

The Victorian News Letter, which herewith makes its debut, has two chief purposes. One is to serve as a house organ, so to speak, for the Victorian group of the MLA; the other is to act as a medium for the exchange of news and opinions relating to the study of Victorian literature. There are no ambitious plans for it--not even a regular production schedule. Its sponsors hope, however, that its continuance and growth will be encouraged by all who are interested in Victorian scholarship and criticism. That encouragement, for the present at least, will not take the form of subscriptions, for the News Letter, to use a favorite Victorian cliché, will be a marvel of cheapness. In fact, it will be distributed free. But its growth will depend upon the readiness with which students of Victorian literature contribute to its columns news items, short statements of viewpoints, queries, and other material like that sampled in the following pages. Every Victorian scholar who receives the present issue is invited to send to the editor, without further solicitation, items he deems appropriate to such a paper.

This issue is being sent to several hundred men and women who have attended English X meetings in the past few years, or who have published articles and books on Victorian subjects, or who for other reasons are thought to be interested in the field. Professor Ray will be glad to add further names to the mailing list; simply send him a card or letter with your suggestions. The next issue will appear in the autumn, with a full representation of the various features which are proposed, and to some extent illustrated, in the following pages.

EDITORIAL

In 1940, writing for Studies in Philology a detailed survey of Victorian studies from 1932 to 1939, the late Charles Frederick Harrold was able to look back upon eight years of fruitful work in the field. Were he living today, he would

undoubtedly review with even more satisfaction the accomplishment of the past twelve years, which witnessed a steady advance in our understanding of Victorian life and letters. Victorian scholars seem to agree that the period is coming more and more into its own, and a comparison of the work now being done in Victorian studies with that in any other field of English literary scholarship supports this sanguine view. Yet, as Harrold noted in 1940, and as several of the contributors to The Reinterpretation of Victorian Literature later pointed out in greater detail, there is no danger of our scraping the barrel for a long time to come. There are still hundreds of important and challenging topics for study in biography, history of ideas, criticism, social background, the history of periodicals and publishing--in fact, in every aspect of Victorian literary and cultural history.

One of the great desiderata in Victorian studies is criticism. American scholars--and those in our own field are by no means an exception to the rule--shy away from the writing of criticism, however enthusiastically and well they practice it in the classroom. While it is no doubt true that few research men make first-rate critics, still there are some who do, and more who would, if they gave themselves a chance; and one need not be himself a researcher in order to apply the discoveries of others to a stimulating re-examination of Victorian literature. There is no good book of criticism on any of a number of eminent Victorian writers (Browning is a notorious case in point); there is no good modern history of Victorian literature in general; there is even a scarcity of good critical essays on the Victorian novelists and poets and essayists. Should not this, then, be one of our chief tasks in the years to come--to offer to the world a whole series of thoughtful analyses and re-evaluations of the Victorian writers as literary artists? The opportunities are limitless, and the need is great.

While--thanks in great part to scholars in England and America--the world knows much more about the true nature of Victorianism as an intellectual and social force than it did twenty or thirty years ago, when to many people Lytton

Strachey's view was still gospel, there is still more to find out. We need more studies of the minds of influential Victorian thinkers--studies modelled upon Noel Annan's recent one of Leslie Stephen. We need studies of the common mind of the period: the way in which ordinary people viewed life, the prejudices they cherished, the standards of value to which they clung. We need more intensive examination of the social background of the age. On the dusty shelves of Blue Books, reports of statistical societies, contemporary social documents of all sorts, lies hidden a wealth of material which can throw revealing light upon the milieu in which Victorian literature was bred and read.

Everyone talks about the influence of publishing practices upon Victorian letters, but few people really know much about it. Never before had the peculiar circumstances of the publishing business, the economics of authorship and of the trade, exerted so widespread and various an influence upon what authors wrote, and how, and why. Yet there has been little systematic exploration of this complex of elements which determined the character of Victorian writing. When the Richard Bentley papers, a great mass of which is now at the University of Illinois, have been thoroughly examined, we shall undoubtedly have much new information on such matters. But even the printed sources now available, if the researcher knows how to find and use them, can yield valuable data. And speaking of publishing in general, where is the Frank Luther Mott who will give us a history of nineteenth-century English magazines?

