

Goethe, to his death, a period within which he came into contact with practically every important writer living, he found himself drawn to great men with a force beyond his capacity to resist—"to shun such a man as W. or neglect to seize every occasion of being in his company is beyond my power," he once confessed. He knew everybody and wrote to and about everybody. And everybody wrote to him—from the heart, simply, frankly, as if to one whose kinship they recognized and of whose understanding there was never a question.

When Robinson died in 1867 he left, as a record of his intimate contacts, one of the most remarkable accumulations of contemporary evidence on thought and literature ever known. Among his manuscripts, now preserved in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London, are thirty-two volumes of correspondence, four huge volumes of "Reminiscences," twenty-eight volumes of "Journals of Tours," a detailed Diary running from 1811 to 1867, and various bundles of miscellanæ. From this mass of material, of which Dr. Sadler's three-volume edition included not over one twenty-fifth of the whole, Miss Morley has selected the letters relating to the Wordsworth circle contained in her new book.

Both Dr. Sadler's and Miss Morley's books show that, capacious as were Robinson's sympathies, he was no mere collector of celebrities, but was rather a connoisseur of genius. He was kind to James Montgomery, but his praise was limited to the temperate remark that Montgomery was "a very respectable poet." He admired Southey, but with clear-sighted reservations. He described his "Doctor" as "a pleasant, but a very unsubstantial book . . . very pretty literary small talk." But he saw Goethe as "the mightiest intellect that has shone on this earth for centuries"; in Shelley he discerned the greatness of one "who in poetic genius better deserves to be classed with Wordsworth and Coleridge than either Byron, Scott, or Tom Moore"; and when he read Keats's "Hyperion" he called it "a poem of great promise," showing qualities which should place its author "at the head of the poets of the next generation." In like manner Robinson welcomed literally scores of important figures who at one time or another moved across the far-flung horizon of his literary life—among them Hazlitt, Carlyle, Macaulay, and Arnold. It was he who first taught Madame de Staël the secrets of German philosophy; and he, too, who before Carlyle, helped make German poetry and philosophy popular in England.

It is as a devotee of Wordsworth, however, that he is best known, and it is his relation to Wordsworth and his circle that is chronicled in Professor Morley's new volumes. Upon first reading Wordsworth in 1802, with his customary clarity and certainty of judgment, Robinson at once pronounced him an original and true genius, "our first English poet." This was to be the tenor of his critical comment on Wordsworth for sixty-five years. Wordsworth and his poetry were his constant topics. At the end of a half century, he was writing, "I love him more now than I did fifty years ago." More than any other single individual, perhaps, he helped create a taste for Wordsworth's poetry. "I made many converts," he once said simply. But his admiration was the result of shrewd appraisal, never blind idolatry. Even his great personal friendship for Wordsworth, which began at their first meeting in 1808, and continued without interruption to the poet's death in 1850, did not prevent his seeing and pointing out defects. He censured Wordsworth for his intolerance toward other writers, questioned the wisdom of his accepting the laureateship, and in general deplored his defection from the Liberals; likewise, with robust critical integrity, he found fault with "Peter Bell" and other weaker poems, and even made suggestions for their improvement—suggestions to which Wordsworth, we are a bit surprised to learn, listened with respect.

For years the privileged friend of the family, a frequent and welcome visitor at Rydal Mount, Robinson carried on an extended correspondence with Wordsworth and other members of the group. The Wordsworths always carefully returned Robinson's letters to him, and he as carefully preserved theirs. Regarded from the point of view of biographical interest alone, this correspondence makes a notable contribution to literature. Of the 671 letters and bits of memoranda included by Miss Morley less than a hundred have ever appeared before. Nearly fifty of the new pieces are Wordsworth's

