called:

> From our conversation of yesterday morning I gather that you agree with me that you could not very well have in the pages of "The Lady's Pictorial", the work of a more popular writer, a story which would illustrate better or one which would do more credit to the paper.119

In order to encourage Chew to make a quick decision, Watt suggested partially offsetting the *Pictorial*’s illustration costs by offering their blocks when selling the American serial rights. Despite the hard sell, Chew failed to bite immediately. Watt clearly needed more time, even more than the six months delayed offered. Even as late as 4 January 1898 things were still undecided. On that day Watt wrote to Chew in some desperation, asking for an interview and stating that ‘I must now get the matter settled’.120 The crisis must have been resolved at that meeting, or soon after, for by 29 January Watt was able to write to Chew laying out the details of the arrangement:

118 18 November 1897, LtB 34: 3, and WA [A] 23/2 [3].
119 WA [B] 23/2 [1].
120 WA [B] 23/2 [2].
1. That you are willing to purchase the exclusive right of publishing the story serially in “The Lady’s Pictorial” and in a district bounded by a line drawn round London fifty miles from the centre.

2. That the story shall be of about 120,000 (one hundred and twenty thousand) words in length.

3. That for the above mentioned rights you would be willing to pay the sum of £400 (four hundred pounds).

4. That we shall be at liberty to sell the story for publication simultaneously with the publication in the “Lady’s Pictorial” to not more than eight provincial newspapers in Great Britain and Ireland but outside the district above mentioned.

5. That you would prefer that Sir Walter Besant should write an 18th Century story.

6. That you should be at liberty to alter, or the author should agree to alter at your request, any word or expression in the story which might in your opinion be calculated to give offence to the readers of “The Lady’s Pictorial”.

7. Finally, that you are willing to publish the story in the six months January to June 1899, July to December 1899 or January to June 1900, whichever may suit our convenience best.\(^{121}\)

In another context, John Sutherland has referred to ‘the shaping power of contract’.\(^{122}\) The shaping power of this contract not only determined, or at least predisposed, the novelist to write at a certain length (120,000 words), and in a certain period (the eighteenth century), but also committed him to accepting others’ censorship, or his own. It seems extraordinary that such a

\(^{121}\) WA [B] 23/2 [3]. Clause 7 was peculiar, for very few journal were in practice as lax as this. The slots they wished to fill were very specific and rarely allowed much leeway. As events proved, the clause must have been a product of Watt misreading the conversation with Chew. Almost immediately after receiving the contractual letter Chew wrote (on 2 February 1898) to disabuse Watt: ‘We should not care to publish from July to December, we should want the story to start in January.’ (WA [B] 23/2 [4]). Watt must have prevaricated, for he received a much sharper note five days later: ‘... unless we can arrange to commence publication of this [in] January 1899 we shall not be able to consider the matter, and the later date originally suggested will not fit in at all.’ (WA [B] 23/2 [5]). As usual, Watt having proposed, the journal disposed, and he agreed to Chew’s dates on 11 February 1898 (WA [B] 23/2 [7]).

well-known writer of such impeccable rectitude should have been subjected to such a clause, but there is no doubt that Besant accepted it without demur.\textsuperscript{123} As he said, rather resignedly, on 10 February 1898 in a letter to Watt:

\begin{quote}
As there never have been any objectionable words in my novels hitherto, I do not suppose there will be any now, but I am perfectly willing to accept the clause.\textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}

Another example of proprietorial censorship, albeit a mild one, occurred in 1899 when Besant was writing a short serial, entitled ‘The Long Game’, for one of Newnes’s Sunday magazines. The editor wrote to Watt asking:

\begin{quote}
I wonder if Sir Walter would think of changing the old man’s belief in fairies to a belief in God? Perhaps if you could put before him that facts of my position as an evangelist, and the paper being one for Sundays he would not think it presumption on my part for suggesting it . . .\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

Perhaps it was Besant’s anti-Romantic view of the writer as a skilled professional (he frequently compared the income and status of an author with that of a lawyer) rather than an autonomous and heroic artist,\textsuperscript{126} which led him to accept the right of magazine editors and proprietors to direct and censor his work. He was merely accepting instructions from his clients much as a solicitor or an architect might. In 1894, for instance, Clement Shorter of the \textit{Illustrated London News} could order a Christmas story from Besant much as he might have asked an architect to design a Renaissance office or a gothic cottage:

\begin{quote}
Would you care to write a regular old-fashioned Christmas story—a story on the somewhat conventional lines which were more popular, perhaps, twenty years ago than now? . . . There should be some scenes in the New World,—Australia or elsewhere—where the scape-grace son is perhaps amassing a fortune and returning home to find, about Christmas time, his family in considerable distress, to whom he
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{123}See Watt to Chatto & Windus, 12 February 1898, WA [A] 23/2 [3]: ‘It is perhaps as well to add that Sir Walter approves of the contents of clauses 2, 5, 6 . . . ’.

\textsuperscript{124}WA [B] 23/2 [6].

\textsuperscript{125}7 October 1899, WA 44/3 [1]. Newnes bought the British serial rights for \textsterling}200.

\textsuperscript{126}This is briefly touched on by John Gross in \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters, English Literary Life Since 1800} (London, 1969), pp. 199-201.
of course appears as a beneficent angel. You will of course introduce a
love-making element. The story might extend to 10,000 words or so, 
in fact, I want it to practically make the complete Christmas Number 
apart from the outside illustrations, and should not publish any other 
story in that Number. We would pay you £100 for it ... I should want 
it delivered at least by March.127

One cannot imagine a Dickens or a Henry James, at an equivalent time in 
their careers, receiving such a prescriptive order. Besant, on the other hand, 
accepted the commission within a week.128

The shaping power of contract in Besant’s case went well beyond the 
structure and content of *The Orange Girl*, for it also effected the form in 
which the novel initially appeared, and the local variations that that ap­
pearance would take: exclusively in the *Lady’s Pictorial* for a radius of fifty 
miles around London, and then syndication in up to eight papers beyond 
that.

It was some reflection, perhaps, of Besant’s already declining reputation, 
that Watt found it very difficult to syndicate widely. The Watt archives 
record only three deals: one, with the *Glasgow Herald* which bought the 
serial for £100;129 two, with the faithful *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* which 
paid £70 (£10 less than the original asking price);130 and, three, with 
T.S. Townend of the *Argus* and the *Australasian* for the Australasian serial 
rights which were valued at £90.131 The letter from the *Glasgow Herald’s* 
office gives evidence of Watt’s efforts to sell the serial rights. In the hand of 
a Watt clerk is written a list of eight newspapers:

Glasgow Mail
Weekly Scotsman
Glasgow Weekly Herald
L’pool Post declined
Yorkshire Post declined

127Clement Shorter to Besant, 6 December 1894, WA 21/1 [1].
128Watt to Shorter, 13 December 1894, WA 21/1 [3] The story in question was ‘The Luck 
of Susan Bell’ and the £100 was for British, American and Australian serial rights, see 
WA 21/1 [2].
129See letters dated 14 and 15 April 1898, WA [D] 23/2 [1], [2].
130See letters dated 10 and 11 May 1898, WA [F] 23/2 [1], [2].
131Letters dated 24 and 28 February 1898, WA [C] 23/2 [1], [2].
The first three were struck out, presumably because the *Glasgow Herald* had bought the rights for the entirety of Scotland. The next two, according to the gloss, declined the offer. Of the others the Watt archives are silent. However, the Chatto & Windus files do provide one additional piece of evidence which both extends our knowledge and confirms that the publishers, as owners of the serial rights, were rather worried that the income was not going to cover their £800 investment. On 9 September 1898, only four months before the serialisation was due to start, Chatto & Windus wrote to Watt:

> We sincerely trust that you may be able to place some more outside or provincial serial rights in the story. We note that as yet the only serial rights placed are
> Ladys Pictorial
> The Argus
> Glasgow Herald
> Cardiff Times
> Newcastle Weekly Chronicle
> which at net rates amounts to £612 altogether. We trust however that your negotiations for placing other serial rights may be successful to the extent of covering the difference between this amount and our payment for the serial rights.¹³³

It is clear that by this time Chattos were not hoping to make a profit on the deal but merely to break even. But to do even this Watt would have to sell something like £880 of rights because, as the phrase 'net rates' should remind us, Watt was taking something like 10% as the publisher's agent. With this knowledge we can work out how much the *Cardiff Times* paid for *The Orange Girl*. The known serial sales come to £660, of which Watt would have taken £66 as his commission. This would leave the publisher with a net income of £594. But the letter refers to £612, a difference of £18, presumably the income from the Welsh sale minus Watt's commission. £20

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¹³²WA [D] 23/2 [1].
¹³³LtB 35: 71.
from serial rights for Wales suggests that Watt was scraping the bottom of the barrel. Certainly neither archive contains any more references to Chatto’s investment in the serial rights. It is highly likely that the publisher lost around £188 in this speculation. Watt’s income, on the other hand, would have been £80 from Besant on the value of the original sale, plus £68 from Chatto & Windus on syndication sales of £680.

Chatto & Windus were probably compensated, however, by the book sales. As part of the agreement that covered serial rights, Chatto also undertook to buy the British and Colonial book rights including ‘English on the Continent’ and translation rights but, once again, excluding the USA and Canada. For this Besant, through Watt, was to be paid £850.134 Watt sold the novel to Tauchnitz for a standard £50,135 but the real income came from home sales. The first 6s edition was of 6,000 copies, a normal size for a late Besant novel (A Fountain Sealed (1897) had an initial print run of 5,000 copies; The Fourth Generation (1900) one of 6,000 copies).136 What was unusual about The Orange Girl was that its 6s edition went through many impressions very rapidly. Its first was delivered from the printers to Chatto & Windus in July 1899, and had been bound up by September of the same year. The second impression, under the influence of Chatto’s usual caution, had a modest print run of 2,000 and was ordered on 15 September. A third impression, again of 2,000 copies, was ordered only ten days later (25 September). A fourth impression (2,000 copies) was ordered on 5 October, and a fifth (2,000 copies) two days later. All these were bound up by the end of October 1899.137 The sixth impression was ordered a month later (4 November) and the seventh a month after that (8 December), both these were again of 2,000 copies each. Within nine months Chatto & Windus had sold some 18,000 copies of the 6s edition.138 The eighth impression, yet again of 2,000 copies, took much longer to be bound up, and some of the quires

134 WA [A] 23/2 [1].
135 See agreement dated 2 October 1899, WA [G] 23/2 [1].
136 See LgB 5: 525, 377, 708 respectively.
137 LgB 5: 525.
138 LgB 5: 525, 650.
were used later for a ‘Colonial Edition’. The reason for this, however, had little to do with dwindling popularity. On 4 January 1901, less than two years after *The Orange Girl* had first appeared, Chatto & Windus ordered a 6d edition with a print run of 100,000 copies, of which 65,000 were bound up by April 1901. By November 1903 the first 6d impression had sold out, and a second (print run of 10,000) had been ordered. The third and fourth impressions (each of 10,000) were ordered in August 1906 and January 1912 respectively. By 1911, just twelve years after its first publication, *The Orange Girl* had sold around 140,000 copies in various forms.

Besant had reserved the North American serial and book rights to *The Orange Girl*. These Watt sold on his behalf to Frank Dodd of Dodd, Mead & Co. of New York. It appears from the contractual letter that, as Chatto had done, Dodd bought the serial rights in order to sell them on to some other periodical publisher. The arrangement is a curious one:

> That you agree to pay us, acting as Agents for Sir Walter Besant . . . a sum equal to whatever sum you may be able to sell the said American serial rights for to some periodical or publisher. Provided always, however, that you shall, in any case, pay us for the said American serial rights of the said novel, a sum of not less than £200.141

The Chatto deal was a gamble, but it was quite clear that, had Chatto been able to sell the rights for more than the £440 required to break even, he would have kept the profit. From the clause quoted above, it appears that Dodd, Mead were guaranteeing £200 minimum, and promising to remit anything over and above that sum to Watt. The arrangement seems to exclude the possibility of profit. It may be that Dodd, Mead regarded the serial rights as a loss leader which gave them access to the book rights on which they hoped to profit but, if so, the loss leader was worth more than the book rights, for Besant was offered only £100 as an advance on 15% royalties.142 More likely this apparent anomaly was due to the fact that the

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139 It was bound between June 1900 and June 1904, see LGB 5: 650.
140 See LGB 5: 776; LGB 8: 158.
141 Watt to Frank Dodd, 19 April 1898, WA [E] 23/2 [1].
142 See WA [E] 23/2 [1]: 15% royalty was payable on the first 5,000 copies sold; 17½% was payable on all copies sold above 5,000.
surviving evidence is in the form of a letter rather than a legal contract. Hidden below the informalities of the letter may well be a tacit assumption of common practice in which Dodd, Mead, acting as Watt’s agent, would deduct 10% of the sale price before remitting the remainder to Watt.

By the middle of 1901, book sales of *The Orange Girl* in the USA had dwindled to insignificant proportions:

> The cloth sale of the book is small at present. We have sold about 100 copies in the last six months. The next sixth months, the fall sale, will be somewhat better, perhaps two or three hundred copies.\(^{143}\)

Dodd, Mead proposed a papercovered edition not, as Chatto had done, as a triumphal climax to successful hardback sales, but more as a response to falling sales. Profit margins on papercovered editions were narrow:

> The list price of this paper series is $ .50, which would make the royalty, at 17\(\frac{1}{2}\)%, 8\(\frac{2}{8}\) cents. The price on these paper editions is very close, and such a rate of royalty would make it impossible for us to sell the book to our customers. We can manufacture the book for about nine cents per copy, bound in paper, and are willing to supply it if the author will take as his royalty four cents per copy, which, with expenses, would about divide the profit between us.\(^{144}\)

The letter makes clear that the American publishers must have sold at least 5,000 copies in cloth, because Dodd, Mead were referring to 17\(\frac{1}{2}\)%, a royalty which only applied to sales above 5,000 copies. By the time of Watt’s reply, Besant was dead, and the agent accepted the ‘half-profits’ arrangement on behalf of the estate.\(^{145}\)

We are now in a position roughly to calculate Besant’s income from *The Orange Girl*. He received £1,650 gross from Chatto & Windus for British and other serial and book rights. With Watt’s commission this represented a net income of £1,485. He received at least £300 for the North American serial and book rights from Dodd, Mead, which would result in a net income of £270. Finally, out of sheer good luck, he earned £101 from the sale of

\(^{143}\)Dodd, Mead & Co., to Watt, 21 June 1901, WA [E] 23/1 [3].
\(^{144}\)ibid.
\(^{145}\)Watt to Dodd, Mead & Co., 3 July 1901, WA [E] 23/2 [5].
dramatic rights, net income £90.18.0 (see below). In total Besant's known net earnings from *The Orange Girl* amounted to £1,845.18.0.

**Dramatic Rights**

As suggested above, *The Orange Girl* earned some income from an unexpected source. Potentially, dramatic rights could be highly valuable, but only if they were expressed through a successful theatrical production. The rights resided with Besant but, although the Watt records have many examples of attempts to farm them, they proved on the whole to be a rather infertile tract of land. Most agreements for the sale of such rights had clauses that ensured that the dramatist was under no financial obligations unless the play were actually produced. Similarly, the novelist's literary property was protected by ensuring a rapid reversion to the author if no production took place within a specified number of months or years. In other words, neither party risked much.

An example of such an arrangement is provided by *A Fountain Sealed* (1897) which was subject to the hopeful attentions of would-be dramatists. On this occasion it was Justin Huntley McCarthy who expressed an initial interest. On 1 May 1897 Besant and McCarthy signed a contract which in essence gave McCarthy eighteen months in which to write the play, and a further six months in which to produce it. Any profits accruing from either the sale of the play as a text, or its presentation as a performance, would be split equally between the novelist and the dramatist. Besant had the right of veto over the text which had to be submitted to him for approval.

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146 Besant understood this very well; he wrote to Chatto on 5 July 1890: 'The dramatic rights however that may be established by Act of Parliament can never be anything but a bare possibility of great gains. My own opinion is that the question should be considered, and that in every agreement in which copyright is bought a special clause should make such an agreement as I have suggested in my note to you, in case of anything coming of the chance.' (Besant Letters, General Manuscripts Collection of Princeton University Library.) Besant himself also wrote, with W.H. Pollock, a number of plays—see *The Charm, and Other Drawing-Room Plays* (London, 1896).

147 The son of the Chatto author Justin McCarthy (1830-1912).

148 'An Agreement made between Sir Walter Besant and Justin Huntley McCarthy', 1 May 1897, WA [D] 25/18 [2].
Despite the touching optimism shown by McCarthy, nothing came of this enterprise, and on 16 February 1903 he acknowledged that the unexercised rights had reverted to Besant's executors.149

However, they did not remain there long. Another enthusiast bearing the sort of name reserved exclusively for late nineteenth-century minor men of letters, Fewlass Llewellyn, entered into a similar arrangement with Besant's executors on 15 June 1903.150 As in the first agreement, the dramatist had to present the play to the executors within a certain time limit (12 months), and the executors had to signify their approval or the contrary (within 21 days) before the financial conditions contained in the agreement came into force. Llewellyn had clearly already written the play, for by 24 June 1903 Watt was able to return the copy to the dramatist with the comment that the play had been approved, and that Watt looked forward to seeing it produced. Given the history of most dramatisations, Watt's hope was a vain one, and he probably knew it. There was no sign of a production within 18 months of the contract being signed, and thus arrangement consequently lapsed. However, with the optimism necessary for anyone attempting the dramatisation of Besant's later novels, Llewellyn revived his enthusiasm and presented a proposal to Watt which the literary agent transmitted to Foster Barham:

He [Llewellyn] called here the other day, however, to ask for permission to give two performances of the play at Putney [Llewellyn's address was in Putney] in the early part of next year. His intention being to invite various managers to witness the production, in the hope that business might result.151

Permission was given, Llewellyn wrote back with enthusiasm and confidence,152 and the rest was silence.

The exception to this no risk/no income arrangement was the contract

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149 Justin Huntley McCarthy to Watt, WA [D] 25/18 [4].
150 'Memorandum of Agreement between T. Foster Barham and Alexander Pollock (executors) and Fewlass Llewellyn', WA [G] 25/18 [1].
151 Watt to Foster Barham, 26 November 1907, WA [G] 25/18 [3].
152 Llewellyn to Watt, 7 December 1907, WA [G] 25/18 [6].
between Besant and Addison Bright\textsuperscript{153} for the dramatic rights to \textit{The Orange Girl}, in which Bright, with remarkable and almost totally misplaced confidence, paid £100 for the sole and exclusive right to produce a dramatisation of \textit{The Orange Girl}. The sum was regarded as an advance on possible royalties and was not '...returnable by the said Sir Walter Besant to the said Addison Bright either in whole or in part in any case whatsoever'.\textsuperscript{154} For his £100 Bright got the exclusive right to produce such a play in either Britain or North America, but not later than 31 October 1901.

Addison Bright's efforts fared no better than those of many other hopeful dramatists who had gone before him. Watt made no attempt strictly to enforce the time limit but did, when another party expressed interest, get Bright to admit the reversion.\textsuperscript{155}

The second party was the theatre manageress Constance Stuart who intended to commission Leonard Merrick (one of Watt's clients) to dramatise \textit{The Orange Girl}.\textsuperscript{156} Mrs Stuart, though enthusiastic enough to enter into an elaborate four folio-page contract, had none of the naivety or financial recklessness of Addison Bright. For the exclusive rights to produce a play based on \textit{The Orange Girl} until 31 December 1907 she paid precisely one pound.\textsuperscript{157} Her caution was justified. The right reverted to Besant's executors without the Orange Girl ever stepping on to the English or American stage.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{153}Arthur Addison Bright, dramatic agent, who at some time represented Barrie and Conan Doyle; see Hepburn, pp. 65-6.

\textsuperscript{154}Memorandum of Agreement between Sir Walter Besant and Addison Bright of 89, Comeragh Road, West Kensington', 8 January 1900, WA [H] 23/2 [1].

\textsuperscript{155}See letters dated 12 and 13 September 1905, WA [H] 23/2 [2], [3].

\textsuperscript{156}Watt to Foster Barham, 2 January 1906, WA [I] 23/2 [3].

\textsuperscript{157}See Memorandum of Agreement between Watt and Foster Barham on the one part and Mrs Constance Stuart of 5, Western Villas, New Southgate, London, 19 January 1906, WA [I] 23/2 [2].

\textsuperscript{158}Watt to Constance Stuart, 8 January 1906, WA [I] 23/2 [5].
Watt’s Contribution to Besant’s Income

In his Autobiography Besant claimed that Watt had multiplied his income ‘by three at least’. How effective was the agent in increasing Besant’s income? We saw in Chapter 2 that Chatto paid the co-authors £800 for the serial and five years’ book rights, plus another £150 for the remaining rights, a total of £950 for All Sorts and Conditions of Men. We have seen in this chapter that, by 1890 at least, first UK serial rights and all UK book rights were roughly equal in value (occasionally the split would favour serial rights by up to 53% to 47%). Dividing £950 by two we get £475 as the likely value of book rights. By 1883 and All in a Garden Fair this sum had been increased to £650 for all book rights. It rose again to £750 for Dorothy Forster in 1884, and finally to £800 for Bell of St. Pauls in 1889, at which figure it stuck. In seven years, therefore, Watt was able to raise the value of Besant’s UK bookrights by about 68%. If we assume a fifty/fifty split, then a similar, or slightly higher rise in UK serial rights could be claimed. Perhaps the greatest advance was in the marketing of North American rights, particularly serial, which by the mid-1890s were worth around £400. However, as we have seen, this increase in US income was probably due more to the Chace Act of 1891 than to Watt’s powers of negotiation.

There were two factors in the 1880s which would naturally have increased Besant’s income even without the influence of Watt: one, his popularity was at its height; two, he was now a solo author who did not have to split his earnings. The total known earnings of All Sorts and Conditions of Men were £950. If we added, say, £100 for additional earnings in foreign markets, and then compared that sum to the £1,845.18.0 (net) earned by a Watt-promoted bestseller, The Orange Girl, we see that the novel’s income had been improved by about 75%. It was a substantial addition, but nothing like the threefold increase that Besant had claimed. Such a claim confused the consequences of two simultaneous but distinct events: Besant becoming

159 Autobiography, p. 204.
a solo author, and Besant acquiring Watt as his agent.
Chapter 6


*We believe that the recent fashion on the part of some publishers of bringing out very cheap editions at 6d has had its day, and it is being found to be a better policy to publish books in a more enduring form.*

Andrew Chatto, 1883

*Oh! there can be no doubt that it [the sixpenny] has come to stay, for new readers are always growing up and pouring forth from the schools. Moreover, a paper-covered reprint does not last for years like a cloth-bound book. It is read, thrown away, and destroyed, so making room for another.*

Andrew Chatto, 1906

Introduction

So far this study has concentrated on aspects of Besant's publishing history and its immediate context. Within this context he has been observed experiencing a remarkable increase in popularity and sales between the early 1870s and the early 1890s. Was this the result exclusively of Besant's talent, or of a particular combination of an acute publisher and a hustling literary agent capable of pushing sales? Was he one of those examples of
unaccountable luck that occasionally favours the far-from-remarkable who just happens to be in the right place, doing the right things at the right time? Perhaps both these explanations have some truth in them. Neither of them, however, either individually or together, is likely to provide the full answer. After all, many of Besant’s equally talented contemporaries (such as William Black, James Payn, Justin McCarthy) were enjoying levels of success which, if not exactly comparable with Besant’s, were close enough to suggest that something in their cultural and economic environment was exerting an influence. In other words, was it that, given a modest talent and a lot of effort, Besant was able to exploit a new and highly dynamic literary industry that was emerging at precisely the same time as his career was maturing? Perhaps Besant’s career was exceptional only by virtue of the fact that he enjoyed more fully what had been made newly available to all professional writers.

To answer such questions we must first broaden the scope of the survey and look at what happened to the publishing industry during Besant’s life and, in particular, whether anything exceptional took place in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. What would we need from such a survey? We would need to get a rough idea of how many impressions were produced annually at the beginning and at the end of our period. We would need to know what happened to the total output of the different genres as the nineteenth century progressed: how the output of religious works changed; whether education book production rapidly expanded after 1870; what happened to fiction in general, and the novel in particular, through the period. We would want to find out how book prices shifted in response to new methods of production and new markets.1

1 Of course, with a rising population and an increasing level of literacy, one would expect British publishing activity to expand, but that simple fact alone cannot account for the size or nature of the increase recorded. For instance, the population of Great Britain rose from 23.13 million in 1861 to 40.83 million in 1911, a 77% increase (B.R. Mitchell, European Historical Statistics 1750-1970, abridged edition (London, 1978), p. 8.). But in the same fifty years the Publishers’ Circular records a rise in the annual number of titles listed from 4303 to 10,914, or 154%; the British Museum Copyright Receipt Books record a rise of items printed items deposited from 27,743 to 77,430, or 179%; the production of paper and related materials went up from 100,000 tons in 1861 to 1,068,300 tons fifty-one
Given the chronic limitations of the data from such sources as the British Museum Copyright Receipt Books, the Stationers' Company records, the *Publishers' Circular*, the *Bookseller*, and so on,\(^2\) what sort of questions might we ask of this material and still hope to get sensible answers? If one took a set of data and looked, not so much at the numbers themselves, as at the way those numbers increased or varied year by year, then one might be able to deduce some sort of pattern. If one then went to a second set of figures which covered roughly the same period and, again ignoring the absolute numbers, looked for that same pattern, and found a reasonable approximation to it, one might then be tempted to talk tentatively about patterns in nineteenth-century book production. If it then proved possible to find reassuring echoes of these patterns in other sets of statistics, a model of the dynamics of book production in the period 1840-1919 might gradually emerge. Such a model, based upon smallish subsets of the real total production, subsets, moreover, which were far from random samples, would be tentative and subject to revision. However, such as it was, it would be worth having, if only as a source of working hypotheses.

This model would have different 'layers' of detail. The basic one would be derived from looking at year-by-year production over the whole period. However, certain statistics, particularly for the later part of the nineteenth century, allow the resolution of greater detail. The *Publishers' Circular* and the *Bookseller*, for instance, offer, for the period 1870-1919, a classification by subject. Although this classification is inevitably crude, and often erratic, it does give us the chance to investigate the production of different types of books, both in absolute numbers, and in the way certain subjects increased or decreased in relation to other subjects in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth.

The *Publishers' Circular* and the *Bookseller* also provide information about the cover price of books. Unlike information about subject, this data

\(^2\)For a description of these sources please see 'List of Books Cited or Referred To', 'Primary Sources: Manuscripts', 'Primary Sources: Other Printed Materials' and 'Secondary Sources'.
is in no way organised or classified. The information is abundant but is also almost completely inchoate. Classification can only be done slowly and painfully. A modest attempt at a preliminary survey has been made, but it should be regarded as indicative rather than conclusive.

This Chapter is derived in part from a larger survey, Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919 (to be published in 1990). Given that some of the statistical sequences do not make much sense unless they are given the longest run possible, data from periods earlier than the 1840s have, on occasions, been introduced into the following discussion. The data sets themselves are contained in a series of Tables which are printed as Appendix 3.

Section A: The Pattern of Annual Production 1840-1919

Turning first to the histogram compiled from the figures published in the Publishers' Circular. Figure 1 reveals a profile which the whiggish among us might not have expected. There is no steady, constant incline leading from the slough of early industrial times to the sunny uplands of the almost fully-literate early twentieth century. Although there is an increase in book production, and a substantial one, between 1850-1910, it is spasmodic rather than smooth, intermittent rather than continuous. According to the Circular (see Table A1), the 1840s began at a rate of just under 3,000 editions and impressions a year, and varied that rate very little during the first six years. In 1847, however, the annual record jumped from the 3,231 of 1846 to 4,168, 42% higher than the yearly average for the period 1840-44. The growth was sustained in 1848 (46% above the 1840-44 baseline) and in 1849 (51% above the baseline).

This considerable burst of production seems to have peaked in 1851, but held up well until 1854-5. In percentage terms 1851 represented a 79% in-

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3 A ‘baseline’ is the average of five years’ production; the particular years used are specified in Tables A1-A8, Appendix 3.
crease over the average production of 1840-4, while 1854 represented a 74% increase over the same baseline figure. Of course, generalising from one set of figures from one source can be a dangerous business. The Publishers' Circular was still experimenting with the way in which it recorded publications during the 1840s, and it may well be that this sudden surge in production in the late 1840s and early 1850s was merely a product of more efficient information-gathering rather than a real increase in actual production. It would be wise at this point to turn to another set of figures which might help to place the Circular's in a wider context. The figures most likely to reflect the same segment of the market are those derived from Bent's Monthly
Lit"erary Advertiser, and it is to these we shall now turn.

