

**The
Victorian Studies Association
Newsletter**



Ontario, Canada.

THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

Conferences	2
Forthcoming Conferences	8
Meetings, Lectures, Exhibitions	9
Theses on Victorian Subjects	11
Library News	11
Communications	14

REPORTS OF CONFERENCES

Ontario Victorian Studies Conference

The annual conference of the Association was held at Glendon College, York University, on Saturday, March 28, 1970. Two papers were given, by Dr Brian Harrison of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and by Professor John M. Robson of Victoria College, University of Toronto, and reports of these appear below. Visitors to the conference included Dr Louis James, who chaired Professor Robson's paper, and Professor Michael Wolff, who spoke to the business meeting on a number of general questions related to the future of Victorian Studies. At the business meeting Professor Michael Millgate, of University College, University of Toronto, was elected as the new President of the Association on the completion of Professor Albert Tucker's two-year term. As retiring President Professor Tucker remains on the Committee of the Association; the other members are Professor Sidney Eisen of York, Professor Richard J. Helmstadter of Toronto, and Professor Thomas J. Collins of Western Ontario, with Professor Michael Laine of Victoria College, University of Toronto, as Secretary-Treasurer.

Professor Laine reminds members that subscriptions to the Association cover the period of an academic year and suggests that it would be most helpful if the \$5.00 subscription for 1970-71 could be returned by all members before the end of December. Cheques payable to the Victorian Studies Association should be sent to Professor Laine, Department of English, Victoria College, University of Toronto, Toronto 5. Members who have not already paid their 1970-71 subscriptions will find a convenient form enclosed with their copy of the Newsletter.

John M. Robson, "Fiction for the Historian: A Rhetorical Approach to the Victorian Novel".

Historians are reluctant to consider fiction as a source since it is, by definition, "invented." Nonetheless, many of them cite novels and novelists, occasionally quoting passages from them, or mentioning specific characters, to make a variety of points, generally having to do with attitudes taken to be prevalent in a period, especially among the readers of fiction, and frequently relating to class attitudes and behaviour, to taste, or to social and political milieu. The question of how historians can properly use fictional evidence is particularly relevant to Victorian studies, for much of the fiction may be described as "social," "political," or "religious." A further question related to this is: Is it true that historians of the Victorian period generally read the fiction of the period, but not the modern literary criticism, while literary scholars read modern historians of the period, but not the sources on which the historians draw? (This latter should be understood as a background consideration in this paper, but one that in part governed my argument.)

An examination of works by eight historians (Gash, Woodward, Young, Clark, Lynd, Briggs, Dodds, and Burn) revealed, as one would expect, a great variation in the amount and nature of fictional citation and quotation, so great, indeed, that the only generalization of much interest is that they are all properly cautious about such evidence, and tend, each in his own way, to state or imply qualifications about its use while using it. Some, notably Briggs and Burn, are more confident, more relaxed, and also more aware of the possibilities of fictional (and other literary) evidence. Recent attitudes towards historiography, as well as their own qualities, may help explain this difference between their work and that of earlier historians of the period, and one might also note that Briggs and Burn were the only two of those examined who relied on literary critics for generalizations.

The stated or implied qualifications concerning historical uses of fiction can be seen as hints at evaluation of the evidence, and as comments placing it in its context. Viewed from another angle, they can be seen as equivalent to what may be termed "rhetorical variables," that is, the variable factors bearing on anyone who attempts to communicate through words. These variables may be listed as Purpose, Person, Subject, Audience, Occasion, Resistance, Materials, and Argument.

When one sees the evidential and contextual tests of the historian as being equivalent (or at least closely parallel) to considerations appropriate to literary criticism in establishing the unique qualities of any piece of writing, the possibility of interaction between historian and literary critic becomes more hopeful. Looking at yet another example, H.G. Nicholas's introduction and headnotes to his collection of fictional election scenes, To The Hustings, one can feel more confident about this possible interaction, for Nicholas (a psephologist) neatly combines, in perhaps too compressed a form, considerations appropriate to historian and literary critic--considerations I would describe as rhetorical.