own, and a still larger number are from Dorothy, Mary, Quillinan, and others of the immediate family. With a complete veracity until recently unknown to writers on Wordsworth, Miss Morley prints the Wordsworth letters exactly as they were written: for once the Wordsworths are allowed to speak for themselves, without officious editorial meddling. Robinson and other friends of the circle speak as frankly—whatever excisions occur are obviously in the interests of relevancy. The result is one of the most satisfactory books on Wordsworth ever written. Here, in the delightfully unpremeditated sincerity of intimate correspondence, often so much more illuminating than formal biography, the story of the Wordsworths is revealed to us as we have long wanted to know it—in its simple truth. No other book certainly gives one so much the feel of meeting the Wordsworths at home, living their quiet, unaffected, if somewhat regulated lives. The impression left with the reader is on the whole a pleasant one. If there is some austerity here, there are also kindness, sympathy, cheerful affection, always intellectual buoyancy. Mrs. Wordsworth is especially delightful—some one should write an essay about her; Dorothy, until her health fails, is, as usual, capable, eager, understanding; Wordsworth himself, in spite of some uncomplimentary things said about him by different ones of the circle, is more attractive than he is sometimes made to appear—more gracious, more indulgent, more tenderly solicitous for the welfare of others. There is much warm humanity here at Rydal Mount and Wordsworth has his full share of it.

Readers will be long grateful to Miss Edith Morley and to Henry Crabb Robinson for this new view of the Wordsworths. Miss Morley's book contains the breath of life, it is authentic, it fills a gap in our knowledge of Wordsworth; and henceforth no one will expect to understand him without its aid.

The Art of Biography

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH BIOGRAPHY. By HAROLD NICOLSON. New York: Harcourt, Brace. 1928. \$1.25.

TOLSTOY. By HUGH FANSON FAUSSET. The same. \$3.50.

Reviewed by ARTHUR COLTON

AS soon as any kind of endeavor is called an art it acquires standards and tests, and presently will be developing its canons and contesting schools. The word biography was composed to mean any written account of a life, but Mr. Nicolson will not admit a biography to be real biography unless it meets his tests, which seem sensible enough if perhaps a little exclusive. His rapid survey of the history of English biography is, so far as I know, the only book on the subject, which it covers in a masterly fashion.

Medieval biography is nearly all the lives of saint blundering haloed. Bede had a sense of construction and a personal note, but still he was a hagiographer. Asser's "Life of Alfred" is the first biography of an English layman, but it is both conventional and improbable, with almost nothing directly observed. Eadmer's "Life of Anselm" in the twelfth century is the first "pure" biography, and even makes use of letters. By the thirteenth century hagiography was declining and biography should have risen in its place. If Chaucer had written a life of John of Gaunt it might have been a classic, because John of Gaunt was a character and Chaucer had all the faculties of a supreme biographer. But the fifteenth century is a blank, except for the "Paston Letters." In the sixteenth century were written two biographies of importance, Roper's "More" and Cavendish's "Wolsey." Roper was biased and inaccurate, but readable and vivid. Cavendish's "Wolsey" is a deliberately artistic piece of work composed to a thesis, namely, the mutability of fortune. But it is skilfully done, for the thesis is not explicit, but implicit, and kept in the background. Cavendish and Roper mark an immense advance. They were commemorative and didactic, but they broke away from the long tradition of hagiography and shifted the center of interest. "Neither of them regard their subjects as types representing ideals or institutions, but as individuals representative of human personality." If English biography had developed undisturbed from that seed it should have

reached its full flowering a century earlier than it did.