On the whole, throughout the 1840-59 period, Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser's absolute figures were somewhat lower than those of the Circular. In the early 1840s this gap is only a matter of a few hundred titles a year but, by the early 1850s, the gap had widened to 1,000 and more per annum. Given this, it might be advisable to turn immediately to the trends revealed by these absolute figures when converted into percentages. Using the Bent's figures for 1840-44 as the baseline, it is clear that the same stable picture for the period up to 1846 is revealed. By 1846, however, production, according to Bent's, was 20% above the 1840-44 baseline, by 1847 it was 26% above, by 1848 29% above. By the end of the decade the baseline had been exceeded by 33%. Not quite as dramatic as the Publishers' Circular figures, but clearly reflecting the same rising trend.

We can follow this trend in the Bent's data into the early 1850s. The rise was slightly gentler and smoother than the Publishers' Circular, the percentages above the 1840-44 baseline being, for 1850-53, 44%, 43%, 48% and 59% respectively. The trends revealed in these two sets of figures are close enough to suggest that they are reflecting a genuine feature of book publication of the period.

Why should the late 1840s and early 1850s have marked a surge in book production? Certain external events may well hold the key to this problem, particularly when we realise that, although not fully-comprehensive in their listings, Bent's and the Publishers' Circular did include many pamphlets as well as books in their lists. The Great Exhibition of 1851 certainly generated a considerable number of titles, as did the death of Wellington in 1852 and the start of the Crimean War in 1854. However, probably the most important factor in this upwelling of titles, many of which were in pamphlet form, was the religious controversies of the period, particularly those which centred on the Oxford Movement and its repercussions. Newman's reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1845 and the Gorham case of 1847-51 were certainly influential. However, judging by the volume of pamphlets produced, the subject which stimulated the publication of more titles than
any other single issue was Pius IX's decision, in 1850, to re-establish the Roman Catholic diocesan hierarchy in England. The plan provoked a pamphlet war of religion on an almost unprecedented scale. The number of writers who volunteered for service in this war was so great that the *Publishers' Circular* was obliged, during 1850-51, to devote many pages to announcing and cataloguing their battles. Such factors as these should not be forgotten when we come to discuss the relative importance of different genres within total book production.

As one might expect, the production of paper during this period tells a slightly different story, but that is useful in reminding us that books and pamphlets (particularly of titles of interest to the Trade, which is what, inevitably, the *Publishers' Circular* and *Bent's* would have concentrated on) represent only one criterion of print production. Whatever controversy was raging, posters, tickets, lottery tickets, catalogues, official forms and all the other sorts of printed paraphernalia would still be needed, and in growing quantities. One would therefore expect to find evidence of a pretty continuous increase in production - and one does (see Table A2). If, however, one then looks more closely at these rising figures certain other trends become discernible within them. Taking the ten-year period 1844-53, and again using a baseline figure derived from the average annual production of 1840-44 (ignoring for a moment Table A2 which changes the baseline in 1855), *Bent's* rose from 104% to 159%; the *Publishers' Circular* rose from 106% to 170%; and paper production from 109% to 176%. In two cases the 1853 level was sustained in 1854, and then dropped in 1855: *Circular* from 174% (5,117) to 157% (4,599), paper production from 176% (79,400) to 166% (74,500). In *Bent's* the decline set in a year earlier but continued into 1855: using the 1840-44 baseline the percentages slid from 159% in 1853 through 146% to

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4 Of pamphlet production the *Publishers' Circular* commented:

In 1850, there were 1,198; in '51, 940; and in '52, 908. The noticeable excess for the first year arising from the pamphlet-writing on the Papal question, upon which there were no less than 180 published during one month. (*Publishers' Circular* 5 December 1853, p. [478]).

On 2 December 1850 (p. 396) the *Circular* went as far as to devote a specific page to publishers advertising 'Papal Question' books and pamphlets.
142% by 1855.

This sudden and, as far as paper production was concerned, short-lived decline was probably due in part to the economic effects of the Crimean War. After this slight statistical blip, paper production rose again so that, by 1859, it had more than doubled its 1840-4 average production (from 45,024 tons to 97,250 tons, an increase of 116%). This substantial rise was almost certainly the result of the reduction of the unit cost of paper due to mechanisation of production, and of the gradual removal of the ‘taxes on knowledge’ in the 1850s (the last was abolished in 1861).

While we are looking at paper production, it might be worthwhile fol-
lowing the figures into the 1860s (see Table A3 and Figure 2). At this stage, with new statistical sources coming in the late 1850s (notably the British Museum Copyright Receipt Books and Annual Reports), a new baseline had to be established for all sets of figures so that like could be compared with like. All percentages for the 1860s and beyond are expressed in terms of a baseline derived from the average annual production over the five year period 1855-59. In 1860 paper production, according to Spicer's figures, was 117% of its baseline value, a figure it sustained in 1861. In 1862 it rose to 127%, and in 1863 it climbed still higher, to 139%. At this point paper production seemed to be following a pattern similar to that established in the 1850s, a steady, nearly relentless rise. However, production in 1864 dipped to 125% and stayed there in 1865. It rose to 144% in 1866, but only to fall back to 128% by 1867. It returned to its 1866 level in 1868, but declined again in 1869 leaving paper production only 37% above the 1855-59 baseline. According to Spicer, in other words, paper production in the UK goes up from 62,961 tons in 1850 to 97,250 tons in 1859 (a difference of 34,289 tons); whereas, in the 1860s it only rises from 99,810 tons in 1860 to 117,000 tons in 1869 (a difference of 17,190 tons). The steep rises of the 1840s and 1850s had been replaced by, if not quite a plateau, something very close to it. Although, given the differences in what was being measured, we should not expect a very close correlation between paper production and lists of editions, it might now be worth returning to the Publishers' Circular (Bent's having ceased publication in 1860) to look at its profile for the 1860s.

Figure 1 makes clear that, as far as the works listed by the Circular are concerned, there is a similar plateau in production which extends from the early 1860s to the middle 1870s. The percentages from Table A3 reinforce this point. Taking 1855-59 as a baseline once again, production in the 1860s hovered between 93% (1862, 1863) and 107% (1860, 1868). Even in the early 1870s the figures were relatively low: 110% in 1870, 114% in 1871, 108% in 1872, 112% in 1873, and 102% in 1874. Only after 1875 did the the Publishers' Circular listing suggest a significant expansion in the yearly total: 115% in 1875, 115% in 1876, 120% in 1877, 125% in 1878, 137% in
This phenomenon of a plateau in the recording of editions between roughly 1860-75 seems at first sight somewhat improbable—certainly improbable enough for us to suspect more than usual distortion in the Circular's figures. It is true that Spicer's UK paper production figures also suggest something similar to this phenomenon, at least as far as the 1860s were concerned but, even so, we should not accept them without further investigation.

At first glance the figures for the Stationers' Company Registry Books (see Table A3) would suggest that this plateau was indeed illusory, and that numbers of book titles climbed rapidly from year to year in the 1860s. However, we must treat the Registry Books with some caution, particularly at this late date. Stationers' Company records are invaluable, particularly for the first two and a half decades of the nineteenth century where there are very few other sources. By the 1850s, however, we have other sources, all of which were recording much larger numbers of books than the Stationers' Registry Books. In 1855, for instance, the Registry Books recorded just 954 works; in the same year Bent's listed 3,653 titles, the Circular detailed 4,599 editions and impressions, while the British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books included no less than 27,623 items. Although the Registry Books do show some brief sign of catching up in the period 1869-72, they rarely listed more than half to two-thirds of the Publishers' Circular entries. The Stationers' records therefore represent a rather small sample and a sample, moreover, that probably over-represented the old and conservative firms who had made a habit of deposit, and probably grossly under-represented the newer, pushier publishers who deposited exclusively with the copyright libraries after the Copyright Act of 1842 (5 & 6 Victoria c.45). One should add to this the fact that, by the 1850s and 1860s, if not before, a significant proportion of the Stationers' Hall records were of a 'commercial' rather than 'literary' nature. Finally, the 1855-59 baseline calculated for the Registry Books is unfortunate in being too low. Of the five years taken to establish the annual average, three had totals which were under 1000 (1855, 1856 and
1858). This means that when, in the late 1860s, the Registry Books were recording 2,000-plus per annum (still less than half the Circular's total), the percentage increase was way above the other sets of figures (typically recording a 200% to 300% increase over the 1855-59 baseline). For all these reasons, the Registry Books are an unreliable guide for this period, and thus should be treated with extreme caution.

Fortunately, by the late 1850s, we have another source of copyright deposit information which is much more comprehensive than the Stationers' Company Registry Books. Let us turn to the British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books to see if we can observe the same 'plateau' effect as was evident in the figures from Spicer and the Publishers' Circular. The Copyright Receipt Books did not provide consistent data until the late 1850s (when Panizzi’s influence began to be felt), but it is clear from Tables A2 and A3 and Figure 3 that the high levels of 1858 and 1859 (at 28,652 and 28,807 items respectively) were not surpassed, indeed not even equalled, until 1868 (31,863 items), and then only in one year, the figures otherwise remaining below 29,000 until 1873. Using the 1855-59 base line, the 1860s annual figures varied between 87% and 115%, quite close to the Circular's figures for the same period (93% - 107%). The two forms of the British Museum's annual report show a similar stagnant state: British Museum Annual Reports (Parts) varied from 81% to 115%; British Museum Annual Reports (Volumes) varied, during the 1860s, from 95% to 130% (see Table A3).5

On the whole, then, the evidence available from these sources would suggest that the 1860s and very early 1870s saw something of a stable, perhaps even contracting publication of titles while, although paper use continued to grow, it did so at a much slower rate than that which characterised the 1840s and 1850s.

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5 Work by the author on the figures currently available from the Nineteenth Short Title Catalogue, Phase I, Series II (1816-70), Vols 1-5 (Newcastle, 1986) for the period up to 1870 confirm this phenomenon. The NSTC was not included in Tables A1-A4 as it was felt that the information so far available for 1816-70 was too insubstantial. For what it is worth, the current figures (for the letter 'A' only) suggest a 'leveling' out of titles recorded: they remained under or at baseline for the period 1860-67, and only then rose painfully slowly to 104% of baseline by 1870, where the figures end. I have to thank Gwen Averley of the NSTC for providing me with this data.
If we return to the *Publishers' Circular* and look now at the later 1870s and 1880s, we will observe a marked difference. Annual numbers ceased to oscillate uneasily and unevenly, and instead began to rise more consistently from 1877 on (see Figure 1). There were a number of ups and downs, but the general trend was distinctly upwards, and the gradient was steeper. This same tendency can be observed even more distinctly in the British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books (Figure 3) where the gradient is even steeper. A similar phenomenon can be seen in *Parts* and *Volumes* in Tables A4 and A5.

There was also a dramatic surge in the paper production figures for the
1870s and 1880s (see Tables A4 and A5 and Figure 2): from 1875-76 the gradient of production steepened visibly. This acceleration occurred slightly earlier in records of paper production than in the other sets of statistics available to us. This is understandable enough, for paper consumption occurs early in the causal chain which eventually leads to additional titles being recorded in the Trade journals and, even later, to books being deposited under copyright legislation.

All the statistics (except for the Registry Books whose weaknesses have been discussed above) moved sharply upwards in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century, but the rate at which they moved varied considerably. The Publishers' Circular rose from just 15% over the 1855-59 baseline in 1875, to 78% over the same baseline in 1899. The British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books shifted from 8% over their 1855-59 baseline in 1875 to 120% by 1899. The Annual Report figures showed similar increases: Parts from 4% to 110%; Volumes from 23% to 109%. The drifting of the Publishers' Circular figures down and away from the copyright statistics in this period is a clear indication of the growing difficulties an essentially private organisation was having with bibliographic control at a time of rapid increase in book production.

Although titles and impressions were increasing fast during this period, it was the increase in paper production which was really remarkable. This suggests that the quantitative increase in titles was accompanied by a general increase in the number of copies per title or per edition, or an increase in the quantity of periodical production, or an increase in the amount of non-book printed matter or, most likely, an increase in all three. In 1875 paper production was 86% over its 1855-59 baseline, by 1899 it was no less than 612% over the same base. Roughly speaking, by 1899 books had doubled their annual number of recorded titles in twenty-five years, whereas paper production had increased seven-fold in the same period. Of course, given the limitations of the print production statistics, the doubling of titles is likely to be an underestimate, though how large an under-estimate is difficult to say. It is not likely, however, that the corrected figures would suggest
anything like a seven-fold increase, so we are still left with the impression of a considerable expansion in the print run of certain titles in the 1880s and 1890s, coupled with an increase in the size of periodical and non-book printed matter.

Clearly, the 1880s and 1890s witnessed a considerable quantitative change in book publication. Those studying the publishing history of the 1880s and 1890s have been aware for some time that, in a number of ways, the last two decades of the nineteenth century marked a new beginning: the development of the new journalism (in both its newspaper and magazine forms) and the mass circulation daily papers of the 1890s; the expansion of the syndication market in the provinces, the Empire, and the USA (particularly after the Chace Act of 1891); the emergence of the literary agent; the founding of the Society of Authors, the Booksellers' Association, the Publishers' Association; the rapid growth of the new public libraries; the decline and collapse (in 1894) of the three-decker novel; the development of the very cheap, paper-covered reprints at sixpence or less (such as Chatto's 'Popular Editions' produced from the early 1890s); the enormous expansion in printing capacity represented by the large, web-fed rotaries; the coming, in the 1890s, of the hot-metal type-setting machines, particularly the Linotype and Monotype. Any one of these innovations, taken singly, would probably have had a marginal effect on book and other forms of print production. Coming, as they mostly did, in the confined space of a couple of decades, their combined impact changed radically both the size and nature of the print-culture. The whole concept of the 'man of letters', not as an inspired genius nor as a picturesque bohemian, but as a workaday professional, on a par in training, status and (with a bit of luck) income with a lawyer or doctor, was the creation of this hopeful period. This image, which was promoted by the Society of Authors and celebrated by its prime mover, Walter Besant, could only have existed in that strange, promising time when there seemed no end to the demand for light and entertaining writing for syndication and serialisation. The confluence of almost universal literacy with cheap and large print runs serving an apparently endlessly expanding international English-
reading market and, most important of all, the absence of any other form of universally available popular entertainment, made the period 1880-1910 a fleeting golden age for the facile writer of easily-read prose. So at least it must have seemed to those who benefitted from it most.

It could never, of course, have been quite like that. Would-be writers always tended to multiply faster than opportunities, however fast those increased. Many of the writers who did manage to get published did not, or could not, publish enough in the right places to make anything more than half a living. ⁶

Many did not even do that much. For every Jasper Milvain there would have been four or five Edward Reardons eking out a precarious and dismal existence. Nevertheless, all the evidence suggests that it was a time of rapid expansion and of great promise and, such as it is, the data on publishing tends to bear this out.

If we return to Figures 1 and 2 we will see that this rise in production continued into the first decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, according to the *Publishers' Circular*, the rate of increase became greater. In fact other sources suggest that the gradient, though somewhat steeper, was less sharp than the *Circular's* figures would imply: between 1900-09 the *Publishers' Circular's* figures rose from 68% over the 1855-59 baseline to 153% over the same baseline, a rise of 85 points (between 1890-9 it rose 43 points); during the same period the British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books went from 117% to 166%, a rise of 49 points (40 points between 1890-9); *Parts* rose 54 points (23 points between 1890-9) and *Volumes* 45 points (29 points between 1890-9). It is very probable that the *Publisher's Circular* was improving its record keeping during this period, and it is this which is being reflected in the figures.

The period 1910-19 is marked in all the statistics by a year of peak production (somewhere between 1911-13) followed by the inevitable decline in production consequent on the outbreak of the First World War. Taking the peak production year first, there is a surprising degree of unanimity

between the different sets of statistics, not so much over which year saw the peak, as over the increase in production compared with the 1855-59 baseline. The Publishers' Circular gives a figure of 192% over the baseline; the British Museum's Copyright Receipt Books give 182%; its Annual Reports give 172% (Parts) and 191% (Volumes).

There is a similar measure of agreement over the contraction during the War: the decline over the period 1915-18 is a relatively steady one: the Circular figures slipped from 151% to 82% over the baseline; the Copyright Receipt Books slid from 118% to 80% over the same baseline.7

What perhaps is equally striking is the way in which all the sets of figures indicate a very rapid recovery in the period 1918-19: The Publishers' Circular moved up to 103% over the 1855-59 baseline (a rise of 21 points over 1918); the Copyright Receipt Books recorded 136% over baseline (a rise of 56 points over 1918; the Annual Reports contain one maverick figure (Parts record an improbable leap to over 180% over baseline) but Volumes had a figure reasonably consistent with the other sets: 122% over the 1855-59 baseline.

Conclusion to Section A

Drawing back for a moment from the details of individual years and decades, but remembering the caveats which will always be found surrounding book publication statistics, what can we say of the general trends 1840-1919 which are darkly visible through the figures? The late 1840s showed a significant increase in production: by 1849 it was probably between 16% and 30% above its 1840-44 baseline. This rapidly-increasing rate of production continued into the 1850s and peaked somewhere between 1851-53 at around 67% above the 1840-44 baseline. From the mid-1850s production decreased somewhat so that by the end of the decade it was, on average, only 34% above the same baseline. The exception to this was paper output, which continued a very strong upward movement, ending the decade 116 points above its 1840-44 baseline. Between 1850-59, according to Spicer's estimates, paper

7The British Museum Annual Reports do not give figures for 1917-18.
production rose 55%. With the exception of the 1860s, paper statistics always ended a decade at a significantly higher level than that at which they had started. After the interregnum of the 1860s, it was to be the 1870s that fully realised the trend in paper production suggested by the 1850s. Section C includes evidence that there was a significant alteration in the price structure of books in the late-1840s and 1850s, with 'cheap books' (those with a cover price of 3s6d or under) becoming a dominant feature of the market. Cheap books imply longer or more frequent print runs and thus would naturally demand more paper. The final abolition of newspaper duty in 1855 would also have made a major contribution to an increased demand for paper.

The 1860s were characterised by a plateau in production which extended the rates of the later 1850s right through to the late 1860s or early 1870s. Even paper output, although it did rise, did so much more modestly than in the 1850s, and with a considerable number of fluctuations. Indeed, the percentage gap in paper production between 1860 and 1869 was only 16%.

The early 1870s saw the last of the steady state which had characterised book publication since the late fifties. There seems to have been at least three years during this decade which experienced substantial increases in the rates of publication (1872-73, 1877), and by 1879 the rate was probably about 35% above the 1855-59 baseline. Paper, however, as one might expect, was experiencing a much faster rate of increase being, by 1879, some 193% above its 1855-59 baseline. Indeed, the 1870s mark the period in which the estimated UK paper production moved ahead more quickly than at any other time. Paper statistics had always had a tendency to increase faster than the other statistics (on average, perhaps, about 20% more above any given baseline than any other data set); in the 1870s the differences are multiplied, with a gap of no less than 140% between paper and the next nearest figures (British Museum Annual Reports—Volumes). The percentage gap between production in 1870 and in 1879 was no less than 108%, almost twice the size of the gap in the 1850s. In absolute terms: between 1870-79 the annual output of the UK paper industry more than doubled (from 120,000 tons to
250,000 tons). The introduction of web-fed rotary printing machines in the newspaper industry as well as the use of Wharfedale and derivative machines in book-printing, will explain the much higher paper-consumption implied by these figures.

The 1880s continue the trend established by the middle and late 1870s, albeit at a slightly modified rate. The 1890s steepen the gradient once more, as does the first decade of the twentieth century. Production rose to its climax somewhere between 1911-13 at around 284% of its 1855-59 baseline value. As one might expect, it declined during the First World War to, at its lowest point, about 181% of its 1855-59 baseline value. In other words, by 1918 production has been reduced to about 63.5% of its pre-war volume. Recovery, however, seems to have been rapid, at least as far as one can judge from one year's figures. By 1919 production had recovered to, on average, about 235% of its 1855-59 baseline value, or 83% of its immediately pre-war value. However, one should treat these recovery figures with extreme caution. They represent one year's total which might well have been swollen by titles held up by the War; as we don't have paper production figures for these years, it may well be that the editions represented by these rapidly-increasing titles were smaller than their pre-war equivalents. Nevertheless, despite the caveats, the figures make clear the fact that in the book industry, as in so many other manufacturing areas, the first decade or so of the twentieth century was a rehearsal for what was to come after, and that, at worst, the First World War represented no more than a temporary disturbance of the trends visible from the 1870s onwards.

Section B: Subject Classification 1814-1919

Introduction

Quite apart from the statistical problems which inevitably confront any enquiry into the patterns of book publication in the nineteenth century, the enquirer into the range of subjects on which books were published, and the number of books and pamphlets published on one subject as compared
with the number published on another, is assailed by an additional set of problems: those of categorisation. It is difficult enough when the material is organised on the Dewey or similar subject classification system, it is far worse when the material has its own, often idiosyncratic, principle of arrangement. It is at its worst, of course, when it has no organising principle at all.

In theory it would be possible to sit down with the British Museum’s Copyright Receipt Books and work through their entries, systematically classifying the subject of each entry on the basis of its title. If one is working on a short time span and with a source which lists no more than 800-1000 items a year, then such a procedure would be just about practical. Apply the same technique to a decade or more, or to a source which lists thousands of entries per year, and the approach becomes impractical. For this reason all sources of data which were not already classified in some way were excluded from Section B. In practice this meant that the only two useable sources were the Publishers’ Circular after 1870, and the Bookseller. Needless to say, in their original state these two sources used separate classification systems which were not wholly compatible. Nevertheless, they provided a minimum but invaluable coverage of the 1858-1919 period. Unfortunately, they left the 1840-57 period totally untouched. In order to provide some ground for a comparative survey, the Bibliotheca Londinensis was used to supply information relating to the 1814-1846 period.8 Inevitably, the Bibliotheca Londinensis had a classification system that bore little relation to either that used in the Publishers’ Circular or the Bookseller for later nineteenth-century material.

Further complications were added by the Publishers’ Circular’s decision in 1896 to combine two categories in one, its decision in 1911 to expand the classification to twenty-three categories, and its decision to add two extra categories in 1915. The above should be sufficient to explain why the final categories used in this survey may appear to be rather arbitrary and elephantine: such categories as ‘Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illus-

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8Thomas Hodgson, Bibliotheca Londinensis: A Classified Index to the Literature of Great Britain During Thirty Years Arranged from and Serving as a Key to the London Catalogue of Books 1814-46 (London, 1848).
trated Books’ (ASMI), or ‘Politics, Sociology, Economics, Military and Naval Books’ (PSEMN) are clumsy and imprecise, but they do at least allow us to make some broad comparative observations over a long time span which in any other circumstances would have been impossible. The other consolation is that, apart perhaps from ‘Geography, Travel, History and Biography’ (GTHB), those categories which seem to have the largest number of titles are often the most straightforward and least composite (e.g. ‘Religion’, ‘Novels and Juvenile Fiction’).

Subject Classification 1814-46

The Bibliotheca Londinensis is not, of course, divided into decades; it is simply a re-arrangement by subject of the 36,000 titles listed in the London Catalogue 1814-46. On its own, therefore, it cannot give us any sense of the dynamic, of what was changing in the relationships between one subject and another. What it can do is offer a substantial sample of books published in the earlier nineteenth century roughly sub-divided into categories. However, once analysed, this sample can act as a fixed point against which we can measure other, later samples. The difference between this benchmark and those later samples will give us some idea of the shifts of emphasis from one subject to another that were taking place in the second half of the century. As the absolute numbers vary so wildly, all the histograms represent the percentage share commanded by the various categories. The actual numbers of titles represented by these percentages are printed in Tables B1-B7 in Appendix 3.

If we turn to Table B1 and Figure 4, we will be immediately struck by the predominance of religion as the subject matter of books published between 1814 and 1846. We may be struck, but are hardly likely to be surprised. All the subject analyses done on the output of presses in earlier centuries stress the high percentage of religious material. A recent subject analysis of eighteenth-century production showed religion as the subject on which people were most likely to publish (or books survive).9 Between 1814 and

9 John Feather, ‘British Publishing in the Eighteenth Century: a Preliminary Subject
1846 religion in one form or another accounted for 20.3% of the books listed.

Surprisingly close behind 'Religion' comes 'Geography, Travel, History and Biography' at 17.3%. This catch-all category cannot be broken down much further but, roughly speaking, Geography, History, Voyages and Travels seem to have taken up about three-quarters of this category and Biography and Correspondence the other quarter. The popularity of this subject area might come as something of a surprise until one recalls that, in his study of the borrowing records of the Bristol Library in the late eighteenth century, Paul Kaufman found that works on travel and Geography were borrowed more frequently than any other type of book.10

The category of 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' which comes third and commands 16.2% of the total listings, can be more easily sub-divided into its component parts. 'Fiction, Novels, Romances and Tales' have 3,180 entries,

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or 8.9%; 'Juvenile works, Moral Tales etc.' have 2,628 entries, or 7.3% of the total. However, as the editors of the Publishers' Circular were to complain in the 1890s, it was sometimes very difficult to distinguish between fiction written for children and fiction written for adults, so this level of discrimination may well be somewhat misleading. Treating the 'Fiction and Juvenile' category as a whole, then, it is clear that, even in the earlier nineteenth century, it represented a considerable slice of the market, being only 1.1% below the second category and only 4.1% below 'Religion'. If we look once again at the Feather article referred to above, we will see that 'Literature' also occupied third place in the subject analysis of eighteenth-century production.\textsuperscript{11} According to Eighteenth-Century British Books\textsuperscript{12} cited by Feather, some 53,000 titles were entered under 'Religion' and some 38,000 under 'Literature'. In other words, the total for 'Literature' represented some 71.7% of the total for 'Religion'. In the Bibliotheca Londinensis some 7,268 entries were made under 'Religion' and some 5,808 under the general heading 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature'. In the latter case the total for 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' represented 79.9% of the total for 'Religion'. Clearly, by the first half of the nineteenth century, 'Fiction' was closing the gap on 'Religion'.

In fact the gap was actually smaller than the above figures suggest. Feather's use of the Dewey system meant that all forms of literature would, quite properly, be counted under the classification 'Literature'. The categories used by the Bibliotheca Londinensis were less logical and frequently less consistently comprehensive. 'Poetry and Drama', for instance, was a separate category, and will be found in the sixth position in Table C1. The 2,720 entries listed in under this heading should, if we wish to compare like with like, be combined with the 5,808 listed under 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature'. The two categories together produce a total of 8,528 entries (or 23.8% of the total), 1,260 more than under 'Religion'. Allowing some leeway

\textsuperscript{11} Feather, p. 36.
for mis-classification, we can still say that, by the early-middle period of the nineteenth century, Literature in the broadest sense was on a par with religion and, indeed, might well have already replaced it as the most popular subject for publication.

Education is the one other broad category which commanded more than 10% of the total number of titles listed by *Bibliotheca Londinensis*. The portmanteau nature of these categories is made painfully clear by ‘Education’, for it contains not only books about education and educational theory, but text books of all kinds, subjects and standards. Given the nature of the curriculum of the earlier nineteenth century, a significant proportion of this material would have been classical texts and primers. Below ‘Education’ in Figure C1 stands another broad and miscellaneous category ‘Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illustrated works’, which between 1814 and 1846 commanded 8.8% of the total. Following ‘Poetry and Drama’, a category already dealt with, we come to two unambiguous classifications, ‘Medical’ at 5.7% and ‘Law’ at 4.4%. ‘Politics, Social Science, Economics, Military and Naval’ poses something of a problem. In the Feather article quoted above, ‘Social Science’ was the second largest subject area, whereas this category between 1814 and 1846 commanded only 4% of the total and came ninth in a list of eleven categories. This is not likely to be the result of a radical change of taste. More probably it is a sport of the classification system. It is quite likely that many works of social science were classified under other headings, particularly ‘Geography’, ‘History’, ‘Education’ and even ‘Law’. This is a salutary example, for it warns us, once again, that subject classifications, particularly those derived from contemporary sources, are at best blunt instruments, and can only indicate trends on the grossest scale.

‘Logic, Philosophy and Belles-Lettres’ limps home with an unsurprising 0.7%, while the pile of left-overs, labelled ‘Miscellaneous’, is commendably small at 3.2%. However, such commendable smallness is probably a result of an over-confident, not to say cavalier, subject classification system in which very few works are left over for the simple reason that the compilers did not agonise for long over categorisation. A crass confidence ensured a very small
'Miscellaneous' category.

Whatever its limitations, this analysis of the contents of the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* does give us a rough yardstick against which to measure the dynamics of subject publishing in the later nineteenth century.

