

THE  
NEW RAMBLER

Journal of The Johnson Society of London

JANUARY, 1961

# THE NEW RAMBLER

JOURNAL OF THE JOHNSON SOCIETY OF LONDON

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## EDITORIAL

### EDWARD GIBBON

It has become customary to consider Samuel Johnson and Edward Gibbon as antipathetic characters, as indeed they were. Yet who would question that of the Johnson Circle, and of the Literary Club, Edward Gibbon was one of their brightest ornaments. Today his work has influence far beyond that of Sir Joshua Reynolds' "Discourses" or Oliver Goldsmith's plays and poems; although very different in kind it can only be compared with the great memoir written by James Boswell. The publication of the abridgement of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" by Mr. D. M. Low affords the opportunity of comment upon Edward Gibbon in two aspects, as an historian and as a student of religion.

That in his History and in his Autobiography Gibbon wrote some of the abiding literature of the 18th century is not open to dispute. The influence of his history may be ascribed to certain factors. For the value of its lessons one must consider the logical character of the mind of Gibbon and appreciate the varying influences to which the manner of his life contributed; he spent many years abroad or in a great capital city, London; he also had a sound practical knowledge of affairs, as an executive officer of militia during the years 1760-1763, and as a Member of Parliament, 1774-1783 and an official of the government from 1779-1782. An historian may also be assessed in part by his influence upon the notable men of later generations. We may refer to two great statesmen of our own time. Sir Winston Churchill records that when he was serving as a subaltern in India, he beguiled the heat of the day, and formed his mind and his style, by studying Gibbon's History. Earl Attlee relates that when he was Deputy Prime Minister, under the stress of making momentous decisions, he gained strength by reading the history of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire".

From the standpoint of religion Gibbon has been set down as an agnostic. Before judgment is given on this point certain considerations arise. His father had been under the tutorship of the Rev. William Law, an evangelical with whose book "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" together with others like it the library at Putney was furnished, and Gibbon read extensively among them. He went to Oxford when he was only fifteen years of age; there he

attended the chapel of Magdalen College regularly. Owing to his youth, on admission to Oxford, he had not subscribed to the Thirty Nine Articles. He tells us that "without a single lecture, either public or private, either Christian or Protestant, without any academical subscription, without any episcopal confirmation, I was left by the dim light of my catechism to grope my way to the Chapel and communion table where I was admitted, without a question how far or by what means, I might be qualified to receive the Sacrament". For a youth of Gibbon's thoughtful and studious temperament this was not sufficient and he began to study the writings of the Fathers for himself. The result was that at the age of sixteen he became a Roman Catholic, being admitted on June 8th, 1753, after a short period of instruction. Next he is sent by his father to be under the care of a Calvinistic minister in Lausanne. Four such rapid transformations of religious environment while he was still a youth, a precocious youth, were likely to upset a systematic course of religious worship. The words which Gibbon used concerning the place of his residence may well be applied to this period of his life; - in his Autobiography Gibbon writes thus:- "But it is the peculiar felicity of youth that the most unpleasing objects and events seldom make a deep or lasting impression; it forgets the past, enjoys the present, and anticipates the future" this might well be applied to the religious life of his adolescence; is it surprising that it left him with an uncertain ecclesiastical outlook. But the practice of religion in his youth, and his critical interest in it throughout life cannot be denied. Mr. Low observes that Gibbon was the first to make the history of religion a secular study. Bagehot considered that Gibbon was a theist after the fashion of natural theology. Cardinal Newman who, as an Anglican, had written that great historical work, "The Arians of the Fourth Century" and so was well acquainted with the period of which Gibbon also wrote, in later life stated that at the time when Gibbon was writing he was the only Church historian worthy of the name who had written in English. Dean Stanley, who wrote the "History of the Eastern Church", observed that "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" might equally be described as "The Rise and Progress of the Christian Church". Nor need we confine our observations to general comments; Gibbon was exact in his detailed knowledge of religious rule. Dr. Prestige, in his life of Bishop Charles Gore, states that "Once during discussion at tea about Sunday observance, somebody made a rash statement about the date of a particular regulation. Gore at once said 'Nonsense, Constantine settled that' and when his statement was questioned he merely said 'Fetch me the third volume of Gibbon', there he turned up the reference without the slightest hesitation". The theological student who is preparing a thesis on heresies will find full account of the various sectaries in the pages of Gibbon; if this were all it would be a small matter; the



history made a close study of the Frenchman's picturesque setting  
of his story. They think only of his own life as a man of  
letters, and of his own life as a man of letters. The student of  
history who knows that history is not a mere record of events  
but a study of the human mind, and that the human mind is  
not a mere record of events but a study of the human mind, will  
never be able to read the history of the world as it is now.

"You are a man of letters, and a man of letters."

"You are a man of letters, and a man of letters."

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Let the student who knows that  
history is not a mere record of events  
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the human mind is not a mere record of events  
but a study of the human mind, will never be able  
to read the history of the world as it is now.

The History of the World.

COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS (1)

by

R. W. Ketton-Cremer, M.A., F.R.S.L.

This is the second occasion on which the Johnson Society of London has honoured me with their invitation to lay this wreath on the anniversary of Samuel Johnson's death. On the first occasion, seven years ago, I was just completing my biography of Thomas Gray, one of Johnson's greatest contemporaries. I remember that my mind was full of Gray and his friend Horace Walpole, neither of whom knew Johnson privately or approved of him as a writer - feelings which were amply reciprocated on Johnson's part. Yet in spite of these personal antagonisms, both men admired Johnson's moral qualities and his Christian example. "He had the virtue of charity to a high degree", wrote Walpole. Norton Nicholls recorded that Gray "respected Johnson's understanding, and still more his goodness of heart. I have heard him say that Johnson would go out in London with his pockets full of silver, and give it all away in the streets before he returned home". It is no small tribute, as I said on that occasion, when even a man's enemies will testify to his charity and his goodness of heart.