These are only a few of the tasks which beckon Victorian scholars in 1952. There are many more. Are Victorian studies now heading toward the most desirable goals? Or are we barking off on false scents, and neglecting jobs that are more urgent than the ones it is now customary to engage in? These are questions which the News Letter invites its readers to consider, and then to discuss in its pages. Like workers in every scholarly field, we need constantly to assess our progress and reconsider our aims; to discourage types of investigation that are simply not paying off, and to do what we can to re-channel our own energies and particularly

those of our graduate students into those fields in which there lies the greatest promise of reward.

The editor, having set the problem for discussion, now turns interlocutor and looks forward to readers' reactions. Please write in; let your fellow-Victorianists know what you are thinking. As it would be impractical and in any event undesirable to discuss such matters formally every year in our group meeting at MLA, the Victorian News Letter can serve as a regular sounding-board for your opinions.

ENGLISH X NEWS

The program of the English X meeting in Boston next December will be devoted to Matthew Arnold. As there is a slight ambiguity in the listing of the group's committees in the February, 1952, issue of PMLA (p. 121), it may be well to state that the program committee for that meeting is headed by Professor Francis Mineka of Cornell, to whom papers should be submitted for consideration.

CURRENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

A substantial majority of the group of English X members who were asked to express their opinions on what the News Letter should contain have urged the inclusion of a selected list of recent publications in our field. An interim list, which would in no way aspire to the completeness of the annual bibliography in Modern Philology, should be available to specialists who seldom are able to keep fully abreast of significant new publications and who at the same time do not wish to have to catch up on a whole year's output after the May number of MP appears. In the autumn issue of the News Letter such a list will, it is hoped, appear. If readers have suggestions relating to the scope and nature of such a list (which, it must be emphasized, will necessarily be highly selective), they are invited to send them to the editor, for transmission to the News Letter's bibliographer--who is yet to be chosen.

One recent and important publication which may well be missed by bibliographers in their appointed rounds is Chapter XIV ("Personal Style and Period Style: A Victorian Poet") in Robert M. Estrich and Hans Sperber, Three Keys to Language (Rinehart, 1952). This forty-page essay on Tennyson's "Ballad of 'The Revenge'" is a noteworthy contribution to Tennyson criticism, and it exemplifies a method--or a combination of methods--of analysis which can be followed, with equally enlightening results, in the case of hundreds of other Victorian poems. Pages 108-24 also contain valuable comments on Carlyle's habit of word-coinage.

The Festival of Britain last year, recalling as it did the Great Exhibition of 1851, occasioned a great deal of journalistic writing about the early Victorian scene. The "Festival Souvenir Number" of the London magazine Bandwagon, for example, was devoted entirely to articles written in the style of, and from the viewpoint of, 1851. Copiously and elegantly illustrated, as it was no doubt tempted to describe itself, the magazine is a delightful souvenir of the year of the Crystal Palace, with the added benefit of a century's hindsight. If, when the 1951 Victorian Bibliography appears, any publications of this nature prove to have escaped the net of Professor Wright's bibliographers, the News Letter will welcome contributions toward a list of them.

LIBRARY NOTES

From time to time the News Letter will print brief descriptions of library collections which are of special value to Victorian students. Readers who know of such collections in their own college or university libraries, or who have used such collections elsewhere, will do a distinct service to their fellow-workers if they send brief descriptions to the News Letter. Quite probably the paragraphs below, which their respective authors have generously contributed at the editor's request, contain information that will be new to some of our readers. Particularly welcome will be news of recent library acquisitions of significance

to Victorian specialists. If your library is especially rich in the mid-Victorian novel, say, or if it has just acquired a mass of manuscript material, let your colleagues know about it.

The Symington Collection at Rutgers

The J. Alex. Symington collection of literary manuscripts and letters of English writers of the nineteenth century, acquired by the Rutgers Library in 1948, contains a vast quantity of mostly unpublished material useful for research in Victorian biographical and critical fields. Probably the most valuable part of the collection is that centering around the Swinburne and Rossetti circles. Included in it are ninety-five long literary letters from Swinburne to W. M. Rossetti, many manuscript poems of Swinburne, and letter books of Watts-Dunton. There are many letters, manuscripts, and miscellanies by or about the Brontës, George Borrow, Landor, Mrs. Gaskell, Harriet Martineau, Hardy, Ruskin, Lord Houghton, Meredith, and others. Large numbers of typed transcripts of letters (some of them still unpublished) from the Wise and Gosse libraries add to the value of the collection to researchers. All of the manuscript material has now been catalogued, with cards for both writers and recipients of letters.