**Subject Classification 1870-1919**

If we turn first to Table B2 and Figure 5, we will be able to observe the changes that the pattern of subject production had undergone since the 1814-46 period. In order to render these changes more graphic, the order of category size established by the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* is retained in the histograms in Figures 5-9, thus 'Religion' is placed first, 'Geography, Travel, History and Biography' second, and so on. Given this arrangement we can see at once that the histogram in Figure 5 has changed its profile, particularly as far as the first three main categories are concerned. 'Religion' has declined markedly, slipping from a 20.3% share of the total, to about 15.6% of the total. It is worth remarking, however, that, due to the marked general increase of production during the 1870s and 1880s (discussed in Section A), the absolute number of titles this 15.6% represented was slightly larger (7,653 titles) than the number recorded under 'Religion' in *Bibliotheca Londinensis* (7,268 titles). In other words, more books on religious subjects were recorded in the ten years between 1870 and 1879, than were recorded for the thirty-two years between 1814-46. However, relatively speaking, 'Religion' as a subject had suffered a marked decline. 'Geography, Travel, History and Biography', as a single category, also experienced a dip in popularity, at least according to the *Publishers' Circular*. From 17.3% in the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* it drifted downwards to 12.4%, thus maintaining its position relative to 'Religion' (it was 3% below the latter between 1814-46; and was 3.2% below it between 1870-79). From the 1870s onwards, according to the listings in the *Publishers' Circular*, 'Geography, Travels, History and Biography' maintained a pretty consistent percentage share (1880s: 12.7%; 1890s: 11.6%; 1900s: 12.3%; 1910s: 14.3%). Once it had declined from the very high levels characteristic of the eighteenth and early nineteenth cen-
tury, this category seems to have found its own level and remained there, regardless of the fluctuations in the surrounding subjects. The slight rise in the final 1910-19 decade is interesting, and will be discussed when we come to consider that period in greater detail.

The most clear and obvious difference between the histograms for 1814-46 and 1870-79, however, is to be found in the relative position of the ‘Fiction and Juvenile Literature’ category. In the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* it was third in terms of size, and a good 4% below ‘Religion’. By the 1870s ‘Fiction’ was very obviously the predominant subject area, commanding no less than 23.3% of the total number of titles listed by the *Publishers’ Circular*. ‘Fiction’ is now 7.7% above ‘Religion’ and claims 3% more of the total number of titles than the latter category accounted for in the *Bibliotheca*. If we combine ‘Poetry and Drama’ and ‘Fiction’ to create the super-category ‘Literature’, then that subject’s predominance becomes even more obvious. By the end of the 1870s ‘Literature’ in all its forms accounted for 29.8% of the total titles listed by the *Circular*.

Figure 5 Publishers’ Circular: Subjects 1870-9 (see Table B2)
As in Figure 4, 'Education' takes fourth place, although with a slightly reduced percentage (10.5% rather than 11.8%). A difference of 1.3% is certainly within the range of statistical or classification error. It is also true that the Publishers' Circular's 'Education' category was less of a catch-all than that used by the Bibliotheca. It may thus be that these figures really represent a steady percentage share for 'Education' between the two periods. This, however, would be somewhat surprising, for 1870 saw the passing of Forster's Education Act, a piece of legislation which, at least in theory, made elementary education compulsory for all children. Such an Act would surely have had some impact on the market for educational books, particularly as far as increasing the demand for simple text books and 'readers' was concerned. We might answer this question by pointing out that, as with books in the 'Religion' category, the 1870s was a time of rapidly increasing production, and that more educational titles were produced in the ten years between 1870-79 (some 5,136) than had been listed by the Bibliotheca Londinensis for the entire thirty-two years between 1814-46 (4,226 titles). In other words, demand had been met by a rise in the absolute number of titles rather than by an increase in percentage share. This might be the solution but, if it is, it would tend to suggest that the educational reforms of the 1870s had had but a slight impact on the educational book market.

In order to find a somewhat more satisfactory explanation for this anomaly we must turn to the data in Table B2. If we look in the second column, we will find an interesting dynamic. In 1870, the very year of Forster's Act, education books do indeed command a percentage higher than the decade average of 10.5%. At 11.8% education in 1870 was taking exactly the same share as it had done in the Bibliotheca Londinensis. In 1871 this share increased still further, to 13.3%, and it begins to look as if the publishers were responding to an increase in demand of the sort one might expect after a major piece of educational legislation. However, this response proved to be short-lived. By 1872 Education's share had drifted down to 9.5%, a trend which was continued in the period 1873-75. By 1875 Education had slumped to just 6.8% of the total. 1876 (at 9.6%) and 1877 (at 10.4%) marked some-
thing of a recovery, and by 1878 (11.0%) the percentage is roughly back to where it was in 1870. The decade ended on a strong note, with Education commanding 14.2% of the total production recorded in the Publishers’ Circular. How might we explain this curious pattern?

It looks as if publishers of educational books initially over-estimated the likely increase in demand generated by the 1870 Act. Most historians agree that the early 1870s did not see an immediate and dramatic expansion in primary education, and this for a number of good reasons: many elementary schools were already in place before the Act and thus, in some areas, 1870 was little more than making de jure what was already de facto; the education provided was not free to all; there were many sectarian wrangles; school buildings took time to erect. For all these reasons it was not possible to make the system compulsory until 1880.13 In such a situation, the demand for new education titles would not be as buoyant in the early years of the Act as might have been anticipated by the publishers. Equally, the schools that were created by the Act would have taken a number of years to become fully established, as would the extra demand for books that they created. In such a situation, one might well expect a minor over-production at the beginning of the decade, followed by a slump in the middle period which would, in turn, be replaced by a surge at the end; something, in fact, very close to the pattern observable in Table B2. Finally, we must remind ourselves that these figures record first editions and reprints. They do not record print runs. It would be perfectly possible for the publishers of educational books to respond to whatever demands were made upon them immediately after 1870 by increasing the production of existing titles and extending print runs rather than initiating new titles. Such a response would not be properly recorded by the figures available to us. A final answer to this question must wait for a systematic study of the production ledgers of the main educational publishers of the period.

Most of the other categories do not show substantial changes from the

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percentages they commanded in Table B1. The exceptions to this are: ‘Medicine’ (down from 5.7% to 3.4%); ‘Law’ (down from 4.4% to 2.5%); and the catch-all categories ‘Logic, Philosophy and Belles-Lettres’ (up from 0.7% to 5.1%) and ‘Miscellaneous’ (up from 3.2% to 9.8%). The *Bibliotheca Londinensis* lists 2,050 titles on ‘Medicine’ and medical matters as having been published between 1814 and 1846, an average of 64.1 titles a year; between 1870 and 1879 the *Circular* lists 1,664 titles, an average of 166.4 titles a year. Similarly, the per annum average for ‘Law’ in the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* was 49.6, in the *Circular* for 1870-79 it was 121.8. Obviously, the *Publishers’ Circular* was more efficient at recording titles (and also reprints) than the *Bibliotheca Londinensis*, so we would expect a higher per annum average. Even with that caveat, however, it is clear that more books were being produced per year on ‘Medicine’ and ‘Law’ between 1870-79, than during the period 1814-46. The drop in percentage share of these two categories reflects a growth in other areas rather than a decline in the literature of the professions. However, it could be argued that the subject classification figures from the *Publishers’ Circular* for 1870-1919 express a diminishing relative significance of the learned professions (Church, Law and Medicine) in publishing when set against the rise of a new and untraditional literate and semi-literate market. Between 1814-46 ‘Religion’, ‘Law’ and ‘Medicine’ between them commanded 30.4% of the total titles listed, By the time of the first *Publishers’ Circular* figures this share was down to 21.5%; that level was roughly sustained during the 1880s (20.7%), but it fell again in the 1890s (to 14.2%). It remained approximately at that level for the last two decades of our survey (1900s: 14.3%; 1910s: 14.5%). In other words, between the first half of the nineteenth century and its end, the percentage share of publications for the traditional professions had roughly halved.

The variations in the size of the catch-all category can probably be best explained by the differences in the classification systems used by Hodgson on one hand, and the editor of the *Publishers’ Circular* on the other. The ‘Miscellaneous’ category accounts for between 9.8% and 16.2% of the total from 1870 to 1910. There are two possible explanations for this: one, new
markets (and therefore new types of book to satisfy them) were developing in the 1870s and beyond which did not fit comfortably into traditional classification systems; or, two, the Circular practised a more rigorous technique of classification that would not encourage books to be loosely catalogued under convenient but inappropriate subject headings. As these explanations are not mutually exclusive, it might be wise to assume that they both played a part in increasing the size of the 'Miscellaneous' category. It is certainly observable that when, finally, the Publishers' Circular did institute a more sophisticated system of subject headings (in 1911; further elaborated in 1914 and 1915), the percentage of books classified under 'Miscellaneous' dropped dramatically (to 2.4%).

What further changes are visible in the Publishers' Circular figures for the 1880-89 period? If we compare Table B3 and Figure 6 with Table B2 and Figure 5, we will see a continuation of a pattern already implied by

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14See note on the Publishers' Circular in 'List of Works Cited or Referred To'.

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the figures for the 1870s. 'Religion' had declined marginally from 15.6% to 14.9%, while 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' had increased by 2.7% to 26.0%. This increase was offset, however, by the decline in 'Poetry and Drama', which had slid from 6.5% in the 1870s to 2.9% in the 1880s. 'Literature' in the 1880s, therefore, took a 28.9% share of the Publishers’ Circular listings, slightly under the corresponding percentage for the 1870s (29.8%).

The constituent parts of 'Literature' seemed to be changing their proportional relationship during the 1880s, the 'traditional' genres being somewhat squeezed by the more popular form of fiction. Although the 1880s present this process in its most extreme form, most later decades confirm the trend. Between 1814-46 'Literature' was composed of, roughly, 68% 'Fiction', etc. and 32% 'Poetry and Drama'. By the first Publishers’ Circular set of figures the super-category 'Literature' was made up of 78% 'Fiction' and 22% 'Poetry and Drama'. In the 1880s, at the time of Besant's greatest popularity, these proportions were at their most extreme: 90% and 10%. The subsequent decades saw a slight diminution in the proportion of fiction, but this decline was only marginal until the 1911-19 period. In the 1890s it was 88% and 12%; in the 1900s it was 85% and 15%. In the 1910s 'Fiction, etc.' was contributing 80%, and 'Poetry and Drama' 20%.

The general impression derived from Table B3 and Figure 6 is that, apart from the collapse of the 'Poetry and Drama' and an increase in the 'Miscellaneous' categories, things were very much as they had been in the 1870s. 'Education' is much more stable throughout the decade (within a range of 10.2-12.6% between 1880-89), while 'Medicine' and 'Law' sustain the percentages that they settled into in the 1870s (3.4% and 2.4%, respectively).

The landscape of Figure 7 is, in many respects, a very familiar one: 'Geography, Travel, Biography and History' was at its usual 11-12% level, and so was 'Education'. 'Medicine' and 'Law' were hovering around at roughly 3% and 2% respectively. 'Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illustrated Works' were down surprisingly (for their normal level was anything between 6% and 8%), and inconsistently (for they commanded 8.4% by 1900-09), but otherwise most categories were maintaining something close to a steady state.

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The two most obvious exceptions to this were the two categories which had displayed the greatest dynamic in earlier periods, and which could lay some claim to be the best and most sensitive markers of change: 'Religion' and 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature'. The decline in the percentage share of 'Religion' in the 1870s and 1880s was, as we have noticed, modest. This was not so in the 1890s. In the early 1890s the percentage share of 'Religion' slipped below 10% for the first time (in 1893, see Table B4) and remained there, resulting in a decade average of 9.6%. In contrast, 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' jumped about 5.5% to take more than 30% of the total number of Publishers' Circular listings for the decade. The increase in 'Poetry and Drama' ensured that 'Literature' accounted for more than one-third of the editions and impressions recorded by the Circular in the period 1890-99 (35.6%, to be exact).

The decline in 'Religion' in the first decade of the twentieth century was a modest one (0.5%) and too small to be of statistical significance (see Table B5 and Figure 8). 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' slipped to just below
30% (29.7%) but, when added to ‘Poetry and Drama’, still accounted for more than a third of all impressions listed by the Circular between 1900-09 (34.8%). ‘Education’ slipped surprisingly during this decade, from its traditional 11-12% to 8.2%, but this may be accounted for by a corresponding rise in two other categories which were quite closely linked: ‘Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illustrated Works’ rose from 3.0% in the 1890s to 8.4% in this decade; similarly, ‘Politics, Sociology, Economics, Military and Naval’ increased from 4% in 1890-99 to 7.7% in 1900-09. It is quite possible that at least the former category included many educational texts; the latter would certainly have some, but its increase can probably be best explained by the growing crisis in Europe and the increasing awareness of the political and military significance of the Empire. Similar factors probably also played a part in the slight increase in the ‘Geography, Travel, Biography and History’ category during this period, an increase that was to be confirmed in the final decade of the survey.

Figure 8 Publishers’ Circular: Subjects 1900-9 (see Table B5)
The profile of the decade 1910-19 (see Table B6 and Figure 9) was in many ways unusual, although one should hardly be surprised at that. The figures include the four years of the First World War, and represent a period during which the trend of accelerating rates of print production, visible since the middle 1870s, received its first major check. Methodologically, the period is one in which the Publishers' Circular was experimenting with new classification systems, so some changes are likely to be the result of different methods of cataloguing. Given this we should, perhaps, note only the grosser changes between 1900-10 and 1911-19, for anything subtler may well turn out to be nothing more than statistical 'noise' in the system.

The drop of 0.8% in 'Religion' is too small to be of much significance, and probably represents something close to a steady percentage share of between 8.5% and 9.0% throughout the first twenty years of the twentieth century. 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' slipped back to 24.1%, mostly due to the decline in 'Fiction' in 1914-15, and 1917-19 (see Table B6), for 'Juvenile
Literature' held up well throughout the War. It is noticeable that there seems to be some form of correlation between 'Geography, Travel, Biography and History' (GTHB) and 'Fiction and Juvenile Literature' (FIC/J). At a time when FIC/J was declining (down 5.6%), GTHB was increasing (up 2%). Although not perfectly symmetrical, this relationship is reasonably consistent throughout the sets of data we have been looking at. In the *Bibliotheca Londinensis*, GTHB was 1.1% higher than FIC/J; by 1870-79 (Table B2) FIC/J had gone up 7.1%, and GTHB had gone down 5.1%. 1880-89 (Table B3) is the one exception, though not much of one: FIC/J went up (2.7%) but GTHB remained virtually constant (up 0.3%). Between 1890-99 (Table B4) FIC/J went up and GTHB came down. Between 1900-9 (Table B5) FIC/J slipped and GTHB climbed; between 1910-19 (Table B6) FIC/J slipped further and GTHB got to within 3% of its 1814-46 share of the listings. Paul Kaufman\(^{15}\) has pointed out how popular books of travel were with borrowers in the late eighteenth century; might it be that the two genres satisfied similar needs in the reading public (after all, travel writing in the eighteenth century and before was commonly fictitious) and that, occupying the same literary ground, they were therefore likely to oscillate—one advancing as the other retreated?

As in the 1900-09 period, 'Education' suffered a contracting percentage share although, as in the preceding decade, this was likely to be a corollary of the dramatic increases in 'Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illustrated Works' (up 6.8% at 15.2%) and 'Politics, Sociology, Economics, Military and Naval' (up 3.6% at 11.3%). Not surprisingly, 'Military and Naval' (a category brought in by the *Publishers' Circular* in 1914) commanded 3.5% in its first year; by 1916 it was up to 5.4% of the total; in the last two years of the war it averaged 4.1%, after which it seemed to have contracted to peacetime proportions (2.5%).

\(^{15}\)Kaufman, pp. 28-35.
‘Religion’ and ‘Literature’ in the *Bookseller* 1858-1916

As referred to above, ‘Religion’ and ‘Literature’ are not only two of the largest categories in all subject classifications so far discussed, they also seem the most dynamic, increasing or decreasing by larger percentage steps than most other categories. If we wished to follow the progress of subject areas in statistics other than those derived from the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* or the *Publishers’ Circular*, statistics that were difficult to categorise in their entirety, then ‘Religion’ and ‘Literature’ would be the most useful categories to select. The *Bookseller* represents such an alternative source of statistical information, it is rich but wearying, and any full survey of its lists would require a Herculean task of counting and classification. As a substitute for such an heroic endeavour, the present study surveyed three middle years of each decade and, from each year selected, counted the monthly totals of books classified under ‘Religion’ and the various sub-headings which together made up ‘Literature’. Table B7 and Figure 10 record the percentage share taken by ‘Religion’ and ‘Literature’ in the surveyed years of the *Bookseller*.

It is noticeable that, in the first three years of its existence (1858-60), the *Bookseller* had ‘Religion’ (at 24.9%) and ‘Literature’ (at 26.1%) running nearly neck-and-neck, and accounting together for over 50% of the total. As this period covers one of the two decades missing between the end of the *Bibliotheca Londinensis* figures and the beginning of the *Publishers’ Circular* figures, it would be encouraging to see this as representing a transition from the earlier period where ‘Religion’ was predominant to one in which ‘Literature’ was the most popular. Unfortunately, such a neat and elegant interpretation would not fit the brutish facts. Only four years later (1864-66) the *Bookseller’s* figures are showing ‘Literature’ completely predominant (at 34.1%, as opposed to ‘Religion’ at 18.7%).

In fact, it is not likely that such a reversal really occurred so rapidly, so for an explanation of both sets of figures we shall have to look at the way in which they were recorded. Being the first three years of the *Bookseller*, 1858-60 is not likely to be typical. Methods of recording publications, and what was being recorded, were being experimented with, and thus the figures
were far from consistent. In the first year or so, for instance, the *Bookseller* recorded a considerable amount of material published by the 'The Christian Knowledge Society' and 'Religious Tract Society' (including 'Picture Tickets for Rewards' and 'Natural History Prints' [both used as Sunday School awards]). This swelled the 'Religion' category in the first year and, when the *Bookseller* ceased consistently to list such material, artificially depressed the figures in the second and third years of the sample (for example, 1,508 'Religion' items were recorded in 1858, but only 1,287 in 1859 and 1,251 in 1860). At the same time the *Bookseller* seems to have increased its coverage of 'Literature' in the second and third years so that, although only 1,150 items were recorded under that head in 1858, 1,417 were recorded in 1859, and 1,674 in 1860. By 1860, therefore, one might argue that the *Bookseller* was doing justice to 'Literature' but was under-representing 'Religion', and that the 1864-66 figures exaggerated that trend. It was not likely that, by the mid-1860s, 'Religion' was on a par with 'Literature', but it is equally unlikely that it had dropped so far behind as the *Bookseller* figures suggested.
One of the striking ironies evident in Table B7 is that, even in 1858 when the *Bookseller* was recording more religious than literary works, the Christmas season showed the predominance of ‘Literature’ (October-December: 449 titles) over ‘Religion’ (October-December: 385 titles). By 1866 that trend had been exaggerated to ‘Literature’: 503; ‘Religion’: 224. As early as the middle of the nineteenth century, at least as far as the *Bookseller* was concerned, Christmas was a commercial, and not a religious, festival.

On the whole the *Bookseller*, at least in the years surveyed, recorded more entries than did the equivalent volume of the *Publishers’ Circular*. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>CIRCULAR</th>
<th>BOOKSELLER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
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<td>5997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
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<td>6516</td>
<td>8989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>8252</td>
<td>12054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>10665</td>
<td>8849</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exception to this generalisation, as can be seen in the above Table, were the years of the First World War. This must be remembered when we come to discuss the proportion of total listings commanded by Religion and Literature. In absolute terms the number of these titles recorded was often greater than the comparable figure in the *Circular*, but not great enough to compensate for the larger total. This means that both ‘Religion’ and ‘Literature’ accounted for a slightly lower portion of the whole than they did in the *Publishers’ Circular’s* figures. For this reason every percentage recorded will be followed in brackets by the absolute number it represents. To avoid confusion this discussion will concentrate on the middle-decade years listed in the Table above.

Taking ‘Religion’ first: in 1875 the *Circular* recorded 15.5% (759); the *Bookseller* corroborated this with 15.3% (918). In 1885 Religion was still commanding 15% (847) in the *Circular* while it had already declined to 11.7% (811) in the *Bookseller*. This is not such a radical divergence as it may seem, for in the subsequent four years the *Circular’s* ‘Religion’ category began to slide (ending up in 1889 at 12.6% (764)). By 1895 the
two journals were once again within 1% of each other and both confirming the precipitous decline of Religion's percentage share (*Circular*: 8.7% (570); *Bookseller*: 7.8% (700)). The subject seemed to stabilise at around this percentage, fluctuating little more than 1% in both 1905 (*Circular*: 9% (745); *Bookseller*: 8% (968)) and 1915 (*Circular*: 8.4% (896); *Bookseller*: 8.5% (751)). Table B7 and Figure 10 illustrate the steady decline in Religion's percentage between 1858 and 1896, and its relative stability in the period subsequent to that.

In almost all cases the percentage claimed by 'Literature' in the *Bookseller* was a few percent less than the comparable figure in the *Publishers' Circular*. However, it never dropped below 25%, and was more usually between 26%-29%. As explained above, the smaller percentages in the *Bookseller* have nothing to do with smaller absolute numbers, but much to do with the *Bookseller* frequently recording a larger number of editions and impressions per annum. In particular it covered government, parliamentary and scientific publications much more thoroughly than the *Circular* ever managed to do. The uncharacteristically lower figures for 1915 were almost certainly due to a collapse in the number of government and similar publications recorded by the *Bookseller* during the First World War. Significantly, when the gap between the *Circular's* and the *Bookseller's* annual total was at its greatest (in 1905 when the *Bookseller* recorded 3,802 items more than the *Circular*), Literature declined to its lowest percentage share (25.3% (3,035) as opposed to the *Circular's* 34.3% (2,836)). This detail merely re-inforces the need for us to look at long-term trends rather than individual year's figures.

What then were the overall trends in 'Literature' between 1875 and 1915? Firstly, the *Bookseller's* data confirms the predominant position of Literature in the later nineteenth century, for even at its lowest point in the largest sample it never took less than one quarter of the total number of works listed. Secondly, both sets of figures agree that Literature had a larger proportion of the whole in the 1870s and 1890s than in the 1880s. Numbers peaked in the first decade of the twentieth century and held up well during the Great
War despite the general decline in the volume of publishing.

Conclusion to Section B

The most striking feature revealed by these, admittedly limited, subject statistics is the shift from the publishing of religious material towards the more secular subjects, particularly literature and, within literature, prose fiction. This shift was likely to have been a slow, almost imperceptible process during the first half of the century, but one which gathered speed in the 1850s and 1860s. By the 1870s, at least according to the Publishers’ Circular, ‘Literature’ was being produced in larger quantities than ‘Religion’.

The period 1880-1919 saw a progressive diminution of the percentage share of ‘Religion’ and a very rapid increase in the share of the total market for ‘Literature’ so that, between 1890-1910, the latter subject was commanding around 33% of the Publishers’ Circular’s listings. The pre-eminent position gained by fiction in this period certainly goes some way to explain the many and vociferous complaints from librarians and educators in the 1880s and 1890s on the subject of fiction, and the threat it seemed to pose to the ‘more serious’ sorts of writing and reading.

The final decade of our survey seems to have witnessed a minor contraction in this area (particularly in fiction and juvenile literature) which may have been a consequence of the 1914-18 War; ‘Religion’ showed no sign of a compensating rise during this period, and continued its gentle decline.

The decline in the percentage share of ‘Education’ after 1900 is puzzling, and may well be due to some oddity in the way the Publishers’ Circular classified material, particularly after 1911.16 However, if the phenomenon is a real one, and not merely caused by some methodological quirk, then one might point out that there is an inverse relationship between ‘Education’ on the one hand, and ‘Arts, Science, Mathematics and Illustrated works’ and ‘Politics, Sociology, Economics, Military and Naval’ on the other. In the period 1870-1899, ‘Education’ maintained an average percentage of 11.13%; while ASMI commanded 5.53% and PSEMN 3.57%. In the two

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16See note on the Publishers’ Circular in ‘List of Works Cited or Referred To’.

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decades 1900-1919 ‘Education’ average percentage share dropped to 7.2%, while ASMI went up to 11.8% and PSEMN climbed to 9.5%. Clearly, one could not depend too much on figures that were derived in part from the atypical years 1911-19; nevertheless, it might be argued that the educational changes ushered in by the early twentieth century required texts that were not so readily identifiable as ‘educational’, and that the increasing stress on scientific and technical subjects (at the expense of, for example, classics) meant that many educational texts tended to be classified under other headings.

The mild inverse relationship between ‘Fiction and Juvenile Literature’ on one hand, and ‘Geography, Travel, Biography and History’ on the other, might be worth some further exploration, although the width of the latter category makes precise statements very difficult to substantiate.

Section C: Price Structure 1811-1919

Introduction

For the historian, the price of a book is a very revealing piece of data. According to circumstances of production, it can suggest something of the costs of materials and production, the nature and size of the publication, the length of the print run and often, and most important, the market at which the book was aimed.

Despite the importance of pricing, and publishers’ pricing policies, relatively little work has been done on this aspect of the subject. The reason for this is not very obscure. Except in rather unusual bibliographies and catalogues, price is not usually recorded as a significant bibliographical detail. Information about the price of books published in the past is thus not easy to come by. Even a major primary source such as the British Museum’s Copyright Receipt Books does not contain price information.

If we are to do any work at all on the pricing of books in the nineteenth century, we shall have to rely for information on those sources for which price was a factor of sufficient importance for it to be recorded comprehensively.
and consistently. The trade journals of the period had a readership made up of publishers, wholesalers, booksellers and stationers whose very livelihoods depended on getting pricing right. For them the price was as significant as the author or the title. *Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser*, the *Publishers' Circular*, and the *Bookseller* in their various lists of recently published titles invariably noted the cover price at which the publication was issued. It is therefore perfectly possible, if one knows the author or title of a particular work, to look it up in the relevant issue of one of these journals and find out its nominal price.\(^{17}\) However, a problem arises when one wishes to look, not for one work or a handful, but for a sample large enough to give some overall idea of how many cheap titles, how middle-priced, and how many expensive books were published in a given month, or year, or decade. The *Publishers' Circular* from 1870, and the *Bookseller* from 1910, issued 'Analytical tables' at the end of each year which showed that year's production broken down in terms of months, subjects and 'new books' or 'reprinted titles'. Neither journal made any attempt to analyse by price.

The cruel truth is that, if one wants to do any work on the price structure of 'books known to the Trade', then one is faced with a monumental task of counting book by book and classifying each item within a price band. Given this, the survey undertaken for this Chapter was inevitably ferociously circumscribed. Because of the preliminary nature of this whole exercise, all its conclusions must be regarded as tentative, but none more so than those reached in this Section.

The method used was as follows: a year, usually in the middle of each

\(^{17}\)The use of the term 'nominal' or 'cover price' is designed to indicate that the prices discussed in this Section are not necessarily the ones that a contemporary customer would have been expected to pay. Despite various attempts to fix prices, (see James Barnes, *Free Trade in Books, A Study of the London Book Trade Since 1800* (Oxford, 1964)) there was essentially a free market in books until the gradual introduction of net books (initially by Macmillans) in the 1890s, and the creation of the Net Book Agreement in 1899. The free market meant that the customer could normally expect a discount on most books of between 1d and 3d in the shilling. The discussion which follows is based on the nominal price as we have inadequate information on how discounting worked generally. It should be remembered, however, that the prices paid, particularly for more expensive books, would almost certainly be lower than the nominal price until the late 1890s. Books under 6s did not immediately come under the conditions of the Net Book Agreement.
decade, was chosen to represent that decade; for each of the chosen years the
months of April and October were surveyed title by title. April and October
were chosen as being most likely to be typical months. Both months were
parts of one of the two most important book-publishing seasons (April part
of the Spring season, October part of the Christmas season) but, more often
than not, neither marked the high point of its respective season. The prices
recorded were sorted into eleven bands: 1d-6d, 7d-11d, 1s-2s, 2s1d-3s6d,
3s7d-5s, 5s1d-7s6d, 7s7d-10s, 10s1d-20s, 20s1d-30s, 30s1d-40s, over 40s. The
results for the April and October of each of the chosen years were then
added together and the resultant figures percentaged to give an impression
of the price distribution by title over those mid-decade years. These figures
are recorded in Appendix 3 but, to avoid over-complication, and for the
purposes of this discussion, the eleven price bands have been combined into
three larger groupings: the low price group (1d-3s6d), the mid-price group
(3s7d-10s), and the high price group (10s1d-over 40s). Most of the following
discussion will be in terms of the three broad groups, although occasional
reference to specific price bands will be made as and when appropriate.