In short, historians' attempts to evaluate the probative status of evidence, and literary critics' attempts to establish the individual qualities of works, proceed on lines much less divergent than is often thought, lines that in fact coincide at many places, and run parallel in others. As a result, it should be possible for historians to accept more openly generalizations drawn from literary criticism, and also, by applying tests they know well, to accept evidence directly from literary works. (J.M.R.)

Brian Harrison, "The English Prohibitionists from 1853 to 1872".

After stressing the importance of investigating any Manchester-based, predominantly-nonconformist reforming movement which frontally challenges laissez faire attitudes in the mid Victorian period, Brian Harrison went on to analyse in detail the essential characteristics of British prohibitionists between 1853 and 1872. His analysis was based primarily upon a study of the 234 identifiable prohibitionists who gave £5 or more to the United Kingdom Alliance (the prohibitionist organisation) in the financial year 1868-9. The movement attracted support from all age groups, but its regional basis was strongly biased towards the industrial areas of Northern England, especially Lancashire; the movement was never strong in London, and was always suspicious of the compromises and lukewarm policies embraced at Westminster. It never attracted the aristocratic landowners, but appealed strongly to enterprising manufacturers and merchants, especially in the textile trades. Its mass following came from the élite of working men, who felt themselves threatened by social conduct at both social extremes: by aristocratic pensionaries and idlers, and by pauper spongers off the rates. The prohibitionists were energetic, somewhat eccentric, but decidedly "active" citizens, overwhelmingly Liberal in political allegiance. They were also dissenters of the political variety, and the movement attracted few Anglicans at any period. However sectarian the Alliance may have been at the national level, at the local level its supporters advocated many reforming causes-- notably temperance, peace, free trade, disestablishment, feminism and anti-slavery. The existence of this movement in the mid-Victorian period forces us to qualify somewhat Dicey's assertions on the debt owed by mid-Victorian

individualism to evangelicalism and Benthamism. For both evangelicals and Benthamites were prominent in prohibitionist interventionism, and quite self-consciously departed, in this sphere, from traditional laissez faire attitudes. But when one recalls that this departure was designed only to create the rational, self-directed citizens with whom laissez faire theory could operate--the qualifications which we must impose on Dicey's argument seem less extensive or important than might at first sight be anticipated. (B.H.)

York Dickens Conference

A two-day "Dickens Festival" was held at York University, Toronto, on September 28 and 29, 1970. Papers were given by Lauriat Lane ("Dickens and Melville: Our Mutual Friends"), Anthony Burgess ("Dickens as Earman, or A Voice Through the Gaslight"), and G.R. Stange ("Dickens and the Painter's Art"); Philip Collins gave readings from Dickens on the first evening of the festival, while the "Victorian Banquet" on the second evening was followed by speeches from F.E.L. Priestley and Robertson Davies. A special feature of the festival was the showing of films made from Dickens' novels at various periods--including the 1934 David Copperfield with Freddy Bartholemew and W.C. Fields, the 1948 Oliver Twist with Alec Guinness, and the 1947 Great Expectations with John Mills.

Alberta Dickens Conference

A Dickens Centennial Conference was held at the University of Alberta on October 1 and 2, with papers by Philip Collins ("Dickens' Public Readings"), J. Hillis Miller ("Interpretation in Bleak House"), Ian Watt ("Oral Dickens"), Sylvère Mond ("Confessions of an Unrepentant Chestertonian"), Steven Marcus ("Pickwick Papers Revisited"), and John M. Robson ("Our Mutual Friend: A Rhetorical Approach"). Publication of the papers is planned.

There was a concluding panel during which the speakers, who had shown a remarkable degree of agreement in approach, tried hard but somewhat unavailingly to account for it. The main centre of discussion throughout was the value of a close analysis of the text; it is unfortunate that the discussion didn't take place at the York Dickens Festival earlier in the week, where Anthony Burgess had with Podsnappian gesture but more than Podsnappian wit dismissed such investigations. A feature of the Edmonton Conference, as of the York one, was a public reading by Philip Collins, in which he included some materials not read at York. Another shared feature were the attractively and cleverly printed programme and menu.

