

Ashamed to be a Poet

By KENNETH YOUNG
The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Edited by Humphrey House. Completed by Graham Storey. (O.U.P. 63s.) The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Edited with an introduction by Christopher Devlin. (O.U.P. 42s.)

THE Hopkins manner bobs up in the poetry of the '30s and '40s like a ubiquitous chin in a family album, not least in Dylan Thomas, who would scarcely be himself without it. Hopkins showed there were other methods of loading every rift with ore than that inherited from Laforgue and Corbiere via Pound and Eliot.

Moreover, though he died in 1893, his inimitable prosody gave him a tormented stammer peculiarly acceptable in the disturbed inter-war years:

"Not, I'll not, carry comfort,
Despair, not fear on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be
—these strands of man
In me or, most woful, cry I can
no more I can . . ."

Now, however, the re-issue of House's book, expanded with new material into two volumes, has done for Hopkins what was recommended to himself by the "Pylon" poets—until Abbott's edition of the Correspondence and Humorous House's selection of "The Note-Books and Papers."

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Etymological "Flights"

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It may even be one of the causes that impelled this brilliant young son of a consular official who took a double "first" at Balliol into the ascetic discipline of the Society of Jesus when he was only 24.

Catastrophe in 1944

ONLY the relentless pressure of war could have excused the tragic blend of ignorance and bad organisation which led to the frightful explosion that occurred in Bombay docks on April 14, 1944.

On the afternoon of that fateful day the Fort Stikine, a British ship carrying badly-needed stores, including 1,305 tons of explosives, 8,700 bales of raw cotton and hundreds of drums of oil, some of them leaking, caught fire during unloading.

War time security blacked out all news of this grievous blow to the Allied cause, but in "Bombay Explosion" (Casell, 15s.) the story has been skillfully reconstructed by John Ennis. It is a record which pays due and fitting tribute to the heroism of many.

A SCEPTICAL VICTORIAN

By H. D. ZIMAN
Walter Bagehot: a Study of his Life and Thought together with a Selection from his Political Writings. By Norman St. John-Stevens. (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 36s.)

A SEEMINGLY casual phrase in the preface to Norman St. John-Stevens's Walter Bagehot declares the 19th century to be "the most fascinating period of our history."

This high estimate of Victorian Age, which would have been considered a paradox when I was young, is now widely and rightly upheld by thoughtful members of Mr. St. John-Stevens's generation, and it is curious as Bagehot treated as a personality instead of just a text.

A full biography of Bagehot is being written by Mr. Alastair Buchanan. What Mr. St. John-Stevens has done is to pick out certain of his author's political writings and to preface them with 117 pages of enlightening discussion of the man and his ideas.

"If he were a horse . . ." Contemporary biography and literary criticism interested him almost as much as politics and economics. If detached, he was not remote or academic, but urbane and often hard-hitting.

Despite the temptation to quote every other epigram I must be content with one sentence on Peel, whom Bagehot admired: "No man has come so near our definition of a constitutional statesman as the power of a first-rate man and the greed of a second-rate man. And on the subject of Peel, would any one but Bagehot have thought of drawing a contrast between the workings of the Prime Minister's mind and the mind of Peel's schoolfellow, Byron?"

RECENT FICTION

HERE are two first novels about young officers and old Blimps in the post-war British Army, and they run to an oddity similar pattern.

Both are concerned with "police action" in fermenting colonies, pseudonymously but recognisably. Both contain a strong homosexual motif; both end with a court martial or trial; and both offer a blend of realism and pure fantasy.

Mr. Raven's notion of their occupational obsessions, they are poles apart in their ethical attitudes. Mr. Raven, like Evelyn Waugh (from whom he has learnt a few useful tricks) is an unabashed romantic snob—intellectual, social and moral.

Mr. Raven deserves to be taken seriously for all his quips. He writes with great power and economy; his scenes of action are quite superb; and, whether we like it or not, he knows just what he stands for. Here is a young writer so far to the right that he makes Coriolanus look like a Fabian.

WHEN we turn to "At Fever Pitch," the moral climate undergoes an abrupt change. True.

clear without sentimentality. From the drips on an aunt's moustache to an uncle's justification of "neck-oil" Mr. Bates sticks to the facts.

In passing, Sir Osbert introduces quantities of oblique and tendentious comment, distinguished by honoured politicians, the Inland Revenue Department, the Welfare State, and the way things go nowadays. The stories are good and unexpected, but the comment has been somewhat overdone.

Wolfe and the Colonists

By Lt.-Gen. H. G. MARTIN
The Plans of Abraham, By Brian Connell. (Hodder, 21s.)

DESPITE the title of his book, Brian Connell has written much more than a history of Wolfe's victory and death on the Plains of Abraham.

He tells the story—far too little known over here—of the North American Colonies from 1748, when the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle ended one war with France, to 1763, when the Treaty of Paris ended another and gave France's empire in North America to Britain. And he tells it admirably.