The limitations of this survey are obvious. It derives all its information
from trade journals and these, as we have observed before, offer an interest­ing,
important but far from random sample of publications. Trade journals
will, inevitably, tend to concentrate on those publications which would be
sold through booksellers and other more or less conventional outlets. Given
that most retailers had rather modest turnovers, most booksellers would be
interested in those publications which would give them a reasonable profit
per unit sold, and those would tend to be books in the medium to high price
groups or, at best, books in the upper part of the low price group. The
part-works, broadsheets and pamphlets selling at anything between a 1d
and 2d would not be their concern, for they were sold by hawkers and street
traders with low or no overheads, and relatively high turnovers. On the
other hand, publishers with high-price, high-status books to promote would

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18 This is less true of October during and after the 1890s when it is commonly the largest
month of production in the Christmas season.
be very keen to publicise them widely in the trade journals. The result of these two factors is that all three journals (and Bent's in particular) will have lists of new publications which are skewed to the more expensive end of the price range. It is likely that the majority of titles published at 10s and more will have been recorded by one journal or another; on the other hand, it is very likely that a significant proportion of popular publications priced at 2d or less went totally unrecorded. We must also remember that there was usually an inverse relationship between price and print run, and that this survey deals only with titles. Thus a book retailing at 30s in 1895 may only have had a print run of 750 copies or less, whereas a 6d novel printed in the same year might well have had an initial run of 100,000 copies or more. Therefore, in terms of titles (and even more so in terms of quantities produced), the low price group will be under-represented in the figures below. This under-representation will be at its worst in the first four decades of the nineteenth century when the only source is the lists published in Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser, for this journal, although it has a rather limited coverage in all groups, is weakest in the low price region.

Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser had one advantage. As the total number of publications listed per annum is relatively small, it was possible to record the data for the whole of the chosen year rather than just the months of April and October. Nevertheless, the figures from Bent's (as those from the Publishers' Circular and the Bookseller) should be treated with caution. What we will concentrate on in the following discussion is the way in which low-priced, middle-priced and high-priced books alter in relationship to each other over time, and this is best observed by looking at the percentage share of total production each of these three categories commanded in 1815, 1825 and so on.

Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser 1811-55

If we turn to Table C1 and Figure 11, we will see the pricing structure as revealed by Bent's between 1811 and 1855. (Although not a mid-decade year, 1811 was included as this is the first year in which the journal produced a
clear annual listing of publications with their associated prices.) It is noticeable that throughout the Bent’s sequence hardly any publications are registered under the first two columns (1d-6d, 7d-11d). This should warn us again of how inadequately representative these figures at the low end of the price range are likely to be. In 1811 the low-price group represented just 19.8% of the total number of listed titles; the mid-price publications occupied 35.9% of total titles, while the high-price titles commanded 44.4% of the total. Four years later the pattern still remained roughly the same: low-price books had gone up by about 3%, high-price books by about 2% and, by way of compensation, mid-price books had fallen by about 5%. The slight rise at the cheap books end of the market in 1815 might well be ascribed to the political events of the year, for stirring national or international events always gave rise to a flurry of cheap pamphlets and tracts. Such relatively ephemeral publications would not normally be noticed by such a staid journal as Bent’s, but ephemera can gain a temporary dignity by being associated with great events (a similar phenomenon is visible in the Publishers’ Circular listing of pamphlets in 1850-1). Despite these minor fluctuations, however, the basic pattern remained the same. Of the 413 publications listed by Bent’s at the end of its 1815 issues, only 96 cost 3s6d or less, 125 were priced at between 3s7d and 10s, and no less than 192 cost more than 10s.

By 1825 the pattern seemed even more firmly entrenched. The publications in the low-price category occupied just 14.8% of the total, mid-priced books had returned to their 1811 level (35%) while high-priced books now accounted for just over half the listings in Bent’s (50.2%). 1825 was a particularly successful year in terms of quantity of titles produced. However, there is no reason to suggest that this increase in production had anything to with a lowering of price, either as cause or effect. John Sutherland’s study of the 1825-27 period tends to confirm this impression. Using figures de-

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derived from the composite *English Catalogue of Books 1801-36*, Sutherland observed that the average price of books listed in 1824 was 13s3d; by 1825 this figure had climbed to 15s6d. This trend is equally visible in the actual number of titles counted by Sutherland: in 1824 the total number of titles at 20s or over was 223, in 1825 it was 308; in 1824 the total number of titles at 6s or under was 497, by 1825 this figure had dropped to 414. 1825 seems to exhibit that curiously 'pre-industrial' phenomenon of increased production coupled with a rising unit price.

*Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser* was, even as late as 1835, still listing no more than 656 titles in its yearly summary. By the mid-1830s, however, even these figures were beginning to show evidence of a change in pattern, albeit a slow and unspectacular one. Low-price books had returned to their (untypical) high level of 1815 (23.3%), while books priced at over 10s had
declined a full 13% from their 1825 level to 37.1%. Mid-price books, which had been steadily increasing their percentage share since 1815, went up to 39.4% and, for the first time in this time series, became the largest single category.

The figures for 1845 confirmed this trend. The total number of titles in this sample was more than double those for 1835 (although still low at 1,507), but the pattern was very similar. The mid-price group remained essentially stable (at 38.9%); around this still point high-price titles declined a further 2% while low-price books increased their share by a similar figure (up to 25.9%).

Most significant of all were the figures for 1855, the last in the Bent’s Monthly Literary Advertiser series. The high-price group had suffered another major fall, down nearly 15% from 35.2% to 20.7% (paralleling the fall of 13% between 1825 and 1835). The mid-price group, having peaked between 1835 and 1845, had dropped 8% to 30.8%. Most important of all, however, was the fact that publications with a cover price of 3s6d or less now dominated the lists with no less than 48.5% share of the total number of titles. In other words, according to the Bent’s figures, the low-price group had nearly doubled its share between 1845-55.

If, for a moment, we look at the individual price bands within this broad price group, we will see something of what appeared to be happening. In 1845 the low-price group was composed of 21.1% of titles costing between 2s1d and 3s6d, and 4.8% of titles costing between 1s and 2s (although the balance between the two bands changed, 2s1d-3s6d had always taken the larger share, apart from the 1811 figures). In 1855 the 2s1d-3s 6d band had hardly changed (up 1.9% to 23%), but the 1s-2s band had increased fivefold (from 4.8% to 25.4%) and, in doing so, had become the largest single price band in the whole range. The 4.8% figure for 1845 does seem a little on the low side, but even if we take an average of the 1s-2s band between 1811 and 1845 (7.4%), it is still a very striking increase.

The early and mid-1850s were, as has been indicated in Section A, a time of enormously increased production of titles. Unlike 1825, this increase was
not restricted to one year, but was sustained over a number. Unlike 1825, an increase of titles had been accompanied by a radical fall in the cover price of the average book. The figures from 1855 are exhibiting precisely those symptoms of industrial mass-production (increased productivity, falling unit price) that were lacking in Bent's figures for 1825.

One other feature should be noted before we leave the statistics derived from Bent's. If we look at the price bands which compose the mid-price and high-price groups, we will see a distinct pattern developing. Let us take the mid-price band first. Looking at the relative sizes of the three bands we will see that in 1811 5s1d-7s6d was the largest, followed by 3s 7d-5s0d, followed by 7s7d-10s0d. Although the percentages differ, this order of size was repeated exactly in 1815 and 1825. In 1835 3s7d-5s0d is still largest, but this time it was followed by the next band up, 5s1d-7s6d, and then by the most expensive band within the mid-price group, 7s7d-10s0d. This smooth gradient was then maintained within the mid-price group in 1845 and 1855. If we then look at the high-price group, we will find that, in 1811, 10s1d-20s0d was the largest, followed by those titles above 40s, followed by 20s1d-30s0d, followed by 30s1d-40s. By 1815 this order had been slightly switched (20s1d-30s0d is second, Above 40s is third), but otherwise remained the same. The 1815 pattern is repeated in 1825. In 1835, the same year in which the mid-price group acquired its smooth gradient, the same thing happened to the high-price group: 10s1d-20s0d remained the largest, followed by 20s1d-30s0d, followed by 30s1d-40s0d, and then titles above 40s. As with the mid-price group, this smooth gradient was then maintained through the rest of the Bent's decades. This arrangement of the lowest price band having the largest, and the highest price band having the smallest, number of titles in both the mid-price and high-price groups indicated a slow but distinct drift towards lower prices post-1825.

The increase of the 30s1d-40s0d band around 1835 is interesting. It is, of course, the band which includes the price of the conventional three-decker novel, 31s6d. This had been established as a standard in the 1820s, and was being consolidated in the 1830s.
The *Publishers’ Circular* 1845-1915, the *Bookseller* 1858-1915

We should now turn to the next set of figures, those derived from the *Publishers’ Circular*. For two of the sample years (1845, 1855) these overlap the *Bent’s Monthly Literary Advertiser* data, so it is possible to use them as a means of checking and, if necessary, of modifying our initial impression derived from the earlier journal. The one drawback is that, as we move from the manageable hundreds of *Bent’s* to the unmanageable thousands of the *Circular*, we have to rely on the figures derived solely from April and October, rather than the whole year. The impression gained from working on the *Circular* and, for later periods, the *Bookseller*, is that these two journals were not only recording many more titles than *Bent’s* but were also concentrating more on the cheaper end of the market. We should expect, therefore, that the figures for the low-price group will be generally larger from these sources. In particular, this will mean that we shall have many more titles in the first two bands (1d-6d and 7d-11d) than in the figures from the *Bent’s* data.

If we turn to Table C2 and Figure 12 we shall be able to see the two years which overlap with *Bent’s*. In 1845, the *Circular’s* statistics suggest, the high-price group accounted for 24.6% of the total titles, the mid-price group for 36.5%, and the low-price group for 38.9%. Unlike the *Bent’s* figures for 1845, the low-price group was already the largest, although not by much. Given the larger numbers recorded by the *Circular*, it’s likely that this distribution pattern is closer to the truth than that to be deduced from the *Bent’s* data. However, we should not ignore the similarities between these two sets of figures. For 1845 they both recorded a situation of near balance between the three price groups: two had a 35% - 38% share, while the third (low-priced in *Bent’s*, high-priced in *The Publishers’ Circular*) has about 25%. Only 1835 can claim a similar pattern. All the other years from all sources exhibit much more radical imbalances with one or other price group clearly predominant (between 1811 and 1825, the high-price group; any time after 1855, the low-price group). Despite the differences between these two sets of data, they clearly agree on a number of points. In
particular, that the 1835-45 period was one of price transition which resulted in a short period during which low-, mid- and high-price books commanded comparable shares of the total number of titles listed.

Turning now to the figures derived from the Publishers' Circular in 1855, we shall find other parallels between the two sets of figures. By 1855, the figures in Table C2 suggest, the low-price group was taking a 60% share of the listed titles in April and October. This is markedly more than the 48.5% implied by the Bent's figures. Given, however, the obvious bias in the older journal towards higher-priced books, the increase of both figures over their 1845 counterparts is very similar: a 22.6% increase in Bent's, a 22.0% in the Publishers' Circular. Both sources agree about the dynamics of the low-price book: between 1845-55 its share of the total expanded to the point where it was unequivocally the largest of the three groups.
If we look at the two sets of figures at a higher level of detail resolution, we shall be able to observe other similarities. The 1845 figures from Bent's suggested that, within the low-price group, the 2s1d-3s6d band was the most important. The Circular's figures also suggest this, although the difference between 1s-2s and 2s1d-3s6d was not so great (16.3% and 19.3%). By 1855, Bent's figures indicate, this relationship has been reversed, 1s-2s having become the largest band. The Circular's figures confirm this though, as one might expect from a wider coverage of lower prices, the size of the 1s-2s band was much larger than the 2s1d-3s6d band (29.9% and 17.4%).

It is worth noting that Bent's recorded just 0.1% of its books as being published in the 1d-6d band in 1855; the Circular recorded 12.6% in the same band. The difference between Bent's total for low-price group in 1855 (48.5%) and the Circular's (60.9%) is 12.4%. One final detail: by 1855 the Publishers' Circular was displaying the same price gradient in both the mid- and high-price groups as was evident in the Bent's figures from 1835.

At this point we might look at some data derived from the Bookseller which began publication in 1858. Table C3 lists the figures for 1858 which, though they cannot be compared directly with the two other sets for 1855, might prove of some interest. The first thing to notice is that the 1858 figures are reasonably similar to the Publishers' Circular figures for 1855: for the low-price group the Bookseller recorded 61.4%, the Circular 60.9%; for the mid-price group the figures were, respectively, 23.7% and 26.4%; for the high-price group they were 14.8% and 12.7%. For the 1s-2s and 2s1d-3s6d bands the Bookseller recorded 26.5% and 19.5% (Circular: 29.9% and 17.4%), while the 1d-6d band accounted for 13.8% (Circular: 12.6%). To complete the parallels, the 1858 Bookseller exhibited the same price gradient within the mid- and high-price groups (mid-price: 11.8%, 8.7%, 3.2%; high-price: 9.1%, 3.1%, 1.7%, 0.9%) as evident in both other sets of figures for 1855.

By 1865 we can run the Publishers' Circular and the Bookseller in parallel. In Tables C2 and C3 the first striking thing about the figures for 1865 is that they mark something of a price retrenchment. The low-price group
was still by far and away the largest, but its share had declined by between 9 and 13% (to 51.7% in the *Circular*, and to 48.5% in the *Bookseller*). The mid-price group displayed a modest increase to 27.1% in the *Circular* and to 29.5% in the *Bookseller*, while the high-price group went up by between 7 and 8%. Clearly, the developments in price structure implied by the figures for the 1850s were not fully realised by the 1860s. If we think back to Section A, we will recall that the 1860s represented something of a plateau in publication, perhaps even a slight decline in the total number of titles produced. The price structure of the 1860s seemed to be implying the same thing: a hesitancy, a counter-current, a return (after the heady years of the early 1850s) to patterns more reminiscent of the 1840s, albeit on a larger scale.

One thing the 1860s did not do was disturb the pattern established in
the 1850s of 1s-2s being the largest price band: in both the *Circular* and the *Bookseller* this band included something like one quarter of the titles listed (26.3% and 25.1% respectively). Similarly, both sets of figures confirm the same price gradients for mid- and high-price groups visible in the 1850s.

The year-by-year publication figures for the 1870s discussed in Section A suggested that, by the mid-1870s, the 'plateauing' of the late-1850s and 1860s was over, and that production was beginning to return to the levels set in the early to middle 1850s, albeit slowly and hesitantly. We might therefore expect a similar pattern in the price structure of publications in the 1870s. If we look at Tables C2 and C3 we will see that that was indeed the case. The increase in the percentage share of low-price books was dramatic in the *Bookseller* figures (up 10% on the 1865 data to 58.7%) and less so in the *Publishers' Circular* (up about 3% to 54.6%), but both indicate an upward movement in the lower price range, and both suggest that, by the mid-1870s, publications costing 3s 6d or less accounted for something like 55% of the total titles listed. Interestingly, both sets of figures agree that there was very little movement in the percentage share of mid-price books between 1865-75. If we average the two sets of figures for the two years we would find a drop of no more the 0.9%, a figure too small to be of any statistical significance (from an average of 28.3% in 1865 to an average of 27.4% in 1875). Both journals, however, agree that the high-price publications suffered a distinct drop. Again, in both cases, the figures are sufficiently close to justify averaging: in 1865 the average was 21.6%; by 1875 that had dropped to 16.0%.

The price structure revealed by the 1885 figures tends to confirm the post-1830, mass production link between increasing production and the growing number of cheap titles. The averaged share of low-price titles in 1885 was 64.7%, with mid-price publications falling by just under 5% to 22.8% and high-price titles dropping yet again (to an average of 12.6%).

The slide in the high-price group's percentage share, visible from 1835 (with only the 1865 figures recording an increase), is continued, albeit at a more gentle gradient, in the data for 1895: the *Publishers' Circular* recorded a percentage share down to 12.3%, while the *Bookseller* went further and
recorded no more than 10% of books being published at 10s 1d or above (average of the two being 11.2%). 1895 was one of the last years of a remarkable economic period in the late nineteenth century during which deflation had been predominant with a consequent general fall in prices (but excluding wages which were continuing to rise). Printed products, in so far as they benefitted from falling prices for materials, should therefore have become cheaper anyway, even if the more general trends, observable from the 1830s, had not been operating. How much this general economic deflation will have assisted the general cheapening of printed items cannot be fully established until more work has been done on the production costs of the ‘average’ book. What percentage of the production costs can be ascribed to materials and capital costs, and how much to labour? The larger the former, the more effect deflation should have had.

Interestingly, both the Publishers’ Circular and the Bookseller recorded an increase in the percentage share of mid-price publications in 1895. The Circular indicated a substantial rise from 22.8% in 1885 to 30.1% ten years later. The Bookseller suggested a more modest increase (from 22.8% to 25.8%). In the Circular’s figures this dramatic rise seems to have been mainly at the expense of the low-price group, which falls about 6.2% to 57.6%. the Bookseller records a very minor decline (of about 1.2%), too small to be of much significance. Some reasons for the disagreements between the two sets of figures will be given in the discussion of price in relation to subject, which occurs later in Section C. For the time being we can at least say that both sources agree that the decline in publications with a cover price of more than 10s continued, that there was a rise in the percentage share commanded by mid-price items, and that there seemed to be some sort of temporary check on the rise of the low-price group (although it was still commanding something like 60% of all titles).

If we now compare the figures for 1905 in Tables C2 and C3 we shall see that they are in much closer agreement, close enough for the use of an average reading once more. High-price publications continued their gentle slide (down an average of 1% to 10.2%); the mid-price group slipped in
the Publishers' Circular figures to 25.4%, while the Bookseller's figures for the same group showed only a small downward change to 24.4%, giving an average over the two sources of 24.9%. The low-price group rise in both sets of data and return to the levels set in 1885 (the average percentage share being 64.9%). By the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, publications with a cover price of 3s6d or less accounted for something like two-thirds of the titles listed for April and October 1905; titles priced at between 3s7d and 10s0d for about one quarter, and titles priced at more than 10s0d for the remainder.

The figures for 1915 show only marginal changes from the proportions established ten years previously: the total number of titles produced is down, of course, but the price inflation induced by the First World War had yet to have its full impact. Again, the figures from the Publishers' Circular and the Bookseller are sufficiently in agreement for us to be able to use an averaged percentage to summarise their data. Both recorded a further slippage of the high-price group, on average down nearly 2% on the 1905 figures (to an average of 8.4%). Both sets of statistics show a distinct jump in the mid-price range from an average of 24.9% in 1905 to 29.6% ten years later. Titles with a cover price of 3s6d or under slipped on average 2.8% to 62.1%. These changes are too marginal for us to draw any hard and fast conclusions. It may be that the increase in the mid-price group was merely a temporary phenomenon of the sort visible in the 1895 figures but, given the fact that both sources recorded almost precisely the same rise (something that was not true of the 1895 figures), it may well be of more significance than that. The slight fall in the low-price titles percentage share coupled with this uniform rise in the mid-price group may well be the first slight signal which indicated the beginning of the end of the predominance of the cheap book.

Before turning out attention to price in relation to subject we ought, perhaps, to look briefly at the relationship between a couple of price bands in the mid-price group and a couple of bands in the low-price group. If we compare the percentages derived from the Publishers' Circular figures with
those from the *Bookseller* we will find that they are commonly within 1%-2% of each other. Given this closeness, it is justifiable to average these two figures and so make comparisons between different price bands in different decades somewhat easier. The following table gives the average percentage share values for books in the 1s-2s, 2s 1d-3s 6d, 3s 7d-5s, and 5s 1d-7s 6d bands between 1855-1915.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>1s-2s</th>
<th>2s1d-3s6d</th>
<th>3s7d-5s</th>
<th>5s1d-7s6d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>30.1%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures reveal a couple of predictable, and one or two unexpected, features. In the former category we could place the predominant position in the *Circular*s and *Bookseller*s lists of the 1s-2s price band. At no time between 1855 and 1915 did it command less than a quarter of the total listings, and in four of the seven sampled years it was markedly higher than that. The 2s1d-3s6d band was, apart from 1895, smaller than the lower band, varying from 15% in 1865 to 26.5% in 1895. The 1895 figure should, however, be treated with some caution. It was one of the few occasions in which the figures making up the average differed by significantly more than 3% (to be exact: 4.4%), and only the *Publishers*’ *Circular* figures suggest that the share of the higher price band was larger in 1895 than that of the 1s-2s band. On the whole, however, the 2s1d-3s6d band commanded anything from 15% to 20% of the listings. This meant that, together, these two bands accounted for between 45% and 51% of the printed items recorded by the two journals. In only one decade did this proportion fall below 45%, and that was during that most anomalous of periods—the 1860s (where the combined percentage share dropped to 40.7%).

If we stay with the 1860s, and turn our attention to two bands in the mid-price group, we will observe something striking: the average percentage

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share held by the 3s7d-5s0d band was no less than 15.6%, slightly larger than the 2s1d-3s6d band in the same year. In no other decade in the period 1855-1915 did this happen; indeed, from then on the 3s7d-5s0d went into a steady and unchecked decline: by 1875 it was roughly back to its 1855 levels (a common feature in many of the figures was the mid-1850s establishing a pattern which was interrupted by the 1860s only to be restored by the 1870s). By 1915 it was down to 8.2%. To find the 3s7d-5s0d band holding a percentage share similar to or higher than its 1865 level we have to go right back to the figures for 1835 (Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser: 18.1%) or 1845 (Bent’s: 18.2%; Publishers’ Circular: 13.1%). Here again we have evidence to suggest that the 1860s seem to be displaying production patterns which have more in common with the 1830s and 1840s than the 1850s or 1870s.

The virtual halving of the 3s7d-5s0d band between 1865 and 1915 was inversely paralleled by the rise in the average percentage share of the 5s1d-7s6d band. Starting at 9.3% in 1855 it rose slowly to between 10% and 11% during the 1875-85 period. It then jumped dramatically to 15.7% in 1895, and continued to climb through the last twenty years of the survey, ending up at 19.8% (roughly equivalent to the share commanded by the 2s1d-3s6d band). 1895 seems generally to have been an odd year: the rough equivalence of the two bands in the low-price group, and the sudden jump in the percentage share of the 5s1d-7s6d band. Perhaps it is worth recalling that the mid-1890s witnessed the early experiments with net books and, more importantly, the collapse of the three-decker novel and its replacement by the single-volume novel selling in first edition at a cover price of 6s, a price which would put it firmly in the band which showed the most dramatic increase in 1895. How influential this factor was cannot be determined by the crude, undifferentiated price figures that we have, so far, been discussing. Perhaps it is at this point that we ought to turn to those tables which make some attempt to relate the cover price of a publication to its subject matter.

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Price and Subject Classification

It might be worth exploring the problem of whether the subject matter of a book had any relation to its cover price. Were books about religion, for instance, more likely to be cheaper or more expensive than the average book in a given period? Were there any particular subjects whose average cover price was much lower than other sorts of books, but whose numbers were sufficiently large to drive the overall average price of publications down? Unfortunately there is only one source in this survey which, with relative ease, can be made to render up such information: the Bookseller. However, given the rather restricted sample on which we are working in this Section, even the eleven super-categories used in Section B would produce too many divisions with too few titles in each to allow for any worthwhile generalisations, however tentative.

It was decided, therefore, to concentrate on the two subject areas which had emerged as the most important in Section B: 'Religion' and 'Literature'. A third category was chosen, not so much for its inherent importance as for a peculiar but interesting quirk in the journal’s figures. Unlike the Publishers' Circular, the Bookseller listed a large number of government and parliamentary publications, particularly between 1875 and 1905, many of which had cover prices of 6d or less. To include these in publications other than 'Religion' and 'Literature' would be to skew such a category towards the cheap end of the market. In order to avoid this, Parliamentary, National, and Local Government publications have been quarantined by being placed in a separate category.

This survey of subject-price relation in the April and October listings of the Bookseller therefore uses four categories: 'Religion', 'Literature', 'Parliamentary and Government' and 'All Other Publications'. Most of the discussion will be in terms of the relationship between the low-, medium- and high-price groups in these categories, although occasional reference to specific price bands will be made. In order to avoid an over-frequent use of scare quotes, they will not be used in the following discussion; nevertheless, the reader should remember that all four categories are rough and arbitrary.
Turning to Table C4 and Figure 14, we can see that in 1858 Religion had a very substantial presence in the low-price group (74.6%) and made a strong showing in the lowest price band of 1d-6d (31.1%). Although, as we shall discover, Religion always made a strong showing in the low-price group, it will never again have so many in the lowest price band. 1858 was, of course, the first year of the *Bookseller* and, as such, its listings had not ‘settled down’. In particular, many of the cheap publications (many designed for Sunday Schools) of the SPCK were listed comprehensively in the first three years but, subsequently, did not feature so strongly. This is a pity, for there is no doubt that the SPCK, and other similar organisations, continued to produce vast quantities of very cheap religious materials which, had they been listed, would have tended to increase the apparent market.
share of the cheapest publications. The partial disappearance of the SPCK from the listings of the *Bookseller* after 1860 is yet another reminder, should we need one, of the inevitably selective nature of the data with which we are working. On the other hand, of course, one might argue that the *Bookseller's* growing tendency not to list all of the SPCK's output simply reflects the diminishing commercial significance of religion as a subject for profitable publishing.

The figures for Literature were somewhat different from those of Religion. In 1858, according to the *Bookseller*, 51.2% of Literature publications had a cover price of 3s 6d or less, and no less than 22.9% cost over 10s. The overall percentage share for all publications in the 1858 listings of the *Bookseller* was low-price: 61.4%; mid-price: 23.7%; high-price: 14.8%. In other words, Literature as a category was generally at a higher price than other sorts of books. This is confirmed if we look at the percentages for the All Other Publications category, a percentage which runs, as one might expect, very close to the overall average: for 'All Other Publications' the figures are low-price: 61.9%; mid-price: 23.3%; high-price: 14.8%.

What happened in 1865? In the Religion category, with the *Bookseller* no longer listing many SPCK and similar cheap publications, the lowest price band falls from 31.3% to 8.2%. The low-price group now accounts for 55.8% of the total of religious books. The proportions in Literature (see Table C5) showed no marked changes; at 50.3% the low-price category is down by about 1% on 1858; the mid-price group is up 4% and the high-price down 3%. Government publications seemed to have taken over the role of cheap publications from Religion, with no less than 72.9% costing 3s6d or less (see Table C6). The most remarkable change is that visible in the All Other Publications category (Table C7). Low-price books now only account for 39.7% of its total (down 22.2% from 1858). If we discount Literature as essentially static between 1858 and 1865, we can see that it is the general rise in the proportion of books costing more than 3s6d in Religion (44.2%) and, particularly, in 'All Other Publications' (60.3%), which caused the 1860s to appear more like the 1840s than the 1850s. Perhaps one of the reasons
for us failing to observe this general price rise in the 1860s is that we have commonly concentrated on Literature and related forms which do not, on the whole, display this price inflation, and have not paid enough attention to those other categories which do.

As we might expect from our earlier studies, in 1875 things changed again. If we look at Table C4 and Figure 14 we will see that low-price religious publications were beginning once again to increase their share of the total religious output, albeit at a rather modest rate (up 3.1% to 58.9%). Most significant, however, is the rise in the proportion of Literature books (Table C5, Figure 15) with a cover price of less than 3s6d (up 18.6% to 68.9%). Both mid-price and high-price titles drop in percentage share to compensate for this (mid-price by 8%, high-price by 10%). Government publications change marginally, but All Other Publications low-price share increases by just under 9% to 48.6%. Significantly, however, this 48.6% is still 10% under the overall average for low-price titles in the 1875 Bookseller. In other words, unlike in 1858, All Other Publications was neither paralleling nor determining the overall average. This overall average is being pulled by other, more powerful influences. In 1858 the total number of titles in April and October under All Other Publications was 477, under Literature it was 209, under Government it was 61, and under Religion 252. In 1875 the equivalent figures were All Other Publications: 492; Literature: 311; Government: 115; Religion: 163. As a proportion of the total, Literature and Government were steadily increasing, and therefore had a growing impact on the overall average.

By 1885 all three categories which we have separated off from all other books show a percentage of low-price books between 8.5% (Religion) and 23.4% (Government publications) higher than All Other Publications, this despite the fact that 'Other subjects' had been increasing its share of low-price books by about 9-10% per decade since 1865 (1865: 39.7%; 1875: 48.6%; 1885: 58.7%). In other words, all categories show a general cheapening, but Religion, Literature and Government publications are significantly cheaper than the generality of books in all decades after the 1850s.
Percentages can obscure real numbers, so we should remind ourselves that, although Religion in percentage terms appeared to be keeping up with Literature and Government publications, in real terms it accounted for a diminishing part of the whole market. In 1885, for instance, Literature (362 titles) had more than three times the number of entries under Religion (119 titles), while All Other Publications (612 titles) had more than five times Religion’s total.