--Leslie A. Marchand

Charles Darwin in Philadelphia

The American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia is rapidly building up a collection of Charles Darwin Papers which seem already second in importance only to those at Down House and at Cambridge University in England. The American Society collection contains at the present time 177 letters from Charles Darwin to Sir Charles Lyell, 1837-1874; 277 letters to Lyell from A. R. Wallace, T. H. Huxley, A. von Humboldt, and others, 1828-1874; as well as a Darwin-Romanes correspondence of 84 pieces and microfilm of the collection at Down House. A collation based on incomplete notes rapidly indicates that much, if not most, of this material is unpublished. The Darwin-Lyell letters form, for Darwin's side, an admirable record of the long friendship which he began in

hero-worship and ended in rather perfunctory mourning for the deceased. Technical scientific discussion predominates, but there are many personal and general statements highly interesting to the biographer and historian of ideas. One sees that Darwin read Lamarck with more care than he has elsewhere indicated. One sees also how much he modelled himself, both as a man and a scientist, on Lyell; and how--when he could not accept the "humanism" of The Antiquity of Man and Lyell could not quite accept the naturalism of The Origin of Species--the discussion gradually lapsed into the safety and comfort of minor issues. Two cautious but very earnest men differed slightly on a fundamental point. The result was a significant but hardly perceptible coolness.

--William Irvine

The Sadleir Collection at U.C.L.A.

Students of the Victorian novel will be interested to know that Michael Sadleir's collection of nineteenth-century fiction has been acquired by the University of California at Los Angeles. Though the general nature of Mr. Sadleir's interest had long been known, it was not until the publication last year of XIX Century Fiction, a monumental catalogue (2 vols., University of California Press) based on his collection, that the importance of his library was widely and fully realized. It is questionable whether any amount of patient assiduity, together with an unlimited budget (in these days of the revival of Victoriana), could reproduce the books which Mr. Sadleir began to acquire some thirty-five years ago.

The significance of the transfer of this collection to an American university lies in the rich and perhaps unique opportunities for fruitful scholarship which it offers. As a collector Mr. Sadleir had a keen eye for the condition of his books, disposing of one copy when a better came to hand. Many a library which rightfully prides itself on its collection of Victorian fiction has among its books a liberal sprinkling of Mr. Sadleir's discards. The collection therefore provides unrivalled materials for the study of Victorian printing practices and binding styles. But more important, of course, is the completeness of the minor

novelists. Since Mr. Sadleir, by and large, left the big names to the traditional collectors, most of the 300 writers represented in the total of approximately 10,000 volumes fall into the categories of second and third-rate. It is precisely these, however, who will most interest close students of fiction, providing as they do materials for a hitherto unwritten chapter in the history of nineteenth-century fiction. Very few of the lesser known Victorian novelists, many of them very interesting, have ever been studied critically. In the introduction to his collection Mr. Sadleir has suggested several categories and styles of fiction that could profitably be studied; other critics practiced in the field will have no difficulty in adding to the list.

Temporary housing has already been provided for the collection, which is open to qualified students. When a new wing of the UCLA library is built, a room will be provided in which Mr. Sadleir's novels will be brought together with the education and philosophy library of his father, Sir Michael Sadleir, which was acquired several years ago. It is expected that Mr. Sadleir will come to Los Angeles in October to participate in a ceremony dedicating the collection.

--Bradford A. Booth

MICROFILMS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY PERIODICALS

As most of our readers know, there is now under way an extensive program of microfilming the entire files of some two hundred British periodicals from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. An article by Richmond P. Bond describing the genesis of the project, was printed in the Library Journal for January 15, 1951.

A recent communication from University Microfilms, the agency undertaking the work, announces that, of the several acres of nineteenth-century periodicals scheduled for filming, one (the Critical Review, which lasted down to 1817) is already issued, and three (Cobbett's Political Register, the Examiner, and the

Scots Magazine) are now in negative film. Prospects are excellent for a steady flow of film from laboratory to subscribing libraries. Since periodicals from three centuries are involved in this single project, however, it must be expected that only a fair proportion of the output in any given year will consist of films particularly relevant to Victorian studies.

