CHAPTER – 1

THE VICTORIAN AGE

SOCIETY AND ITS UNDERWORLD

This chapter seeks to present a pen picture of the literary trends in the Victorian period. In particular, Dickens's and Collins's literary masterpieces, as faithful representatives of the age that they lived in. A brief survey of the Victorian society, covering the social, economic and political scenario of that time, is followed by a study of the existence of a Victorian underworld, and the emergence of crime in the Victorian period.

The unprecedented turmoil and upheaval in the Victorian society resulted in the 'literature of the rebel' and the 'literature of consent'. The underlying currents of evil threatened to over rule the peaceful ambience of the Victorian society. Dickens was the very picture of subtlety in the representation of evil, but Collins revelled in his fascination with and sympathy for the criminal. Crime, mystery and suspense are intrinsic to Dickens’s and Collins’s narrative art. Reasons for the sudden upsurge in the popularity of these novels, have also been cited here. The sensitive and realistic portrayal of the decadent society found many takers. The greatness of these two writers ensure that their classics are till date, acclaimed works of art. Their way of depicting a crime ridden society, raised their work from the abyss of cheap thrillers to acclaimed works of art.

The Victorian Age was fraught with drastic changes in all spheres of life. Political, social and economic changes ushered in the Victorian Age. To
start with, the political fabric of English society underwent a profound change. The common folk came to enjoy the fruits of democracy and individual freedom. The king thus became a mere figurehead while the real power went into the hands of elected representatives. As real power came to be vested in the hands of elected representatives i.e. the House of Commons, the Theory of Divinity of Kings became extinct. A number of legislations were passed by this very House of Commons, which revolutionized the rights of the common people. Compared to the preceding age, the Victorian Age was remarkably an age of peace. People welcomed peace brought about by democracy and shunned warfare. Democracy also ushered in education for the masses. With the spread of democracy and popular education, there were other desirable changes, like religious tolerance and growing brotherhood.

But, this was also an age of profound social unrest. The society came to be divided into different strata of the rich, the middle class and the very poor. The rich and affluent came to enjoy life at the expense of the poor. They had enough wealth to while away their time in meaningless pursuits or token social work while they employed a battery of servants to run their households. The middle levels looked up to the aristocracy and were perfect exponents of Victorian prudery. The womenfolk claimed an affinity with the aristocrats, while their supporters (husband, brother, father) stressed the dignity of work. Their diligence in dispensing their responsibilities assured that their womenfolk did nothing, as it would otherwise be a slur on their manhood. The womenfolk of the very poor could not help but work as factory hands, where they were debased and forced into prostitution, for the sake of two square meals a day.
Inspite of the slaves having been freed around the year 1833, socially alert Englishmen realized to their chagrin, that ‘slaves’ did not necessarily mean negroes from Africa. Slaves also referred to their English brethren working in the mines and factories. This period of social unrest is marked by an unprecedented rise in crime in the early part of the nineteenth century. Different social critics have described crime differently.

In everyday language, crime’ refers to either serious criminal acts against victims (larceny, burglary and housebreaking, robbery, thefts of large amounts, fraud, forgery and coining, serious assaults, homicides, sexual assaults and so on and so forth) or those offences and offenders, which are felt to pose some threat to the society at large, and who therefore have to be reined in by the police and the courts. Other minor offences such as vagrancy, drunkenness, minor assaults and breaches of the peace, breaches of licensing laws and local acts are not considered serious criminal acts. Different reasons have been forwarded for such criminal activities,

...as a result of man’s original sin, ...socio-economic.....

consequence of class struggle and social stratification

...institution of private property ...Environment as key to crime and punishment.¹