If we take a closer look at the figures for Literature in Table C5, we will see that the price band 1s-2s accounted, in April and October 1885, for no less than 40.9% of all Literature books published. From 1858 onwards this price band had always been larger than the 2s1d-3s6d band (commonly 10%-15% more), but by 1885 this difference was nearly 19%. In the mid-price group the band 3s7d-5s accounted for 14.4%, while the next band up (5s1d-
7s6d) had 8.6%. The difference between these two bands had been essentially consistent since 1858 (roughly 6.5%, except in 1875 when it had dropped to 4.2%). If we now compare these figures with the All Other Publications category we will see that, in the low-price group, All Other Publications paralleled Literature in the sense that the 1s-2s band was always larger than the 2s1d-3s6d one, although not by such a consistent margin. The margin started off in 1858 by being very small (2.7%), and then rose rapidly through the next decades so that, by 1885, it was 13.1%. There is less of an analogy in the relationship between the 3s7d-5s and 5s1d-7s6d bands. Up to and including 1865 the 3s7d-5s band was larger than the 5s1d-7s6d one, but by 1875 this had changed: the higher of the two price bands was now accounted for more titles (14.2%), than the lower (10.6%). This pattern was then sustained for the remaining sampled years up to and including 1915.

Much more work will have to be done on book-pricing before most of these changes can fully be accounted for, but, as far as Literature is concerned, the sustained significance of the 3s7d-5s band can partly be explained by the traditional popularity of 5s as the cover price for the first cheap reprint of a novel. From the 1860s onwards there had been a gradual cheapening of first reprint prices and, by the 1880s, many popular novels from the newer houses were appearing as reprints at 3s6d, 2s6d or even 2s (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, many more conservative firms stuck to the pricing policy established by such publishers as Bentley in the 1840s and 1850s, and for them 5s was the traditional price for a reprinted novel.

The 1890s saw two extremely important developments in the price structure of books. One was the first experiments in Net Books promoted by Macmillans and others in the middle part of the decade, followed by the Net Book Agreement at its end. The other was the sudden and dramatic collapse of the three-decker novel after 1894, and the introduction of the single-volume novel selling in its first edition at 6s. We might not expect the former to have much impact on our 1895 sample for the simple reason that Net Books were still a tiny minority of the total titles listed in that year, but we might well expect the latter to have a substantial but specific
If we turn to Table C5 and look immediately at the two price bands 3s7d-5s and 5s1d-7s6d under Literature, we will see that the price structure illustrated there did indeed respond to the change: from 14.4% in 1885 the percentage share of the 3s7d-5s band dropped to 9.8%, while the percentage share of the 5s1d-7s6d band rose over the same period from 8.6% to 18.4%. This change in the relative importance of bands in the mid-price group echoed what happened in the All Other Publications category two decades before, but much more dramatically. The gap between the two bands in All Other Publications was never more than 4.2% in any sampled year between 1875-1915. In Literature the gap was already larger than that in 1895 (8.6%), and was to grow over the next two decades: 22% by 1905, 29.3% by 1915. In fact, these last three sample years witnessed the complete collapse of the
3s7d-5s band in Literature: in 1895 it accounted for 9.8% of titles, in 1905 for 3.4%, and by 1915 it commanded no more than 2.3%. If the 6s novel was responsible for the dramatic increase in the 5s1d-7s6d band, then it was also guilty of the collapse of the lower price band. In 1885, with many novels still costing 31s6d in first edition format, it was perfectly possible, though rather conservative (and a little greedy with most prices falling), to argue that the 5s reprint was still an amazing bargain. In 1895, with first edition novels costing 6s, that argument was no longer tenable. The price differential simply was not large enough. The reprints that had been priced at 5s had to be reduced. The most likely stopping place would be at 3s6d or 2s6d, both price levels established two decades earlier for first reprints by the more adventurous publishers. Now, both these prices fall within the price band 2s1d-3s6d and, if we look at that band in the Literature category for 1895, we will see that it had been swollen considerably and was now, at 35.3%, larger than the traditionally popular 1s-2s band. This was an exceptional phenomenon, and one that did not occur in any of the other sampled years. Equally significant, this inversion was not visible in any of the other three categories where the 1s-2s band retained its predominance (though only just in the case of 'All Other Publications'). It is difficult to be certain about a complete explanation for this, but it is likely that the migration of the first reprint price had had much to do with it.

If we follow the Literature category into the twentieth century by looking at the 1905 figures, we will find that the 2s1d-3s6d band had resumed its more usual relationship with the band below it (which had remained pretty stable at 29%), although it is still large (25.0%). What is also noticeable is the much increased percentage share of the lowest band, 1d-6d, which had gone up from 3.1% in 1895 to 16.4% by 1905. As mentioned in the introduction to this Section, it is likely that the Bookseller substantially under-represented very cheap books, and it may be that this sudden increase was due simply to a new and more liberal listing policy. Such a change of policy would itself, of course (as in the case of the reduction in the coverage of SPCK titles after 1860), be a reflection of trade concerns. There is,
however, another possible explanation: in the 1890s and 1900s many of the more go-ahead publishers of fiction were experimenting with very cheap reprint series. Some of these would be classic, out-of-copyright texts, and some were the works of current, popular novelists whose work had gone through the various stages of reincarnation as 6s, 3s6d and 2s books, and which were now coming back to life (often for the last time) as sixpenny or threepenny paperbound reprints. Whatever the reasons, the Literature category's price structure is skewed most emphatically to the cheapest end of the market in the months of April and October 1905. No less than 70.8% of its listed titles had a cover price of 3s6d or less, a further 28.8% cost between 3s7d and 10s0d; only 0.4% cost more than 10s. Both Religion and Government had a higher percentage share in the low-price groups, but both were atypical in certain respects (Religion titles were relatively few, less than one-third the Literature total; Government consisted largely of printed bills, acts and reports at 1d and 6d), and neither had such a high percentage of combined low- and mid-price books, or such a low percentage of high-price books. Perhaps the best comparison lies between the Literature category and All Other Publications: both categories had a roughly equal share of mid-price books (Literature: 28.8%, Others: 27.3%), but Literature had 70.8% low-price titles (Others only 55.2%), while Others had 17.3% high-price titles (Literature only 0.4%).

If we now move to the final sample year, 1915, one or two features of the absolute numbers will strike us. The discussions in Section A, along with common sense, should prepare us for a reduction in overall production during the second year of the First World War but not, perhaps, the uneven effect of this reduction. The Government category, as one might expect, was drastically reduced, as was the quantity of cheap publishing: the percentage share was roughly equally portioned out between low-, mid- and high-price titles (31.6%, 31.5% and 36.8% respectively); overall there were just 38 publications listed in these two months (as opposed to 342 listed in the

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same two months in 1905). The Religion category was also down in absolute numbers (from 202 in 1905 to 91 in 1915). All Other Publications had also suffered a major reduction in absolute terms (from 1,141 in 1905 to 656 in 1915). The one category that had suffered only slightly was Literature, which was down from 672 in 1905 to 516 in 1915. Its percentage share of low-price books had slipped (from 70.8% to 64.6%), due mainly to a fall from the high of 16.4% to 7.8% in the 1d-6d price band. Many of the Literature books priced at 6d or less had to be produced in very large print runs in order to take the advantage of low unit production costs; such print runs used huge quantities of material, particularly paper (which would obviously be in short supply during the War), and this may well be one reason why the lowest price band appeared to have been hit the hardest in 1915.

Figure 17 Bookseller: Price/Subject 1915 (see Tables C4-C7)
Prices 1840-1913

Table C8 reproduces the Rousseaux Prices Indices for 1840-1913 which use the average of the figures for 1865 and 1885 as a baseline of 100. Is there any correlation between what we have seen happening to book prices and what was occurring in prices generally in the middle and later nineteenth century? According to the argument above, there had been something of a price revolution in the titles listed by the trade journals between 1845-55 with the low-price group (1d-3s6d) becoming the largest single category by 1855. The figures in Table C8 indicate a steady, if not entirely consistent, drop through the 1840s from 128 in 1840 to 95 in 1849. The indices remained below 100 until 1853, at which point they began to climb, peaking in the years of the Crimean War and its aftermath at between 125-127. If we think back to the patterns of annual book production discussed in Section A, we will remember that there was a substantial peaking of book publication between 1851-3 which seems to correlate quite closely with the low prices of this period. The book price revolution of the period 1845-55 discussed in this Section may well also have been stimulated by these generally lower prices.

The 1860s ranged between 107 and 121 above baseline, and on average registered 117.2, which is the highest average figure of all the full decades listed in Table C8. The generally higher prices of the late 1850s and 1860s covered the period when, according to most of the figures in Section A, titles listed reached a sort of plateau from which they did not clearly escape until the mid-1870s. In terms of book prices, this period was characterised in both the Publishers' Circular and the Bookseller as one of retrenchment: the proportion of titles in the low-price group contracted, while those in the mid- and high-price groups expanded.

According to Table C8, prices remained relatively high in the early 1870s (an average of 120.2 between 1870-74), and then began to decline (an average of 108.2 between 1875-79). This decline in prices increased in speed and size in the 1880s, falling from 102 in 1880 to 84 in 1889 (the 1880-89 average was 91.8). This decline in prices can be matched quite well with the clear increase
in number of titles listed from the mid-1870s on (discussed in Section A), and to the post-1875 increase in the low-price (and decrease in the high-price) group of books illustrated in Section C.

Average prices were at their lowest in the 1890s, declining from 87 in 1890 to 72 in 1895, before rising again to 84 by 1899 (a decade average of 79.2). The steep rises of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century visible in the annual book publication figures in Section A correlate well with the data in Table C8. They correlate less well with the price structure deduced from the *Publishers' Circular* in Figure 12 which shows a slight decline in cheap books in 1895. However, the figures from the *Bookseller* show only the most marginal of declines, while both journals confirm the depressing effect that deflated prices were having on the high-price group of books.

Most significantly, the lowest average prices occurred during the period 1894-98, a period which, of course, also witnessed the collapse and rapid disappearance of the market for the three-decker novel, the emergence of the 6s first edition novel, and the large print-run 6d edition.

The 1900-9 period had the second lowest average index figure (88.6), and witnessed some of the most substantial increases in the output of book titles.

These correlations are not exact, nor do they prove any direct causal connection between book publication figures and general prices. Nevertheless, the fit is good enough to suggest that there may well have been quite close links between these factors, links which might repay further research.

**Conclusion to Section C**

The price structure shown by the figures for 1811, 1815 and 1825 revealed a conservative form in which the highest price group took the largest percentage, the mid-price group accounted for the second largest, and the low-price group the smallest percentage share. 1835 marked a change in which high-price books diminished and mid-price books became the largest single group. The 1840s represented a transitional period during which the low-price book
began to emerge as the dominant form. By 1855 the price structure typical of the early nineteenth century had been reversed: low-price books now accounted for the largest percentage share, mid-price books came second, and high price books dropped to their lowest percentage so far recorded. The 1860s seemed to mark a hiatus, and possibly even a slight retrogression: the relationship of the low-, mid- and high-price titles remained the same, but the percentage of low-price books decreased, and the percentage of high-price titles increased, in comparison with the 1855 figures. From 1875-1905 the 1855 pattern was re-established and developed (with minor fluctuations); the most consistent feature was the steady decline of the high-price group from 1875-1915. There may well be some correlation between the Rousseaux Price Indices for 1840-1913 and both the annual pattern of publication (discussed in Section A) and the price structure of books over the same period.

Certain subject categories of titles are characterised by distinctive price structures. Religion as a subject category always tended to have a price structure which leaned towards the cheap book. This is partially masked by the failure of the Bookseller comprehensively to list SPCK and similar publications after 1860. However, many of these publications were heavily subsidised and so are untrustworthy as market indicators. Literature also had a characteristic price-profile, although that did not fully emerge until the 1875 figures. In the 1858 and 1865 figures Literature exhibited a rather conservative pricing policy. The period 1870-90 witnessed the emergence of the cheap book listed under Literature in the Trade journals, while the 1890s marked a distinct change in the disposition of some of the bands in the mid- and low-price groupings. These changes were almost certainly connected with the collapse of the three-decker novel, the development of the Net Book system and the extensive re-publication of both copyright and non-copyright fiction in extremely cheap formats. In 1915 war production constraints had an impact on all categories, but on Literature somewhat less than any other subject.
Besant and the Late-Victorian Book Revolution

We have seen in Section A that, in terms of output, book publication ‘took off’ from the early 1870s and rose with unprecedented rapidity for the next forty years. Besant’s first novel was published in 1872, and his last in 1902: his fiction-writing career thus coincided almost exactly with this late-Victorian publishing revolution and its insatiable demand for more and more reading material in both periodical and book form. There was more of a seller’s market in popular literature at this time than there had ever been before, or was ever to be again, and Besant was in the middle of it.22

Section B indicated that, by the 1870s, Literature, and particularly prose fiction, commanded the largest single portion of the publishing industry’s total output of titles. Besant was creating a product for which there was a growing public appetite. In these circumstances an author would not have to be dazzlingly inspired in order to make a good living out of novel-writing.

Section C demonstrated that the last three decades of the nineteenth century saw a significant change in the price structure of books in general and literature in particular. So much so that, in April and October 1895, 68.9% of the books listed under Literature in the Bookseller cost 3s6d or less. Peter Keating has suggested that a sale of 50,000 copies or more of a title was an indication of bestseller status in the late-nineteenth century;23 on this basis no less than five of Besant’s and Rice’s, and no less than six of Besant’s solo novels could easily claim that title. Almost all these sales were of copies priced at 3s6d, 2s or 6d. The new price structure thus enabled both Chatto & Windus to exploit their literary property to the full and Besant to acquire the status of a recurrent bestseller and successful man of letters.

It is difficult not to conclude that Besant was fortunate to have written when he did. A confluence of the social and economic factors illustrated by this chapter created an extraordinary tidal surge which carried him further and faster than his talents alone would have taken him; further indeed than he, with his commendable modesty, would have expected to go.

22 In some respects the book revolution is but another aspect of the emergence of the mass market for all sorts of consumer goods, see W.Hamish Fraser, The Coming of the Mass Market 1850-1914 (London, 1981), particularly pp. 71-6, 224-31.
23 The Haunted Study, p. 440.
Conclusion

Walter Besant died at his house, Frognal End, on Sunday, 9 June 1901 and was buried in the burial ground off Church Row, Hampstead. A bronze bust of him was set up in the Crypt of St Paul's in that year, and another one (paid for by public subscription and the LCC) on the Victoria Embankment near Waterloo Bridge in 1902.

His effects were valued at £8,812.19.7, and his library, which was sold by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge on 24 and 25 March 1902 realised £589.9.6. Entries in Besant's diaries for 1900 suggest that he was in receipt of around £3,000, while his literary earnings in the last five months of his life amounted to £357.27 Yet, within seven months of his death, his widow, Lady Mary Besant, had made a formal application to the Royal Literary Fund for support in order to see her four children through their education. In part this was due to the enormous financial burden of *The Survey of London* which Besant had begun in 1894. A. & C. Black had come to an arrangement with Besant which reminds one of the way in which the booksellers financed Johnson's *Dictionary*: Besant got a lump sum out of which he was to finance the project and its associated research. Once

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24 Probate was granted to T.F. Barham and A.P. Watt on 14 November 1901. Somerset House, A-B Wills and Admons 1901.1 (Index Book).
25 Royal Literary Fund Archives, Case No. 2614, document (2).
26 RLF, Case No. 2614 (1).
27 She received powerful support from Gosse, Karl Pearson of University College London, and Lord Crewe, and was granted £250 on 13 February 1902. See RLF, Case No. 2614, (2)-(10).
28 Besant was under no illusions about what he had taken on; writing to Chatto on 9 November 1894 he said: 'The Survey is an immense job—I dare not look ahead—but I hope to worry through.' Besant Letters, General Manuscript Collection, Princeton University Library.
29 A sum not exceeding £1500 in all for the remuneration and expenses of all contributors, searchers, clerks and others required by Mr Besant in the preparation and writing of the book—Mr Besant to receive remuneration for
the books had been published he would also be entitled to half-profits.\textsuperscript{31}

The problem was that, as Karl Pearson put it:

\ldots it has been left in such an unfinished condition, that it cannot be a source of any immediate income, and as another work of the same kind is in the field,\textsuperscript{32} the whole time & capital spent on it may be wholly lost. This 'Survey' had indeed largely affected Sir Walter's income for some years before his death \ldots \textsuperscript{33}

But this was merely another symptom of what Lord Crewe was to characterise in his letter to the RLF:

Sir Walter was, I suppose, in receipt of a very good income from his books, but he was possibly not a very good man of business, and I dare say erred in the direction of generosity.\textsuperscript{34}

In 1900 he had bought up three cottages to 'save them from a speculative builder and the owners charged enormously \ldots ';\textsuperscript{35} G.H. Thring, in his manuscript history of the Society of Authors commented:

Walter Besant was usually quite hopeless in [financial] matters of this kind, for if there was not a sufficient balance at the Bank he would as likely as not pay the money from his own account keeping no record and making no claim.\textsuperscript{36}

In 1897 it was discovered that Besant had been paying for articles for the Author out of his own pocket, and the Society of Authors' Committee had to step in to stop it.\textsuperscript{37} Besant was a sort of holy fool in financial matters, yet he was the same man who was forceful, even reckless, in the defence of others' literary rights. The paradox was made richer by Besant being fully aware of his own incapacities. In an unpublished poem, 'Ode to Myself Aug. 14 1874', he had observed:

\begin{itemize}
  \item parts of the book written by him but not in excess of the said sum of £1500.
\end{itemize}

Agreement between Besant and A. & C. Black, 1 August 1894, WA 19/2 [1].
\textsuperscript{31}ibid. A. & C. Black were allowed a 5% commission to be taken out of the profits before they were divided.
\textsuperscript{32}This refers to the London Survey Committee and the London County Council's \textit{The Survey of London} published from 1900.
\textsuperscript{33}Karl Pearson to the Secretary of the RLF, 25 January 1902, RLF, Case No. 2614, (5).
\textsuperscript{34}Lord Crewe to A. Llewelyn Roberts, 11 February 1902, RLF, Case No. 2614, (8).
\textsuperscript{35}Mary Besant to Gosse, 11 January 1902, RLF, Case No. 2614, (3).
\textsuperscript{36}History of the Society', p. 74, Society of Authors Archives, Add. Mss. 56888.
\textsuperscript{37}ibid., p. 141.
How you've chucked and how you've spent
Money borrowed, money lent:
Money anything but saved.
Oh! if you had only braved
Loss of present joy ... 38

A year later, just before Rice made contact with Chatto & Windus, Besant had written a letter to his mother-in-law, a woman whom he seems to have admired a great deal. Having congratulated her on a 'narrow escape' from some unspecified danger, he went on to describe a long period of hard work that he had planned for himself:

For my own part it will be a summer of very hard work, so far as I can see—both for the Fund & for myself. I am not afraid of hard work, but I am sometimes a little tired of working so much harder than others who yet make so much more money. I wish I was not a fool as regards business—but we are as the Lord made us. 39

The 'Fund' was the Palestine Exploration Fund on whose headed writing-paper the letter was written. Given the year, 1875, his own work was probably the writing of his and Rice’s most popular novel, The Golden Butterfly. The sense of working hard for others was a product not only of performing the onerous and often under-acknowledged duties of Secretary to the Fund, but also of doing most of the actual writing of the novel while receiving only half of the credit for it. 40 Given that the collaboration continued until Rice’s death and that, loyally, Besant never spoke a word against Rice afterwards, it’s unlikely that he ever broached his sense of grievance to Rice himself. It seems typical of Besant that he should have avoided wrangling with those immediately concerned and instead complained, in a half-justified, half-self-pitying way, to others less directly involved. It was as though he could only be assertive at one remove, either by complaining to a third party in private, or by fighting for the rights of others in public. Besant prided himself, quite rightly, on being a gentleman, and a gentleman never complained for him-

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38 Manuscript in the Sheppard Collection.
39 Letter dated 21 April 1875, the Sheppard Collection.
40 In a ‘Valedictory Essay’ published in the Hampstead Annual for 1901, S.Squire Sprigge commented on the Besant and Rice novels that ‘In every case the first draft was, I believe, in Besant’s handwriting ...’ (p. 13).
self. A gentleman, however, was duty-bound to complain for others. It was into the apparently objective battles for the Society of Authors that Besant could pour all his personal resentment and sense of ill-usage and see both converted into collective righteousness.

On a personal scale, it is this sense of altruism, half-consciously willed, and half-unconsciously compelled, which strikes an observer of Besant's literary life. Those who worked most closely with him—Rice, Chatto and Watt—all gained more in terms of money or status from the relationship than he did. The writers whom he helped directly, through the RLF or by proposing them to Chatto & Windus, the hundreds of writers who benefited indirectly by all Besant's campaigning, all gained something from his self-sacrificing enthusiasm.

Perhaps in all this he was a rather untypical late nineteenth-century man of letters. However, the main burden of this thesis has been to suggest that, in most other respects, the history of Besant’s fiction provides a very useful way in which we can probe major issues in the publishing history of the period. Chapter 1 demonstrated the way in which Rice became Besant’s informal literary agent and, in doing so, introduced ambiguities and uncertainties into the relationship between Chatto and Besant from which neither were ever quite able to escape. It also demonstrated the way in which new publishers such as Chatto were able to exploit the growing market for cheap reprints by buying up copyrights cheaply and reproducing at 6s, 3s6d and 2s in rapid succession.

Chapter 2 explored the way in which Besant's first solo novel was marketed and exploited, and suggested that Chatto used the success of *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* to promote Besant as a man of letters through an advertising campaign in literary journals and newspapers, most notably in the *Athenaeum*. The novel also allowed us to explore the variety of transformations a successful work of fiction would undergo during a twenty year life.

Chatto & Windus's reprint policy was set in context by Chapter 3. It was

41 The RLF Archives list at least 46 cases sponsored or supported by Besant between 1882-1901, including Henry Vizetelly, and Elizabeth, widow of Charles Dickens, Junior. The Chatto & Windus Letter Books are full of acknowledgements to Besant for letters of recommendation.
discovered that the history of Besant’s reprints was in no way remarkable, and that cheap and rapid reprinting of successful novels had been occurring from the mid-1860s onwards. By the time that *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* appeared as a 3s6d reprint in 1883, the majority of major fiction publishers had issued cheap reprints, or were about to, soon after the appearance of their first editions. This premature issue of cheap reprints, Chapter 3 argued, was the major cause of the collapse of the three-volume first edition in 1894.

Chapter 4 also set Besant’s work in its context: it established that Besant’s problems with *Good Words*’ premature issue of its annual volume undercutting the sales of his first edition was in no way untypical, Hardy and Blackmore being only the most distinguished of many other victims of this practice. It also demonstrated that Chatto & Windus’s attempts to sell Besant’s ‘English on the Continent’ rights to Tauchnitz and Gradener were paralleled by similar efforts on behalf of its other novelists. We saw how Chatto’s efforts to sell Continental rights in bulk to the German publishers was an extension of his copyright farming discussed in Chapter 1.

The role of A.P. Watt as Besant’s official literary agent was the main subject of Chapter 5. It established that Watt was unable to change significantly the bad publishing practices Besant had fallen into under the tutelage of Rice. Besant sold his serial rights, as he sold his book rights, comprehensively and quickly. Watt, we established, gained much from the relationship, acquiring status by association and occasionally having the chance to act for both Besant and for the client to whom he had sold the serial rights. Besant, meanwhile, found himself locked into a series of stagnant contracts which occasionally went as far as to specify the subject of a forthcoming novel and to allow editorial censorship of it.

Chapter 6 was designed to answer some of the broadest questions raised by the study of Besant’s publishing history. Despite being a man of modest talents (if immodest energy) and one who did not husband his resources with any competence, Besant was yet able to command a high level of sales and income throughout the late 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. Was this mere luck, or was it that the novelist was able to exploit new markets, and new means of getting to those markets? Chapter 6 approached these questions
by looking at three aspects of print production in the nineteenth century: the increase in titles, the change in subject, and the shift in prices. In all three areas, but particularly in the first two, it became evident that the last twenty-five years of the century marked a 'take-off' period, a time of rapidly expanding production, of a substantial shift towards literature in general and fiction in particular, and a dramatic cheapening of book prices. Besant, it became clear, was being carried along on a growing wave of production and consumption. Although he may have been nearer the crest of that wave than many others, his career was in large what many of his contemporary writers were experiencing in little. Besant could be considered as an exemplar of the popular writer who lived in that strange and transitional period, somewhere between 1870 and 1910, when near-universal literacy combined with mass-production techniques and the lack of any other equally widely available form, made the printed word the universal popular medium for information and entertainment. The coming of cinema and the gramophone at the end of the nineteenth century, radio in the 1920s, and television in the 1950s, mark progressive stages in the move away from that hegemony of print on which Besant so heavily depended.

Besant's eclipse after his death was so rapid and so total that it is easy to underestimate his importance in late-nineteenth-century popular fiction. The submitted article, 'Public Libraries and Popular Authors, 1883-1912' set Besant's work in a broader context, and allowed some assessment of his relative popularity. It was found that, in London and the South, his popularity, as expressed by the holdings of public libraries, often placed him above Dickens and Scott, and occasionally above the most successful of all: Miss Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood. The further north one went, the more Besant's popularity diminished; nevertheless, Besant was a significant figure in all the library catalogues looked at, and by the 1890s was commanding an average holding of over 9% among the twelve major novelists surveyed throughout England and Scotland. Combining sales figures and library holdings allowed us to claim that Besant was no marginal figure but, on the contrary, quite central in the huge expansion of the fiction industry during the period.

If Besant was indeed an exemplar of the popular novelist in the late
nineteenth century, then the history of his reputation was equally typical, for neither his status nor his sales long survived him. Even the way of doing business with his main publisher had been changed within two months of his death. Chatto, contemplating the two collections of Besant’s essays he was committed to bringing out, declared that:

...the only way we would be justified in handling them would be on a royalty basis, and we shall therefore be pleased to bring out the volumes at intervals upon an arrangement of 25% royalty on the published price.  

Chatto & Windus did not bring out the Autobiography, but Hutchinson, who did, also enforced a 25% royalty agreement on Besant’s executors. Although some of Besant’s fiction was re-packaged (as ‘Khaki Novels’) for the men in the trenches or the particularly patriotic at home, 1914-18 marked the end of Besant’s literary presence, just as it marked the end of so much else. Chatto & Windus production ledgers relating to Besant after 1914 are littered with such comments as: ‘Stereos melted by Billing 8/2/17’, ‘remaining to Soames as waste paper May 17 1917’, ‘sold to Simpkin as remainder June 15/33’, ‘Stereos melted by Harrison 3/6/35’, ‘Dust cover blocks scrapped by McFarlane & Erskine Sept 10/42’.  

One doubts whether Besant would have been surprised by all this. He had, after all, a lively sense of the absurdity of literary pretensions. Writing to Sprigge on Society of Authors’ business in 1890 he observed:

I do think that authors, of all men in the world, are the most difficult to deal with. Why is it? I think it is partly this rather odd belief in immortality—Oh! Lord! Think of the immortality of the precious novelists of the day!  

This sense of the absurd was underwritten by Besant’s own uncertainty, his edgy sense of insecurity which never leaked into the bustling confidence of his novels, but was to be found everywhere in his business dealings.

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42 Chatto to Watt, 6 August, 1901, WA [A] 11/18 [2].
44 For Faith and Freedom is an example of such re-marketing, see LgB 4:656.
45 LgB 4: 11; LgB 5: 318; LgB 8: 734; LgB 5: 822; LgB 6: 452, 770; LgB 6: 175, 864.
46 8 September 1890, Society of Authors Archives, Add.Mss. 56863.
What he could not say in his fiction, he expressed in his contracts and the ways in which he disposed of his literary property. Despite having achieved ‘...literary success in a measure unhoped for ...’ and ‘a name known all over the English-speaking world’, he sensed that it was all ephemeral and fleeting, and would evaporate into nothing.

One cannot get away from the impression that Besant sold most of his copyrights outright as soon as he could because he didn’t believe that his work would last. In the shorter term he was wrong, and that led him into financial error. In the longer term he was right, and that led him into writing a poignant vision of the fate of the popular minor novelist:

As things go, a novelist has reason to be satisfied with an immortality which stretches beyond the twenty-first year.48

For my own part, I think that simply to have delighted his own generation is an achievement so wonderful, especially when that generation means a hundred million readers, that any man ought to be satisfied with it. Let it be written on my tomb: ‘His generation read his stories’.49

Appendix 1

Chatto & Windus Production Record: the Major Novels of Besant and Rice

Note A ‘?’ before an item indicates that it is the product of an educated guess. A ‘(?)’ indicates an entry in the production ledgers which might well be an error. Comments on an edition or impression are placed in square brackets on the subsequent line.