Mr. Nicolson attributes the disappointing seventeenth century to the disastrous influence of Plutarch, Theophrastus, and the French school of character sketches. So far as the two latter go I can see that their influence would be a set back, but I do not seem to see Plutarch in the same boat, and Mr. Nicolson does not anywhere explain or justify the inclusion. Walton's "Lives" are far from realistic and almost hagiographical; his own lovable personality is a thick veil over his portraits. Clarendon's "History" is a gallery of portraits, but he was steeped in Tacitus, the Theophrastians, and the French character sketch. "He has little concern with personal idiosyncrasies"; his method is to personify qualities and treat historical characters as ethical types, a method which has persisted in some degree down as far as Macaulay and Carlyle. John Aubrey's "Minutes" of lives is little more than a brilliant card-index. He was a born biographer but shiftless. Anthony à Wood was a pedant, Thomas Fuller of the "Worthies" was another compiler of biographical notes of merit, but given over to futile generalities. The later seventeenth century produced a mass of "ana" the most famous of them Selden's "Table Talk." Mr. Nicolson remarks "I cannot follow Dr. Johnson in his admiration of Selden's 'Table Talk.' It seems to me pompous, dull, and elaborate." I cannot follow Mr. Nicolson. It seems to me none of these things, a great pity there is not more of it. There are also the diaries of Evelyn, Pepys, and Sir Kenelm Digby. Hamilton's "Gramont" is a work of art and something of a *chronique scandaleuse*, but not strictly a biography. Of autobiographies there are Lord Herbert of Cherbury's, a most singular book; Lady Fanshawe's Memoirs which are original and charming; the Duchess of Newcastle's which are still more so; and Mrs. Hutchinson's Memoirs of her husband and herself, "representing the widow-biographer at her very worst." Mr. Nicolson is not only positive but caustic. The trouble with seventeenth century biography, he suggests, was the moral earnestness of the time. "Biography is essentially a profane brand of literature." The moral earnestness and solid convictions of the seventeenth and of the middle part of the nineteenth century cramped its biography which "is the preoccupation and the solace, not of certainty but of doubt."

The amount of English biography increases steadily through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the flood conditions of to-day. Very significant in the eighteenth is Roger North's Lives of his three brothers, written in 1715. He is gay and vivid; in an age of seriousness he wrote with humor, frankness, and dramatic skill. Mason's "Life of Gray" was the first in the "life and letters" method and had an important influence on both Boswell and Johnson. Johnson's "Life of Savage" is the first masterpiece of English biography. On Johnson and Boswell, their method and originality, Mr. Nicolson dwells in some detail. The greatest biography at full length, after Boswell's work, is Lockhart's "Scott." For examples of the devastating effect of moral earnestness and sentimentalism on Victorian biography he gives Stanley's "Arnold" and Lady Burton's "Burton." In the Froude-Carlyle controversy he is quite on the side of Froude. He admits however too much good biographical work in the nineteenth century to leave much substance to his thesis of nineteenth century decline. That no full length biography after Lockhart was as impeccable as Lockhart's may be true or may be debatable, but the immense increase in the volume of good biography in the nineteenth century is hardly debatable. Sainte-Beuve remarked in 1852 that Walckenaer's "La Fontaine" (1820) first introduced into France the large biography of the English type, "*ce genre de grandes biographies à l'anglaise*." It was Boswell mainly who created the type. But a list of the admirable full length nineteenth century biographies could not be paralleled or approached by any other era.

The first problem of the twentieth century, Mr. Nicolson continues, was to differentiate. There were all kinds in the century preceding: the "life and times" species like Carlyle's "Frederick" and Masson's "Milton"; ethical and commemorative types tending to hagiography; elegies, apologies, and idyls; and fanciful treatments running off into fiction. But individuality and absolute truth are the tests and purposes of biography proper; the former

divides it from history, the latter from fiction. If it is not truthful and concerned primarily with an individual, it is something else than biography. The present taste for biography is an interest in the personal side of history on the part of some, and is a relish for psychology on the part of others. The latter interest, which Mr. Nicolson thinks the more important, is partly "scientific" and partly "literary." The scientific interest, is for most readers superficial, and consists in identifying and comparing themselves and their experiences with those of another man. But it is an intelligent interest and is increasing. "The less people believe in theology, the more they believe in human experience, and it is to biography that they go for this experience." And the intelligent reader is also demanding literary form.

The two most significant English biographies of the twentieth century so far are perhaps Gosse's "Father and Son" and Strachey's "Queen Victoria." The full length biography continues, but these two illustrate psychological insight and literary form, condensation and suggestiveness. Mr. Strachey's irony is a model of artistic "debunking," and suggestive also of its perils.