I think that every recent visitor to Westminster Abbey will have been impressed by the results of the cleaning of the memorials. This formidable task has to be undertaken at regular intervals; and then by degrees the London grime inevitably settles upon the monuments once more. But just at present we are able to examine the Abbey's treasures of English sculpture as they ought to be seen. We can appreciate their artistic excellence to the full. Many of us must have looked during the past year or two at these monuments in Poet's Corner with almost a new vision, finding fresh beauty and interest in them since their cleaning and renovation. Perhaps there is no place where Johnsonian associations are more closely assembled. Here are the memorials, and in many cases the sculptured likenesses, of the great English writers of ages prior to his own, whose works he had studied, quoted, written about in the Lives of the Poets. Here are the memorials also of the writers who were his contemporaries - friends like Goldsmith and Garrick and Sheridan, oppo-

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(1) Delivered in Westminster Abbey on Tuesday, December 13th, 1960.

nents like Gray and Mason and James Macpherson. All are united now in this quiet corner of the Abbey, where the tablets and busts are on the modest scale which befits the writer's profession, and where, as Washington Irving well said, "a kinder and fonder feeling takes the place of that cold curiosity with which we gaze on the splendid monuments of the great and the heroic".

Few of these memorials in Poet's Corner can be more often visited, or with more affectionate feelings, than Samuel Johnson's - that fine bust by Nollekens on the wall behind me, and the stone on which I lay this wreath, on behalf of the Johnson Society of London, on the anniversary of his death.

#### NOTES

Through our President, The Very Rev. W. R. Matthews, we have received from the Secretary of "The Johnsonians", Pearl River, New York, a brochure containing admirably produced photographs of a cast in plaster, taken from the original bust of Dr. Johnson by Joseph Nollekens. In the cast the resolute, thoughtful features of the great doctor are shown in three different aspects; there are also reproduced other busts in different media, which are in Westminster Abbey, the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum, which collectively make an interesting study of the countenance of Dr. Johnson in the prime of his life.

In the present age a solid currency has been abandoned and governments produce their resources by printing paper money which has no adequate backing, through this we all know the meaning of financial difficulty. The Johnson Society of London also feels this stress, particularly in producing its Journal. The matter was carefully discussed at the Annual General Meeting last year, when a resolution was passed asking the Executive Committee to consider raising the subscription by 5/- per annum. Due notice of this was given on p.56 of the June issue of the Journal and this small addition will now take place. We believe that the increasing circulation of the Journal and the steady attendance at the monthly meetings of the Society at our comfortable headquarters in London are evidence that the life and work of the Johnson Society of London is of real literary value. May we note how much we appreciate the presence of our Overseas Members and Visitors at our meetings.

JOHNSON'S BOOKS and the BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY

by

Charles Parish, Esq., A.L.A.  
The Public Library, Birmingham, Eng.

The association, particularly in his young manhood, of Dr. Samuel Johnson with Birmingham was considered sufficiently important to justify the arrangement there, during September and October, 1959, of a programme of celebrations of the 250th anniversary of his birth. The contribution made by the Birmingham Library to these celebrations was an exhibition of books known to Johnson and, for the most part, in the same editions as those used by him, all drawn from the Library's shelves. The exhibition, of fifty of these books, was based on references made by Boswell, either in the Life, or in the Journal of a tour to the Hebrides, to the many books Johnson read, consulted or discussed. The principal object of the exhibition was to present Johnson through his books and, therefore, the arrangement of the display and of its printed catalogue, followed the order of these references in the Life and the Tour except that, since they were the sources of almost all the annotations, these books appeared as items 1 and 2 of the exhibition: the Life in the 1st edition of 1791, <sup>(1)</sup> and the Tour in the 3rd edition of 1786. The exhibition showed Johnson, the man, and the range of his intellectual activity; there were the tools of Johnson's trade in the form in which he had used them; there was a view of literature, of thought and of action in Johnson's age.

It is not possible to speak in detail about all the books in this exhibition and, on those I have selected for comment in this address, I have thought it best to use a different arrangement from the one employed there. In the first group, are books used by Johnson as sources, beginning with Richard Knolles. The general historie of the Turks... 3rd ed. 1621. Johnson borrowed a copy of

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(1). References to the Life in this address are to: Boswell's Life of Johnson ... Edited by George Birkbeck Hill; revised and enlarged edition by L. F. Powell, Oxford, 1934-50. 6v.



this book from Peter Garrick and there found the story on which he based Irene. (2) This is followed by Paolo Sarpi. Histoire du Concile de Trente, écrite en Italien par Fra-Paolo Sarpi...et traduite de nouveau en françois, avec des notes...par Pierre-Francois Le Courayer. 1751. 3v. (3) This work was first published in 1619. An English translation by Nathaniel Brent appeared in 1676. In 1736 was published a translation into French with notes by Le Courayer. In 1737 Johnson proposed to Cave that he should make a new English translation, using Le Courayer's notes. The proposal was accepted and, although the work was never completed, the contact with Cave, may have led to Johnson's later employment on the Gentleman's Magazine. (4) Then follow two books used by Johnson during the compilation of his Dictionary: Francis Junius. Etymologicum Anglicanum. 1743, (5) and Stephen Skinner. Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae... 1671. (6)

The religious thought of the age is represented by several books. Here, for example, is William Law. A serious call to a devout and holy life... 10th ed. 1772. This work, first published in 1728, was read by Johnson at Oxford and, as he said, "...was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational enquiry". (7) The scepticism of the 18th century, as expressed by Gibbon, is represented here by the 3rd ed. of his History. You will remember Boswell's account of the conversation, at Trinity College on that evening in March, 1776, when he, Johnson and Thomas Warton "...talked of a book much in vogue at that time, written in a very mellifluous style, but which, under pretext of another subject, contained much artful infidelity". (8) Priestley, the Unitarian philosopher and scientist, and the most distinguished product of the dissenting academies, is here through his Experiments and observations on different kinds of air; 3rd ed. 1781. 3v. Boswell has this story: "Chymistry was always an interesting pursuit with Dr. Johnson: Whilst he was in Wiltshire he attended some experiments that were made by a physician at Salisbury, on the new kinds of air. In the course of the experiments frequent mention being made of Dr. Priestley, Dr. Johnson knit his brows, and, in a stern manner enquired, 'Why do we hear so much of Dr. Priestley?'

