

## Editorial

NEXT month the first meeting of IASAIL, the International Association for the study of Anglo-Irish Literature, will be held in Dublin. This number of *ARIEL* marks the occasion by discussing Anglo-Irish writers and by including twenty extra pages of new Irish poems. The inclusion of these poems has been made possible by a generous grant from the Irish Cultural Affairs Committee, to which we are most grateful.

The formation of IASAIL marks a new development in critical and scholarly interest in the literature written in English by Irish authors. Just as the use of a convenient portmanteau term 'Commonwealth Literature' to denote literature written (largely) outside the British Isles and the United States causes similar reaching for rule-books, political-histories, logic-choppers and all the other standard aggressive equipment of the professional congress-wallah or committee-man, so the term 'Anglo-Irish Literature' gives many an academic barrack-room lawyer opportunity for argument. Though the definition of the various literatures written in English is difficult, what is meant by 'Commonwealth Literature' is clear enough for convenience (though it may ultimately be superseded or supplemented by the wider term 'Literature written in English' — as opposed to 'English Literature'). Indeed, English literature itself is now subdivided for some purposes. This is not just a piece of modern specialism run riot.

In the past 'English Literature' has been taken to mean the literature of the British Isles — not always to the content of all the inhabitants of the islands, and now not always to that of the specialist scholar or critic, wherever he may be.

Professor Daniel Corkery once produced a simple and workable definition of Anglo-Irish literature: 'literature written in English by Irishmen' (to him Irish literature was 'literature written in the Irish language alone'). Courses are labelled Anglo-Irish thus in universities, those homes of definition-making the world over. But what is to be understood by Professor Corkery's definition

will depend upon how the reader sees the panorama of Anglo-Irish literature. Does it begin with Molyneux's fascinating early piece of anti-colonialism, *The Case of Ireland, Stated* (1698), or with Swift's pamphlets, or with that first regional novel, Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800)? Or with more obviously Irish writers in the nineteenth century, Tom Moore and Lady Morgan, James Clarence Mangan and William Carleton? Or with the Irish literary revival, with Sir Samuel Ferguson and Standish O'Grady as precursors of Yeats, Lady Gregory, Synge? Or with recently dead and deeply lamented writers, Frank O'Connor, Flann O'Brien and Patrick Kavanagh? Where does Bishop Berkeley fit in, or Edmund Burke, or Goldsmith, or Wilde, or Bram Stoker, or Shaw, or Joyce, or Gogarty? What is the place of those living writers, Padraic Colum and Austin Clarke, who so gracefully bridge past and present? Will 'Anglo-Irish' be superseded or supplemented by the wider term 'Irish'?

Every man to his definition then, with ample material for contemplation: the interaction in one small island of two languages, the juxtaposition of different spiritual and material aims; extremes of aristocracy and countryfolk merging into a modern middle class; a very mixed heritage — of war, poverty, patriotism, religion, emigration; all of it emerging in a sheer delight in words, all blending into a rich and cohesive body of writing much influenced by a long, living oral tradition. Anglo-Irish drama, poetry, novels, and short stories are in need of the loving care of literary historians, who will disentangle some of the twisted threads making up this rich inheritance of Irish writers and readers throughout the world. Scholars and critics will be discussing it all in Dublin in August. We wish them pleasant and useful deliberations and suggest that what is needed most of all is the reprinting of many excellent Anglo-Irish books which are unobtainable now, such minor classics, for instance, as *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, or *Fardarongha The Miser*, or *The Real Charlotte*.

A. N. J.