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[Cancellation due to Chatto's copyright expiring 11/15]

TOTAL: 37500 (excluding the cancelled order)

309
### With Harp and Crown (Tinsley Brothers, December 1875)

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[Library edition]

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- 3s6d 500 28/3/90 3-4/90 3/90-10/91 4: 548

[300 given new t.p. and re-published in the 'Khaki Library']

- 3s6d 1000 20/8/95 9-19/95 9/95-2/04 4: 294

**TOTAL:** 31000

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[Library edition]

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- 2s 2000 2/5/89 6/89 13/7/89-7/91 4: 496
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310
The Golden Butterfly (Tinsley Brothers, November 1876)

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| 6s    | 500  | 13/11/00  | 11-12/00   | 11/00-2/04 | 4: 298  |
The Monks of Thelema (Chatto & Windus, September 1878)

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[Chatto & Windus publishing on commission]

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[67 quires sold as waste 17/5/17]

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[Library edition]

| 6d    | 25000| 26/10/05 | ------- | 28/2/06-7/14 | 6: 402 |

[548 copies remaining 7/8/16]

| 6s    | 500  | 28/10/10 | 12/10 | 12/10-4/33  | 4: 297 |

[Library edition. 77 remaindered 4/33.]

TOTAL: 57750
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The Chaplain of the Fleet (Chatto & Windus, April 1881)

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[Published on commission]

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[119 copies remaining 9/9/26]

TOTAL: 112450
Appendix 2

The Chatto & Windus Production Record: the Major Novels of Walter Besant

Note A ‘?’ before an item indicates that it is the product of an educated guess. A ‘(?)’ indicates an entry in the production ledgers which might well be an error. Comments on an edition or impression are placed in square brackets on the subsequent line.

All Sorts and Conditions of Men (Chatto & Windus, September 1882)

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[St. Martin's Library edition]

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[The remaining 178 copies rebound in the 'New Piccadilly Library' series 17/3/32]

TOTAL: 272500

All in a Garden Fair (Chatto & Windus, November 1883)

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[‘GR’ Edition]

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[159 'sold to Oppenheim at 3d [each]' 5/8/30]

? 5000 | 25/9/12 | 10/12 | 10/12 | 8: 264

[Lever Brothers Edition 'Flatsheets a/c Lever Bros']
TOTAL: 38500

Dorothy Forster (Chatto & Windus, 1884)

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['GR' Edition]

| 3s6d  | 3500 | 11-12/84| 11-1/85   | 4: 9   |
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| 3s6d  | 2000 | 5-6/86  | 5/85-10/86| 4: 9   |
| 2s    | 6000 | 3/86    | 3-4/86    | 4: 205 |
| 2s    | 4000 | 4-5/86  | 5-8/86    | 4: 205 |
| 2s    | 3000 | 9-10/86 | 9/86-8/87 | 4: 205 |

| 3s6d  | 750  | 1-2/87  | 1-10/87   | 4: 272 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 1-2/88  | 1-11/88   | 4: 272 |
| 2s    | 2000 | 7/88    | 7/88-4/89 | 4: 205 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 3-4/89  | 3/89-2/90 | 4: 272 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 5/89    | 5/89-12/90| 4: 485 |
| 2s    | 2000 | 7/90    | 7/90-11/91| 4: 272 |
| 2s    | 1000 | 11/90-1/91| 11/90-7/92| 4: 485 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 1/92    | 1/92-2/93 | 4: 485 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 8/92    | 8/92-9/94 | 4: 485 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 10-11/93| 10/93-7/95| 5: 45  |
| 2s    | 1500 | 11/94   | 3/95-8/98 | 5: 45  |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 8/95    | 10/95-12/97| 5: 45 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 1/98    | 1/98-7/00 | 5: 442 |
| 2s    | 500  | 12/98-1/99| 12/98-2/01| 5: 442 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 10-11/00| 10/00-8/02| 5: 442 |
| 3s6d  | 1500 | 8-9/02  | 8/02-7/06 | 6: 56  |
| 6d    | 30000| ?12/04  | 12/04-1/08| 6: 287 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 5/06    | 7/06-10/10| 6: 56  |
| 6d    | 10000| 75/09   | 5/09-5/13 | 6: 287 |
| 3s6d  | 1000 | 11/10   | 1/11-9/17 | 6: 962 |
| 6d    | 10000| 79/13   | 9/13-12/17| 6: 287 |
| 3s6d  | 500  | 5/19    | 7/19-7/22 | 6: 962 |

[103 copies remaining 20/7/22]

| 5s    | 1500 | 17/1/23 | 2/23    | 2/23-8/34 | 8: 712 |
| 2s6d  | 5000 | 25/1/28 | 2/28    | 2/28-8/38 | 8: 712 |

TOTAL: 103500

The Children of Gibeon (Chatto & Windus, September 1886)

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[Second impression of 31s6d edition]

| 31s6d | 3500 | 21/9/86 | 11/86     | 11/86-6/89| 4: 218 |

318
The World Went Very Well Then (Chatto & Windus, February 1887)

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['GR' Edition]

| 3s6d  | 2000 | 13/6/87 | 6-8/87 | 6/87-3/89 | 4: 281 |

[Levers Brothers Edition 'as our 3s6d Edition']

TOTAL: 43000

Herr Paulus (Chatto & Windus, April 1888)

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['GR' Edition]

|-------|--------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------|

[8494 copies sold by 1914]

| 2s    | 10000  | 2/4/90  | 4-6/90    | 4/90-1/98 | 4: 590 |

TOTAL: 24500
### For Faith and Freedom (Chatto & Windus, 1889)

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[‘GR’ Edition]

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[About 587 copies bound up in ‘Khaki Library’ series between 24/11/14 and 8/1/15]

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TOTAL: 82250

### The Bell of St. Paul’s (Chatto & Windus, November 1889)

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[‘GR’ Edition]

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TOTAL: 23750

### Armorel of Lyonesse (Chatto & Windus, November 1890)

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[‘Colonial Edition’]

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<td>4: 617</td>
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[‘Colonial Edition’]

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<td>4/97-10/98</td>
<td>5: 68</td>
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[50 copies left in sheets in warehouse 1/4/01]

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[50 remaining copies ‘bound as 2s’ 24/7/01]

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[Some of these copies bound as 2s edition]

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<td>3/07-1/11</td>
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['1000 ea 2s-3s6d titles']

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<td>5000</td>
<td>25/9/12</td>
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[Lever Brothers Edition 'Flat sheets...a/c Lever Bros']

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<th>Ledger</th>
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[110 copies remaining 24/7/28] TOTAL: 70000

St. Katherine's by the Tower (Chatto & Windus, May 1891)

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<td>1250</td>
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<td>73s6d</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>11/4/91</td>
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['Colonial Edition']

<table>
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<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
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</table>

[450 copies sold to Oppenheim at 3d [each] 5/8/30]

<table>
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<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2s</td>
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<td>12/4/93</td>
<td>5/93</td>
<td>4: 668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73s6d</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>25/9/12</td>
<td>10-11/12</td>
<td>4: 668</td>
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</table>

[Lever Brothers Edition. 'Flat sheet...a/c Lever Bros']

TOTAL: 26000

The Ivory Gate (Chatto & Windus, October 1892)

<table>
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<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>8/8/92</td>
<td>9/92</td>
<td>9/92</td>
<td>4: 809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73s6d</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>8/8/92</td>
<td>9/10/92</td>
<td>9/92-1/94</td>
<td>4: 809</td>
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['Colonial Edition']

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<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>10/1/94</td>
<td>1-2/94</td>
<td>1/94-2/06</td>
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<td>10-11/12</td>
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[Lever Brothers Edition. 'Flat sheets...a/c Lever Bros']

TOTAL: 26000

The Rebel Queen (Chatto & Windus, September 1893)

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<th>Ledger</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3s6d</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>22/3/93</td>
<td>5-6/93</td>
<td>5-9/93</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3500</td>
<td>27/3/93</td>
<td>6/93</td>
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['Colonial Edition']

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<th>Delivered</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
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[600 copies remained at 3d each 20/2/26; 144 remained at 3d each 5/8/30]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>3/95-12/96</td>
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<td>1000</td>
<td>22/3/93</td>
<td>5-6/93</td>
<td>4: 882</td>
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[300 copies bound in the 'Khaki Library' between 2/15 and 5/15] TOTAL: 19500
## Beyond the Dreams of Avarice (Chatto & Windus, January 1895)

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<th>BOUND</th>
<th>LEDGER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>10/12/94</td>
<td>1-2/95</td>
<td>1/95-3/97</td>
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<tr>
<td>[6s edition replacing 31s6d edition]</td>
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<tr>
<td>3s6d</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3/2/96</td>
<td>2-12/96</td>
<td>2/96-2/98</td>
<td>5: 123</td>
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<tr>
<td>[184 copies re-cased by Leighton in 'new style' 26/4/00]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>15/1/97</td>
<td>2/97</td>
<td>2-3/97</td>
<td>5: 123</td>
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<tr>
<td>[100 copies re-cased by Leighton 'inserting plates' 11/8/98]</td>
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<tr>
<td>2s</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>9/1/00</td>
<td>1-2/00</td>
<td>1/00-7/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>3s6d</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>18/8/02</td>
<td>8-9/02</td>
<td>8/02-9/19</td>
<td>5: 677</td>
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<tr>
<td>5s</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>10/11/20</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>1/21-6/33</td>
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<tr>
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## The Master Craftsman (Chatto & Windus, May 1896)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10s</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>26/2/96</td>
<td>4/96</td>
<td>4-6/96</td>
<td>5: 246</td>
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<tr>
<td>[Two-volume edition]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10s</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>30/4/96</td>
<td>6/96</td>
<td>75-6/96</td>
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<td>[Second impression of two-volume edition]</td>
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<td>6/96</td>
<td>76/96</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3/97</td>
<td>3/97-9/00</td>
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<tr>
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## The City of Refuge (Chatto & Windus, October 1896)

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<td>9-12/96</td>
<td>9/96-9/97</td>
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<td>3000</td>
<td>12/8/96</td>
<td>9/96</td>
<td>9-12/96</td>
<td>5: 318</td>
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<td>3s6d</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>12/11/96</td>
<td>11/96</td>
<td>11-12/96</td>
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A Fountain Sealed (Chatto & Windus, May 1897)

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<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>4-5/97</td>
<td>4-10/97</td>
<td>5: 377</td>
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</table>

[200 copies bound as 'Colonial Edition' 7/9/99]
TOTAL: 7500

The Orange Girl (Chatto & Windus, September 1899)

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<th>Size</th>
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<th>Delivered</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>30/5/99</td>
<td>7/99</td>
<td>7-9/99</td>
<td>5: 525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7/10/99</td>
<td>10/99</td>
<td>10/99</td>
<td>5: 525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8/12/99</td>
<td>12/99</td>
<td>12/99-3/00</td>
<td>5: 650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7/3/00</td>
<td>4/00</td>
<td>6/00-6/04</td>
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</table>

[Some copies from these last three impressions were bound as part of the 'colonial Edition']
<table>
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<th>Size</th>
<th>Ordered</th>
<th>Delivered</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6d</td>
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<td>4/1/01</td>
<td>4/01-1/03</td>
<td>4/01-5/03</td>
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<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>5/11/03</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>1/04-1/06</td>
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<tr>
<td>3s6d</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>18/1/04</td>
<td>2/04</td>
<td>3/04-9/18</td>
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<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>2/8/06</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>9/06-4/11</td>
<td>5: 776</td>
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<tr>
<td>6d</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>19/1/12</td>
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<td>2/12-5/18</td>
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[3463 remaining 5/18]
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<th>Delivered</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5s</td>
<td>750</td>
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<td>7/21-3/26</td>
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[450 remaining 3/26]
TOTAL: 150250

The Fourth Generation (Chatto & Windus, September 1900)

<table>
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<th>Size</th>
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<th>Delivered</th>
<th>Bound</th>
<th>Ledger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6s</td>
<td>6000</td>
<td>15/6/00</td>
<td>7/00</td>
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| PUBLISHERS' CIRCULAR (EDITIONS) | Nos | 5735 | 5706 | 6254 | 6382 | 6458 | 6516 | 6573 | 7926 | 7516 | 7567 |
| % | 4246 (BASELINE 1855-59) | 135 | 134 | 147 | 150 | 152 | 153 | 155 | 187 | 177 | 178 |

| BM COPYRIGHT RECEIPT BOOKS (ITEMS) | Nos | 49828 | 48267 | 55881 | 56195 | 61864 | 58893 | 59515 | 58774 | 67136 | 60903 |
| % | 27623 (BASELINE 1855-59) | 180 | 175 | 202 | 203 | 224 | 213 | 215 | 213 | 243 | 220 |

| BM ANNUAL REPORTS - COPYRIGHT (PARTS) | Nos | 32736 | 33857 | 32404 | 34507 | 34432 | 37241 | 36623 | 37319 | 37506 | 36773 |
| % | 17514 (BASELINE 1855-59) | 187 | 193 | 185 | 197 | 197 | 213 | 209 | 213 | 214 | 210 |

| BM ANNUAL REPORTS - COPYRIGHT (VOLUMES) | Nos | 10599 | 10668 | 12852 | 12759 | 13430 | 11867 | 12618 | 12175 | 12317 | 12345 |
| % | 5895 (BASELINE 1855-59) | 180 | 181 | 218 | 216 | 228 | 201 | 214 | 207 | 209 | 209 |

| ESTIMATED UK PAPER PRODUCTION (SPICER) (TONS) | Nos | 472600 | 474300 | 483380 | 484250 | 530000 | 534000 | 540600 | 597000 | 599000 | 608000 |
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Nos  | 7149 | 6044 | 7381 | 8381 | 8334 | 8252 | 8603 | 9914 | 9821 | 10725 |
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Nos  | 34677| 34639| 35431| 38646| 40338| 39653| 39107| 44695| 41744| 44091 |
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**BM ANNUAL REPORTS - COPYRIGHT (PARTS)**

Nos  | 11643| 12723| 13992| 13904| 15460| 16329| 14454| 16176| 13833| 14313 |
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TOTAL
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187 202 145
226
166 706
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17.1 11.4 2 2 .8 11.8 8 . 4
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3 .3 3 .5 2 .5
4.0
2 .9 12.4
’/.
1881
945 728 1174 682 452
148 164 133
247 571
5406
162
17.5 13.5 2 1.7 12.6 8 . 4
2 .7 3 .0 2 .5
3.0
4 . 6 10.6
100.0
'/.
1882
789 696 1417 525 344
181 177
75
189
106 625
5124
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159 253 223
1883
912 821 1517 691 491
225
304 549
6145
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2 .6 4 .1 3 .6
3 .7
4 . 9 8 .9
100.0
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1884
929 954 1454 683 591
228 215 279
239
239 562
6373
1 4.6 15.0 2 2 .8 10.7 9 .3
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3 .8
3 .8 8 .8
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*/.
847 720 1508 652 373
1885
164 187 129
220 587
5640
253
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4.5
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1886
752 571 1414 572 178
93 171
33
246
479 701
6210
1 4.4 11.0 27.1 11.0 3 . 4
1.8 3 .3 0 .6
4.7
9 .2 1 3.5
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1887
815 760 1589 684 178
126 210 122
138
375 746
5743
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2 .4
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1888
231 199 172
912 783 1784 779 253
135
389 954
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1889
764 684 1915 681 146
187 182 106
340 936
126
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TOTAL 8640 7365 15071 6624 3485 1704 1960 1417 1939 2865 6937
58007
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2 .9 3 . 4 2 . 4
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T able B4: S u b ject C lassification: P u b lis h e r s ’ C ircular 1890-9
YEAR

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188 193
79
109
362
930
5735
73
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3 .3 3 . 4 1 .4
1 .9
6 .3 16.2
100.0
%
1891
627 684 1663 694 116
201 175 109
136
254 1047
5706
11.0 12.0 29.1 12.2 2 .0
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100.0
2 .4
4 . 5 18.3
%
1892
673 704 1882 694 209
227 177
65
175
139 1309
6254
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1893
533 653 2023 622 123
234 151
50
85
107 1801
6382
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3 .7 2 . 4 0 .8
100.0
1 .3
1.7 2 8 .2
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1894
556 664 1950 742 128
181 156 149
162
485 1312
6485
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7 . 5 2 0 .2
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1895
570 759 1891 771 112
247 206
90
186
442 1242
6516
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6 . 8 19.1
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1896
603 940 2179 643 380
407 162 182
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153
578
6573
%!
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1897
703 966 2677 928 318
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641
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•/
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813
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■SBBBBBBSSSaSBSSBnaB EBBSB

334


Table B5: Subject Classification: Publishers' Circular 1900-9

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### Table C7: Bookseller: All Other Publications

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### Table C8: The Rousseaux Price Indices 1840-1913

(Average of 1865 and 1885=100)

| Year | 1840 | 1841 | 1842 | 1843 | 1844 | 1845 | 1846 | 1847 | 1848 | 1849 | 1850 | 1851 | 1852 | 1853 | 1854 | 1855 | 1856 | 1857 | 1858 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1840 | 128  | 121  | 111  | 105  | 108  | 110  | 113  | 115  | 110  | 112  | 110  | 95   | 92   | 112  | 125  | 124  | 127  | 111  | 340  |
List of Works Cited or Referred To

Primary Sources: Manuscript Materials

Note The sources are arranged alphabetically by name of archive or, if the archive has no specific title, then by the name of the institution housing that archive. Although not strictly in accordance with the MHRA conventions, given the large number of annotations which interrupt the listing in this section, bullets have been used to distinguished the works from the notes.

- The Bentley Papers, British Library: (Add. Mss. 46600, 46620, 46621, 46622, 46645, 46655)
- The Blackwood Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh: (ACC 5643/D12, D13; ACC 5644/F7, F8; MSS 4415, 4429)

Note The ‘Copyright Receipt Books’ are a series of large folio volumes consisting originally of tear-off receipt slips with attached flimsies. The top copy of the receipt would normally have been given to the depositor, leaving the flimsy as a record. Each printed item was given a separate deposit number, e.g. the three-volume edition of All Sorts and Conditions of Men was numbered 23049-51. The sequence begins in 1851. Between 1851-7 numbering was re-started on or around 26 December. After 1858 numbering was begun anew on 1 January each year. Volumes for 1853 and 1857 are missing. Data from this source is used in Table A1-A8, Appendix 3.


Note Most of the out-letters are in the form of flimsies, many of which have faded to the point of illegibility. When numbering the ‘Out-Letter Books’, Chatto & Windus ignored the first volume (which concerned the business of Saunders, Otley and Co. 8 July 1863-1 July 1867) and began the sequence with John Camden Hotten’s correspondence c. 2 February 1866-25 May
1867. Chatto & Windus's original numbering has been retained in this work. Data from the Production Ledger Books is used in Appendix 1 and 2.

- The Hampstead Local History Collection, Hampstead Public Library, Swiss Cottage, London: Besant papers
- The Thomas Hardy Collection, Dorset County Museum, Dorchester
- The Hench-Blackmore Collection, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia: (Accession 5252, Box 3)
- Longman Archive, University of Reading: ‘Royalty Ledgers’
- Newcastle upon Tyne University Library, Manuscript Collection: (Ms Album 89)
- Palestine Exploration Fund Archives, British Library: (Add. Mss. 41294, 42875)
- Princeton University Library, General Manuscript Collection: the Besant Papers

**Note** A collection of about 100 letters from Besant mostly to Chatto & Windus, mostly about proofs and illustrations, and dated between 1884-1901.

- ‘The Sheppard Collection’, London

**Note** A collection of fifteen family letters written by Walter and Mary Besant to their children and to relatives between 1875-1900, a selection of newspaper cuttings and a manuscript book of eighteen of Walter Besant’s poems (in Mary Besant’s hand) owned by Mrs Barbara Sheppard (a granddaughter of Walter Besant), 146, Palewell Park, East Sheen, London SW14 8JH.

- The Sladen Papers, Richmond Public Library: (SLA 6 Volumes 1-2)
- Society of Authors Archive, British Library: (Add. Mss. 56863, 56868)
- Somerset House, London: ‘Wills and Admons 1901.1’
• W. H. Smith & Son Archives, Abingdon: (CCC 708 (X.109), DDD 704 (X.112-X.117))

• Stationers' Company Records, Stationers' Hall, London: 'Entry Books' 1800-42

Note Consists of a series of manuscript volumes in folio in which details of the works are recorded. The number of works varied in direct relation to copyright legislation, e.g. between the Acts of 1801 (41 Geo.III c.107) and 1814 (54 Geo.III c.156) numbers recorded were small due to the obligation to deposit eleven copies; after 1814 the figures increased because the copies had to be provided only on demand. The latter Act required the Warehousekeeper to send a list of titles received to the copyright deposit libraries). Data from this source is used in Table A1, Appendix 3.

• Stationers' Company Copyright Records, Public Record Office, Kew: (COPY 3/1-80, COPY 3/221-226)

Note After 1842 Copyright Act (5 & 6 Victoria c.45) the 'Entry Books' became 'Registry Books', and are currently deposited at the PRO. Between 1842-83 all deposits are recorded in one sequence of Registers; between 1883-1912 'Literary' and 'Commercial' materials are catalogued separately. The record peters out after the Copyright Act of 1911. Data from this source is used in Tables A2-A8, Appendix 3.

• A.P.Watt Archives, A.P.Watt Ltd., 26/28 Bedford Row, London WC1: The Besant Papers (1/1-318/6)

Note A collection of agreements and associated correspondence contained in two shoe boxes; the majority of the material is dated between 1888-1935. It is organised in a series of files, each of which carries an identifying code consisting of two numbers separated by an oblique stroke. The files are arranged in numerical order. Frequently, however, the same code is used on a number of different files concerned with the same title (e.g. 12/20 is used for Beyond the Dreams of Avarice (1895) records which cover six separate files, one covering British Serial rights, another covering British book rights, a third concerned with American serial rights, and so on). The individual papers within a file are not numbered. The Watt system was felt to provide too low a resolution of detail, so the present writer devised a more comprehensive system which, nevertheless, does not obscure the original. Any file which shared a code with another file was given a unique number by attaching a letter of the alphabet to it, the letter being determined by its chronological position. Thus in the case above, the file relating to the British serial rights carried the earliest date, so it was given the code [A] 12/20, the British book rights came next, so that file was labelled [B] 12/20, and so on. Each distinct document within a file was numbered chronologically, so that the first document in file [A] 12/20 would be identified as [A] 12/20 [1].
In order to avoid obscuring the original Watt system, the new parts of the code were placed in square brackets. A copy of all the Besant material in the Watt archive organised on these principles will be deposited with this thesis if necessary.

- Dr Williams Library, London: Letters to Dr Henry Allon (Ms 24.110 [25-48])

**Primary Sources: Printed Materials**

**The Works of Walter Besant**

*Note* Titles are arranged chronologically by date of first publication in book form; articles are arranged chronologically by date of first publication. Although the MHRA convention does not require publishers to be recorded, it was thought desirable to identify the publishers of those books in this section not originally published by Chatto & Windus.

*The French Humourists from the Twelfth to the Nineteenth Century* (London, R. Bentley & Son, 1873)
*French Grammatical Exercises* (London, Stewart & Co., 1877)
*Rabelais* (Edinburgh and London, W. Blackwood & Sons, 1879)
*All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (London, 1882)
*The Revolt of Man* (Edinburgh and London, W. Blackwood & Sons, 1882)
*All in the Garden Fair* (London, 1883)
*The Captain's Room* (London, 1883)
*The Life and Achievements of Edward Henry Palmer* (London, John Murray, 1883)
*Readings in Rabelais*, edited by W. Besant (Edinburgh and London, W. Blackwood and Sons, 1883)
*The Art of Fiction* (London, 1884)
*Dorothy Forster* (London, 1884)
*Uncle Jack* (London, 1885)
*Children of Gibeon* (London, 1886)
*Katherine Regina* (Bristol, Arrowsmith, 1887)
*The World Went Very Well Then* (London, 1887)
*Herr Paulus* (London, 1888)
The Inner House (Bristol, Arrowsmith, 1888)
The Bell of St Pauls (London, 1889)
For Faith and Freedom (London, 1889)
To Call Her Mine (London, 1889)
Armorel of Lyonesse (London, 1890)
The Literary Handmaid of the Church (London, Henry Glaisher, 1890)
'The Doll's House—and After', English Illustrated Magazine, Vol. VII (January 1890)
St Katherine's by the Tower (London, 1891)
The Ivory Gate (London, 1892)
London (London, 1892)
Verbena Camellia Stephanotis (London, 1892)
'My First Book', Idler Magazine, Vol. 1 (February-July 1892)
The Rebel Queen (London, 1893)
Beyond the Dreams of Avarice (London, 1895)
In Deacon's Orders; and Other Tales (London, 1895)
Thirty Years' Work in the Holy Land (London, A.P.Watt & Son, 1895)
Westminster (London, 1895)
'The Luck of Susan Bell', Illustrated London News (London, 1895)
The Master Craftsman (London, 1896)
The City of Refuge (London, 1896)
A Fountain Sealed (London, 1897)
The Orange Girl (London, 1898)
The Pen and the Book (London, Thomas Burleigh, 1899)
South London (London, 1899)
The Fourth Generation (London, 1900)
East London (London, 1901)
The Lady of Lynn (London, 1901)
Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant (London, Hutchinson, 1902)
No Other Way (London, 1902)
As We Are and As We May Be (London, 1903)

Essays and Historiettes (London, 1903)

Sir Walter Besant's "Bourbon" Journal, August 1863 (London, Besant & Co., 1933)

Co-Authored Books

Note Titles are arranged chronologically by date of first publication in book form. Although the MHRA convention does not require publishers to be recorded, it was thought desirable to identify the publishers of those books in this section not originally published by Chatto & Windus.

With E.D. Palmer, Jerusalem, the City of Herod and Saladin (London, R. Bentley & Son, 1871)

With James Rice, Ready-Money Mortiboy (London, Tinsley Brothers, 1872)

With James Rice, My Little Girl (London, Tinsley Brothers, 1873)

With James Rice, With Harp and Crown (London, Tinsley Brothers, 1875)

With James Rice, This Son of Vulcan (London, Sampson Low, 1876)

With James Rice, The Golden Butterfly (London, Tinsley Brothers, 1876)

With James Rice, The Case of Mr Lucraft; and Other Tales (London, Sampson Low, 1876)

With James Rice, By Celia's Arbour (London, Sampson Low, 1878)

With James Rice, The Monks of Thelema (London, 1878)

With James Rice, 'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay, and Other Stories (London, 1879)

With W.J. Brodribb, Constantinople. A Sketch of its History (London, Seeley, Jackson, & Halliday, 1879)

With James Rice, The Seamy Side (London, 1880)

With James Rice, The Chaplain of the Fleet (London, 1881)

With James Rice, The Ten Years' Tenant, and Other Stories (London, 1881)


Other Printed Materials

Note Titles are arranged alphabetically. The date(s) in square brackets which follow the place of publication indicate the dates of the issues covered by this study. Although not strictly in accordance with the MHRA conventions, given the large number of annotations which interrupt the listing in this section, bullets have been used to distinguished the works from the notes.

• The Academy (London) [1882]
• All the Year Round (London) [1876-87]
• The Athenaeum (London) [1876-1901]
• The Author (London) [1890-1902]
• Belgravia (London) [1881-3]
• Bent's Monthly Literary Advertiser (London) [1805-1859]

Note Data from the ‘New Publications’ list and ‘Catalogue of the New Books ...Published in Great Britain’ was used in Tables A1, A2 and C1.

• Bibliotheca Londinensis: A Classified Index to the Literature of Great Britain During Thirty Years Arranged from and Serving as a Key to the London Catalogue of Books 1814-46, compiled by Thomas Hodgson (London, 1848)


• The British Quarterly Review (London) [1883]

• The Bookseller (London) [1858-1919]

Note Data from ‘Publications of the Month’ and ‘Classified Table of Publications’ was used in Tables B7, C3-C7. The number of categories used by the Bookseller varied considerably over the period 1858-1919: in 1858 there were 18 categories, by 1867 this number had increased to 20; by 1877 it was
up to 31 and, by 1887, to 46. By 1912 the journal was using 65 separate categories. The relevant categories for Tables B7 and C3-C7 are 'Religion and Theology' (REL), 'Children's Books and Minor Fiction' (LIT), 'Fiction' (LIT), 'Poetry and Drama (LIT), 'Government Publications' (Government/Parliamentary), 'London County Council Publications' (Government/Parliamentary); all other categories were subsumed in All Other Publications.


- Chicago Herald (Chicago) [1898]
- The English Catalogue (London) [1837-1919]

Note: Variously known as Catalogue of Books Published in London (1837-44), Catalogue of Books Published in the United Kingdom (1845-56), The British Catalogue (1857-60), The English Catalogue (1861-1959).