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(2) Life i, 100.

(3) Life i, 135.

(4) Clifford, James L. Young Samuel Johnson. 1955. p. 191.

(5) Life i, 186.

(6) Life i, 186.

(7) Life i, 68.

(8) Life ii, 447.

He was very properly answered, 'Sir, because we are indebted to him for these important discoveries'. On this Dr. Johnson appeared well content; and replied, 'Well, well, I believe we are; and let every man have the honour he has merited'". Boswell's footnote to this anecdote is as follows: "I do not wonder at Johnson's displeasure when the name of Dr. Priestley was mentioned: for I know no writer who has been suffered to publish more pernicious doctrines. I shall instance only three. First, Materialism; by which mind is denied to human nature which, if believed, must deprive us of every elevated principle. Secondly, Necessity; or the doctrine that every action, whether good or bad, is included in an unchangeable and unavoidable system; a notion utterly subversive of moral government. Thirdly, that we have no reason to think that the future world, (which, as he is pleased to inform us, will be adapted to our merely improved nature), will be materially different from this; which, if believed, would sink wretched mortals into despair, as they could no longer hope for the 'rest that remaineth for the people of God', or for that happiness which is revealed to us as something beyond our present conceptions; but would feel themselves doomed to a continuation of the uneasy state under which they now groan. I say nothing of the petulant intemperance with which he dares to insult the venerable establishments of his country... The Reverend Dr. Parr, in a late tract, appears to suppose that Dr. Johnson not only endured, but almost solicited, an interview with Dr. Priestley. In justice to Dr. Johnson, I declare my firm belief that he never did. My illustrious friend was particularly resolute in not giving countenance to men whose writings he considered as pernicious to society. I was present at Oxford when Dr. Price, (9) even before he had rendered himself so generally obnoxious by his zeal for the French Revolution, came into a company where Johnson was, who instantly left the room. Much more would he have reprobated Dr. Priestley...' (10) The story seems to have got about that it was Priestley whom Johnson had shunned, but Priestley asserts: 'In fact, we never were at Oxford at the same time, and the only interview I ever had with him was at Mr. Paradise's, where we dined together at his own request.

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- (9) Dr. Richard Price, dissenting minister at Hackney, liberal theologian, mathematician, and economist. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, the close friend of Priestley and of Benjamin Franklin. He was an advocate of the cause of the American colonists, and a friend of the French Revolution. His sermon, "The love of our country", preached to the Revolution Society in 1789, provoked Burke's Reflections.
- (10) Life, iv, 237-8.

He was particularly civil to me, and promised to call upon me the next time he should go through Birmingham. He behaved with the same civility to Dr. Price, when they supped together at Dr. Adams's at Oxford. Several circumstances shew that Dr. Johnson had not so much of bigotry at the decline of life as had distinguished him before, on which account it is well known to all our common acquaintance, that I declined all their pressing solicitations to be introduced to him". (11).

Representative of the intellectual contribution of Scotland to the age are: William Robertson, The History of Scotland during the reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI...5th ed. 1769. 2v. (12) and James Beattie. Essays. 1776. Robertson, whose friendly clashes with Dr. Erskine are commemorated in Guy Mannering, published his history of Scotland in 1758-9. It had a great success and, in consequence he became chaplain to the King in 1761, Principal of the University of Edinburgh a year later, and Historiographer-Royal in 1764. Johnson was critical of him as a writer, but loved him as a man, and this in spite of Robertson's being a Scot, a Whig and a Latitudinarian. James Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic at Aberdeen, met Johnson, through the agency of Boswell, in 1771. Of him, Johnson said: "Sir, he has written like a man conscious of the truth..." (13) Johnson's name appears in the list of subscribers in this book. The first essay in the volume, Essay on the nature and immutability of truth, in which Beattie attacked Hume, first appeared in 1770, and had a tremendous success. In 1773 he was granted a pension of two hundred pounds a year. The news of this reached Johnson at Inverary and, as Boswell tells us: "He sat up in bed, clapped his hands and cried, 'O brave we!' - a peculiar exclamation of his when he rejoices". (14)

The period was notable for a revival of interest in the ballad and in old poetry generally. Here are three books of importance in this connection: Thomas Percy. Reliques of ancient English poetry...3rd ed. 1775. 3v., Thomas Warton. The History of English poetry...1774-84. 3v., and The poems of Ossian; translated by James Macpherson; new ed. 1773. 2v. In his preface, Percy writes: "to the friendship of Dr. Samuel Johnson he owes many valuable hints for the conduct of the work"... Warton's great history is included for its importance, and because it is a good

(11) Priestley, Joseph. Appeal to the public. 1792.

(12) Life, ii, 53.

(13) Life, v, 29.