There were some one hundred "delegates" at the Conference, with perhaps fewer from Ontario than there would have been if the York meetings had not drained energy as well as giving sufficient delight and instruction. Credit should be given to Rowland McMaster and Norman Page of Alberta, who, by arranging their Conference well in advance, encouraged Professors Collins and Monod to embark on extensive North American tours: having already, in Toronto, had the pleasure of Professor Collins' company at the start of his travels, we shall have that of Professor Monod's near the end of his, on November 12. (J.M.R.)

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Ontario Victorian Studies Conference

The annual conference of the Association will be held at Glendon College, York University, Toronto, on Saturday, April 3, 1971. Details will be sent direct to members in due course, and a full announcement will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Conference at University of Massachusetts and Associated Colleges

The theme of this Spring 1971 conference will be "The 1870s: A Decade of Conflict." On Friday and Saturday, April 16 and 17, there will be general sessions at the University of Massachusetts on: Culture and Aesthetic Values; Science and Religion; Imperialism; The Role of Women. During the preceding four days there will be a variety of Victorian events at five colleges in the area--Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and the University of Massachusetts. The registration fee will be \$3.00 and those who would like further information should write to Professor Michael Wolff, Department of English, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass. 01002.

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MEETINGS, LECTURES, EXHIBITIONS

Waterloo Lutheran University

On February 25, 1970, Professor Michael Laine gave a lecture on Victorian architecture and Victorian Literature. The event was jointly sponsored by faculty and students from the English departments of Waterloo Lutheran and the University of Waterloo.

University of Waterloo

During the month of March 1970 the University had on show the Victorian photography exhibit, "Victoria's World," prepared by the University of Texas. See also the previous item.

University of Western Ontario

Professor J.K. Fielding lectured on Dickens's Bleak House on August 7, 1970, and on September 29 Professor Philip Collins spoke on "Fact and Fiction in Dickens." During the 1970 summer session Professor Kenneth Allott and Professor Miriam Allott visited the university and gave courses on Matthew Arnold and on the English Novel.

York University (Glendon College)

On October 6 Mr Peter Pratt (visiting Toronto under the auspices of the National Heritage Foundation) gave a lecture at Glendon on the architecture of Victorian London.

Toronto Group

A second meeting of the Toronto interdisciplinary group (see Newsletter No. 5, pp. 3-4) was held at Professor Helmstadter's house on Monday, February 23, 1970. The subject for the evening, "The Situation of the Rural Writer in a Predominantly Industrial Age," was introduced by Professor W.J. Keith, who had announced beforehand that he would focus particularly on Borrow's Lavengro, Jefferies' Amaryllis at the Fair, and Hardy's Far from the Madding Crowd. Taking up each of these books in turn, Professor Keith explored such matters as the concern with authenticity of portrayal (of nature, agricultural methods, etc.) in rural literature, the position of the rural writer as someone writing about the countryside for a chiefly urban audience, the way in which the presentation of the rural scene for its own sake could threaten the structural integrity even of a novel like Far from the Madding Crowd. During the subsequent discussion these points were again taken up, as were particular questions related to each of the selected books and a number of additional topics, including the role and significance of dialect writing during the nineteenth century, the relationship between rural literature and landscape painting, and the economic factors affecting the rural writer's choice of fiction or of non-fiction prose as his preferred vehicle.

Similar meetings are planned for the 1970-71 academic year, and at the first of these, to be held on October 29, Professor Anne Robson will introduce, under the title "Time on Their Hands," a discussion of Victorian Women and their occupations. Details of these meetings are sent to

members in the Toronto area and to others who wish to be kept informed of them: anyone interested should get in touch with Michael Millgate or Michael Laine. It is also hoped that a number of Victorian books will be included in the first exhibition of the Toronto Book Circle, to be held in the main foyer of the Victoria College Library for two weeks from October 28.

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VICTORIAN THESES AT ONTARIO UNIVERSITIES

The last issue of the Newsletter listed theses recently completed or still in progress at York and at Queen's; the next issue will include similar lists from Toronto and Western. Members are urged to send the editor information about theses at their own universities so that this section of the Newsletter can be kept up to date.

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LIBRARY NEWS

University of Western Ontario

The library at Western is reported to be making a determined attempt to fill in the gaps in its holdings of nineteenth-century periodicals (see the list published in Newsletter no. 3).

University of Calgary

The editor has received a list of the Victorian periodical holdings at Calgary and plans to publish it in an early issue.