- Good Words (London) [1880-1900]
- The Idler Magazine (London) [1892-8]
- The Illustrated London News (London) [1884-8]
- Longman’s Magazine (London) [1885-6]
- Catalogue of the Principle Books in Circulation at Mudie’s Select Library (London) [1875-92]
- Murray’s Magazine (London) [1887]
- Once a Week (London) [1872-6]
- The Palace Journal (London) [1887-1890]
- House of Commons Parliamentary Papers: Accounts of Income and Expenditure of the British Museum (London) [1850-1920]

Note: Data from these sources was used in Tables A1-A8, and listed under the headings 'BM Annual Reports—‘Parts’ and ‘Volumes’. These figures are inherently less reliable than the Copyright Receipt Books because the way in which they were listed changed frequently over time: sometimes music, atlases, maps or newspapers were included, sometimes not. Despite this, the overall publication pattern produced by these two sources is not that dissimilar from the pattern visible in the Copyright Receipt Books. ‘Parts’ would usually cover part-works; ‘Volumes’ would usually cover books and pamphlets (and sometimes music and newspapers).

- The Publishers’ Circular (London) [1837-1919]
Note: Data from 'Books Published in the Last Fortnight' listings was used in Tables A1-A3. Note that the figures for 1840-42 are less reliable than those that come after because the Publishers' Circular did not begin clearly numbering its entries until 1843. After 1870 (i.e. Tables A4-A8) the data was derived from the yearly 'Analytical Table' usually published in late December or the following January. Data for Tables B2-B6 was also derived from the Circular's 'Analytical Tables'. Originally these Tables used 14 categories, but this was reduced to 13 in 1896 with the conflation of 'Novels and Other Works of Fiction' and 'Juvenile Works and Tales'. The categories were (with the super-categories used in the Tables in round brackets): 'Theology, Sermons, Biblical, etc.' (REL), 'Educational and Classical' (EDUC), 'Juvenile Works and Tales' (FIC/J), 'Novels and other Works of Fiction' (FIC/J), 'Law, Jurisprudence, etc.' (LAW), 'Political and Social Economy, Trade and Commerce' (PSEMN), Arts, Science, and Finely Illustrated Works' (ASMI), 'Travel and Geographical Research' (GTHB), 'History and Biography' (GTHB), 'Poetry and Drama' (PY/DR), 'Year Books and Bound Volumes of Serials' (MISC), 'Medicine and Surgery' (MED), 'Belles Lettres, Essays, Monographs, etc.' (LPB-L), 'Miscellaneous, including Pamphlets, not Sermons' (MISC). In 1911 the classification system was brought into line with the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Librarians in Brussels in 1910 which offered 23 classes (with the super categories used in the Tables in round brackets): 'Philosophy' (LPB-L), 'Religion' (REL), 'Sociology' (PSEMN), 'Law' (LAW), 'Education' (EDUC), 'Philology' (EDUC), 'Science' (ASMI), 'Technology' (ASMI), 'Medicine, Public Health, etc.' (MED), 'Agriculture, Gardening' (ASMI), 'Domestic Arts' (EDUC), 'Business' (PSEMN), 'Fine Arts' (ASMI), 'Music (Works about)' (ASMI), 'Games, etc.' (EDUC), 'Literature (General)' (LPB-L), 'Poetry and Drama' (PY/DR), 'Fiction' (FIC/J), 'Juvenile' (FIC/J), 'History' (GTHB), 'Geography and Travel' (GTHB), 'Biography' (GTHB), 'General Works' (MISC). For 1914 the system was further enlarged by the addition of two new categories: 'Description and Travel' (GTHB) and 'Military and Naval' (PSEMN). The eleven headings in Tables B2-B6 represent super-categories into each of which two or more of these varying categories were placed in order to insure some level of continuity between different periods and different journals. Table C2 was derived from 'Books published in the Last Fortnight', and from the 'Analytical Tables'.

- The Saturday Review (London) [1882-6]
- The Spectator (London) [1882-1901]
- The Times (London) [1882-1901]
- Tinsley's Magazine (London) [1869-84]
- Westminster Review (London) [1870, 1872-88]
Secondary Sources


Downey, Edmund, *Twenty Years Ago* (London, 1905)


[English, R.], ‘The Price of the Novel, 1750-1894’, *The Author*, V (1894), pp. 94-9


Feltes, N.N., *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago, 1986)


Gatrell, Simon, 'Hardy, House-Style and the Aesthetics of Punctuation', *The Novels of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Anne Smith (London, 1979)


Gittings, Robert, *Young Thomas Hardy* (London, 1975)


Millgate, Michael, *Thomas Hardy, His Career as a Novelist* (London, 1971)


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Note ‘Paper Charged with Duty’ 1840-61 in Tables A1-A3 was derived from this source (pp. 263-4). These statistics ceased in 1861 with the abolition of the paper duty. For the early years, however, they provide a useful check on Spicer’s estimates.


Note Data from this source (pp. 722-4) was used for the Rousseaux Price Indices in Table C8.

Moore, George, *Literature at Nurse* (London, 1885)

*Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*, Phase I, Series II (1816-70), Vols. 1-5 (Newcastle, 1986)


Rubinstein, Hilary, ‘A.P.Watt: The First Hundred Years’, *The Bookseller*, No. 3619 (3 May 1975), pp. 2354-8


Note Data derived from Spicer’s Appendix IX was used in Tables A1-A7. Spicer’s figures are estimates based on Parliamentary returns, factory returns, raw material imports and data on the output of individual mills. For the years 1840-1861 the ‘Paper Charged with Duty’ provides a useful check on these estimates.

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Public Libraries and Popular Authors, 1883–1912

By SIMON ELIOT

IT IS SOMETHING OF AN AXIOM that Victorian readers borrowed rather than bought their fiction. Like many axioms this requires some qualification. In the period after 1870, reprints of novels were issued at shorter and shorter intervals after their first (multi-volume) editions; the single-volume reprints were also much cheaper than the original, commonly selling at between two and six shillings. These two factors together probably had the effect of increasing the number of novels bought rather than borrowed. However, the axiom is true enough to suggest that any attempt, however crude, to quantify the relative popularity of nineteenth-century novelists will be unsatisfactory if it does not take into account the standing of these writers at the libraries.

By the end of the nineteenth century there were two major types of lending library available to the public. The circulating library (of which Mudie’s and Smith’s were the outstanding examples, although many smaller ones existed) and the public library, which ranged in size from the small town library to the great metropolitan collections. Ideally, both types of library should be surveyed and the results compared. Unfortunately, the circulating libraries have left very little evidence behind them. The Mudie archives are no longer in existence, while W. H. Smith’s records, although extant, contain no indication of how many copies of a given novel were ordered, or how they were geographically distributed, or for how long they were circulated. Of necessity, therefore, the researcher must turn to that other book-lending system which was just beginning to flower as Mudie’s and Smith’s were beginning to wilt — the public library.

Surprisingly, William Ewart’s Library Act of 1850 did not immediately produce a crop of new library authorities. Between 1850 and 1870 the average came to little more than two a year. By the 1870s this rate had increased to about five a year. It did accelerate during the 1880s (some 87 authorities being set up between 1880 and 1889), but the increase is more notable in the 1890s, with some 178 districts establishing library systems. Between 1900 and 1909 a further 197 authorities were added to the list. By the end of 1912 559 library authorities had been set up in Great Britain.¹ In

financial terms this public library market did not offer as lucrative or as secure a source of income to an author as the circulating libraries (at least as they were before 1894); however, it clearly represented a new and, as Mudie's and Smith's faltered in the late 1890s, an increasingly important means of achieving popularity, particularly for writers of fiction.

How might one establish what sort of books, particularly fiction, these libraries had on their shelves, and in what quantities, and by which writers? Due to the particular way in which many of these newly-established public libraries were set up and run, they have left behind them valuable evidence which gives a good idea of what their bookstacks contained. A significant number were run on the closed-shelf system — that is, borrowers were not allowed to browse among the books to make their selection. Access to books was gained indirectly by compiling a list of wanted titles in order of priority, and handing this list to a library assistant who would then go to the stacks in search of the requested works. Such a system required more than one manuscript or card-index catalogue, as each borrower would need to consult a copy every time a book was wanted. Closed-access libraries were thus obliged to produce printed catalogues in editions large enough to make multiple copies available for reference in the library; for the keenest borrowers, copies were also available for purchase at a modest sum. Many librarians evidently considered that, as their catalogues were printed and published, they quite properly came within the copyright regulations which required the depositing of a copy with the British Museum Library. Certainly a significant number of these catalogues are now lodged in the British Library, and it is on this collection that most of the following research is based.

The choice of authors to be surveyed raised a number of problems, the most important of which was the difficulty of ensuring that an inevitably small selection adequately represented the many different types of novelist whose books were stocked by the libraries. Finally, five different categories were defined: long-term bestsellers (Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, Trollope); those who were bestsellers over a shorter time span (Braddon, Ouida, Wood); those men and women of letters who wrote a wide range of both fiction and non-fiction (Besant, Oliphant, Payn); foreign authors enjoying large sales in England (Twain); and young authors in the process of establishing their reputations (Haggard). These categories are not, of course, mutually exclusive (one writer might well span two or three), and they are certainly not meant to be totally comprehensive. However, in drawing at least one example from each, the survey aims to avoid the

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2 The price of a catalogue ranged, according to size and the library authority which issued it, from 1d. to 1s., although most were 6d. or less.

3 The survey was augmented by some fourteen additional catalogues located in the Library of the Library Association.
Public Libraries and Popular Authors

dangers of arguing from too narrow a base, or of assuming that, at a given
time, there is only one type of popularity among the borrowers of fiction.
The choice of particular authors to illustrate these categories was determined
by the need to ensure that all those chosen did enjoy a reasonable level of
popularity, and thus that like was being compared with like. It would, after
all, have been a meaningless exercise to compare Dickens's holdings (as a
long-term bestseller) with those of, say, Henry James (as an up-and-coming
newcomer), when all the existing evidence suggests that James, although
establishing a literary reputation, was never able to command large sales. In
other words, although this survey was designed to test comparative popu­
licity within public library stocks, it needed other means of assessing
popularity in order to guarantee that the choice of examples was neither
unbalanced nor misleading. The main criterion for determining popularity
outside the public libraries was book sale or production statistics, suggested
either directly by publishers' production figures or numbers of editions and
impressions, or indirectly by such phenomena as frequent and large-scale
billing in publishers' advertisements, or the rapid reprinting of newly­
published works in cheap editions. A mixture of these criteria was used to
determine the final list of twelve authors.

By applying the techniques described in Appendix I, it is possible to
observe how these authors' holdings, recorded in the catalogues, vary in
relation to each other over a period of time, or from one region to another.
As this paper aims to summarize the survey, no attempt has been made to
reproduce the data relating to each separate library. Instead, the information
in the Figures and Appendices has been designed to illustrate the broader­
scale results, and thus is organized on a period by period and region by
region basis.

Taking the period by period figures first (see Figure 1 and Table 1,
Appendix II): what unequivocal trends are visible? First, there are three
'rising' authors: Besant, Haggard, and Twain. Between 1883 and 1892
Besant's percentage share of the bookstock over the entire four regions was
just 6%. Between 1893 and 1902 this had increased to 8%; it increases again
to 9.3% in the final period 1903–12. This is peculiar for, after his death in
1901, we might have expected his library holdings to decline in relation both
to long term bestsellers and to up-and-coming younger authors. It is true
that both Haggard and Twain, both of whom survived Besant physically
and in reputation, also display evidence of an expanding share of the
holdings. Haggard increases from 2.7% through 5.4% to 7.8% by Period 3;
Twain rises from 2% in Period 1 to 2.8% in Period 2 to 3.7% by Period 3. In
fact these three authors are the only ones who show a completely consistent
rise in their percentage share through the three decades. Of the three, Besant
presents the greatest anomaly. How can we account for this upward
dynamic, particularly in the latter half of Period 2 and in Period 3, when the
Figure 1
actual sales of his books were tailing off quite sharply? One possible reason might be what could be termed the inertia of popularity, and its influence on the purchasing policy of the public libraries. If an author had written a number of best-sellers over the period 1872-90 — books which were referred to frequently, often borrowed and held by the larger libraries in duplicate and triplicate — then that author’s name might become lodged in the acquisitions librarian’s mind as being popular and likely to be in demand. Such an association of ideas might well long outlive the reality of popularity, particularly if there were no close analysis of changing patterns in borrowing.

This inertia effect might also have some influence on borrowers themselves. Once having got to know an author like Besant, a writer of limited range who, by the 1890s at least, was producing a standard (not to say repetitive) product, the reader might be disinclined to purchase any more variations on the same theme, but might still sufficiently enjoy the reassuring experience of reading a familiar type of book to ask for it at the local library. Another factor which might explain this apparent anomaly is the fact that Besant had, by the mid-nineties, become a character in his own right — a man of letters to whom literary and topical magazines might and did turn for comment on the latest literary issue, a man closely identified with the whole business of fiction and fiction writers, and a man who was identified with such apparently sound and solid enterprises as a multi-volume ‘History of London’. Such incidental associations probably meant very little to most borrowers, but quite a lot to those librarians who regarded themselves as being part of the great new literary profession Besant so frequently and so fulsomely proclaimed.

Another possible explanation arises from the major debate which had centred on public libraries ever since they had resolved to lend fiction. The Library Association’s journal was full of discussions about whether the reading of novels was harmful, whether novel readers would tire of their devotion and move on to the more solid fare of history, philosophy, or mechanics. In such a debate Besant’s work offered a distinct advantage to the supporters of fiction. Many of his novels were either based on a current issue of social concern, the seriousness and the importance of which no one would deny, or were historical novels, mostly set in the late seventeenth or eighteenth century, the location and background of which were often quite meticulously researched. Such novels, it could be argued, were clearly a sort of ‘amphibian’ form existing somewhere between fiction and non-fiction and the most likely, therefore, to instil a serious habit of mind. Historical

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4 A typical Besant novel of the 1880s, *Dorothy Forster* (1884), sold about 40,500 copies in various editions (31s. 6d., 3s. 6d. and 2s.) in its first ten years. A typical Besant novel of the later 1890s, *The Master Craftsman* (1896), sold about 9,500 copies in various editions in its first ten years. See the Chatto and Windus Ledger Books: Book 4 (fols 9, 205, 272, 485) and Book 5 (fols 45, 246).
novels do certainly seem to have been treated with particular respect by the cataloguers of public libraries. Sir Walter Scott's novels, for instance, were frequently glossed with a description of their historical setting, and readers were encouraged to read them chronologically, beginning with *Count Robert of Paris* and ending with the novels set in the eighteenth century. Besant's books were often similarly arranged. A combination of these factors probably accounts for the final 9.3 percentage share gained by Besant in the period 1903-12.

Although Besant's share did steadily increase over the whole period, the actual rate of increase slowed down in later years. Thus the difference between Period 1 and Period 2 was 2%, while the difference between Periods 2 and 3 was only 1.3%. From an admittedly lower base Rider Haggard's share increased more dramatically: 2.7% between Periods 1 and 2, 2.4% between Periods 2 and 3. Mark Twain's percentage share also increases through the period, but it is from a low base and the steps by which it climbs are smaller than those of Besant and Haggard. According to Dennis Welland, Twain was selling in quantities not all that far short of Besant; yet even in Period 3 Twain's percentage represents just over one third of Scott's.5 This provides a salutary observation, for it reminds us that this survey can only measure one sort of popularity.

What of those authors whose popularity seemed to be in decline? Perhaps the most striking is Trollope. Commanding 9.3% in Period 1, he steadily declines during the next twenty years through 6.9% in Period 2 to 5.8% by Period 3. His decline is the reverse image of Besant's rise from 6% in 1883-92 to 9.3% in 1903-12. Trollope, of course, died nearly twenty years before Besant, so that Period 1 represents the first decade after his death, much as Period 3 does for Besant. It is unfortunate that there is insufficient evidence to allow us to follow Besant's holdings beyond 1912 in order to see whether his holdings suffered an equally dramatic decline. One suspects that there were special factors influencing Trollope's swift descent, some of which are discussed in Michael Sadleir's introduction to Trollope's *Autobiography*.6 Besant, too, had a posthumously published autobiography, which adopted a very Trollopian tone in its discussion of profit and literary fame. It seems, however, to have caused little stir, and probably did not contribute significantly to the collapse of Besant's reputation.

A less dramatic but no less clear example of a contracting percentage share can be seen in the figures relating to Bulwer Lytton's holdings. Beginning at 9.5% they drift downwards in Period 2 to 8.2%, finally ending up at 6.9% by Period 3, a drop of 2.6% over the three periods — less dramatic than Trollope's 3.5%, but nevertheless consistent and distinct.

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A still smaller but consistent drop can be observed in James Payn's holdings. In Period 1 his books command 7.6%, by Period 2 this has dropped slightly to 7.2%. This 0.4% drop is followed by a sharper decline of 1.3% between Periods 2 and 3.

The final author in this category shows an even more marginal decline. Sir Walter Scott drifts down from 13% in Period 1 to 11.9% in Period 3. Such a small change might well be due to vagaries and uncertainties in the sample available, so it would be unwise to put too great an emphasis on this. Scott's regional figures, which provide more interesting reading, are discussed on pages 333–34.

The remaining five authors sampled display similar uncertainties. At least Scott, considered nationally over the three Periods, does show a consistent, though small, downward movement. M. E. Braddon and Margaret Oliphant, however, rise (albeit marginally) between Periods 1 and 2, and then decline between Periods 2 and 3. In both cases this increase in Period 2 is small enough (0.3% in Braddon's case, 0.1% in Oliphant's) to be regarded as statistically insignificant. It is most probable that both authors' holdings were peaking during Periods 1 and 2 and were beginning their downward path in Period 3. The rate of decline of M. E. Braddon's holdings between Periods 2 and 3 is almost certainly exaggerated by the very small sample available from Scotland in Period 3, a problem discussed in Appendix I.

Two other authors exhibit a pattern which is the reverse of the Braddon and Oliphant model. The holdings of both Mrs Henry Wood and Charles Dickens show a decline from Period 1 to Period 2, a decline which is then reversed in Period 3. In Dickens's case this oscillation is over a small range and probably represents a reasonably stable national percentage holding of around 10% during the entire thirty years of the survey. Mrs Henry Wood's percentages are more difficult to explain, and need reference to separate regional totals in order to render them more intelligible.

We are thus left with Ouida whose figures, at first sight, would seem to place her with Mrs Braddon and Mrs Oliphant as an author whose public library holdings seem to peak during Period 2 and then go into a minor decline. The problem with this interpretation is that Ouida's percentages are very low, much lower than one would expect. By all conventional accounts Ouida was a very popular and successful novelist; not, perhaps, quite able to compete in sales figures with either Miss Braddon or Mrs Henry Wood, but nevertheless a strong seller. Yet, if one looks at the percentage share commanded by Ouida over the three Periods, one finds the following

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7 Between 1876 and 1886 Under Two Flags sold about 62,250 copies in various editions. Between 1896 and 1903 Chatto disposed of 220,000 sixpenny copies of the same novel. Between 1880 and 1889 Moths sold 103,000 copies of five-shilling and two-shilling editions, and between 1897 and 1907 the publishers sold 230,000 paperback copies of the same title at 6d. each. See the Chatto and Windus Ledger Books: Book 3 (fols 109, 274, 320, 381, 432, 641); Book 4 (fol. 57); Book 5 (fols 282, 353, 679, 878).
values: 2.9%, 3.6%, 3.4%. These rather small percentages are the consequence of the fact that a significant number of public libraries in the survey failed to stock Ouida at all (see Appendix IV). No less than twenty-seven out of the eighty-one catalogues surveyed contain no record of Ouida's works.\(^8\)

Other authors, of course, occasionally failed to appear in certain catalogues — particularly the more sensational writers such as Miss Braddon. Three libraries failed to stock any works by Braddon, significantly all in Scotland.\(^9\) Rider Haggard’s works are absent from six libraries, but these instances are all clustered in Period 1 and none of the catalogues involved is dated later than 1886. It is therefore reasonable to assume that this absence is a result of Haggard not having established himself before the late 1880s, rather than the product of some moral or aesthetic censorship exercised by the library authorities.\(^10\) Mark Twain’s works were missing from the shelves of four libraries and James Payn from two.\(^11\) Mrs Oliphant and Anthony Trollope are mysteriously absent from just one and the same library.\(^12\) In other words, all other authors had a presence of some sort in the overwhelming majority of libraries. Their exclusion from a handful of catalogues can probably be best explained, except perhaps in the case of Mrs Braddon in Scotland, by economic constraints on small libraries and minor local variations in reader demand.

Clearly no such explanation can account for Ouida’s exclusion from exactly one-third of the library catalogues examined. Further work will have to be done on this phenomenon before a fully satisfactory answer can be expected to emerge but, given the fact that Ouida was frequently attacked in the reviews and elsewhere for her failures both in technique and moral sense, it might have occurred to many library authorities that there were both moral and aesthetic grounds for excluding the novelist. Any librarian wishing to demonstrate a combination of critical sensitivity and social concern for the moral well-being of his readers had only to exclude Ouida to prove both. Whatever the reasons for this exclusion were, it is clear that it was practised widely, though not uniformly. The striking feature of the Ouida figures is that evidence of exclusion is stronger in certain periods and

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\(^8\) To make sure that this result was not a freak of inconsistent classification, a search of the catalogues in question was made under ‘Ramée’ and ‘De La Ramée’, as well as under the more famous pseudonym. To no avail, for they remained stubbornly silent about the novelist.

\(^9\) They were spread evenly, one in each of the three Periods: Dumbarton (1885); Greenock (1897); Glasgow, Kinning Park (1905).

\(^10\) The libraries were: Wandsworth (1885); Wednesbury (1885); Leamington Spa (1886); Dunfermline (1883); Inverness (1883); Dumbarton (1885).

\(^11\) Twain’s works are not listed in the catalogues for Leamington Spa (1886); Dumbarton (1885); Watford (1898) and Birmingham, Balsall Heath Branch (1902). In Payn’s case, both examples come from Period 3 when Payn’s holdings in relation to the other authors were declining rapidly: Hampstead, West End Branch (1904); Eastbourne Branch Library (1906).

\(^12\) Eastbourne Branch Library (1906). This small and probably under-funded branch library seems also to have discriminated against Payn and Ouida. Its parent library, Eastbourne Central (1906), housed three of the four writers and excluded only Ouida.
certain regions than in others. In Period 1, for instance, no less than 15 of the 30 catalogues surveyed make no mention of her works. By Period 2 this 50% rate had dropped to just under 20% (6 out of 29); in Period 3 it rose again, but only to 25% (6 out of 24), just half the Period 1 rate. Nor were cases of exclusion distributed evenly within a given period. There were radical differences in geographical distribution: in Period 1, for instance, only 2 of the 9 library catalogues in London, and 4 out of 9 in the Midlands and North, excluded Ouida but, between 1883 and 1892, 4 out of 6 catalogues in Scotland and no less than 5 out of 6 in the South make no mention whatsoever of the novelist! Taking all three periods together the percentage of catalogues excluding Ouida in each region was as follows: London — 23.1%, South — 52.9%, Midlands and North — 28%, Scotland — 33.3%.

Having raised the issue of regional differences, it might be appropriate to re-structure the date given in Table 1 in Appendix II in order to bring these out more sharply. By doing so it will be seen that, although there are broad, national trends visible in the pattern of holdings of many authors, these trends partially mask significant regional variations (see Figure 2 and Table 2, Appendix II).

The first thing to observe is that the three novelists whose percentage share was increasing over the three periods do exhibit the same tendency in all four regions, but the strength and scale of that tendency varies markedly. If we take Besant as an example: the gravitational centre of his popularity is clearly located in the south, and in London in particular. His starting percentage is higher in both London and the South (6.4% and 7.2% respectively) than in the Midlands and North or in Scotland (5.9% and 4.4%), while his share in Period 3 is higher in the southern part of the country (Region A — 10.7%; Region B — 9.0%) than in the northern (Region C — 8.6%; Region D — 7.3%).

This geographical dynamic helps to explain one problem Besant's literary agent, A. P. Watt, seems to have had in the late 1880s: namely, a difficulty in marketing the serial rights of Besant's novels in the Midlands and North. It was common practice to syndicate novels serialized in London papers to provincial papers sufficiently far-removed from the London distribution system. In October 1888 Watt offered the serial rights of Besant's forthcoming novel, *Armorel of Lyonesse* (1890), to W. H. Hatton, Manager of the Midland Press Limited based at Wolverhampton. Watt clearly asked what he thought was the going rate for a Besant book on a smallish circulation newspaper — thirty-five pounds — and quoted a similar deal for a Wilkie Collins novel as precedent. Now such a bracketing of Besant with Collins would not have sounded at all strange to a southern ear (Besant was to be responsible for completing the novel *Blind Love* (1890) which Wilkie Collins left unfinished at his death); indeed in the late 1880s, with Besant at the peak
(Note: the banded columns represent B2 and D3, the two cells with inadequate samples)
of his career, it might have been considered flattering to the older author. But to a northern editor, if we place him in the context implied by the Region C library holdings, things would have appeared decidedly different. Hatton replied to Watt on the 12 October 1888: 'There was a special reason for giving 35 pounds for Wilkie Collins — he is still a great favourite here. Amongst the mass of readers Mr Besant is comparatively unknown & therefore we considered that our regular rate — 25 pounds should not be overstepped.'

Watt bowed to the unanswerable argument based on local factors, and an agreement was made. From what we can infer from the library holdings survey, Hatton’s point, though no doubt exaggerated for the purposes of negotiation, had more than a grain of truth in it. In the early and middle 1880s, it seems, the works of Besant, and Besant and Rice, had still to make any significant impact on readers in the area served by Hatton’s newspaper. It so happens that one of the library catalogues used in the Region/Period C1 comes from Wednesbury Free Library just three years before the Watt–Hatton deal. This library had no more than 12 copies of Besant’s and Besant and Rice’s work on its shelves, representing just 2.1% of the total twelve-author holding. Wilkie Collins’s total, on the other hand, was no less than 51 copies which puts him, in this library, quite close to Scott and Bulwer Lytton (63 and 60 copies respectively). The Wednesbury Free Library clearly reflected W. H. Hatton’s prejudice, and justified his commercial caution.

The percentage figures relating to Rider Haggard reflect in all regions an even more positive movement upwards than Besant’s. He starts from a lower base in Regions C and D (2.4% and 1.2%) than in London and the South (3.6% and 3.5%), but by Period 3 his percentage share has increased over threefold in Region C and over fourfold in Region D. It is notable that, by Period 3, Haggard’s holdings are higher in Regions B and C than in London, a pattern quite unlike that of Besant’s.

In contradistinction to Haggard, Mark Twain’s holdings in Period 3 are highest in Regions A and D and dip somewhat in Regions B and C. Twain’s increase in percentage share between Periods 1 and 3 is more modest than that of Haggard’s and achieves, at best, only about half the latter’s share of the library holdings (4.4% as opposed to 8.4%). Clearly, Twain was an author who was in that enviable state of being more bought than borrowed.

What of the authors whose percentages were generally declining during the thirty years of the survey? When subdivided regionally the pattern is less clear than for those writers who were increasing their share. Scott’s very marginal decline over the three decades of about 1% is reflected in some very

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inconsistent figures. The variation of around three-quarters of a per cent in his holdings in London probably represents something close to a steady-state. Indeed, only in Region C is there a clear and consistent decline in Scott’s percentage holdings. If we exclude the unreliable figures in B2 and C3, then the general impression is of a novelist whose classic status has ensured a permanent presence on the library shelves. One might tentatively go a little further: assuming that most libraries were gradually increasing their book stocks over these three decades, particularly of the younger writers in our sample, a given author would have to increase the absolute number of holdings in order just to maintain his percentage share. It might therefore be argued that Scott’s holdings were not merely the product of inertia but represented a continuing demand for his books. But a note of caution must here be sounded, for Scott and Dickens in particular were, by the end of the century, widely available in cheap collected editions. It is possible; particularly in the case of Scott, that many public libraries bought the author in complete sets, adding to them, perhaps, one or two extra copies of the more popular novels. There is no direct way in which one might use the catalogues to substantiate this suspicion, for methods of book-acquisition are not recorded in them. However, many libraries do seem to have stocked all the Waverley Novels, including the most obscure and least read, so the hypothesis is at least a reasonable one. On this basis the size of the holding would tend to become inflated to a point where it no longer corresponded at all closely to reader demand. This question cannot be resolved, but what one can say is that, sustained popularity or not, Scott remained a substantial presence on the shelves of public libraries throughout the period.