The following table² shows the total committals to Trial for Indictable Offences, for the Black Country 1835-60, divided into categories of offence.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offence Category</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Larceny</td>
<td>17,410</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Offences against property committed with violence (robbery, housebreaking)</td>
<td>1,216</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Receiving stolen goods</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Embezzlement</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fraud, forgery, currency offences</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Offences against the person</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Riot and public order offences</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Malicious damage or injury</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Other</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,072</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around the 1820s, crime was thought to be the result of widespread poverty and unemployment. But this view which suggests that poverty or in other words want is the cause of all crime, was not later accepted as the prime cause of crime. In the year 1839, the Royal Commission on a Constabulary Force[^3], however, reported that poverty and destitution had been wrongly held responsible for the unabated rise in crime. They interestingly reported that crime owed its rise in popularity, to the attractive profits of a life of loot and plunder compared to one of honest diligence. These confirmed criminals thus, having forsaken honest labour, looted and plundered whenever the need arose. At times, they would also take up honest work, but they habitually stole to make up
their financial constraints. An important segment of the criminal class was made up of what we now call juvenile delinquents. Orphans, runaways and deserted children must have taken to crime to keep themselves from starving. In most cases, the poverty of their parents must have forced them into a life of crime and destitution. For the urban juveniles, social poverty and not individual poverty was the cause of all crime. The poverty of the social institutions led many of the urban juveniles to a life of crime. Society was now riddled with vices like drunkenness and crime. The desire to drink or the money spent on it meant for food or lodging, often initiated the entry into a crime ridden life. The meagre savings of the wife were forcibly taken by the husband to pay for his drinks. The need of a drink before and after committing a crime was obvious and much of the proceeds of crime as such, went on drink. Thus, some assaults and minor offences were many a time the result of excessive drinking and the consequent loss of self control. Many prisoners, became confirmed criminals either through advice and example or through loss of reputation. Crimes were, committed by hitherto honest people also. This addiction to drink and consequent crime, which followed was not limited to the drinker himself. It affected both the father and the mother, the latter with disastrous consequences. Thus, the desire for a drink in the poverty stricken life of the common man, often resulted in criminal excesses.

In this connection, the Beer Act of 1830, was passed to make beer easily available in that bars could be opened without a justices’ licence. This resulted in an upsurge of drunkenness among the poor and a decline in the level of drinking was effected in 1869 only after control was once again restored to the
The revival of respectable and cheap-eating places without having to buy drinks for the poor, began with the initiation of a coffee-house in Dundee in 1854. The rich and the affluent classes in their emulation of the aristocracy distanced themselves from the poor. The rich were excited into a competition of brashly flouting their property and position and rivalry of emulating gentility. This emulation of gentility saw a division of labour in men and women. Men (brothers, fathers and husbands) of the more affluent class debarred their women from going out to work. Thus, the more affluent women in emulating the gentility were deprived of all her business ability and household chores. Hence, there was a necessity of a battery of maids to relieve the mistress from all domestic drudgery and thus were employed 'a cook, a laundry maid, nursemaid and sewing maid'. Thus, the whole Victorian set up underwent a great change. Once and for all, a clear demarcation was made between masters and servants. No longer did they sit at the same table to share their joys and sorrows while they ate and relaxed. The womenfolk and other dependents of the family began to enjoy the comfort offered by the services of the servants. The ladies of affluence continued discriminating against the rural folk "by recognizing the gulf between her and the people in the trade." But even then the newly employed workers displaced by the new Factory System preferred getting employment in these affluent households. This was mainly because the servants were able to perform some of the domestic work of the household. In this way the customary familial economy, was in a way, kept alive. Amongst all the traumatic changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution servant-hood was "the least abrupt switch from tradition."
From then on, work came to be firmly segregated into separate spheres. Men began to command an authoritative position in public and business transactions. Women, once and for all were debarred from any kind of productivity save that of child bearing. As the women's morale undertook a beating, the women who were compelled to work to maintain themselves suffered untold miseries. The idea of a woman working was degrading. Coupled with this degradation, she was made to slog even at unearthly hours of the day, with the result that her home and hearth were pitifully neglected. The relation between the different members of the family underwent a change for the worse and as an indirect effect; their children were the most affected. As domestic help became popular, many were the instances where mothers left behind their own children to nurse their wards belonging to affluent families. At the same time, the Victorian society expected more from the affluent mothers. Though within the realms of her homely kingdom, the mother exercised absolute sovereignty, she was subservient to her husband. Traditionally, the wives should follow the Biblical injunction as laid down by St. Paul – “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husband, as unto the Lord”. And at the same time sons and daughters too had to submit to their father's word of law.