Mr. Chesterton begins his recent book on Stevenson with the remark: "I propose to review his books with illustrations from his life rather than write his life with illustrations from his books," but it is not what he really does. Rather, like Mr. Fausset in "Tolstoy, the Inner Drama," he writes the life as the books show it. For he believes that the true private life was not in Samoa but in "Treasure Island." The recollections of friends are superficial. What Stevenson wrote, that he was far more than anything else. At least such a theory and procedure draws us back to the half forgotten fact that the important things about a famous writer are his writings and not the incidents of his life; or as Mr. Chesterton says: "I am so perverse as to interest myself in literature when dealing with a literary man, and in the philosophy inhering in the literature—in a certain story, which is indeed the story of his life, but not exactly the story of his biography. It is an inward and spiritual story." So that such books as Mr. Fausset's and Mr. Chesterton's may be indicative of a tendency in twentieth century biography to look more and more for the "the inward and spiritual story."

It may be suspected that not all books are safe and sufficient revelations of their authors, but with respect to Tolstoy the method is probably sound; his "inner and spiritual story" is contained in his writings. Yet the photographs which Mr. Fausset gives of the young and the old Tolstoy are extraordinarily suggestive—the youth with the low tense brows and large sensuous mouth, and the weatherbeaten old prophet. When both the flesh and the spirit are inordinately powerful, aggressive, and intolerant, they never reach any placable compromise, but wage a chronic civil war. Tolstoy's works are full of that war's psychology.

Cardinal Gasquet, the most eminent of English Catholic scholars, has recently been in Great Britain. As Prefect of the Vatican Archives, he is supervising the preparation of an index to the great Library, containing nearly half a million books and 500 MSS., while he is also President of the Commission for the Revision of the Vulgate. We summarize following from an interview he gave to the *London Observer*:

The Index, upon which twenty experts are engaged, will, Cardinal Gasquet thinks, probably occupy five years. The whole cost, which the Americans have been providing out of the Carnegie funds, will amount to at least £5,000 or £6,000. They invited two Italians to visit America to study the modern card-index systems of the principal libraries—one of them spent six months touring the various institutions, while another stayed at Columbia University—and brought back a duplicate of the wonderful index of the Congress Library, which will be of great assistance. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, the head of Columbia University, has taken a prominent part in the scheme, and Mr. Bishop, of the Carnegie body, with several colleagues, is supervising the work in Rome. At first it was feared that the Americans might want to carry out the work solely in their own way, but it is being undertaken on the friendliest basis.

The Real King George

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF KING GEORGE THE THIRD. Volumes III to VI. Edited by the HON. SIR JOHN FORTESCUE. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1928. \$8 a volume.

Reviewed by FREDERICK MARCHAM

SIR JOHN FORTESCUE brings to an end his edition of the correspondence of George III. with these four volumes which cover the period 1773-1783. His task as editor has been a heavy one. He has had to sort over, read, and transcribe these 4,500 papers from among the vast body of correspondence preserved in the Royal Archives at Windsor. He sets them before us in chronological order and arranged in volumes, each volume covering a period of about two years and each supplied with a historical introduction and an index.

This edition of the papers does not provide an entirely new account of events, because most of the correspondence of George III. and Lord North was published by Donne in 1867. Its chief value to the historian lies in the immense amount of new information with which other letters and papers of all kinds fill out the bare story contained in Donne's edition. The complete correspondence, as published by the new editor, forms a continuous and authentic story of public affairs during the fatal years when George himself made and directed English policy. The chief matters of public importance in Eng-



Drawing illustrating a scene of Russian peasant life. By M. VLASSENKO.

land during this time were the revolt of the American colonies and the vigorous and successful attempt of the king to be his own prime minister. There are many papers, now made available for the first time, which deal with the Revolution. They do not afford sufficient evidence for drastic alteration of opinion on major points; indeed, there are few minor matters which will have to be reconsidered on account of them, but by way of despatches, department minutes, private comment, and similar documents they provide details of every kind which give body to the existing record. The bearing of the correspondence on our knowledge of George III. is much more important. In the past, character sketches of the king and the story of his reign have been compiled from correspondence published by Donne and from private and semi-public papers. This material, though large in quantity, has proved too incomplete to justify historians in drawing final conclusions from it and has led those who have used it to eke out fact with fancy. On the sure basis of this new edition of the correspondence it becomes possible to form a balanced judgment of the king's character and policy.