One might point out, in passing, that although Scott’s holdings were large in all regions here defined he was, as one might expect, predominant in Scotland. Even if one discounts D3, his average percentage in his native country was over 17%. The only other authors capable of rivalling this size of share, and then only temporarily, are Braddon and Wood.

One would not normally think of Dickens as a ‘regional’ novelist but, if he had to be located in one area then it would inevitably be London. Yet, quite unlike Scott, Dickens’s home territory is precisely the area that gives the clearest evidence of decline in his percentage holdings, slipping as he does from 9.7% in Period 1 to 7.8% in Period 3. In the other regions, like Scott but on a slightly smaller scale, Dickens’s marginally rising or oscillating percentages suggest something close to a stable share of the holdings.

London is idiosyncratic, too, when one comes to regard the fate of another writer. James Payn emerges from the Period statistics as being an author suffering consistent decline. If one again discounts B2 and C3, then the picture is confirmed by the Regional figures for B, C, and D, the most dramatic slippage occurring in the South where his percentage is nearly
halved over the three decades (from 10.0% to 5.1%). But in London Payn's share of the holdings actually seems to be going up between Periods 1 and 2, and only in very slight decline by Period 3. (Region C also shows a slight increase in Period 2, but drops away markedly in Period 3.) As with Dickens, London seems to be following a slightly different trend from the rest of the country.

Mrs Oliphant also seems to have enjoyed the benefit of London's lack of conformity, for her holdings expand by a good 2% over the whole period in Region A while they suffer a 3% decline in the South and the Midlands and North. The figures from Scotland suggest that she might well have benefited from the same regional connection which so evidently influenced the size of Scott's holdings in Region D but, lacking reliable figures from D3, this suggestion must be considered still unproved.

Turning to the two writers who exhibited the sharpest decline over the three Periods, we find a much less ambiguous situation. Bulwer Lytton's percentage holdings show a contraction over time in all four Regions although, as with other writers, the extent of that contraction varies. Region A shows a decline of some 3% over thirty years, as does Region D. The decline in Region C is more marked, dropping from 10.8% in Period 1 to 6.3% in Period 3. Region B is the exception: ignoring B2, we have what is essentially a static state with Lytton's holdings stable at 7.7%.

Anthony Trollope's holdings do not even have a single anomaly to rescue them from universal decline, but again regional variations in the rate of decline are considerable. In London the contraction in percentage terms was no more than a fraction over 1% (7.8% to 6.6%); in the South about 4.5% (10.1% to 5.6%); in Scotland about 3.6% (7.9% to 4.3%). As with Lytton, the steepest decline occurs in the Midlands and North, Trollope's percentage share of the holdings being more than halved (11.5% to 5.6%) between Periods 1 and 3.

This leaves us with the two popular writers who, along with Scott, are the only ones to display percentages consistently in double figures. It might be worthwhile to look at the placings of these authors in relation to the other nine writers in the survey. This kind of ranking can, of course, be very misleading. Unlike comparing percentages, it gives no idea of proportion—that is, whether the writer with most copies in a given library has twice the number of copies as the author placed second, or just one copy more. A novelist who commands a reasonable, but not outstanding percentage in each library may not register at all when one is focusing on just the first two places. Another author, with a very small percentage holding overall, may,

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15 The only Region/Period in which M. E. Braddon achieves less than 10% is the unreliable D3, which consists of just three Glasgow public libraries, one of which seems to have excluded her entirely. Interestingly enough, the one sample in which Mrs Wood drops below 10% is also located in Scotland — D1 — in which the writer scores 7.9%.
through special, local factors, take first place in one library. In such a survey of rankings, the former will escape notice, while a spurious importance will attach to the latter. Nevertheless, it can be a useful additional criterion, particularly when studying writers such as Braddon, Scott, and Wood who have already established a claim to pre-eminence through their high percentage of holdings.

Table 3 in Appendix II reveals just how dominant these three authors were. Of the eighty-one libraries surveyed, no less than sixty-nine had either Braddon, Scott or Wood as the leading author in terms of numbers of copies. Braddon dominates with thirty-three libraries, followed by Scott with twenty and Mrs Henry Wood with sixteen. Striking is the predominance of Miss Braddon in London with sixteen out of a total of twenty-six libraries (61.5%). Equally striking is the way in which this pre-eminence fades the further one moves away from London: 46.7% in Region B, 24% in Region C, and 26.7% of the libraries in Region D.

As one might expect, the dynamic of Scott’s holdings is the reverse of Miss Braddon’s. He comes first in a mere handful of libraries in Region A (11.5%); in Region B this is increased to 20%, a percentage which is maintained in Region C. Region D sees this proportion of first places rise to 60%, which is very close to the percentage Miss Braddon was commanding in London.

Mrs Wood’s placings in English libraries follow a pattern similar to that of Scott’s: Region A 15.4%, Region B 20%, Region C 32%. Scotland presents a different case. On the whole, apart from the last and unreliable Period 3, Mrs Wood’s percentage share was generally lower in Scotland than in England and thus, with the predominance of Scott, we might expect her to get squeezed out — as indeed she does. The only placings she achieves in Region D are in the three Glasgow public libraries which rather unsatisfactorily represent D3.

What tentative conclusions might be drawn from this survey? Many of the results tend to confirm what already existing evidence had suggested: the predominance of Miss Braddon, Mrs Henry Wood, and Scott comes as no surprise, although its scale is remarkable; the decline of Lytton and Trollope was to be expected, although the rate of Trollope’s descent is noteworthy. Regional differences could have been anticipated, although perhaps not such anomalies as Dickens’s contraction in London (set against his steady national

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16 The most common profile (in terms of size of entry in London public library catalogues) over the three decades was: Braddon with the highest entry followed by Wood with the second highest. No less than twelve libraries in the Region followed this pattern: Battersea, Larnmas Hall Branch (1888); Lambeth, Durning Lending Library (1889); Battersea Central (1892); Bermondsey (1892); Brixton Tate Central (1893); Stoke Newington (1893); Rotherhithe (1898); Battersea, Lurline Gardens Branch (1899); Holborn (1899); Stepney, St George-in-the-East Branch (1901); Walthamstow Central and Highams Park Branch (1908); Greenwich Central (1911). It is perhaps worth noting that the majority of these libraries are in working-class areas.
average holding of 10%), or the strong southern emphasis in Miss Bradford's popularity.

Some of the results are more surprising: the absence of Ouida from one third of the surveyed libraries, and the regional differences revealed by these figures; the continuing rise in Besant's holdings, despite the fact that his sales were beginning to tail off by the end of the first period under review; the gap between Mark Twain's high sales figures and relatively low library holdings; and, finally, the evidence for 'library stock inertia' (discussed fully in Appendix III) is another unanticipated by-product of the survey. There is obviously a need to broaden and deepen the sample on which this work is based, and this is already planned. However, the investigation of public library catalogues already provides a new way to answer some old questions and, in the best Shandean tradition of research, also suggests a new and larger set of questions that should, perhaps, be asked of this material in the future.

_Bath_

APPENDIX I

METHODOLOGY

A Scope of the survey

The survey is based upon 81 catalogues covering the period 1883–1912. Given that, by the end of 1912, there were 506 library authorities in England and Scotland, and given that a number of these catalogues stem from the same authorities (the 81 catalogues are a product of 62 different library authorities) this represents a sample of 12.25%. The term 'sample' is here being used in a general way to suggest the sum of the available evidence. Due to the limited number of catalogues it was not possible to choose a truly random sample. Catalogue availability was limited by the following factors:

(1) not all libraries ran a closed-shelf system, and those that did not left no evidence in the form of catalogues;

(2) not all catalogues were deposited with the British Museum Library;

(3) towards the end of the period the open-shelf system became predominant, thus reducing the number of catalogues available;

(4) catalogues varied in quality and clarity. Those which were imprecise in any way were discarded.

B Categorization of the data

(1) The data were divided into three decades:

   Period 1: 1883–92
   Period 2: 1893–1902
   Period 3: 1903–12.
The data were then further subdivided geographically:
Region A: Greater London.
Region B: 'The South' (England to the south of a line drawn between Gloucester and King's Lynn).
Region C: 'Midlands and North' (England to the north of the Gloucester–King’s Lynn line),
Region D: Scotland.

The three periods and four regions were combined to give twelve Region/Periods in all.

A sample of six catalogues per Region/Period was normally regarded as the minimum acceptable. In two cases (B2: the South 1893–1902 and D3: Scotland 1903–12) this minimum was not available. Cells B2 and D3 are represented by three libraries each and thus should be treated with extreme caution.

In order to be as wide-ranging as possible, the authors chosen for the survey were drawn from a number of different categories:

*Long-term nineteenth-century bestsellers:* Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, and Trollope.

*Shorter-term popular authors:* M. E. Braddon, 'Ouida', and Mrs Henry Wood.

*Men (and Women) of letters with a prolific output of both fiction and non-fiction:* Walter Besant, Mrs Oliphant, and James Payn.

*A popular foreign author enjoying large English sales:* Mark Twain.

*An up-and-coming younger author:* Henry Rider Haggard.

This selection had the advantage of including a number of the authors discussed by R. D. Altick in Appendix B to *The English Common Reader*, in particular Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Dickens, and Mrs Henry Wood.

Although the above selection of twelve authors seemed to represent an optimum list, it was felt that it failed to include a number of significant figures in popular English fiction in the latter half of the nineteenth century, some of whom were included in Altick's lists. It was therefore decided to create a subsidiary group of twelve writers whose holdings would be recorded but not analysed in percentage terms or closely compared, as the holdings of the authors on the first list would be. This second list included Harrison Ainsworth, G. W. M. Reynolds (later replaced by Emma Worboise when it was found that, not surprisingly, hardly any library in the survey stocked Reynolds), R. D. Blackmore, Marie Corelli, Mrs Humphrey Ward, R. M. Ballantyne, William Black, Rhoda Broughton, Wilkie Collins, R. L. Stevenson, Jules Verne, and Charlotte Yonge. In practice it was found that none of these authors (with the occasional exception of Ballantyne and with the even more occasional exception of Collins and Worboise) commanded the size of holding which would justify classifying them with the most popular authors in Group 1. They were therefore put aside for later research.

C The selection of catalogues

1. Catalogues which did not clearly list multiple copies were excluded from the survey.

2. In order to achieve a true representation of a given library's holdings, it was necessary to work from a complete catalogue or, as a minimum condition, from a
complete list of fiction holdings. All Supplements were excluded unless they could be linked to an earlier complete catalogue with no unrecorded gap of time intervening. A number of cases in this survey were compilations produced by combining an original complete catalogue with up to two supplementary lists which were acceptable as long as they obeyed the continuity rule explained above. The three cases were as follows:

A1: Lewisham Public Libraries, Perry Hill Branch Library — Main catalogue 1891; Supplement 1892.

C2: Borough of Bootle Public Library — Main catalogue 1896; Supplement 1902.

C3: Borough of St Helens — Main catalogue 1896; Supplement 1913 [1912].

(3) As a basic principle it was laid down that, although it was legitimate to use a library more than once in a survey, it was not permissible to use the same library twice in the same Region/Period. The three cases of this are:

In A1 and A2: Wandsworth, 1885 and 1896.
In B2 and B3: Cambridge Central, 1894 and 1904.
In D1 and D2: Aberdeen, 1886 and 1898.

(4) It was considered acceptable to use both central and branch libraries of the same authority within the same period, as they would represent distinctly different collections and, quite probably, a different set of readers.

D The definition of ‘author holding’

(1) It would be misleading simply to count the number of volumes, as some libraries had large collections of three-decker novels. It would be equally misleading to count the number of titles. Many Victorian authors were extremely prolific, and thus a popular author with fewer titles but more copies of each title might score less or, at best, no more than a modestly successful writer with many books to his or her name but with no more than one copy of each on the shelves. It was therefore decided that ‘author holding’ should mean the total number of copies of an author’s work in a given library or group of libraries.

(2) As this was a survey of author production (rather than just novel production), and as a number of the chosen writers wrote both fiction and non-fiction, it was decided to count all the works of a given author.

(3) Certain library catalogues listed fiction separately, and spread non-fiction over a number of categories. In such cases an author’s non-fiction might be spread over four or more categories, thus rendering an accurate count of copies extremely difficult. In dealing with such catalogues only fiction was counted. This leads to a degree of under-representation of the following authors: Besant, Oliphant, and Payn. Those more marginally disadvantaged are: Dickens, Haggard, Lytton, Scott, Trollope, and Twain. The remainder are largely unaffected.

(4) A number of the chosen authors co-authored certain works. As almost all these joint productions were listed under the main author’s name, and as many were marketed as though they were the production of a single author, the co-authored works were included in the count. The three main examples of this are: Walter Besant (with James Rice); Rider Haggard (with Andrew Lang); and Mark Twain (with C. D. Warner).
E Quantifying author holdings

(1) It soon became clear that the simple recording of absolute figures against each of the twelve names for each library surveyed would not be adequate. Public libraries varied enormously in size, from Knutsford in 1906 with just 1,863 books in the entire library, to great city libraries such as Birmingham or Edinburgh with tens of thousands of books available to borrowers. A straightforward comparison of figures in such cases would be a meaningless exercise. It was thus decided to render these absolute figures into percentages: the figures for each of the twelve authors were totalled and that total regarded as representing 100%. The number of copies of each author's work was then expressed as a percentage of the total. In order not to lose sight of the original numbers, the tables in Appendix II always record the absolute figures before the percentage into which they were converted.

(2) In Table 1 in Appendix II, the 'period' percentage was arrived at by totalling the number of copies held under each author in all the libraries covered by Period 1 in all four regions. The same procedure was followed for Periods 2 and 3.

APPENDIX II

The Tables

In order to check the significance of the observable differences between individual regions and individual periods, a series of chi-square tests were run on the data. The first tested the significance of the difference in author totals between Periods 1, 2, and 3. The second tested the significance of the differences in author totals between Regions A, B, C, and D in Period 1; the third did the same job for Period 2, and the fourth the same job for Period 3. In all four tests the results suggested that the differences were significant, and that the probability of the observed differences being due to chance was less than 0.1%. In the following tables all percentage figures have been rounded to one decimal point.
Table 1. Library holdings by period (The figures in parentheses under the Period totals for each author indicate the percentage share of that author)

### Period 1

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(The figures in parentheses indicate the percentage share)

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<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80 (2.5%)</td>
<td>162 (5.1%)</td>
<td>438 (13.7%)</td>
<td>177 (5.5%)</td>
<td>107 (3.4%)</td>
<td>443 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>86 (2.0%)</td>
<td>278 (6.7%)</td>
<td>587 (13.7%)</td>
<td>493 (11.5%)</td>
<td>67 (1.6%)</td>
<td>600 (14.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>114 (3.2%)</td>
<td>267 (7.5%)</td>
<td>431 (12.1%)</td>
<td>250 (7.0%)</td>
<td>105 (3.0%)</td>
<td>433 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>89 (2.8%)</td>
<td>158 (5.0%)</td>
<td>299 (9.4%)</td>
<td>178 (5.6%)</td>
<td>100 (3.1%)</td>
<td>603 (18.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>102 (2.9%)</td>
<td>298 (8.6%)</td>
<td>628 (18.1%)</td>
<td>275 (7.9%)</td>
<td>64 (1.8%)</td>
<td>274 (7.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>128 (3.6%)</td>
<td>258 (7.2%)</td>
<td>578 (16.1%)</td>
<td>186 (5.2%)</td>
<td>99 (2.8%)</td>
<td>382 (10.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 (1.3%)</td>
<td>69 (7.3%)</td>
<td>191 (20.1%)</td>
<td>41 (4.3%)</td>
<td>41 (4.3%)</td>
<td>168 (17.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Library holdings by region-period
(The figures in parentheses indicate the percentage share)
TABLE 3. First and second placings of predominant authors
(The numbers directly after each name indicate the number of library catalogues in which that writer was placed first out of the twelve selected authors, in terms of the number of copies listed. The figures in parentheses refer to the number of libraries in which the author was placed second)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
<th>Braddon</th>
<th>Scott</th>
<th>Wood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London (Region A)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16 (2)</td>
<td>3 (5)</td>
<td>4 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South (Region B)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7 (2)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands and North (Region C)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6 (5)</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
<td>8 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland (Region D)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4 (3)</td>
<td>9 (3)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX III

Library Stock Inertia

Some of the libraries surveyed had been founded long before the catalogue used in the survey was issued. Others were newly-founded institutions. Although fiction stock changed quite rapidly, it is possible that the initial purchase of stock in an older library provided a gravitational pull which retarded its holdings and made them somewhat more ‘out of date’ than holdings in a catalogue which, although exactly contemporary, had been produced by a newly-founded library able to buy extensively in the latest vogue. This hypothesis of ‘library stock inertia’ was tested in the following way:

(1) Two groups of 22 libraries each were chosen.

(a) Those with a large gap of time between the library’s foundation and the date of the catalogue surveyed (the f-c gap); this averaged out at 25.7 years. (The f-c gap for each library is included in parentheses after the catalogue date): Brighton, 1890(17); Bristol Central, 1892(16); Leamington Spa, 1886(29); West Bromwich, 1888(14); Leeds, 1889(19); Sheffield, Upperton Branch, 1892(23); Wandsworth Central, 1896(11); Fulham Central, 1899(12); Cambridge Central, 1894(39); Watford, 1898(24); Sunderland, 1896(37); Bootle, 1902(15); Hawick, 1895(16); Aberdeen, 1898(13); Walthamstow, 1908(14); Cambridge Central, 1904(49); Norwich, 1912(55); Reading Central, 1912(29); Colchester, 1912(20); Birmingham Central, 1906(45); Aston Manor Central, 1906(28); St Helens Central, 1912(40).

(b) Those with a small f-c gap (average 2.6 years): Wandsworth Central, 1885(0); Clerkenwell Central, 1889(1); Bermondsey Central, 1892(0); Cheltenham, 1890(6); Great Yarmouth, 1890(4); Hindley, 1887(0); Darlington, 1892(7); Kendal, 1892(0); Aberdeen, 1886(1); Edinburgh Central, 1891(1); Stoke Newington, 1893(3); Poplar, 1894(2); Holborn, 1899(6); Hampstead Central, 1899(5); King’s Lynn, 1902(3); Leigh, 1895(1); Waterloo-with-
Three authors whose holdings were declining (Bulwer Lytton, Payn, and Trollope) and three whose holdings were rising (Besant, Haggard, and Twain) were chosen. If stock inertia were a real phenomenon, then we should expect libraries with long f-c gaps to show more cases, particularly in Periods 2 and 3, where ‘declining’ authors maintained a percentage share above the Region/Period average. If some form of retardation was occurring, then holdings of rising authors would more frequently register under the Region/Period average than over it. Conversely, in libraries with small f-c gaps, ‘declining’ authors would more frequently underscore and ‘rising’ authors more frequently overscore.

Each catalogue in the survey had its holdings of the six writers involved compared with the average figure for the Region/Period in which it occurred. If the two figures were within plus or minus 1% of each other they were deemed to be equal and an equals sign (‘=’) was placed against the entry. If the actual library figure was more than 1% lower than the relevant average then the entry was marked with a minus sign (‘−’). If the actual figure was more than 1% higher than the Region/Period average then a plus sign (‘+’) was given. If all the libraries in both surveys roughly conformed to the average we might expect a rash of ‘=’ signs in both Group 1 and Group 2, and might reasonably draw the conclusion that there was no sign of stock inertia. If the libraries in both groups were widely distributed around the mean point then we might expect few ‘=’ and a large number of ‘+’ and ‘−’ signs randomly distributed over both groups. Again, one could reasonably conclude that there was no evidence of bookstock inertia. Only if the ‘declining’ authors get more pluses and fewer minuses than the ‘rising’ authors in Group 1, and the ‘rising’ authors get more pluses and fewer minuses than the ‘declining’ authors in Group 2, can it be argued that there may be some form of retardation of bookstocks in libraries with large f-c gaps.

Table 4 sets out the findings from this analysis, and invites the following observations:

(1) Group 1
   (a) Half (33) of the entries from the ‘declining’ group are 1% or more higher than the appropriate Region/Period average while only about a quarter (17) are below.
   (b) Only 10 of the ‘rising’ entries are above the average while nearly twice that number (19) are below it.

(2) Group 2
   (a) More than twice as many entries from the ‘declining’ group are under the average (32) than over it (15).
   (b) ‘Rising authors’ number 21 above, as opposed to 14 below the average.

Some degree of ‘library stock inertia’ is thus evident in the catalogues.

Two striking results call for further brief comment. Twain’s high number of ‘=’ entries (15 in Group 1, 14 in Group 2) may be explained by reference to his
Public Libraries and Popular Authors

Table 4. Library stock inertia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 — Libraries with a large foundation date-catalogue date gap</th>
<th>Declining authors</th>
<th>Rising authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lytton</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payn</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2 — Libraries with a small foundation date-catalogue date gap</th>
<th>Declining authors</th>
<th>Rising authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>(+)</td>
<td>(=)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lytton</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payn</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trollope</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage holdings. In this selection of catalogues they averaged between 1.6% and 4.0%, so that even something as small as plus or minus 1% represented a considerable proportional change. Trollope's figures tend to confirm him as one of the greatest sufferers of decline in the entire set of twelve authors. His 'over the average' figures drop from 12 in Group 1, to 3 in Group 2, while his 'under the average' figures rise from 3 in Group 1, to 9 in Group 2. Any inertia of bookstock in libraries with a large f-c time gap would be bound to favour most those authors experiencing the sharpest decline in their percentage holdings. Trollope seems to swim like a coelacanth through the preserving waters of these older libraries.

APPENDIX IV

Public Libraries Included in Survey

An asterisk indicates a fiction-only catalogue. Ouida's holdings in square brackets. Catalogues listed by region and date.

A London

Cotgreave, Alfred, Public Library Wandsworth . . . Catalogue of the Whole of the Books in the Library (London, 1885) [23]
Inkster, Lawrence, Battersea Public Libraries, Lammas Hall Branch, Catalogue of the Lending Library (London, 1888) [52]
Burgoyne, Frank J., Lambeth Public Libraries, Index-Catalogue of the Books in the Norwood Lending Library (London, 1888) [0]
Clerkenwell Free Public Library, Catalogue of the Lending Department (London, 1889) [23]
Public Libraries and Popular Authors


Chelsea Public Libraries, *Catalogue of the Kensal Town Library, Harrow Road West* (London, 1890)


Burgoyne, Frank J., *Catalogue of Books in the Tate Central Library, Brixton, S.W. Lending Department* (London, 1893)

Stoke Newington Public Library *Catalogue of the Reference and Lending Departments* (London, 1893)


City of Westminster Public Libraries, *Catalogue of Books in the Lending Department of the Public Library, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.*, second edition (London, 1905)


Public Libraries and Popular Authors

B The South

Cambridge Public Free Library, Index Catalogue to the Books in the Barnwell
Branch Lending Library (Cambridge, 1887)

Brighton Public Library, Catalogue of the Victoria Lending Library (Brighton,
1890); Supplement, 1890

Jones, William, Cheltenham Public Library, Catalogue of the Lending and
Reference Departments (Cheltenham, 1890)

Carter, William, Great Yarmouth Free Library, Catalogue of the Books in the
Lending Department (Great Yarmouth, 1890)

Bristol Public Free Libraries, Catalogue of the Redland Branch Library, White-
ladies Road, third edition (Bristol, 1891)*

Taylor, John, Bristol Public Free Libraries, Catalogue of the Central Library,
King Street, second edition (Bristol, 1892)*

Cambridge Public Free Library, Index Catalogue of the Central Lending Depart-
ment, third edition (Cambridge, 1894)

Watford Public Library, Catalogue of Books in the Lending and Reference Sections
(Watford, 1898)*

Maw, Thomas, Stanley Public Library, King’s Lynn, Catalogue of the Lending
Library (King’s Lynn, 1902)*

Pink, J., The Second Index-Catalogue of the Central Lending Department of the
Cambridge Public Free Library ... (Cambridge, 1904)

Eastbourne Public Libraries, Catalogue of the Central Lending Library, fifth
edition (Eastbourne, 1906)

Eastbourne Public Libraries, Catalogue of the Branch Lending Library, second
edition (Eastbourne, 1906)

Rickword, George, Borough of Colchester, Catalogue of the Public Library
(Colchester, 1912)

Norwich Public Library, Author Catalogue of Fiction in the Lending Library
(Norwich, 1912)*

Greenhough, W. H., Catalogue of the Central Lending Library (Reading, 1912)

C Midlands and North

Stanley, Thomas, Wednesbury Free Library, Catalogue of the . . . Lending and
Juvenile Departments (Wednesbury, 1885)

Leamington Spa Free Public Library . . . Catalogue of the Lending Department
(Leamington, 1886)

Leyland Free Library, Hindley, Catalogue of the Books in the Lending Department
(Hindley, 1887)

Dickinson, D., Catalogue of the Books in the Lending Department of the West
Bromwich Free Library, fourth edition (Oldbury, 1888)

The James Reckett Public Library for Eastern Hull, Catalogue of the Lending
Library (Hull, 1889)

Catalogue of the Leeds Library with a Short History of the Library (Leeds, 1889)

The Edward Pease Public Library, Catalogue of Books in the Lending Department,
new edition (Darlington, 1892)
Public Libraries and Popular Authors

Kendal Public Library, Hand-List of the Books in the Lending and Reference Departments (Kendal, 1892)*

Sheffield Free Public Libraries, Catalogue of the Upperthorpe Branch Library (Sheffield, 1892)*

Birmingham Free Libraries, Catalogue of the Lending Department, Adderley Park (Birmingham, 1894)*

Leigh Free Library, Catalogue of the Reference and Lending Departments (Leigh, 1895)

Rothwell Public Library, Catalogue of the Books in the Lending Library (Rothwell, 1896)

Sunderland Public Library, Index-Catalogue of the Books in the Lending Department, new edition (Sunderland, 1896)

Keogh, A., Newcastle upon Tyne Public Libraries, Catalogue of the Stephenson Branch Library (Newcastle, 1897)

Waite, C., Catalogue of the . . . Free Lending Library, Little Bolton (Bolton, 1890); Supplement, 1898

Taylor, Edith G., Catalogue of Books in the Waterloo-with-Seaforth Public Library (Liverpool, 1899)

Birmingham Free Libraries, Catalogue of the Balsall Heath Branch, new edition (Birmingham, 1902)*

Ogle, J. J., Borough of Bootle, A Catalogue of the Free Public Library (Bootle, 1896); Supplement, 1902

Kenning, J. W., Rugby Public Library, Catalogue of Books in the Lending and Reference Departments (Rugby, 1904)*

Borough of Aston Manor, Catalogue of the Central Lending Department of the Aston Manor Public Library (Birmingham, 1906)

Birmingham Free Libraries, Catalogue of the Central Lending Department Ratcliff Place, new edition (Birmingham, 1906)*

Knutsford Public Library, Catalogue (Knutsford, 1906)*

Burton, George H., King's Norton and Northfield Urban District Council, Catalogue of the Books in the King's Heath Library (1910)*

Burton, George H., King's Norton and Northfield Urban District Council, Catalogue of Books in the Stirchley Library (1911)*

County Borough of St Helens, Free Public Libraries, Catalogue of the Central Lending Library at the Gamble Institute (St Helens, 1896); Supplement, 1913

D Scotland

Carnegie Free Library, Dunfermline, Catalogue of the Books in the Lending and Reference Departments (Dunfermline, 1883)

Whyte, John, Catalogue of the Inverness Public Library (Inverness, 1883)

Catalogue of the Dumbarton Free Public Library Circulating and Reference Departments (Dumbarton, 1885)

Aberdeen Public Library, Catalogue of the Lending Department (Aberdeen, 1886)

Catalogue of the Alloa Public Library (Glasgow, 1889)

Morrison, Hew, Edinburgh Public Library, Catalogue of the Books in the Lending Library (Edinburgh, 1891)
Catalogue and Bye-Laws of the Hawick Public Library (Hawick, 1895) [16]
Edinburgh Public Library, Nelson Hall and West Branch, Catalogue of Books in the Lending Department (Edinburgh, 1897) [27]
Catalogue of the Greenock Library, Watt Monument (Edinburgh, 1897) [1]
Aberdeen Public Library, Catalogue of the Lending Department (Aberdeen, 1898) [43]
Perth, Sandeman Public Library, Catalogue of the Lending Department (Perth, 1898) [33]
Glasgow Corporation Public Libraries, Index Catalogue of the Gorbals District Library (Glasgow, 1902) [8]
Glasgow Corporation Public Libraries, Index Catalogue of the Anderston District Library (Glasgow, 1904) [5]
Burgh of Kinning Park, Index Catalogue of the Kinning Park Public Library (Glasgow, 1905) [0]
Glasgow Corporation Public Libraries, Index Catalogue of the Woodside District Library (Glasgow, 1905) [7]