Catherine Beecher, reasoned in her "Treatise on Domestic Economy of 1841," that women must be subordinate to men in society and in turn, they must have complete hegemony in their homes. Women's "public subordination and private supremacy" is essential not because women are inferior to men but as it would stabilize democratic society. And the English mothers adhered to it. Such mothers often exercised her supremacy at home by administering twenty to fifty
strokes to turn wicked and stubborn children into ones with loving and sweet
dispositions. Such mothers admonished “unless a mother uses her authority in
this way she loses all hold over her children, and when fear and reverence cease
then good-bye to all affections.” But then the Victorian mother had other
important duties to perform. Her first and foremost duty was to run the house
and thus had to neglect the nursery. The child’s training was left to nurses, wet
nurses, governesses, tutors and servants. These nannies were helped by the
nursemaids. These nursemaids came from the rural community, with absolutely
no knowledge of any kind of work. And as such, were exploited, by being paid
a meagre amount for their services. There was a fast turnover of these maids
excepting in some affluent households where they served for about eighteen to
twenty years of service and almost became a mother substitute. Thus we have
Peggotty in David Copperfield, who was idealized by Dickens as the matronly
nurse and mother substitute of David Copperfield. “In the census of 1851 it was
stated that the number of women and girls employed was 2,988,600 out of the
total female population of 10,659,600 or 28.9 per cent.” By 1871, the total
number of general servants in England and Wales had risen to 780,040 (an
increase of 55 percent in 1851) to stretch almost far enough to cover the
estimated 838,000 families whose incomes had risen above £100 per year by
1857. By 1881, the number rose further to three and a half million.

The double standards and hypocrisy of the Victorian society were
apparent in the employment of the wet nurse. The nurse’s own child was
neglected, to be brought up by whoever was available. This neglect often ended
in starvation and death. This is vividly painted in George Moore’s Esther
Waters 1894⁹, which shows the predicament of the Victorian wet nurse, employed by affluent and rich households. These maids were frequently seduced by the masters, totally unprotected, and could not even lodge their complaints with the trade unions. These female servants “provided the would-be-lecher with an integral target, for they were vulnerable, permanently available and had, in a sense, already been paid for.”¹⁰ With the decay in the cottage industries, the capitalist farmers employed the women as wage-labourers. They hoed and weeded the newly enclosed lands. The farmers wanted to enlarge their new markets and so were eager to keep down the cost of production. As such, they were eager to employ women, who could be paid low wages and these put a check on any further demand to increase men’s wages. As women’s services were considered supplementary to a man’s, it further lowered the demand for any increase in a woman’s wages. Thus, men who worked as daily labourers, were kept out of the fields for weeks and months on end, whereas, the capitalist farmer continued to exploit women and children who worked for much lower wages. They were further exploited by being employed seasonally or casually. This class of lower class women thus, sought solace in prostitution. This ‘Great Social Evil’ later became a medium of criminal initiation and instruction to their victims.

The children’s education was also neglected. Both the parents were busy with their respective work, all day long. Amateurish schools too were in short supply, with pupils offering little or no fees. Mr. Wopsles’ great aunt in Great Expectations ran such a Dame school for an hour or so after closing her little village shop. In Northern England, some mercenary persons advertised
excellent instruction in ancient and modern languages, mathematics, and other curriculum. The topping on the cake was that it guaranteed ‘no vacation’. This was a welcome dumping ground for heartless parents and guardians who could forget their wards, for a very long time, by just paying twenty guineas annually. Dickens was very much affected by the miserable plight of the poverty stricken children. At the age of twelve, Dickens had had the bitter experience of working in Warren’s Blacking Warehouse. So with the knowledge and expertise of one who knows, Dickens vehemently denounced any kind of activity that would deprive a child from enjoying his childhood. Dickens announced this principle and it came to be generally recognized and adopted. Thus, we find that the most exploited sections in the society were the women and the children. The women were denounced on the grounds that by working away from home, they neglected domestic happiness. They were held responsible for their husband’s frequent visits to the gin shops and their children’s squalor. These juvenile lawbreakers thus, took to begging and petty crime (like Jo in Dickens’s *Bleak House* although Jo never even thinks of theft) or else made good after a life of transportation in Australia. The second group were the more intelligent the ‘grammar school’ stream who had been pickpockets or more expert criminals.

The growth of towns in the 1840s and 50s further distanced the classes. There was a want of sympathy between the rich and poor classes. Of this poor class, the skilled artisans and agricultural labourers seldom took to crime as they were rarely short of work. But the sudden pressure of influx in the towns was enough to plunge even the well-settled into disaster. The administrative machinery lacked the incentive and drive to offer the basic civic amenities in
the absence of a concerned government. This was prompted by the belief that work was the only way towards salvation and charity or state aid would defeat this moral. Thus, the rich took solace in this convenient opinion and did little to ameliorate the sufferings of the poor and downtrodden of the society. This same 'town-ward drift' was again responsible for the huge impact on the lives of the original residents of the towns and new migrants. They were rudely jerked out of a life of placid certainty, in the same way, that left the poor completely bewildered to see their familiar landmarks wiped away. The high birth rates and low death rates resulted in a youthful population which pressurized the state's economy. The unmarried youngsters living in lodging houses were especially susceptible to unwholesome influences. The situation was made worse by unprecedented congestion in the housing sector. The type of accommodation till then frequented by the poor, became scarce and conditions such as Chadwick and Shaftesbury further humiliated the demoralized poor. This lack of social cohesion, could again be traced back to the death of the Factory System and large scale organization of labour, which in turn led to a lot of drunkenness, ignorance, and the habit of living in unhygienic, overcrowded hovels. This gulf between the rich and poor could not be mitigated by the presence of a middle class either. This utter lack of sympathy and intercourse led even further to a widening rift between the rich and the poor.