(14) Life, v, 360.

copy of the first edition, rather than for any direct connection with Johnson. His Observations on the Faery Queen of Spenser, which had appeared in 1754, won Johnson's warm approval. "You have shewn to all", he wrote, "who shall hereafter attempt the study of our ancient authours, the way to success; by directing them to the perusal of the books those authours had read". The correspondence thus opened led to a long friendship that, although sometimes interrupted by Warton's resentment of Johnson's criticism, was finally resolved only by death. Warton went to Trinity College, Oxford, when he was fifteen and remained there, becoming a college tutor, for practically the rest of his life. Only, perhaps, in the Oxford of his day could he have followed his method with pupils, which was to discourage, frankly and openly, their attendance at lectures. He was Professor of Poetry from 1757-67 and Poet-Laureate from 1785 until his death in 1790. He was influential in obtaining for Johnson, in 1754, the degree of M.A., Macpherson's Ossian is included, of course, because of the quarrel between Johnson and Macpherson on the subject of its authorship. There are three books that celebrate the circumnavigators, of which John Hawkesworth, An account of the voyages undertaken... for making discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere and successively performed by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook... 1773. 3v. may stand as representative. It was difficult to persuade Johnson that books of this kind had any merit, and he, on one occasion, when a friend, as Boswell tells us, "mentioned to him several extraordinary facts, as communicated to him by the circumnavigators, slyly observed, 'Sir, I never before knew how much I was respected by these gentlemen; they told me none of these things'".<sup>(15)</sup> Early in April, 1776, Boswell dined at the house of Sir John Pringle, and there met Captain Cook. On the following day he gave Johnson an account of the conversation and Johnson "was much pleased with the conscientious accuracy of that celebrated circumnavigator, who set me right as to many of the exaggerated accounts given by Dr. Hawkesworth of his voyages".<sup>(16)</sup> Robert Orme, sometime in the service of the East India Company and, for a time, the intimate of Clive, gave Boswell much pleasure by praising Johnson: "I do not care (said he), on what subject Johnson talks; but I love better to hear him talk than any body. He either gives you new thoughts, or a new colouring. It is a shame to the nation that he has not been more liberally rewarded. Had I been George the Third, and thought as he did about America,

(15) Life, iii, 8.

(16) Life, iii, 7.



I would have given Johnson three hundred a year for his "Taxation no Tyranny" alone". Boswell tells us that Johnson was much pleased "with such praise from such a man as Orme". (17) Orme's A history of the military transactions of the British nation in Indostan... 3rd ed. 1780. 3v. (18) is included although I cannot produce evidence that Johnson had read it. Orme praised Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, and expressed himself to Boswell as follows: "There are in that book thoughts, which by long revolution in the great mind of Johnson, have been formed and polished like pebbles rolled in the ocean!" (19) Another work that he may not have read, is Vincent Lunardi. (20) "An account of the first aerial voyage in England"...2nd ed. 1784. In a letter to Dr. Brocklesby from Lichfield on 29th September, 1784, Johnson wrote: "On one day I had three letters about the air-balloon: yours was by far the best, and has enabled me to impart to my friends in the country an idea of this species of amusement. In amusement, more amusement, I am afraid it must end..." (21) To the same correspondence he wrote, on 6th October, of another balloon (that had been destroyed by fire): "The fate of the balloon I do not much lament: to make new balloons is to repeat the jest again. We now know a method of mounting into the air and I think, are not likely to know more. The vehicles can serve no use till we can guide them: and they can gratify no curiosity till we mount with them to greater heights than we can reach without; till we rise above the tops of the highest mountains, which we have not yet done. We know the state of the air in all its regions, to the top of Teneriffe, and therefore learn nothing from those who navigate a balloon below the clouds. The first experiment, however, was bold and deserved applause and reward; but since it has been performed, and its event is known, I had rather now find a medicine that can ease an asthma". (22)

It is possible to mention briefly only, the other authors whose works found places in the exhibition. They are: Peter Bayle,

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(17) Life, iii, 284.

(18) Colonel Newcome, when a boy, "was for ever talking of India, and the famous deeds of Clive and Lawrence. His favourite book was a history of India - the history of Orme". Thackeray. The Newcomes. ch. 76.

(19) Life, ii, 300.

(20) Lunardi, secretary to the Neapolitan ambassador in England, made his ascent, in face of suspicion and hostility, from the Honourable Artillery Company's ground in London, on 15th September, 1784.

(21) Life, iv, 357.

(22) Life, iv, 358.

of the Dictionary, George Buchanan, Scottish historian, political writer and poet, George, 1st Baron Lyttelton, Pope, Baretti, Jonas Hanway, merchant, traveller and philanthropist, Martin Martin, author of Descriptions of the Western Isles and A voyage to St. Kilda, Henry Moore, philosopher and divine, Locke, Sir William Jones, the orientalist, Lord Monboddo, Samuel Butler, author of Hubibras, Nathaniel Hooke, historian of Rome, Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, Charles Burney, the historian of music, Catherine Macauley, the Earl of Chesterfield, Dr. John Campbell, of the Biographia Britannica, Philip Thickness, Thomas Pannant, the traveller, Charles Francis Sheridan, brother of Richard Brinsley and historian of Sweden, William Camden, Lord Kames, Alexander Russell, physician to the English factory at Aleppo, and George Psalmanazar, impostor and penitent.

It would be wrong to claim that the exhibition was truly representative of the middle and late 18th century achievement. There were many omissions. There was nothing of Richardson, Fielding or Fanny Burney; nothing of Thomson, Gray, Cowper or Crabbe. Burke was missing, and so was Wilkes; so were Sheridan and Goldsmith. There were two reasons: firstly, the limitation of the exhibition to fifty books, secondly, many of the editions of the better-known authors are, for obvious reasons in a working library, of too recent a date to be of use. There were one or two disappointments; I wished, very much, that I had been able to produce an early edition of Evelina, and it would have given me the greatest pleasure had I been able to display a copy of the book Johnson gave to the landlord's daughter at the inn at Glenmorison. You will remember, of course, that it was Cocker's Arithmetic. (23)

The Birmingham Library is a subscription library, containing 120,000 volumes, that, since 1955, has been amalgamated with the Birmingham and Midland Institute. It was founded in 1779, and re-organised by Dr. Joseph Priestley, who came to Birmingham in 1780. From its foundation until the amalgamation with the Institute it was a proprietary library: one of many libraries of a similar character founded during the second half of the 18th century. These libraries were non-profit making subscription circulating libraries and the proprietors of these institutions were the members themselves. (24) The Birmingham Library before the

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(23) Life, v, 138.

