

**DICKENS, READE, AND COLLINS,
SENSATION NOVELISTS; A STUDY
IN THE CONDITIONS AND
THEORIES OF NOVEL WRITING IN
VICTORIAN ENGLAND**

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Dickens, Reade, and Collins, sensation novelists; a study in the conditions and theories of novel writing in Victorian England by Walter C. Phillips

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WALTER C. PHILLIPS

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VICTORIAN ENGLAND**

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN ENGLISH
AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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A STUDY IN THE CONDITIONS AND
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IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND

BY
WALTER C. PHILLIPS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, IN THE
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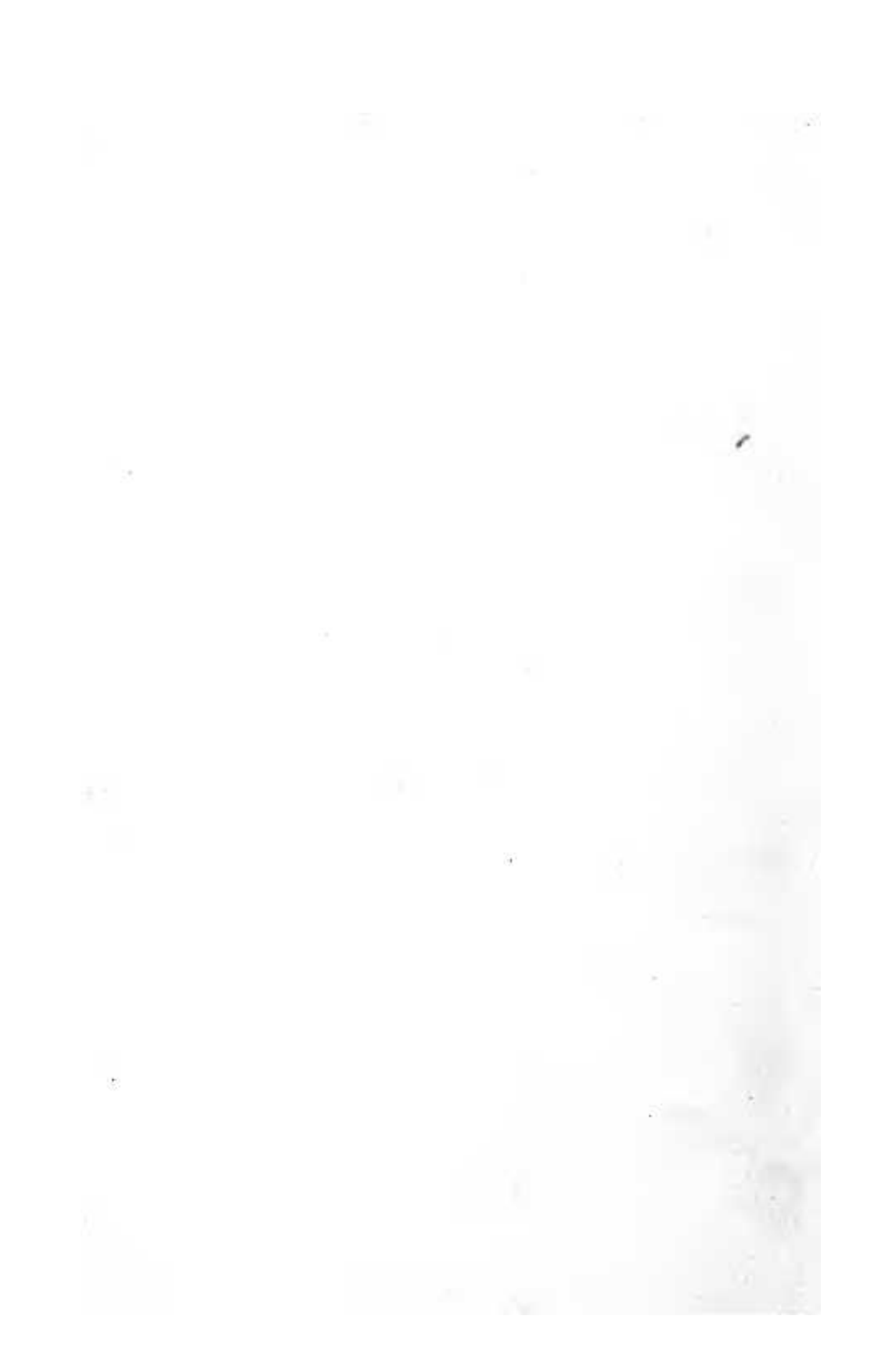
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TO THOSE
WHO MADE THIS STUDY POSSIBLE



VII

PREFACE

DICKENS once condemned a doctrinaire preface by his friend Collins on the principle that a book of all things ought to stand by itself. Such admirable sense, it seems, ought to be heeded generally, especially by those who from time to time with great labor perpetrate books about better books. But the temerity apparent in writing about Dickens at all nowadays will probably seem equal to a preface in the true Victorian manner. If such an attempt is not to need apology, it certainly requires definition.

Hitherto the study of Victorian letters has been confined almost entirely to biography and esthetics. Yet as a matter of common knowledge that which distinguishes Victorian from other times, and chiefly explains the problems in its esthetics, is the social and intellectual change which made the many arbiters of taste. It is common knowledge that this revolution made novel and periodical the favorite literary forms. But the specific ways in which it affected the writer of fiction — the opportunities and ideals it encouraged, the changes it wrought in narrative form, the interaction of periodical and novel upon each other — have never been stated connectedly. The object of this study is an outline statement of these new forces as they affected Dickens and his followers. It aims primarily to present the problems and opportunities of fiction-writing as the Victorians saw them sixty years ago. The book purports to be nothing more than a beginning upon a broad subject. To blaze a trail through the wilderness of trade conditions from 1800 to 1850 is difficult, for in the present state of

bibliography the results depend somewhat upon diligence, more upon chance. Moreover, the narrative is incomplete without reference to the French, who had earlier experimented in low prices and periodical publications. Twenty-five years hence, when this chaotic period is better known, the generalizations in this study will have been reinforced and elaborated, I hope, not changed. Likewise, leaving aside natural inclination of the Dickensians to the theatrical, the tradition of diabolism in English prose romance does not entirely account for their sensationalism. There are obscure, intangible influences from the French here also. These are by no means exhausted by Reade's known appropriation of French narrative. After Scott, say in Ainsworth, English prose romance was experimenting; and how much or in what manner Dickens's followers later were affected by Victor Hugo and Eugène Sue there is little means of saying.

At the end of the task it is pleasant to acknowledge kindnesses encountered in its course. I owe thanks to the staff at the Columbia University Library and to that of the John Hay Library in Providence for pains in making available obscure novels and obscurer magazines, especially to Mr. T. P. Ayer, while he was reference librarian at Brown, and later to Miss E. R. Blanchard, his successor. Mr. Crawford of *The Toronto Globe* enabled me to obtain some controversial papers of Reade which have not been reprinted. Dr. Robert S. Forsythe of Adelbert College kindly called my attention to some obscure but significant facts which I had missed. Some years ago a preceptor of my undergraduate study, Professor G. W. Benedict of Brown, stimulated my interest in Reade, and to him I am indebted for various useful hints during the writing. Professor G. P. Krapp of Columbia also aided in the formation of several chapters. My chief debt is to Professor A. H. Thorndike, whose interest in the study and whose helpfulness have been invaluable. For judicious