The Factory System further worsened the life of these poor agricultural workers. This Factory System, large scale organisation and Capitalist agriculture involved a number of changes in the modes of employment of men and women. This drastically altered familial relationship and the relationship
between the sexes deteriorated. The labourers were mercilessly exploited. The small hutments of these exhausted labourers were filled with people of all ages, equally tired. Along with the loss of physical health, there was loss in standards of morality and individual relationship. Thus, the filial bond came to be authorized by money, instead of mutual trust and love and in this way, money cemented the relationship between parents and their children. The poverty-ridden state of these factory workers was further worsened by the grim and gloomy surroundings in which they lived. The workmen were made machines by the rich entrepreneurs, and were engaged in mechanical and repetitive tasks in the factories, to get the maximum output from them. Their places of work were no better than prison houses. Family members lived like savages. Recklessness, starvation, drunkenness, parental cruelty and carelessness, filial disobedience, neglect of conjugal bonds and rights, absence of maternal love, destruction of brotherly and sisterly affection were the main factors that led to the degeneration in the quality of family life. The children were actually sold to some industries into which they were driven.

Again, the people, who were concentrated in and around the industrial belt, reached a higher standard of life, in comparison to the previous century. Around the year 1733, the simple tools were matched by an equally simple organization of labour. But a century later, this simplicity underwent a drastic change and as a result of the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution, the husband and wife no longer companionably worked for their economic upliftment. The middle class gentleman learnt the dignity of labour, whereas, at the same time, his wife was rendered economically useless. In the crucial
period, which followed the struggle against Napoleon and the French Revolution, England tried to organize her internal prosperity and progress. The Reform Act of 1832 was passed to satisfy the demands of the middle class. However, the poorer section failed to benefit by this act. On the other hand, by her inventions in steel and machinery, and by her successful business ventures, England had become, “the workshop of the world.” This is beautifully illustrated in Dickens’s Nicholas Nickleby.

...Whether I look at home or abroad; whether I behold the peaceful industrious communities of our island home ...I clasp my hands and turning my eyes to the broad expanse above my head, exclaim, “...thank heaven, I am a Briton!”

The numerous inventions made in England automatically increased the use of machinery in the field of industry. This heralded the Industrial Revolution, which was, an epoch-making event in the annals of English history. Everyone firmly believed that all would be benefitted in the process. This was when they had more or less no idea about the evils associated with industrial life. The Industrial Revolution in England, in the 18th century, was an epoch making event. But the evils associated with it, far outweighed its blessings. In 1844, Friedrich Engels in his classic study of The Condition of the Working Class in England, describes how this revolution and the ‘townward drift’ in its wake, gave birth to the English proletariat, who lived and worked in miserable conditions and who were also fast becoming alienated and demoralized. And one of the immediate effects was the tremendous increase in the crime rate.
The advent of the Industrial Revolution saw a gradual sea change come over the entire social fabric. People were thoroughly disillusioned with the evils brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Rural England had all the assets to bring about great economic activities in the industrial scene. Changing conditions in rural England like the 'enclosures'; went a long way in driving away farmers and peasants from all that was familiar and dear to them. The Napoleonic wars went further in dealing a severe blow to the agricultural workers. Because of these wars, the government to recoup the loss of inflow of food-grains from countries strongly articulated the laws of enclosures and the worst sufferers were the poor peasants. Another interesting fact was that, the incidence of crime being so great, there was a disproportionate increase in the crime rate. Destitution, profligacy and other criminal activities continued to increase with an unprecedented rapidity. The growing figures of crime and resultant political unrest could thus, be directly connected to the development of industrialization and the concentration of population in both urban and industrial townships.

