

ever he really understands." So he must—for any book. But for this one, the author and the publisher have so conspired to impose added burdens on what, in this context, is normal joint authorship that few readers are likely to make the attempt—or to survive it successfully if they do.—*Carlyle J. Frarey, School of Library Science, University of North Carolina.*

## Early English Serials

*Serial Publication in England before 1750.*

By R. M. Wiles. Cambridge: University Press, 1957. 391p. 52s.6d.

This work has special value for librarians (for whom it was originally intended "as a mildly interesting note") and also for the literary historian who will discover it to be a treatise on an important phase of English literary history which had not hitherto been fully explored. In a very real and significant sense, however, it is a notable contribution to the history of adult education; in fact, the author, who is professor of English at McMaster University, believes that the chief value of his book is as an account of a previously unrecognized stimulus to increased literacy among the English middle and lower classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The text is complemented by a "Short-title Catalogue of Books Published in Fascicules before 1750." Over three hundred titles on almost every conceivable subject are listed in this bibliography which should be invaluable to the rare book librarian. So profitable in general were these weekly or monthly inexpensive parts that serial publication of books became competitive big business, the story of which is traced from

1678 to 1750. Only a score of titles were published in this manner prior to 1725; the boom really began in 1732; and after 1750 Professor Wiles contents himself with a number of highspots such as the success enjoyed by Smollett, Thackeray, and Dickens.

The parallel with today's pocketbooks does not escape Professor Wiles's attention. He points out that nowadays quite ordinary people are able and willing to buy excellent books, reasonably well printed, at lower prices than are charged for a haircut, a good meal, or the movies; just as two centuries ago the books in parts were sold principally to those who did not make up the "polite" world.

For a bibliographical study the book is unusually well written; at times it even makes entertaining reading—witness the chapter heading "The Law and the Profits." It covers all aspects of this type of serial publication: historical, bibliographical, printly significant is that this mode of publishing, promotion, and distribution. The conclusion summarizes the author's philosophy: "What makes the issuing of fascicules realtion made it possible and easy for middle- and lower-class Englishmen to buy and read books. That is an admirable habit. It is a habit which not even television and other astounding twentieth-century diversions have been able to break."

With its emphasis on reading habits and methods of publishing, the book is a most welcome addition to the librarian's and the library school student's professional reading. At the same time it will be most useful to the rare book librarian and the bibliographer. It should be in college and university libraries generally.—*Andrew D. Osborn, University of Sydney Library.*

INFORMATION, PLEASE: Professor Roger L. Brooks, Department of English, College of Engineering, University of Colorado, Boulder, wants to locate all extant copies of the following books by Matthew Arnold: *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* (1849), *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* (1852), and *Poems* (1853). He would like to know about any inscriptions and the names of previous owners, if available.

John B. Kaiser, School of Library Service, Columbia University, would like to locate the text in which the late Jacques Loeb, eminent biologist, referred to the library as "the essential to discovery." He believes that the comment was made at a library dedication (possibly in New England) prior to April 1926 but within a few years of that date.