His book takes us down to 1775 and shows how, by removing the French menace, Wolfe's victory at Quebec and the peace settlement that followed it had made the War

In and Around this Planet

Earth's Envelope. By Theo Löbbeck. Trans. by E. L. and D. Rewald. (Collins, 21s.)

It is more erudite than either of the two above and meatier. But this is not overdone and should not be too tough for anyone, professional or amateur, who is interested in the problems facing the zoologist of to-day, deserves to banish the zoo theory for ever.

It is just the kind of book for someone who feels in this day and age that he should know something about jet-streams, fall-out distribution, tornadoes, weather forecasting, and the Doppler effect. There is also plenty of chit-chat about why thunder thunders, why a mushroom atomic cloud mushrooms, and why on earth we have an atmosphere at all.

Loren Eiseley is another man who has jumped on the wagon of popularising science. But his is a chalk to Mr. Löbbeck's cheese, for no two approaches could be more different. In "Darwin's Century" he describes the thinking which led up to, and a little of the explosion which followed, the publication of Charles Darwin's views.

It is 100 years since "On the Origin of Species" first appeared, but the century of the present book is really the 19th, for most of it is about Darwin's life. But initially and in his flowery and expansive way Mr. Eiseley goes back to Bacon, Linnaeus and Cuvier in order to prepare the ground.

THIS week's last two novels are both American, and both concerned with analysing aspects of American fantasy-life.

"The Hit" is a first book by a young Negro author, and set in Harlem which he portrays with richly affectionate authenticity. It centres round that Transatlantic version of the Irish Sweepstake, the numbers racket; and thus lands firmly in the wish-fulfillment category.

Hubert Cooley is a janitor whose one secret ambition is to get away from his wife and son, and who backs the numbers heavily. But when his dream-number, 417, turns up, it transpires that the "banker" with whom he lodged the bet has fantasies of his own. The sad, wry, muted ending is a psychological master-stroke. Julian Mayfield has worked a neat variation on an old theme.

A REAL cool, you know, says actress Fay O'Hara, of teen-age idol, deceased Johnny Preston: "another Dean something like." Throw in a generous slice of Marlon Brando as well, and this is a pretty fair assessment. "The Immortal" is composed as a post-mortem dossier on young Johnny, with starlets, publicity agents, a sex-starved school-marm and others all recording their memories of him. Walter Ross has welded the material into a horribly convincing overall portrait of a psychopath, which (I sincerely hope) will tarnish the Legend a bit.

Novels in Brief
"The Moon at My Feet," by Katharine Sim. (Hodder, 15s.) This describes the predicament of an English woman approaching middle age who inadvertently falls in love with a Malay several years younger than herself. The Malay background is indicated, it is rather more convincing than the general love affair conducted by the two principals.

"Dragoman Pass," by Eric Williams. (Collins, 15s.) Quite a lot of excitement is squeezed out of a count of a trip behind the Iron Curtain a couple of years ago. The author and his wife, disguised as Roger and Kate Starke, and a Land-Rover are not sooner across the Hungarian border than they find themselves involved in a pure-and-simple story of adventure.

"A Chair for the Prophet," by Claude. (Faber, 15s.) The most vivid thing about this is not altogether satisfactory novel is the picture painted of the present-day inhabitants of Israel. Factual and frank, but too earnest, the plot turns upon a young Englishman's infatuation for a beautiful Jewish and his wife's seduction by a German immigrant. A. F. D.

People going places →

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Find your way easily with National Benzole Road Maps—Britain's finest. From all 'National' stations 11 each

Oh, the little more, and how much it is . . .

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WHAT IS THIS 'PEAK'? To Londoners going to and from their work, it means the half hours in the morning and evening when the Underground is most congested and the buses, entangled in traffic, move slowly along with full loads of passengers.

Custom apparently dictates that everyone who can shall work from 9.15 to 5.30. So 145,000 people flood into the Central Area of London by Underground between 8.45 and 9.15 a.m.; 155,000 go out in the evening between 5.15 and 5.45 p.m. No less than 89,000 crowd into the stations in a single quarter of an hour between 5.30 and 5.45—5,000 of them into Oxford Circus alone. On the buses, 56,000 people are picked up in thirty minutes between 5.45 and 6.15.

If enough employers and their staffs would move their starting and finishing times by only a quarter of an hour, all would benefit immeasurably, because travel would be more comfortable. Excessive congestion would disappear from the stations and the trains; the bus queues would dwindle. Can it be done? London Transport believes it can.

Those who have adopted staggered working hours have never regretted it. The Traffic Development Officer, London Transport, 55 Broadway, S.W.1. will be glad to advise anyone who is thinking of moving out of the peaks, for the problem grows more serious every month. Write to him, please.

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The six volumes of Sir Winston Churchill's "The Second World War" have been abridged by Denis Kelly into a single volume of 950 pages (Casell, 35s.), with a 20-page epilogue by Sir Winston himself discussing major events from July, 1945, to February, 1947. The text of the epilogue was published in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH in four instalments on April 21-24, 1958.

A new edition of the "Life of Robert Burns" by J. G. Lockhart has been published at 10s. 6d. in The Everyman Library, with an introduction by James Kinsley.