

THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Editors: Dr. E. Wright, Dr. F. A. Peake,  
Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario.

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Editorial

The second number of the Newsletter can report some success, note some disappointment. The success side must include the conference held last March, when the standard of the papers, the strength of support and the interest engendered equalled the hopeful optimism of the organisers. A brief report, with summaries of the papers, is included in this issue. Disappointment centres chiefly round the failure of members to provide news; the recent circular letter asking for items fell on very stony ground. Perhaps there is no news; perhaps members are too modest to believe

that their activities or comments rank as news. Yet the exchange of ideas, requests for information, reports of work in hand, meetings formal and informal, are the staple of a newsletter whose aim is to keep scholars in touch with what goes on in their field across a large and uncommunicative province. Perhaps we ought to change our title, borrowing one of Dicken's discards from the list out of which he produced Household Words. 'Seasonable Leaves' might suit. In view of our editorial grumbles we could hardly select 'Good Humour', as editors to readers we rather incline to 'The Rocket'.

In this number we tentatively present the project of a gradual listing of the holdings of Victorian periodicals in Ontario. The problems and possibilities are discussed later on, but we shall welcome comments and suggestions about any of the points raised and about the project in general.

Finally, a word about timing. The Newsletter is a regularly irregular production, aiming at two or three issues a year for the moment. The next issue should appear in early March, although there will be an intervening supplement to handle the details of the experimental periodicals listing.

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Founding Conference: Victorian Studies Association of Ontario

The founding conference of the Victorian Studies of Ontario was held on Saturday, March 30th at Vanier College, York University, Toronto with about sixty people present.

Following registration and coffee in the Lecture Hall the morning session, under the chairmanship of Professor Sydney Eisen, Department of History, York University, received with great interest a paper by Mr. David H. Newsome, of Cambridge, entitled "The Early Victorian World Picture", a summary of which appears elsewhere in the Newsletter.

In the afternoon a paper entitled "Dickens and the Victorian Sense of Time", which is also summarized in this issue, was read by Dr. George Ford of the University of Rochester, U.S.A., under the chairmanship of Professor H. Girling, Department of English, York University.

The papers were followed by discussion and a commentary by Professor R. K. Webb of Columbia University. Dr. Webb directed his observations chiefly to Mr. Newsome's paper and suggested that there is now a renewed emphasis on provincial history. He also suggested the importance of serious study of the growth of religious movements and their impact upon municipal policies.

Following the sessions a business meeting was held during which the Association was formally constituted and officers elected.

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Conference Papers

We understand that both of these papers are to be published. We are grateful to the authors for their generosity in allowing us to print these summaries.

Paper 1            The Early Victorian World Picture

Given by Mr. D. H. Newsome, M.A., Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History, University of Cambridge.

Mr. Newsome, in beginning his address on The Early Victorian World Picture indicated the complexity of such a topic but also its necessity if one is to understand the ethos of the period.

An understanding of the period, he said, might best be gained by a consideration of W. E. Gladstone, England's G.O.M. In fact, "no one should venture to make bold statements about Victorian England until he has been able to come to grips with Gladstone. ... For here we have in majuscule what is written in the others in minuscule - the same qualities, the same standards, only heightened by the sphere in which they are called upon to wield their influence."

These qualities and standards were being challenged in the 19th century and the significant difference between that century and our own was that it had not become hardened to change.

A further difference was the tendency of the Victorians "conscious as they were of revolution, to theologize their philosophy" that is "to fit everything they witnessed into the framework of God's

purposes for mankind." This theologizing led Victorians to see themselves as having an imperialist vocational pre-eminence, a sentiment which found considerable support in the prominence of Victorian Britain in world affairs.

Moreover, Britain had escaped any such catastrophe as the French Revolution, surely a cause for self-satisfaction; and through the Industrial Revolution had become the workshop of the world; equally a cause for self-congratulation.

The early 19th century also experienced two other revolutions - the Evangelical revival and the Romantic movement. These were different from the others in that they excited a specific response from those who lived in their midst. Moreover, the two were not easily distinguishable. The underlying Victorian characteristic which made them possible was seriousness, the earnestness with which the early Victorians saw themselves, an earnestness which they shared with the Renaissance humanists and which led them to attach profound importance to their own ethos and achievements, and to see in them something of the unique and the heroic, and a feeling that their new knowledge gave them unparalleled power.

All this, concluded Mr. Newsome, is reflected in the aspirations and qualities of Gladstone.