(24) For an account of these libraries, see Beckwith, Frank. The Eighteenth-century proprietary library in England. In, The Journal of Documentation, vol. III, No. 2. September, 1947.

advent of Priestley was very small; too insignificant, for example, for mention in the 2nd edition of William Hutton's History of Birmingham, 1783. The original subscribers were nineteen in number all, save one, dissenters. The foundation of proprietary libraries was one of the notable contributions made by dissenters to the intellectual life of the period. As Priestley asserted: "The Dissenters have always been foremost to promote these libraries". (25) That such a library should have been founded in Birmingham is not surprising. Always friendly to non-conformity, Birmingham, since it was not a corporate town, became, after the passing of the Five Mile Act, a refuge for leaders and members of dissenting communities. The independent, liberal spirit found much nourishment in the Birmingham of the latter part of the 18th century. This rapidly-growing town was the scene of a very considerable intellectual scientific and commercial activity that had, as its finest expression, the Lunar Society. There were close links between the Lunar Society and the Birmingham Library. Priestley, Dr. Withering, the physician and botanist, Samuel Galton and Matthew Boulton, the industrialists were, for example, prominent members of both bodies. The Library, then, was founded at a propitious time, but something more than intellectual eagerness was needed. The 'more' was supplied by Priestley who associated himself with its activities soon after his arrival in Birmingham and, having gained experience of similar libraries in Warrington and Leeds, lent this experience and his remarkable energy to the Birmingham Library. He is spoken of as its 'father' and is often thought to have been responsible for its foundation. He was not, but he re-vitalised it, setting before its Committee an ideal, and worked hard to attract support. What appears to have been his first effort in this direction was an advertisement in Aris's Birmingham Gazette in 1781. "...The books are never to be sold or distributed; and, from the nature of the institution, the Library must increase till it contains all the most valuable publications in the English language; and, from the easy terms of admission (viz., one guinea for entrance, and six shillings annually), it will be a treasure of knowledge both to the present and succeeding ages. As all books are bought by a committee of persons, annually chosen by a majority of the subscribers, and every vote is by ballot, this institution can never answer the purpose of any party, civil or religious, but, on the contrary, may be expected to promote a

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(25) Priestley, Joseph. Familiar letters. (1790) part V, 36-7. See also: Kaufman, Paul. The Eighteenth-century forerunner of the London Library. In, Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America. Vol. 54, second quarter, 1960.

(25) spirit of liberality and friendship among all classes of men without distinction. The Library in this town is at present in its very infancy, but it already contains a valuable collection of books, catalogues of which may always be seen at Messrs. Pearson and Rollason's; and when the Library Room (which is already engaged in the most central part of the town) shall be opened for the reception of it, and the constant accommodation of all the subscribers, the advantages arriving from the institution will be greatly increased". At this time the subscribers numbered 74 and the Library contained 277 volumes and 10 pamphlets. In 1782 there were close on 500 volumes, available to subscribers. Growth went on steadily. By 1783 there were 900 volumes, by 1785, 1,200 and, at the end of its first ten years, 3,400 were available to 150 subscribers.

The earliest minutes of the Library have been lost, but, from 1790 onwards, they survive complete. It has been possible, therefore, to find out when the 1st edition of Boswell's Life was acquired. This was on 3rd June, 1791. A meeting of the Committee held on that day had for its principal business the 'voting in' of a number of books and pamphlets. Six members of the Committee were present. They were: Messrs. John Freer, John Lee, John Blount, Sampson Lloyd, Thomas Cooper and Joseph Rabone. (26) The first item on the agenda was to acknowledge a gift, and the thanks of the meeting were voted to Mr. Charles Lloyd, the Quaker banker, for his present of The abridgment of the minutes of the evidence taken of the slave trade. 2v. The Committee then considered twenty-one books and pamphlets that had been suggested for addition to the Library. All but three survive. Here is the list:

Priestley, Joseph. A discourse on the occasion of the death of Dr. Price...1791. (27).

Priestley, Joseph. The proper objects of education in the present state of the world...1791.

Aikin, John. Poems. 1791. (28)

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(26) Priestley was not a member of the Committee in 1791. He had been elected but had declined to act. In July, 1791, occurred the Priestley Riots that forced him to leave Birmingham.

(27) See p.4, Note 9.

(28) Dr. John Aikin, Principal of the Warrington Academy, friend and colleague of Priestley, and father of Anna Laetitia, afterwards Mrs. Barbauld.



- Tatham, Edward. Letters to...Edmund Burke on politics. 1791. (29)
- Mackintosh, Sir J. Vindiciae Gallicae: defence of the French Revolution against Burke. 1791. (No longer in the Library).
- Berkenhout, John. Synopsis of the natural history of Great Britain and Ireland. 1789. 2v. (No longer in the Library).
- Adams, George. Lectures on natural and experimental philosophy, considered in its present state of improvement. Describing in a familiar and easy manner, the principal phenomena of nature; and showing that they all co-operate in displaying the goodness, wisdom, and power of God. 1794. 5v. (30)
- Williams, Helen Maria A farewell for two years to England: a poem. 1791. (31)

