

# 45 million Pounds

*actively work for New Zealand's prosperity ...*

THE A.M.P. is a *mutual* Life Society ... all funds belong to



policyholders. But that doesn't

HOMES



mean A.M.P. money lies idly in vaults

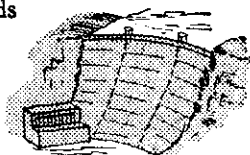
waiting till it is required. Over 45

FARMS million A.M.P. pounds

are currently invested in New

Zealand ... working hard

building homes (£6 millions),



PUBLIC WORKS

boosting farm production (£7 millions),

financing public works (£14 millions),

aiding local bodies (£9 millions),



LOCAL BODIES

assisting industry (£9 millions), pro-

viding needed buildings (£2 million). And

all the time that A.M.P. money is

working for national progress,



INDUSTRY

it is also earning interest which

## A.M.P.

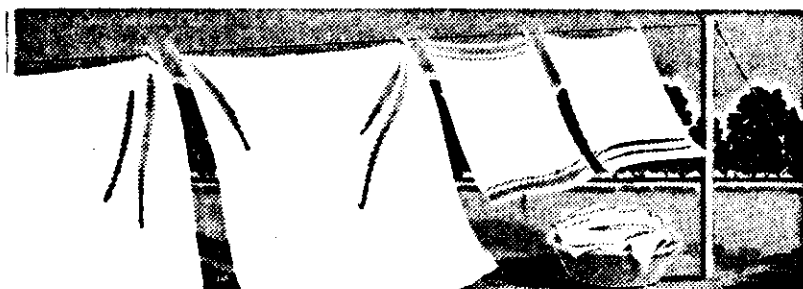
returns to individual A.M.P.

policyholders as bonuses.

FOSTERING NEW ZEALAND'S PROGRESS

S.E.7

AUSTRALIAN MUTUAL PROVIDENT SOCIETY (Incorporated in Australia)



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## The Fame of Dead Writers

IT is easy to feel some sympathy with Mr. Kenneth McKenney, whose letter is printed on the opposite page; but we suspect he is complaining for the wrong reason. "Why can't dead writers be left alone?" he asks. And then, instead of passing at once into the silence he advocates, he goes on to say what he himself thinks of Dylan Thomas. By giving even the briefest impression of the dead poet, he places himself alongside the speakers who had paid their tribute in the broadcast. His estimate may agree in part with theirs, and he is entitled to offer it; but in doing so he makes his plea for silence untenable. "Might we not just leave him that way?" asks Mr. McKenney, after putting forward his own opinion. But why should we? Who is to say that this or any other impression is the right one? The answer, surely, is that Dylan Thomas is now at the beginning of that long appraisal which must be expected by every writer who makes his presence felt in his own generation.

The process may seem to begin too abruptly. A poet dies, and people who admired him feel a personal bereavement. They have their own conceptions of his life and work; and when they hear others speak of him they are disturbed to find that he might have been someone different, someone they had never known. There may also be contrasts between vision and behaviour. Many people are unable to reconcile a writer's weaknesses with his achievement. Faults which can be passed over in an obscure life are magnified in a man of great talent. He is judged by his work, as if it should have made him virtuous, whereas it brings heavy strains and temptations. Even when a writer has been dead many years, his admirers are dismayed by revela-

tions of misdemeanour. For example, an uproar was caused recently by disclosures of Charles Dickens's relations with Ellen Ternan. Yet can it be said that the value of Dickens's novels has been weakened because we know that their author had his full share of human frailty? Literary criticism can be led astray by too much psychology; but a man's work is studied in darkness if the facts of his life are ignored.

An English reviewer said recently that most writers have dull lives. If this were true, it would be hard to explain the interest in literary biography. Carlyle lived uneventfully: he had no adventures of the sort which can be found in hundreds of books by men of action. Yet readers will continue to be interested in the domestic affairs of Thomas and Jane long after today's adventure stories are forgotten. The trivial ceases to be dull when it passes through lively minds; and the Carlyles could write brilliantly about an upset in the kitchen or an unwelcome visitor. Much of what they wrote was not intended for publication, so that people have asked if we have any right to look over the shoulders of the dead. It is not easy to decide where privacy begins in the life of a writer. Some men, fearful of what posterity might say of them, have tried to cover their tracks; and their reputations have been damaged by concealment. Information of great value has been lost in papers burnt by timid men or over-zealous executors. Authorship opens a man's life to public inspection. There is an obvious need of forbearance while people still living can be harmed by gossip about the dead. But few writers want to be swallowed by silence, and most of them know that the price of survival is a search for all that can be known of the truth.