"We may be thankful that we do not take ourselves so seriously; but an examination into the reasons why the Victorians did so may - and perhaps should - provide us with some food for thought."

Paper 2

Dickens and the Eternal Moment

Given by Dr. G. H. Ford, Department of English (Joseph H. Gilmore, Professor), University of Rochester.

The paper explored some problems of Dickens' style or styles, problems that one becomes especially aware of when passages from his writings are read aloud, in particular the nature of what Graham Greene has called "his secret prose . . . the music of memory, that so influenced Proust." Passages from Little Dorrit and other novels were cited to illustrate situations in which the forward movement of the narrative is halted and the experience of a passing moment

is expanded, through recollection, into a seemingly timeless dimension. While such passages (constituting what Poulet calls a "chaplet of instants") are not in Dickens' most characteristic vein as a stylist, they do recur often enough, especially in the later novels, to give significant additional range to the effects of his writings on the reader.

In Dickens the elegiac and nostalgic mood of these "eternal moments" (Browning's phrase) seems to derive in part from recollections of the well-known traumatic experiences of the novelist's early life and in part from his frustrated sense in maturity (despite his monumental success) of having missed life's chances and of having been shut out of a garden. It was further suggested that Dickens is in this respect typical of many Victorian writers, whose sense of time shifts from their confident assertions about progress (Locksley Hall as an obvious example) to a more hesitant and tentatively expressed awareness of loss--as in Newman's closed garden.

Mr. Newsome's paper at the Conference referred wittily to what he called "the game of selective Victorianism." His warning was a chastening reminder that any of us can seize on some phase of the Victorian sensibility and demonstrate that this particular phase was the clue to the age. With Dickens' eternal moments as evidence it is tempting to indulge in such a game but an overall view suggests caution. Most of the time the Victorians were the forward-looking confident Macaulayites that they have been conventionally represented to have been by later generations. Nevertheless they were also haunted at times by a different awareness of experience, a melancholy confrontation with a sense of chances lost (Scrooge himself experienced it) and, when so moved, their writings, both poetry and prose, acquire an endearing pathos. There is a secret poetry as well as a secret prose.

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Next year's conference

The success of the 1968 conference leads naturally to thoughts of another one in 1969. It is too early to make any definite pronouncement, but it can be stated that the Association is very hopeful of mounting its second conference in 1969.

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Victorian Periodicals: Holdings in Ontario

While the importance of periodicals is today taken for granted, the bibliographical tools to facilitate their use are still in the making. The only check list for Ontario is A Joint Catalogue of the Serials in the libraries of the City of Toronto. This was first compiled by Blackburn and the most recent edition is the fifth, published in 1953 (University of Toronto press), which brought the listing up to the beginning of 1952. Scholars, not only from Toronto or Ontario, owe a great debt to Blackburn's work. Yet today something more comprehensive is required, which would cover not only Toronto but all the university, learned or professional institutions which may hold periodicals. Our concern is naturally with the Victorian period and with Ontario. If this 'something' could be created for the Victorian period its value to scholars would be great, not only for Ontario itself but as part of the much wider listing that Michael Wolff and others have called for.

Problems are plentiful of course, both of method and practical effort. Ideally we suppose it would be useful to have a cross-referenced list that would

- a) show where a given periodical is to be found
- b) show what any given library holds.

This could be of benefit in planning trips, or in calling for copies.

It may be that the central research library, when its ivory towers rise, will provide such a listing. However, the immediate need can be considered now, while any discussion of bibliographical method would still be of value.

With the cooperation of Queen's University through Professor J. K. McSweeney, and the University of Western Ontario through Professor T. J. Collins, the Newsletter proposes to offer an experimental sample listing. The two universities were asked if they would supply lists; both have done so and we are grateful to the individuals who have given time in preparing them. The method of listing was left to the institutions, but we did suggest that details of issues held and/or of gaps in runs should be noted. (Showing gaps could also stimulate the exchange of duplicates.) A quick comparison of the two lists throws up immediately a number of problems concerning the most useful way of preparing such lists. They include, in no order of priority:

- Of the three main identification markers for a periodical - issue number, volume number, date - how many are necessary?
- In certain cases there are both British and American editions of a periodical (e.g. The Westminster); publisher and place of publication become important. (In other cases there are quite distinct periodicals bearing the same name.)
- Is it clearer or more economical to show by 'holdings' or by 'gaps'? In some cases there are only a few gaps, in others there are only a few issues.
- Indexes are important (certain gaps shown in the lists can be identified as index volumes). Should indexes be shown, and how?
- Changes of title, new series, breaks in production all present complications.