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- (29) Dr. Edward Tatham, Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. His Letters to Burke contain some severe reflections on Priestley.
- (30) George Adams, the younger, mathematical instrument major to His Majesty. This book cannot, of course, have been available to the Committee, for inspection. It had, presumably, been 'announced' and a decision was taken to acquire it when it should become available. The title-page has been transcribed in full, because it is so characteristic of the 18th century.
- (31) Boswell has, (Life, iv. 282), two charming stories about Johnson and Miss Williams: "He had dined that day at Mr. Hoole's, and, Miss Helen Maria Williams being expected in the evening, Mr. Hoole put into his hands her beautiful 'Ode on the Peace': Johnson read it over, and when this elegant and accomplished young lady was presented to him, he took her by the hand in the most courteous manner, and repeated the finest stanza of her poem; this was the most delicate and pleasing compliment he could pay... Miss Williams told me, that the only other time she was fortunate enough to be in Dr. Johnson's company, he asked her to sit down by him, which she did and upon her enquiring how he was, he answered, 'I am very ill indeed, Madam. I am very ill even when you are near me; what should I be were you at a distance?'" Miss Williams visited France in 1788, and thereafter, for the most part, lived there. She became an enthusiast for the Revolution. Boswell has a footnote to the stories quoted above: "In the first edition of my Work, the epithet amiable was given. I was sorry to be obliged to strike it

- Boswell, James. The Life of Samuel Johnson...1791. 2v.
- Lodge, Edmund. Illustrations of British history...1791. 3v.
- Hartley, David. Observations on man...Reprinted from the author's edition in 1749...1791. (32).
- Williams, John. The natural history of the mineral kingdom... 1789. 2v.
- An address to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury as a Visitor of colleges in the University of Oxford, and as Primate of England; 2nd. ed.... By a Country clergyman. 1791.
- Pagès de. Travels round the world in the years 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771 by Monsieur de Pagès, Captain in the French Navy...1791. 2v.

(31) contd..

out; but I could not in justice suffer it to remain, after this young lady had not only written in favour of the Savage Anarchy with which France has been visited, but had (as I have been informed by good authority), walked, without horror, over the ground at the Thuilleries, when it was strewed with the naked bodies of the faithful Swiss Guards, who were barbarously massacred for having bravely defended, against a crew of ruffians, the Monarch who they had taken an oath to defend. From Dr. Johnson, she could now expect not endearment but repulsion".

(32) This book, read by Priestley in his youth, exercised a decisive influence on his thought. Professor Basil Willey in his The Eighteenth century background (1949) writes: "Throughout his Observations on man (1749) there is to be found a characteristic blend...of scientific ardour with religious certainty (p.136). And (p.143), 'His fundamental doctrine as expressed by J. S. Mill (Autobiography, p. 91 (World's Classics) is, 'the formation of all human character by circumstances, through the universal principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education'".

- Trimmer, Mrs. Sarah. The Oeconomy of charity; or An address to ladies concerning Sunday schools... 1787. (33)
- Thoroton, Robert. Thoroton's history of Nottinghamshire, re-published with large additions, by John Throsby... 1790. 3v.
- Mortimer, George. Observations and remarks made during a voyage to the Islands of Teneriffe, Amsterdam, Maria's Islands near Van Diemen's Land; Otaheite, Sandwich Islands; Owhyee, the Fox Islands on the north west coast of America, Tinian, and from thence to Canton, in the brig Mercury, commanded by John Henry Cox, Esq., illustrated with a sketch of the Islands of Amsterdam, a plan of Oyster Harbour at the Maria Islands with some views of the land: a curious medal; and a club accurately engraved, by Lieut. George Mortimer, of the Marines. 1791.
- Long, J. Voyages and travels of an Indian interpreter and trader, describing the manners and customs of the North American Indians; with an account of the posts situated on the River Saint Laurence, Lake Ontario, etc. To which is added a vocabulary of the Chippeway language. Names of furs and skins, in English and French. A list of words in the Iroquois, Mohegan, Shawanee and Esquimeaux tongues, and a table showing the analogy between the Algonkin and Chippeway languages. 1791.
- Cooper, Samuel. The first principles of civil and ecclesiastical government, delineated (in two parts) in Letters to Dr. Priestley occasioned by his to Mr. Burke. 1791.

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(33) Mrs. Trimmer, née Kirby, (1741-1810) "...met Dr. Johnson at the house of Reynolds, and, a dispute arising about a passage in Paradise Lost, Miss Kirby produced a Milton from her pocket. Johnson was much impressed and presented her with a copy of his Rambler. This was the origin of their friendship." D.N.B. "She was a woman of great piety and inspired by the example of Dr. Johnson, kept a diary which is a daily self-examination in his manner, interspersed with prayers of her own composition". D.N.B. The D.N.B. also tells us that Queen Charlotte, wishing to set up Sunday schools at Windsor, consulted Mrs. Trimmer who had an interview of two hours duration with Her Majesty on 19th November, 1786. The result of the meeting was the publication of "The Oeconomy of Charity".

(Reynolds, Sir Joshua.) Seven discourses delivered in the Royal Academy by the President. 1778.

Speechly, Wm. On the culture of the vine. (No longer in the Library).

The Sampson Lloyd who was present at the meeting of the Committee of the Library on 3rd June, 1791, when these books were 'voted in', was the third of that name. Fifteen years before, he had been Johnson's host. Boswell, under date 1776, writes: "On Friday March 22, having set out early from Henley, where we had lain the preceding night, we arrived at Birmingham about nine o'clock, and, after breakfast, went to call on his old schoolfellow Mr. Hector. (34) A very stupid maid, who opened the door, told us, that 'her master was gone out; he was gone to the country; she could not tell when he would return'. In short she gave us a miserable reception; and Johnson observed, 'she would have behaved no better to people who wanted him in the way of his profession'. He said to her, 'My name is Johnson; tell him I called. Will you remember the name?' She answered with rustic simplicity, in the Warwickshire pronunciation, 'I don't understand you, Sir'. - 'Blockhead, (said he), I'll write'. I never heard the word blockhead applied to a woman before, though I do not see why it should not, when there is evident occasion for it. He, however, made another attempt to make her understand him, and roared loud in her ear, 'Johnson', and then she caught the sound".

