

interests into an "endowment" for scientific work called Research Corporation, which received title to the patents of International Precipitation.

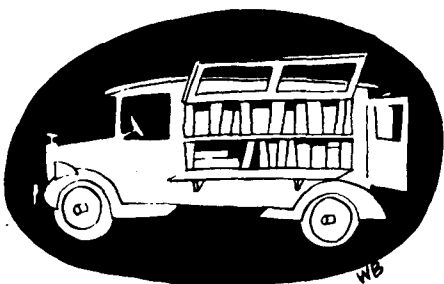
Research Corporation grew and continues to grow as a business engaged in the licensing and management of patents. Aside from this, in obedience to Cottrell, it has given millions in profits to aid scientific advances in various fields. Since the end of World War II several big companies have been licensed to manufacture precipitrons, household dust settling appliances intended to improve family life.

Nevertheless, had Cottrell not turned away from this opportunity through what appears a premature generosity, he might have fostered an industrial organization big enough to have solved to a far greater extent the problems represented by the evils and waste of fumes, smoke, and dust. But Cottrell, this well-intentioned genius, instead became a bureaucrat. From 1911 until 1930, except for a brief period, he remained in the Government's service, working in the Bureau of Mines and the Department of Agriculture.

During his boyhood there had been many signs that Frank Cottrell was a scion of the Benjamin Franklin tradition. Much too commonly "success" is underrated as something stemming from the influence of Horatio Alger when the real influence was Franklin, exponent of hard work, thrift, scientific knowledge. The boy Cottrell, at thirteen, operated a number of business enterprises; job printing, publishing, and landscape photography for real estate dealers. He installed electric doorbells. A magazine he published and edited, called *The Boys' Workshop*, enjoyed second-class mailing privileges. He certainly ran his business ventures for a profit.

How, then, did he happen to get fixed in his conscience a reluctance to take his due reward in many, many situations of his later career? What Mr. Cameron sees as nobility of purpose in Cottrell's repeated refusals to make the most of his opportunities seems no more noble, in fact, than

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Belles-Lettres. *There is a cyclical theory of literary history according to which the reputations of authors undergo periodic rises and declines until finally they stabilize at a generally accepted critical estimate. To contemporary critics and scholars the reputation of Alexander Pope is clearly in the ascendent. The poet who yesterday was accused of facile brilliance and bad manners is today back in fashion. The four books reviewed below, though unequal in merit, demonstrate Pope's return to scholarly grace. Whether Pope has reached a secure plateau in literary topography remains to be seen. Two authors still in process of assessment are Wilkie Collins and Leslie Stephen, Victorian talents of the second rank who have waited long for full biographical attention. Kenneth Robinson's "Wilkie Collins" (page 20) is a skilful reconstruction of a little-documented life; Noel Gilroy Annan's "Leslie Stephen" (page 21) examines the influence of an agnostic and industrious writer.*

Eighteenth-Century Savant

ALEXANDER POPE. By Bonamy Dobrée. New York: Philosophical Library. 120 pp. \$3.

ALEXANDER POPE: Catholic Poet. By Francis Beauchesne Thornton. New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy. 312 pp. \$4.75.

POPE AND HIS CRITICS. By W. L. MacDonald. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 332 pp. \$4.50.

POPE AND THE HEROIC TRADITION. By Douglas Knight. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 119 pp. \$3.

By ROBERT HALSBAND

DURING the last few decades there has been, along with a revival of interest in English literature of the Augustan Age, a revaluation of its greatest poet. Now in progress are the superb Twickenham edition of his poetry, issued in this country by Yale University Press, and George Sherburn's forthcoming edition of the complete correspondence: they will afford us a sound basis for understanding the poetry as well as the poet's complex life and career. These two massive projects will be the cornerstone of future writing on Pope. In the meantime books about him continue to appear, of which the four most recent display important trends.

In his slight book Bonamy Dobrée has written an extremely generous interpretation of Pope's life, sketching the events, friendships, literary campaigns and victories, and interpolating rather emphatic praise of the poetry. To the uninitiated his book may be a persuasive introduction to the poet whose reputation has suffered in the

past, but one may still question his method of achieving that praiseworthy end. Pope is defended by special pleading, his graceless actions condoned in him (and condemned in his opponents), and his infinite stratagems charitably explained away. We are even told that the greatness of his poetry is proof of his "greatness as a man as well." These flaws arise from accepting Pope's autobiographical poems as factual. In other words, the rhetorical pose of, say, the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" is set forth as Pope's actual personality—a confusion pointed out some time ago by another scholar. Why can we not accept the poetry as great and the poet as merely human?

Father Thornton's is a full interpretive biography which tries to show Pope as "an aggressive Catholic," and is written with uncommon felicity of expression and observation, and with a sympathetic appreciation of the poetry. His particular approach is valuable for reminding us that Pope's religion rendered him the victim of several kinds of intolerance, disadvantages we must appreciate in counting up his poetic and personal achievements. Perhaps, as he suggests, Pope's devious personality is partially the result of his religious milieu. But in claiming that Pope bravely retained his faith in spite of the taunts of enemies, the biographer overlooks the possibility—mentioned by a previous scholar—that if Pope had changed his religion he would have laid himself open to far more damaging insult, that (one might say) it was a comfortably mild cross to bear. Among the

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other questionable points are these: facts are omitted if they do not support the thesis (e.g., Pope's obscene version of the First Psalm, Cibber's pamphlet on his immorality); in quoted letters some sections are italicized as his proof, where other sections of the same letters would lead to opposite conclusions; and support is claimed from insubstantial sources (e.g., evidence of Pope's pietism lies in, we are told, "the golden march of his verse").

But, we may still wonder, what was Pope's actual religious position? Hoxie Fairchild, who deals with the problem in "Religious Trends in English Poetry," concludes that Pope, so eager to be all things to all men,

and led to Pope's low esteem in the next century. To read all the relevant materials demands persistence, ingenuity, and a strong stomach—all of which Mr. MacDonald has. He has wisely gone to first-hand sources, and arrived at independent conclusions. Thus instead of accepting the traditional opinion that Pope's pastorals are superior to "Namby-Pamby" Phillips's he compares them anew. In general his objectivity proves that one may be both impartial and sympathetic to Pope.

In the final book here, Mr. Knight examines Pope's translation of the "Iliad," showing that it is not a "pretty poem" (as a contemporary classical scholar called it) but the

Dickens's Confrere

WILKIE COLLINS. By Kenneth Robinson. New York: The Macmillan Co. 348 pp. \$4.50.

By JOHN T. WINTERICH

NEXT time you buy a toothbrush at your neighborhood druggist's, make a mild obeisance to the metal rack of paperbacks just inside the door. It is a memorial to Wilkie Collins. For while Edgar Allan Poe invented the detective story (and tried, unsuccessfully, to float it as a paperback), it was Wilkie Collins who invented the detective novel.

He did more than that (or is that enough, or too much?). He flourished (and he *did* flourish) in the great era of the English novel. Scott was in active production when Collins was born, Hardy when he died. He grew up in the shadow of Dickens, and played Pythias to Dickens's Damon. You didn't have to hear Collins in the days of Victoria—you didn't even have to read Dickens. There were the Brontës, Thackeray, George Eliot. The competition was too stiff for Collins to have any hopes of making the first team. But he was a worthy captain of the second.

Yet his own story has always been something of a mystery—a mystery which Kenneth Robinson has done his best (and a competent best it is) to penetrate. But at the end, writes Mr. Robinson, "there remains a sense of incompleteness. . . . From all but his closest friends he seems to have kept something in reserve." Even his closest friends were not voluble; Dickens had much to say about him, but it was hardly revelatory. John Forster was voluble, but he was so obviously jealous of Collins's close friendship with Dickens that he makes a poor witness. Collins kept no journal. His surviving letters, "like his books, are for the most part narrative." He is known to have destroyed many letters. Of his correspondence with Caroline Elizabeth Graves, with whom he contracted a nine-year liaison, not a line appears to have been preserved.

The way of the biographer, in such a situation, is hard. Too often he yields to conjecture or surmise—there are biographers who prefer that treatment. Not Mr. Robinson. He sticks to such data as he has been able to accumulate, which turns out to be quite a lot. He has foregone the temptation (if he had one) to psychoanalyze his subject. He adheres to the born-lived-died formula with fluent straightforwardness, and the result should be eminently satisfactory alike to the



—By William Hogarth, from The Bettmann Archive.

Doctor James Garth and Alexander Pope in a coffee house.

lacked a firm spiritual center. The main expression of Pope's doctrine lies in his "Essay on Man," where, as Maynard Mack has recently shown in his Twickenham edition of the poem, it is a combination of deism, eighteenth-century sociality, and Roman Catholicism.

Almost every element of Pope's career is so obscurely hidden beneath an underbrush of controversy that Mr. MacDonald's is a very useful task in beating a path through the tangled commentary of eighteenth-century critics. Much of it before Pope's death (in 1744) and the collected edition of his works (in 1751), is valueless, for it was generated more by personal than by literary motives. Still, the analysis here is fresh, and suggestive in showing how critical judgment of the poetry followed the crumbling of neo-classic standards,

embodiment of a deep tradition of epic poetry, one which sustains a whole world-view. His reasoning is so close-packed and allusive that the book makes difficult, though rewarding, reading. Like Mr. MacDonald's book, its value comes from its fresh examination of a vital phase in Pope's career.

The ups and downs of Pope's reputation would lend support to a cyclical theory of literary history. Today we are on the upswing of taste for his poetry. Perhaps after the current evaluation he will achieve the standard reputation of a classic unaffected by literary fashions. An earlier generation of critics damned the poet along with his poetry; we must beware of making the obverse mistake, that of canonizing the poet because we are dazzled by the luminous excellences of his works.