Lord Thurlow, in conversation with the Prince of Wales concerning his father George III., is reported to have said, "Sir, your father will continue to be a popular king as long as he continues to go to church every Sunday and to be faithful to that ugly woman, your mother." The sober and honorable nature of the king's private life received no worse censure than this from his enemies. It commanded the reverence of the great mass of his subjects and has not been put in question by historians. Opinion regarding his public life has been neither so constant nor so generous. During the last half century there have been two major interpretations of the king's policy. One group of historians has represented him as a narrow-minded meddler in English politics who "spent a long life obstinately resisting measures which are now almost universally admitted to have been good, and in supporting measures which are as universally admitted to have

been bad." This opinion has been watered down a good deal by recent students who, largely by way of offering a more reasonable account of English opinion and policy during the American revolution, have described him as the leader of conservatism in England—and for that not to be blamed—and as one who governed Great Britain's first empire at the time of its foreordained disintegration, the champion of a dying cause.



These opinions now give way to descriptions of the substantial character, neither villain nor simple hero, who appears in the complete correspondence. The king first claims attention as a typical administrator. Conservative, confident, efficient, he directed the government, whipped up support, punished defaulters, and kept all subordinates in close control. He was, moreover, an administrator who strove with more than ordinary zeal to follow out a policy. He wished to keep unchanged the system of domestic and imperial government that existed in the early years of his reign and to persuade all Englishmen to his belief that it was "the most perfect combination that ever was framed." He had equal confidence in his own power to control the system, to choose the best men for its service, and by means of it to gain fresh lustre for the nation. His enthusiasm, being steadied by conservatism and efficiency, made him a good business man and a good politician, but it was not enough to make him a statesman, for statesmanship springs from a compound of efficiency and other qualities, such as imagination, flexibility of mind, and a sense of humor. George III. lacked these lighter qualities and lacked them in no common degree. This abnormality led him to denounce all his political opponents as traitors, to belittle their talents, to oppose an unwavering resistance to all forms of change, and to conduct daily correspondence during a period of ten years without the use of one genial word. The intensity of his one-sidedness prepares us for his temporary lapses into madness.

The first to describe the king's character anew is the editor of these volumes, and to him the complete correspondence brings no uncertain vision. He sees the king as a man who fought a great fight and was beaten by selfish factions of English politicians and the thankless rebels of North America; that is, as George would have seen himself. The frame of mind in which he approached his task is well represented by his final sentence in the introduction of Vol. VI, which either discloses his misunderstanding of eighteenth century politics or is a libel on the governmental system of modern England; he is discussing a list of sinecure offices, "if it be thought scandalous, as well it may, let it be remembered that the governing class always provides for itself out of the public purse, that it is doing so at this moment, and that the cost under the new governing class is about a thousand times as great as under the old."

Poe's own copy of "The Raven" was recently offered for sale at the Anderson Galleries. The pedigree of the copy is thus set forth in the catalogue of the Gallery: "Early in the 1840's Edward Dexter Webb, the grandfather of the present owner, and one of the founders of the firm now known as Austin Nichols & Co., roomed in the same house with Poe. They were close friends, although Webb was not connected in any way with Poe's literary work, nor even particularly interested in it. Mr. Bull, the present owner, writes us concerning the circumstances under which this book came into his grandfather's possession: "My grandfather did not take Poe's work very seriously, but some time after the publication of the volume in question, Poe having gained considerable fame in New York City, and my grandfather having seen a stack of the books in Poe's room, he expressed a desire to purchase a copy. Poe replied that the supply at his room was exhausted, but that if he did not object to a used copy he could have his (Poe's) own copy. This my grandfather accepted. The book had Poe's signature on the cover, and the cover was torn off, and otherwise slightly worn. My grandmother stitched the cover back on several years later."

"The wear the book shows is due to Mr. Poe's own use of the book, as it has been preserved carefully since leaving his hands. . . . It has never been in the possession of any one but Mr. Poe, my grandfather and myself."