"We next called on Mr. Lloyd, one of the people called Quakers. He too was not at home; but Mrs. Lloyd was, and received us courteously, and asked us to dinner. Johnson said to me, 'After the uncertainty of all human things at Hector's this invitation came very well'. We walked about the town, and he was pleased to see it increasing....."

"Mr. Lloyd joined us in the street; and in a little while we met Friend Hector, as Mr. Lloyd called him. It gave me great pleasure to observe the joy which Johnson and he expressed on seeing each other again. Mr. Lloyd and I left them together, while he obligingly showed me some of the manufactures of this very curious assemblage of artificers. We all met at dinner at Mr. Lloyd's, where we entertained with great hospitality. Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd had been married the same year as their Majesties, and like them, had been blessed with a numerous family of fine children, their numbers being exactly the same. Johnson said: 'Marriage is the best state

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(34) Edmund Hector (1708-94), Birmingham Surgeon.



for man in general; and every man is a worse man in proportion as he is unfit for the married state'.

"I have always loved the simplicity of manners, and the spiritual-mindedness of the Quakers: and talking with Mr. Lloyd I observed that the essential part of religion was piety, a devout intercourse with the Divinity; and that many a man was a Quaker without knowing it."

"As Dr. Johnson had said to me in the morning while we walked together, that he liked individuals among the Quakers, but not the sect; when we were at Mr. Lloyd's, I kept clear of introducing any question concerning the peculiarities of their faith. But I having asked to look at Baskerville's edition of 'Barclay's Apology', (35) Johnson laid hold of it; and the chapter on baptism happening to open, Johnson remarked, 'He says there is neither precept nor practice for baptism in the scriptures; that is false'. Here he was the aggressor, by no means in a gentle manner; (36) and the good Quakers had the advantage of him; for he had read negligently and had not observed that Barclay speaks of infant baptism; which they calmly made him perceive.."

When your Honorary Secretary invited me to give to your society an address on "Dr. Johnson, or his contemporaries and times - perhaps with a Birmingham flavour", my first thought was that nothing that I had to say on Johnson could stand beside the addresses you have been accustomed to hear and which, later, have appeared in your excellent The New Rambler. At length, encouraged by a remembrance of the very kind reception given to some work I did for the Johnson celebrations in Birmingham last year, I decided to speak about the exhibition of Johnson's books for which I was responsible, and, in the course of my paper, to tell you something of the Library in which these books have been preserved.

A difficulty, which became apparent when I began to write, was that I had two subjects. I resolved to divide my address into two more or less equal parts: part I to deal with Johnson's books and

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- (35) The Birmingham Library's copy of this work was displayed in the exhibition. Rachel, daughter of the second Sampson Lloyd, married David Barclay, (grandson of the Apologist), who brought Thrall's brev
- (36) Tradition says that Johnson flung the volume on the floor and stamped upon it. And later that he continued the debate in such angry tones and struck the table so violently that the children were frightened. It appears that this was a mid-day dinner, for a story is preserved that, in the afternoon, Johnson went to the bank in Dale End and called out: "I say, Lloyd, I'm the best theologian, but you are the best Christian". Lloyd, Samuel. The Lloyds of Birmingham. 1907. p.108.
- (37) Life, ii, 456-8.

part II to consist of a short account of the Birmingham Library which would also be an essay on life and thought in a provincial town during the closing years of the eighteenth century. I decided, too, with a pride for which I hope I may be forgiven, to remind you that, while you had "The Club", we had "The Lunar Society". And I wished to remind you that Birmingham was the home of Priestley, of Matthew Boulton, of the Lloyds and of Edmund Hector. It was, however, impossible to keep Johnson out, even though I was principally concerned with the Library as it was seven years after his death. Boswell was, of course, still alive, and I became very conscious, as I worked, of the Boswell of the Life, the Boswell after Johnson, and particularly the Boswell of the foot-notes. Never, I think, have I admired Boswell less, or Johnson more.

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#### JOHNSON'S SENSE OF CHARITY

by

Professor Maurice J. Quinlan, Ph. D.  
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In the Idler (No. 4) Johnson observed, "The present age, though not likely to shine hereafter among the most splendid periods of history, has yet given examples of charity, which may be very properly recommended to imitation". Johnson was alluding to the philanthropic impulse which led in the eighteenth century to the establishment of charity schools, asylums for the aged and indigent, hospitals, and orphanages. Charity was also stressed in the literature of the time, where it served as a yardstick for measuring the worth of a man. The popular term for the expression in words or deeds of a feeling of goodwill was "benevolence" though this did not always connote the same thing as "charity". Benevolence was generally thought of as a virtue native to man, flowing from natural goodness which the philosophical optimists attributed to him. In the middle of the century the term and the virtue it represented were extremely popular with the sentimental writers. In his dictionary Johnson defined "charity" and "benevolence" with some overlapping of meaning. Either could signify kindness or a disposition to do good; in that sense both were social virtues. But he carefully distinguished between the two when he defined "charity" as "the theological virtue of universal love", but which he meant love of one's fellow-men as comprised in the broader concept of the love of God. To him benevolence, in the sense of a