Subscriptions are still being received for the series. Full details may be obtained from University Microfilms, 313 North First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

WORK IN PROGRESS

A regular feature of the News Letter in future issues will be an interim list of new research and writing projects in our field, in order particularly to facilitate communication between scholars having interests in common. The "Work in Progress" compilation published annually in PMLA must remain, of course, the chief directory of current projects in our field as in all others. But the pages of the News Letter will be open to all scholars, including dissertation-writers, who do not wish to postpone announcement of their project until the next issue of "Work in Progress." Directors of dissertations in the Victorian field should urge whatever candidates have missed the deadline for the 1952 "Work in Progress" to send their dissertation-subjects to the News Letter. And, equally important, this listing will follow the excellent example of the quarterly list in American Literature by including projects which have, for one reason or another, been dropped. Thus it will be possible to keep the register of Victorian research and writing projects reasonably up to date.

In this connection, we should like to invite readers who have major post-doctoral projects well under way (not merely in the planning stage) to send brief descriptions of what they are doing. Too often the necessarily abbreviated announcement of "Work in Progress" is insufficient; "studies in Trollope" or "research in the poetry of Swinburne" or "critical analysis of Arnold"--such descriptions are seldom very enlightening. Students engaged on important

researches and compilations, or on longer-than-article-size critical excursions, are urged not to shrink from mild self-advertisement as unbefitting the traditional modesty of the scholar. Actually, far from being dismissed as puffery (a practice nevertheless quite understandable in scholars working in the shadow of the Seven-Foot Hat), short paragraphs summarizing research-in-progress will be welcomed by our readers for what they are--true news items, with the aid of which it will be possible to be better acquainted with what is going on in our increasingly active field.

A sample of such information comes to us from Miss Beatrice Corrigan of the University of Toronto. She writes:

Through the kind interest of Professor Shaw of the University of Toronto, and of Professor Raymond of Bishop's University, I was enabled by the very generous services of the Committee on Photographic Reproductions of MLA to secure microfilm reproductions of several mss. in Italian libraries dealing with the murder story which is the basis of Browning's Ring and the Book. Of the documents dealing with the murder only one is unknown, but there is much material on two earlier trials, the suit brought by Guido Franceschini to recover his wife's dowry, and that, also brought by Guido, against Caponsacchi for abduction and adultery. During a visit to Italy I also found the account of a suit brought by Guido's mother against Pompilia and Guillichini for theft and adultery. An article on the first part of the material is forthcoming in SP, and it is my hope to publish all the new material which I have discovered.

NEWS OF VICTORIAN SCHOLARS

In each issue we shall present the latest news of the academic fortunes of the men and women in our field: who have changed jobs, who have received Fulbright, Ford, Guggenheim or ACLS fellowships, who are spending a semester or a year as visiting professors at other institutions, and so forth. The items below represent news that has come to our attention in the past month or so. Since the editor has only casual and limited access to the grapevine, he hopes that everyone who has news of professional interest, relating either to himself or to others, will remember to send a press-release to the News Letter. The

following appointments are for the academic year 1952-1953 only:

Joseph Warren Beach, Visiting Professor at the Johns Hopkins University

Jerome H. Buckley, Visiting Professor at Columbia University

Morris Greenhut, Ford Foundation Fellow

Francis E. Mineka, Ford Foundation Fellow

Gordon N. Ray, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Professor (a newly founded chair) at New York University

Lionel Stevenson, Visiting Professor at the University of Illinois

John E. Tilford, Jr., Ford Foundation Fellow

Buckner B. Trawick, Ford Foundation Fellow

SCHOLARLY QUERIES

Finally, room will be available in the News Letter for appeals for information in connection with research. A reader who, having exhausted his most cunning bibliographical ingenuity, is at a loss for a vagrant piece of data, may frequently find that some other reader has the answer in his nearest card-file. Subscribers to our (comparatively!) venerable contemporary, the Johnsonian News Letter, will remember that on several occasions a query uttered there brought a prompt and rewarding answer. Readers with problems are invited to share them with their colleagues.