The following table\textsuperscript{15} shows, that between 1805 and 1842 the number of criminals tried, increased nearly to seven times the original number, with a simultaneous increase in population by about 80 percent.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Committals for Trial England and Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>4,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>5,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815</td>
<td>7,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>13,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>14,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>18,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>20,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>20,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>27,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>31,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>24,303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The improved police service and changes in the legal system obviously showed a marked increase in the recorded crime rate. And, at other times, the weak police service and uneven prosecution, especially in the nineteenth century, showed a far lesser number in the figures of court appearances, from the number of offences being committed. Charles Dickens also spoke of the river thieves in 1853 who took advantage of the lack of adequate warehousing facilities at the docks in Liverpool. Different categories like 'tier-rangers' stole the property of sleeping captains, 'lumpers' were unloaders who regularly stole small packets and smuggled goods for members of the crew, 'truckers' were
lesser thieves than smugglers and 'dredgermen' were those who pretended to
dredge coal, but actually threw parts of the cargo overboard, to be dredged up
later. Very soon, the Victoria Docks came up in 1855, followed by the Millwall
Docks in 1868 and undoubtedly these improved facilities showed a marked
reduction in theft from shipping in the Port of London and from goods in transit.
Contemporary opinion thus played down the effect of poverty in the simple
sense. This was followed by the belief that cyclical fluctuations in trade effected
crime to a great extent. They wrongly believed that the state of trade and wheat
prices were responsible for these cyclical fluctuations. But this view having
proved erroneous, the modern approach to crime which understands it as a fall
out of the institution of private property, seems to be the most viable. This is
further corroborated by the growth of Enlightenment Ideas in the second half of
the eighteenth century, wherein penal theorists held environment to be the cause
of all crime and subsequent crime.

Now, with the incidence of crime so great, it was natural that fiction
should also reflect a slice of real life. Fictional works regarding the exploits of
criminals and their escapades began to flood the market. This trend continued
for sometime, until the roles of the detective and criminal were reversed. Very
soon the eminence and importance enjoyed by the criminals came to be the forte
of the detectives. How and why this happened will be discussed in the following
pages. The general trend in the Victorian period i.e. towards the middle of the
nineteenth century in England, was that the reading public and the novelists
were both weary of novels about criminals, and though works on criminals
continued to flood the literary market, yet there was a growing demand for
novels with the detective as a character of prime importance. Thomas de Quincy (1785-1859), was one of the first novelists to study crime objectively, instead of solely concentrating on the convicts themselves. Though he dealt with the most talked about murders of the time, yet his 'Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts' was certainly far from perceiving that detection might become a subject for study, or that it, too, could be 'considered as one of the fine arts'. Other novels in the detective strain focused on the lives of professional thieves, (The case of the 'Artful Dodger' in Dickens's Oliver Twist). The only mobile police at the time were the Bow Street Runners, who did commendable work under the able guidance of Fielding, but these too fell into disrepute. They had nothing to gain from pursuing notorious criminals, but gained much when they befriended these criminals, by accepting bribes and sharing rewards. Matters came to such a head that in 1829, Sir Robert Peel, inaugurated the organization of the Metropolitan Police. Initially, the citizens were skeptical about the efficiency of the system, but gradually, with greater improvements in the prevention and detection of crime, the suppression of vagrancy and the maintenance of good order, this skepticism was overcome by admiration.

In 1843-44, Sir James Graham, realized that criminal investigation and the detection of crime, must be a specialized concern of the police force. Accordingly, a few keen intelligent officers were appointed to discharge their duties dressed as ordinary people. From this was born the now world famous Criminal Investigation Department at Scotland Yard. William Russell, under the pseudonym of 'Waters', was one of the first police officers to give an account of his personal experiences, upon retirement. It was apparent from his jottings
that there was a general change in the attitude of the people to the police. His *Recollections of a Detective Police Officer* 1856 was so successful, that Alexander Dumas, had it translated to French, warmly recommending it to the French readers. In this way, detectives and detective reasoning came to underline the stage plays before making an entry into fiction. Dramatic detective sequences were also abundant in *The Factory Assassin : or The Dumb Boy of Manchester* written by Barnabas Rayuer (adapted by him from a French source) and produced at Astleys' Theatre in 1837. The detective was given a really important role in Tom Taylor's popular melodrama *The Ticket of Leave Man*, produced at the Olympic in May, 1863. The play had far reaching consequences as it gave equal importance to the criminal (i.e. the convict-hero) and the detective. The realization of the readers that proof is important and that evidence, especially circumstantial evidence was very important, added to the popularity of these novels. But then, gradually the law and order situation was improving. And the convict's punishment was no longer very harsh. As such, he aroused no sympathy in the common man (unlike Pip's convict, Mr. Magwitch, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*). Furthermore, there was an increasing interest in the role of the detective and his mode of working. In the later novels the position of eminence earlier enjoyed by the convict, now came to be enjoyed by the detective.