Victoria College, University of Toronto

David Sinclair has kindly contributed the following note, "The Tennyson Collection in Victoria College Library":

The Tennyson collection at Victoria has recently been catalogued according to modern library conventions. About 600 titles, mainly editions of the poet's works, comprise the bulk of the books and pamphlets in the collection. In addition, there are over 150 periodical articles and a few manuscript items: an inventory for the former has been drafted, and will be completed in a few months.

This collection came to Victoria as a gift of Charles Canniff James (1863-1916), a pioneer Canadian bibliographer and notable collector: his gifts have also enriched the library's holdings in nineteenth-century Canadiana. James' zeal in collecting and accumulating perhaps at times outran his discrimination, but he did build up a very good general collection of Tennysoniana before 1900 in which serious gaps are few. He extracted contemporary articles from a very wide range of periodicals between 1832 and about 1910, and seems also to have had a presscuttings service at work on Tennyson for him. All of this secondary material makes available a great deal of critical and biographical information on Tennyson. A small supplement is provided in the miscellaneous pictorial material such as portraits, travel guides and even postcards depicting both Tennyson and "Tennyson land".

Rich but not complete in first editions, the collection provides a good basis for textual criticism. Among the rarer firsts are Timbuctoo (in Prolusiones Academicæ, Cambridge, 1829); also present as it appeared in The Classical Journal, vol. 40), and A Welcome [to Alexandra] (London, 1863). Holdings are strong in both British and American editions, particularly Poems (from the 1842 text through the 17th ed., 1865, including many Ticknor printings), In Memoriam (1st ed. through 5th ed.) and The Princess (1st ed. through 7th ed.). First appearances of individual poems are represented among the periodical extracts and in anthologies such as The Victoria Regia (1861) and The Tribute (1837).

Some of the items bearing directly on Tennyson's poems include four rare pamphlets: Cloth of Frieze: or, Enoch Arden (continued), by C.H. Parish (1869; not in Wise), The De Profundis of Alfred Tennyson Remodelled, by Metamorphosis (1881?), Vox Clamantis, by Mackay (1887) and Bennett's Anti-Maud (2d ed., 1856). As well, the collection contains studies of the individual poems, concordances, indexes (including Lewis Carroll's to In Memoriam), and biographical essays.

The illustration of the period is spottily represented, while turn-of-the-century items of a popular and sentimental nature predominate. These illustrations are a form of literary comment, however, and the collection could be rounded out in this area. The great period of the sixties in illustration is represented by the second-best Routledge re-issue (1861) of Moxon's selections from the Poems. Doré is represented by Elaine (1866) and the Moxon Story of Elaine folio (1871). More obscure illustrators whose work may be found in the collection are Paolo Priolo (illustrations to the Idylls, 1863) and L. Summerbell, whose illuminated May Queen is a particularly fine item. Press work at its best is represented by the Kelmscott Maud of 1893.

The few manuscript items are mainly curiosities (a letter from Audrey Tennyson, an envelope with Tennyson's handwriting and seal, and ten lines from The Falcon in the author's hand). Of greater interest are two texts (In Memoriam, 1850, and The Lover's Tale, 1879) interleaved with holograph annotations by R.H. Shepherd, and a compilation of selections from Tennyson once owned by James Dykes Campbell. Campbell's library, sold in 1904, also yielded his annotated copy of Shepherd's Tennysonianana. Campbell had a longstanding interest in Tennyson, and his piracy of the poet's "Suppressed" poems (Poems, MDCCCXXX-MDCCCXXXIII) printed at the end of his two-year stay in Toronto as a chinaware dealer is in the collection as well.

As it stands today, with some gaps and inevitably some duplication of items, James' collection is a good one for its period, that is, the beginnings of Tennyson scholarship until about the World War I. It is a satisfactory working collection in many ways, as well as an evidence of one man's admiration for the Poet Laureate.

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COMMUNICATIONS

The editor has received a brochure from The Victorian Society and feels that members may like to be reminded of the existence and work of this body, which both fights for the protection of Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Britain and seeks through education to foster a greater appreciation of such buildings. For further information write to the Secretary, 12 Magnolia Wharf, Strand-on-the-Green, London, W.4.

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