These problems are not new, of course, and standard procedures have been devised for the well-known Serials lists. They merely emphasise that any joint list would need to consider very carefully the method of bibliographical presentation. This in turn would depend on what sort of major use is envisaged, and should take into account the information as already presented in library catalogues. It would also be advisable to check with other centres engaged in work with Victorian periodicals.

It was originally hoped to present the initial lists as part of this number, but problems of time and tabulation prevent this. We shall therefore issue them as a supplement in January, not with bibliographical nicety but experimentally, as examples and as a means of attracting comment. In the meantime we hope that members will write to us with their views and suggestions, so that we can print them with the lists. If there is sufficient interest, further lists can be printed in later numbers. It may be even that the project could prove of sufficient size and importance to be developed through the Association itself rather than through the Newsletter.

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### Bibliographical Instruction for Victorian Studies

The previous number gave an account of Victorian Studies at Leicester University. Mr. Lionel Madden has supplied a more detailed account of the bibliographical course given at the Victorian Studies Centre. Some of its basic material is common, as one would expect, to many courses on bibliography, but we believe that members

will be interested to see how the course is adapted in both content and practical work to the period and to local resources. (Mr. Madden is currently compiling for the Pergamon Press a guide to information sources for the period.)

Although the actual arrangement of the programme is still experimental, the general outline of the course is now clear. Bibliographical instruction by seminars is given to students for M.A. degrees by examination in Victorian Studies and in English Literature 1830-75. Other postgraduate students are also invited to attend the course.

During the first term attention is concentrated on the use of reference sources. The basic bibliographical guides to books, periodical articles, theses and manuscript materials are discussed and appraised. . . . Reference sources for anonymous works, lesser periodical indexes and biographical guides are discussed. Methods of locating and using manuscript materials are outlined. Current bibliographical work is noted and the many desiderata for Victorian scholarship are discussed. During this term students are given instruction in the use of the University Library and are required to perform practical exercises in information retrieval and the compilation of enumerative bibliographies. Words and phrases from a work discussed on the course - at present Alton Locke - are set for detailed annotation. For these purposes a 'Bibliographical Exercises Week' is set apart.

During the second term instruction is given in methods of descriptive or analytic bibliography. Topics discussed include the history of printing and the significance of printing changes in the nineteenth century, relations between authors, printers and publishers, the history and significance of copyright law, and the particular difficulties raised by periodical publication and the custom of anonymous contributions. As part of this course students visit a research collection and perform short practical exercises on selected materials. Last year students visited the Tennyson Research Centre at Lincoln and received enthusiastic and stimulating help from Sir Charles Tennyson, who demonstrated problems arising from Tennyson's habits of proof correction. It is hoped that the University will eventually acquire a hand printing-press. At present the College of Art in Leicester arranges short practical demonstrations of hand- and machine-printing for students.

During the final term students meet the Bibliographer individually to discuss the bibliographical methodology to be employed in the composition of their dissertations.

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A note on St. Deiniol's Library

We draw the attention of our readers to St. Deiniol's Library, a research centre for Victorian studies in the quiet village of Hawarden, just outside Chester. For those who may know little about its facilities we give the following information, summarised from a recent announcement.

Close to Hawarden Castle, for many years the home of W. E. Gladstone, on the edge of the Welsh countryside, yet within easy reach of Liverpool, the library is a residential one with comfortable and congenial living facilities, including thirty single study-bedrooms.

The library was originally planned by Gladstone who, in 1896, set up a trust for the purpose. On his death it was transformed into a national memorial to him. The nucleus of the library consists of the 30,000 volumes of the founder's own library. These comprise largely books and documents in Theology, History, Philosophy, Classics and Literature. Through endowments and gifts it has now grown to two and a half times its original size and accessions are constantly being added.

Endowments enable the inclusive charges to guest students to be kept far below actual costs. Canadians visiting England would do well to keep it in mind.

Further information may be had from the Warden,  
The Revd. Dr. Stewart Lawton,  
St. Deiniol's Library,  
Hawarden, Flintshire,  
Wales.

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Local Meetings

One of the aims of the Association is to encourage the holding of small meetings, formal or informal, among members of the

Association and other interested scholars. News of a meeting at Waterloo University held on November 11th is therefore to be greeted with pleasure. Professor F. E. L. Priestley gave a paper dealing with John Stuart Mill, Bentham and Comte. The paper and the discussion were enjoyed by the audience of about fifteen who attended from various centres. We hope to hear of more meetings and will provide space to publish brief accounts of them.