This eclipse of the convict-hero by the detective-hero...,

received a good deal of its initial impetus from certain novels of

Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins.... In *Bleak House, The*
A brief reference to the reasons for the growing popularity of these novels is here necessary. Julian Symons in his *Bloody Murder: from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: a History* comes up with an interesting classification as to the reasons, why these novels were so popular. He bases his first reason on Dr. Charles Rycroft's "Psycho-analytical Quarterly". Rycroft brings into consideration Geraldine Pederson – Krag's hypothesis concerning the 'primal scene' of infancy. According to Rycroft, the murder in the story represents parental intercourse, the victim is the parent and the clues are the accompanying sights and sounds of the night-time revelry. He assures that the reader personifies his or her own hostility towards the victim – parent and thus the reader transforms himself into not only the detective, but also becomes the criminal. Here, Symons has also included the speculations of Professor Roy Fuller who finds similarities between the detective story and the Oedipus myth which serves as a harmless and cleansing ritual for the Oedipus myth in every writer's and reader's life. In the opening years of the twentieth century mention must be made of W.H. Auden, who stressed on the setting of the detective story. The more idyllic, innocent and rural the setting, the better the effect of the detective story on the reader. It helps the reader to overcome and purge himself of his guilty feelings and conscience. When a person beyond suspicion is proved guilty, we are at ease with ourselves. It helps us escape from the reality of our situation and confirms out belief in 'an imagined primal innocence'. Auden likens this sort of self-ablution to the primitive practice of animal
sacrifice, made to atone for ones sins. In the same way, the society is guilty of aiding and abetting crime and the best outlet is to make the criminal a scapegoat for its condemnation. The criminal is a fit medium for the society to cleanse and purify its guilty conscience, in the very same way, that an animal sacrifice offers its perpetrator, immense relief and satisfaction. So, the main reason that a person widely reads crime stories is the idea of exorcizing the guilt of the individual or social group. Symons here supposes the detective and criminal to resemble light and darkness respectively. The human tribal sacrifice is given sacred honour for the alleged criminal, who resembles the devil and is outdone by the detective, the witch doctor. These are some of the plausible psychological reasons for the popularity of the sensational hybrid-crime, detective, mystery and thriller novel.

Coming to the social reasons for the popularity of the genre of these novels, Dorothy Sayers\textsuperscript{17} has added an important point. So long as the criminal enjoyed the sympathy of the public these novels could not have their heyday. Public opinion had to sway in favour of the good work put in by the detective, for the genre to succeed. And in the twentieth century, we find that these novelists were firmly for the law and order of the society. In other words, novels dealing with crime, mystery and suspense, reassured the public that truth always triumphs. The errant criminal if found and proved guilty, is brought to book, re-establishing faith in society's firm belief in the established order of the day. Only occasionally was the detective allowed to veer from the pre-ordained path. Detectives like Sherlock Holmes in the tune of Robinhood, were allowed a free reign, only because the ends justified the means. He was allowed to upset the
apple cart only because, the society was reassured of his commitments. He did illegal things, adopted unfair means, for the right reasons. Added to this, the detective in the Victorian era was very often an amateur, so that the reader could very easily identify himself with the avenging angel. The detective stories in this way, provided the Victorian readers, with not only an outlet for their criminal and guilt-ridden instincts, but also the satisfaction of knowing that wrong doing is inevitably punished.

The detective story continued to hold its sway till about the beginning of the First World War. The willing suspension of belief, desirable to enjoy and appreciate detective stories was easily provided for, because the ambience of the stories closely corresponded to the ambience of the country house, the most sought after setting of the detective story. But slowly, with the change in the social and religious structure of the society, the country house setting was a pretence and we find the imagination of the writers eroding them. No longer could they keep up the appearance of lets pretend and we find thus, a gradual decline in the detective novel, replaced by a steady increase in the popularity of the crime novel. The detective with its puzzle element was relegated to a back seat, by the onslaught of the crime novel, which laid more stress on characterization. Both have their points of greatness and it is only after an intense study, that we decide on our preferences for a certain kind of literature.
Notes:


