

if he did, the next question is: why would he have written it in that style? And if that question can be answered, there is the question of when, in his pre-1934 life, he would have been likely to have the time or inclination to write it.

Since so few people have read the novel, the best way to begin a discussion of it is to describe its plot (which is relevant evidence in itself). The story encompasses the rise and fall of Silas Burney, a depraved and unscrupulous man who becomes a famous Labour leader. In Book I (of four Books, comprising 38 chapters), we learn that Silas has neglected his wife and four children, being more dedicated to the Socialist Party. The next Book covers his becoming a member of Parliament and a powerful and influential speaker (the titan of the Labour movement); his being befriended by the daughter (named Miles) of Sir John Walker, a "tolerant and kind" newspaper owner who treats his employees well; and Miles's asking Silas to help a housemaid (Flossie) whom (unknown to Miles) he has seduced. At this point we are told that "there are always forces at work, unseen forces, ever vigilant to bring to nought the evildoer wherever found, and Silas Burney was now to see the first signs of his fall" (p. 147).

In Book III, Miles and Flossie gradually discover that they are in love with the same man (Silas); and a Sir Jacob Randles promises Silas wealth and his daughter's hand in return for Silas's arranging for Sir Jacob to be given a title. Silas, in Book IV, vows to pay Flossie to be rid of her (and the child she had by him) in order to accept Sir Jacob's offer. Sir John, convinced of Flossie's goodness and with evidence of Silas's duplicity, manages to bring everyone together in London, where Silas is confronted. Flossie makes an eloquent speech (including poetry) at the end of which she dies, but not before Silas has wept and asked for forgiveness. In a brief Epilogue, we learn that Silas and his daughter have moved to Canada, where he says to her that the bright star they see in the sky "may be your mother's eyes looking down on you and me, and hoping and praying that you will become like her—a woman who brought 'the Titan' down and made him a MAN!"

There are a number of other characters that I have not mentioned; and most of the characters, from time to time, engage in political discussion, often uttering long statements on the dangers of socialism and the corruption of the demagogues who attain office. One character wonders "if the rottenness and canker had gone too far to save the nation" (p. 73). And not only the characters but the narrative voice also raises this concern:

There has been working silently on the English Nation for many years, a spirit alien to everything that makes for honesty of purpose, integrity of character and truthful speech. Turn where we will, this insidious power is at work, ceaselessly, noiselessly, resolutely; bent on undermining the British Character and the British Constitution. (p. 95)

From the opening chapter, the narrator's views are clear: a minister's strictures, for instance, are said to have "aroused the bellicose propensities of a certain class who alas! have assumed the reins of government," and a footnote here states "Labour Government in Office" (p. 11). The formality of expression is illustrated on the previous page when two men conversing on a veranda say they should move inside because of an approaching storm: by doing so, they were "suited the action to the word." The style ranges from overly formal to melodramatic: