

Safeguarding U.S. History

By JOHN TEBBEL

FROM the time of their utterance until the last dozen years or so, the words of the great men who wove the American political fabric have been scattered far and wide across both this country and Europe. Scholars working with these materials had to ferret them out of libraries and private collections. Other people with an interest in the history of the United States had to depend more or less on what the scholars could produce for them.

In both academic and political circles, however, there has long been a growing consciousness of the great need, indeed the obligation, to bring together the papers of our statesmen in collected editions, as complete and carefully edited as possible, to be preserved for everyone. The National Historical Commission has been the prime mover in seeing that this monumental task was carried out, and in the past decade or so they have acquired able and willing helpers in the university presses, which are slowly, with the financial assistance of foundations and corporations, gathering and publishing the work of our great men.

As early as the Thirties, the government itself began the publishing of these documents with a thirty-nine-volume edition of George Washington's papers, containing all the authentic Washington letters discovered up to that time, along with the surviving original diaries. They were meticulously edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, for many years Librarian of Congress.

Jefferson scholars watched the publication of these volumes with envy. For years they had been talking among themselves about the necessity for bringing the widely scattered Jefferson documents together. Nothing was done about it, however, until Congress established in 1940 the Thomas Jefferson Bicentennial Commission. In 1943, Congress directed this Commission to "prepare as a Congressional memorial to Thomas Jefferson a new edition of the writings of Thomas Jefferson, including additional material and unpublished manuscripts preserved in the Library of Congress. . . ." For this purpose the Congress, with a splendid disregard of the economics of publishing, appropriated \$15,000.

But Congress also authorized the

Commission to appoint a historian, and in March, 1943, that body selected a man well able to make the idea a reality. He was Julian P. Boyd, the distinguished librarian of Princeton University, regarded as one of the ablest men in his field.

According to Datus Smith, then director of the Princeton University Press, it was Boyd who conceived the "grand design" of the Jefferson Papers, up to that time one of the largest undertakings in American publishing history. If Boyd had the design, it was the *New York Times* that provided the essential ingredient, i.e., money, to carry it out. Conversations with Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the publisher, resulted in a \$200,000 grant from the New York Times Company for editorial expenses, specifying that the collection should embrace all of Jefferson's works, thereby guaranteeing that it would be definitive. Cost of manufacture and publication would be borne by the Press, without further subsidy.

Thus began what has become a steady procession of such projects, certainly the greatest collective scholarly undertaking in history. The Jefferson prototype remains a most impressive example. Actual publishing began in 1950, and the series is now sixteen volumes along in a program originally estimated to be of twenty years' duration. Before it is completed, it will have involved 78,000 manuscript pages and cost almost a million dollars.

SALES are, naturally, modest. Volume one was launched with 1,060 subscribers, and 900 copies were sold separately—considered a good sale for this kind of publication. About a third of the original subscribers were individuals, and the remainder were libraries. When the library figures are broken down, the true value of such projects becomes apparent—the making of materials available to thousands of students who otherwise would never see them. Of the college library subscribers, 16 per cent were in institutions of less than 1,000 enrollment. Of public libraries subscribing, 30 per cent had collections of less than 50,000 volumes, and were in towns of less than 25,000 population.

As the first of the new comprehensive collections, the Jefferson papers had more than one difficult editorial prob-

lem to solve. A primary one, which all such collections must deal with, is the reproduction of documents for editorial handling. Boyd and his staff solved that one by using the continuous-process photoenlarger, often called the V-mail method. Documents were micro-filmed in libraries or wherever else they happened to be found, and the film was fed through the machine. The result was clear black-and-white reproductions, easy to work with.

One task of the collectors was to assemble related documents into groups. For example, the rough draft of one letter might be in the archives of the Massachusetts Historical Society; Jefferson's copy, with subsequent suppressed passages, might be found in the Huntington Library, in California; his letterpress copy could be in the Library of Congress; and the recipient's copy, bearing a unique postscript, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris. By using the microfilm method, however, facsimiles of all these could be placed in one envelope, docketed, and annotated.

THREE hundred private owners, besides dozens of libraries, were involved in the search for documents. When the project is completed, all the materials will be given to the Jefferson Collection in the Library of Congress, where every scholar will then have access to the facsimiles of the originals.

It was nine years after publication of the first Jefferson Papers in 1950 (in which year they won the ninth annual Carey-Thomas Award for the best example of creative publishing) before other statesmen began to emerge in collected editions from other presses. But, guided by Princeton's example, the presses had been busy during the interval, as was evidenced in the beginnings of three different series during 1959.

Of these the most important is probably the Franklin Papers, being issued by Yale. The publishing pattern was substantially the same. First came the money, in this case a joint sponsorship by *Life* magazine, in return for first serial rights, and the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, which had already spent \$250,000 over the previous twenty years in gathering material. Then an eminent board of editors was appointed, and an editor-in-chief, Leonard W. Labaree, was chosen.

These editors, like those at Princeton, contemplated a twenty-year project, running to about forty volumes in this case. There were an estimated 20,000 documents to collect, 6,000 of them written by Franklin himself. Much of this material had been found in the previous five years. For all his eminence,

Franklin had been one of the most neglected American statesmen in terms of published papers. The last previous edition had appeared a half-century before, and included only 2,000 items; the first volume alone of this new edition contains more than three times that amount. The search for these new materials was far-ranging. It led to five Iron Curtain countries; not long before publication a startling new cache turned up in, of all places, Prague. When the initial volume of the Franklin Papers was published in 1959, the first printing was sold out a month after publication, testifying to the perennial popularity of that universal man. The editors intend to print everything written by Franklin that can be found and, either in full or in abstract, everything addressed to him.

Two Southerners joined the ranks in the same year Franklin appeared: Kentucky began publishing the Papers of Henry Clay, and South Carolina those of John C. Calhoun. Understandably, these are smaller projects, but there is considerable local pride involved. The South Carolina Press pointed out that the money for its project was raised almost entirely within the state; thus far it is the only university press to undertake such a venture without foundation or corporation support.

Dr. Robert L. Meriwether, who had been director of the South Caroliniana Library at the University since 1941, was the editor of the Calhoun series until his death in the summer of 1958, when the first volume was in galley. Calhoun's documentary remains constitute some 30,000 papers, publication of which will require from twelve to fifteen volumes and no one is certain how many years.

The Clay project is somewhat smaller, involving about 10,000 documents. Kentucky expects to do it in ten volumes, at the rate of two a year. Clay, incidentally, has never before been collected in book form. There will be a special Ashland Edition, named in honor of Clay's old Kentucky home,

with a hand-lettered name plate. It will be sold by subscription only, at \$125 for the set. Money for the Clay project came from the Lilly Foundation of Indianapolis, which made a grant of \$96,000.

LAST year two more series began publication, at Harvard and Columbia. Harvard's, of course, was the long awaited and much publicized Adams Papers, correctly termed the greatest private collection of source materials on American history. Here was a project calculated not only to surpass the Jefferson works but unlikely ever to be surpassed itself. For the remarkable Adams family not only wrote voluminously for more than a century and a half, but, as one historian has remarked, they never sold a paper. Less than a third of this material has ever been published, relatively little has appeared in the twentieth century, and nearly all of it is out of print. Scholars and others well remember the nineteenth-century collections of Adamsiana, entombed in their somber black covers, carefully edited and expurgated by surviving Adamses to preserve the family image and throw a New England curtain about private lives.

For years the Adams papers have been kept locked away in the Adams Room of the Massachusetts Historical Society, available only to the most qualified scholars. Those who have used them in the past describe the experience as somewhat like being led into the Inner Chamber of the Highest Temple and being shown the Secrets of Life. In 1956, the Adams Trustees transferred tens of thousands of dollars worth of original manuscripts and autographs to the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The quantity of documents is so formidable that a complete letterpress edition is impracticable. The 400,000 pages of manuscript occupy 27,500 feet of microfilm on 608 reels. The Adams Manuscript Trust will distribute microfilm copies of the entire collection to key research libraries across the country. For the letterpress edition, which

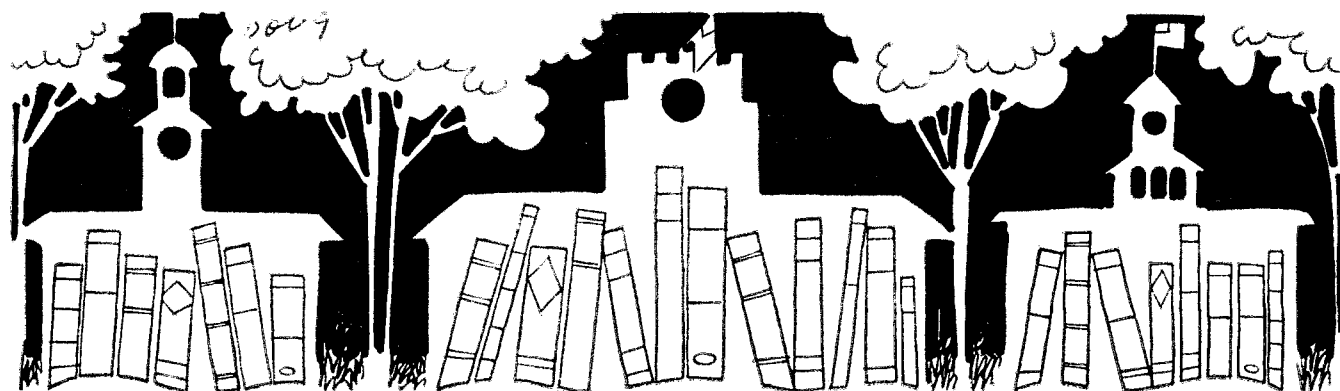
may run to as many as a hundred volumes, the Harvard University Press has the financial help of the ubiquitous Henry Luce, whose *Life* magazine gave \$250,000 to the Massachusetts Historical Society to enable it to engage the project's editor, Lyman H. Butterfield, and his small staff, and get them started. Other sponsors include the society, the university, and, of course, the press itself.

While the letterpress edition, the first four volumes of which were published in the fall of 1961, cannot be definitive, there is, on the other hand, no censorship or withholding of documents. Thomas Boylston Adams, as senior trustee, has decided it is time to tell all. The editors will print whatever they think is worth printing, subject to a single rule: that whatever is included, whether it be letter, diary, or some minor document, must be reproduced whole, without any deletion. If they earn any money in royalties, as they almost certainly will, the earnings will go into a special Society fund earmarked for editorial work.

THIS has been unquestionably the most expensive of all the university projects. Besides the *Life* grant, Harvard has had some welcome support through an endowment from Waldron Belknap, Jr., and his mother. An example of why publication costs mount occurred early in the project when it became apparent that, since John, John Quincy, and the first Charles Francis had all served the United States in Europe, Butterfield would have to do some research on the Continent. A grant from the Guggenheim Foundation provided the initial motive power, and Butterfield set off on his travels, which in 1961 the press converted into a piece of scholarly promotional amusement called "Butterfield in Holland," a small book in its own right.

Butterfield, who was borrowed for the job from his position as director of the Institution of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg,

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Pencraft from Dickens to Durrell

By GRANVILLE HICKS

NO ONE can complain that the university presses are neglecting the literature of the twentieth century. As I have pointed out (*SR*, Nov. 11, 1961), the University of Minnesota "Pamphlets on American Writers" have been paying attention to contemporary as well as to earlier figures, and of the four additions to the series (published by Minnesota at 65¢ each) only one deals with a writer who flourished before 1900. This is Benjamin Franklin, whose claims to be regarded as a man of letters are discriminatingly examined by Theodore Hornberger. Louis Coxe writes about Edwin Arlington Robinson, and takes a step towards the revaluation of the poet that seems inevitable. John L. Stewart discusses John Crowe Ransom both as poet and as critic, and particularly as Southerner. In "Recent American Poetry" Clauco Cambon mentions many poets but wisely concentrates on a few, particularly Richard Wilbur, W. S. Merwin, W. D. Snodgrass, Galway Kinnell, and John Logan. By and large, as I noted last fall, these pamphlets are excellent.

Southern Illinois University has initiated an even more ambitious series, called "Crosscurrents/Modern Techniques," under the editorship of Harry T. Moore. Five volumes have been published (at \$4.50 each), and five more have been announced. The five writers currently under examination are Mikhail Lermontov, Willa Cather, George Orwell, Samuel Beckett, and Lawrence Durrell. Moore has edited the volume on Durrell, which contains a score of essays by various hands, some biographical but most of them critical and most of them devoted to "The Alexandria Quartet." Frederick J. Hoffman's "Samuel Beckett," subtitled "The Language of Self," usefully devotes considerable space to Beckett's literary antecedents, and comments on both the novels and the plays of this difficult writer.

Richard Rees concludes his "George Orwell: Fugitive from the Camp of Victory" with personal reminiscences, but for the most part he concentrates on Orwell's writings and on the qualities that have given him a special importance in our times. It is a friendly book but not an injudicious one. Ed-

ward A. and Lillian D. Bloom call their book "Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy," and sympathy is the virtue they emphasize though it is not the only one to which they call attention. This, too, is a well-balanced study. Lermontov seems a little out of place, although in his preface Moore argues, not without reason, that he has the air of being a contemporary. John Merse-reau, Jr., describes Lermontov's brief life and discusses his early work, but he spends most of his space in a careful and rewarding analysis of "A Hero of Our Times."

Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion Fagan, and William J. Fisher have edited "O'Neill and His Plays" (New York University, \$7.50), a collection of personal reminiscences, extracts from letters, interviews, and essays, reviews of particular plays, and critical evaluations, early and late. As is indicated by the letters that followed my review of Arthur and Barbara Gelb's biography (*SR*, May 3, 1962), O'Neill continues to be a controversial figure. The extreme positions for and against are represented here, together with a wide range of judgments that lie between. It is an exciting volume and a valuable companion to the Gelb book.

E. M. Forster is one of the grand old men of contemporary literature, and a good deal has been written about him, the latest contribution to the subject being "E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism" by Frederick C. Crews (Princeton, \$4). Despite the somewhat belligerent sound of the subtitle, Crews is sympathetic to Forster and to his humanism. His thesis is that Forster's brand of humanism has its limitations, that Forster himself has recognized them, and that out of that recognition come the tensions that give his novels their vitality. Crews traces the origins of Forster's philosophical and political ideas, and shows how they manifest themselves in the books. He believes that "A Passage to India" is Forster's "sole claim upon posterity."

More than thirty years ago I pub-



lished an article entitled "Ford Madox Ford: A Neglected Contemporary." In a sense Ford has continued to be neglected—he died in 1939—and yet much has been written in praise of "The Good Soldier" and the Tietjens tetralogy, which was published in one volume in 1950 as "Parade's End." Richard A. Cassell's "Ford Madox Ford" (Johns Hopkins, \$5.50) discusses all the novels, and the author finds some interesting things to say about some of the early books; but he concentrates, as the critic must, on the two works on which Ford's reputation has always rested. These are works that not only have a considerable importance in the development of the techniques of fiction but can be read today with high satisfaction.

HUBERT H. HOELTJE's "Inward Sky" (Duke, \$10) is a long, sympathetic, and gentle biography of Nathaniel Hawthorne. As he observes, Hoeltje makes less of Hawthorne's "blackness" than Melville did and than many present-day critics do, and what he says about the novels and tales sometimes seems cheerfully superficial. On the other hand, the account of Hawthorne's life is full, making good use of journals and letters, and the book is, in its slightly old-fashioned way, pleasant reading.

In "The Dickens Critics" (Cornell, \$6.50) George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr., have brought together more than thirty critical pieces, ranging from Edgar Allan Poe's review of "The Old Curiosity Shop," first published in 1841, to a 1960 essay by Angus Wilson. John Ruskin, Henry James, George Gissing, Alice Meynell, G. K. Chesterton, Bernard Shaw, George Santayana, T. S. Eliot, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Graham Greene, and Lionel Trilling are among the authors represented, and what a variety of opinions one finds!

In "The Capsule of the Mind" (Harvard, \$4.50) Theodora Ward, who was associated with Thomas Johnson in the editing of Emily Dickinson's letters, presents a series of observations on the poet and her poems. The first three essays examine, in a sensibly tentative fashion, some of the difficult problems of Miss Dickinson's personality, while the other three explore her friendship with Josiah Gilbert Holland and his wife (Mrs. Ward's grandparents), with Samuel Bowles, and with Thomas H. Higginson.

In several of the volumes on which I have commented I find a note to the effect that publication has been aided by the Ford Foundation. The Foundation has done well by the university presses, which are in turn doing well by the public.