cultivated disposition to do good, was a virtue that could exist in any society where the sense of reason had been developed. Charity, on the other hand, could exist only among Christians or among those influenced by Christian teaching. In the Idler (No. 4) he observes that Charity is inseparable from piety and is "known only to those who enjoy, either immediately or by transmission, the light of revelation". For the theory of benevolence as a native disposition that directed one to do good he had no respect. When he was in Scotland and Lady M' Leod asked, if no man was naturally good, he replied "No, Madame, no more than a wolf". Similarly when Boswell attempted to defend a man whose "principles had been poisoned by a noted infidel writer" by saying that he was "nevertheless a benevolent good man" Johnson objected, "We can have no dependence upon that instinctive, that constitutional goodness which is not founded upon principle". Johnson's christian sense of charity explains his many acts of kindness, his readiness to support anyone in distress, the frequent assistance he gave to other writers by composing prefaces for them or editing their works, his constant consideration for the poor, and his patience with the numerous dependents who formed his household. It is notable, too, that charity is frequently the theme of the sermons he wrote for others. In these he urges that the chief reason the Christian should practice charity is to promote his own salvation, since St. Paul tells us it is the most illustrious of christian virtues. It is particularly important, he observes, to fulfil this duty to our neighbour, for by feeding him, clothing him, and showing christian love for him, we may prevent him from falling into sin. Johnson's contemporaries, even in an age of benevolence, were deeply impressed by his sense of charity. To many it seemed deficient in only one respect, his harsh outbursts in society when he was annoyed, or crossed in an opinion. These not infrequent displays of asperity have been explained in various ways. Whatever the cause, one thing is certain, Johnson not only regretted his departures from courtesy, as evidenced by his frequent apologies; his conscience was also troubled by the realization that his lack of forbearance meant that he was sometimes deficient in charity. "When I am musing alone" he wrote, "I feel a pang for every moment that any human being has by my peevishness or obstinacy spent in uneasiness".

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NOTE:- After the Annual General Meeting on April 15th in place of the discussion on the papers read during the past session Dr. Charles R. Hart, Professor Emeritus of Classical Languages, of Emory University, Georgia, will give a paper entitled "The Road to Lichfield". This will explain why he wrote his play "Samuel Johnson"; excerpts from the play will be read.

"JOHNSON ON POETRY - CHAPTER X OF RASSELAS".

On November 17th Professor Tillotson of Birkbeck College gave an address on the above subject to the Johnson Society. The principals of the address were as follows:- Professor Tillotson dealt mainly with two phrases from the tenth chapter of Rasselas - "awfully vast" and "elegantly little". He said that Johnson's idea of the sublime was that it should be both big and empty. He read passages from Boswell's Life, the Lives of the Poets and the edition of Shakespeare to exemplify this, and also showed that Johnson's own attempts at the sublime in the Vanity of Human Wishes, brief as they were, possessed these two qualities. The important word in the second phrase was "elegantly". This adverb showed that Johnson had man in mind as his criterion. He himself did not like small things when they were only to be discerned by tiresomely close scrutiny. The main use to which the poet should put the external world was that of imagery, and because this imagery was to illustrate "moral and religious truth" it should be imagery falling within the experience of every man, having been observed both by "vigilance and carelessness". It was because moral and religious truth was the subject that the imagery, unlike that of the Metaphysical poets, should be commonplace. What was the point of illustrating something already well understood by reference to something unknown?

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REVIEWS

"BOSWELL FOR THE DEFENCE". 1769 - 1774.

London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1960. Pp. Price 30/-.

The discovery of the Boswell papers at Malahide Castle in Ireland and Fettercairn House in Scotland has been described as "the largest and most important find of English manuscripts ever made". To this we may add, that the work of collecting, editing, annotating and publishing the Journals in a reader's edition, as done by the expert Yale Committee and Messrs. Heinemann will surely rank as one of the highest achievements in the annals of book production. The highest praise we can give to the present volume, the seventh of the series, is to say that the superb quality of the previous six has been worthily maintained, if not exceeded. Boswell was married to his



cousin Margaret Montgomerie in 1769 and though for a while his fully written journal was suspended, we have in letters and memoranda a fairly adequate account of his life until March 1772 when the journal was resumed. For two years he is the happily married man enjoying in Edinburgh his home life and professional activities, more temperate and controlled than was usual with him. On March 14th, 1772, he takes the coach for London where he pleads before the House of Lords on behalf of a schoolmaster of Campbelltown who has been dismissed his School for Cruelty. Whilst in London old friendships are renewed; he calls on Johnson, Paoli, Garrick, Edward Dilly and other eminent men, whose conversations are faithfully reported in the Journal and form part of the material to be later used in the "Life". During the whole decade of the Seventies regular visits to London are made and more records of Johnson's movements and conversations are entered in the journal. Seventeen-seventy three is a climacteric year; for on April 30th he is elected as a member of the Literary Club, and in August Johnson joins him in Edinburgh to commence the Hebrides tour. The travellers arrived back in Edinburgh on November 9th when Boswell resumes his legal activities, establishing himself as an advocate mainly concerned with criminal cases. Between times there is much junketing and heavy drinking. He notes one high Court official as staggering out of a dram shop and quite unable to continue with his work; Boswell himself admits to being often fuddled after a night's debauch, but somehow does manage to carry on. An account of the trial of John Reid, Convicted of Sheep Stealing, together with a description of his execution and burial, occupy the last hundred pages of the journal. For Boswell, the fate of this man became an obsession, he not only pleads for him in Court, but also, with him in the gaol, and at the foot of the executioner's ladder. He forms a plan to revive the Corpse, which is happily frustrated. In this as in other actions for the defence of poor criminals, Boswell reveals himself as the generous and kind hearted man we know him to have been; at the same time he shows also that morbid streak which made him so interested in crime and in public executions. Johnson more than once impressed on Boswell that he should record in his journal not only what was said and done, but also how he felt about everything; in other words, he is asked to give an account of his inner as well as of his outward life. Johnson's advice was good but superfluous, for in this as in his other journals Boswell pours himself out with often embarrassing candour. The oft repeated sequence is: aspiration, vows, elation, failure, regret and remorse. "Boswell for the Defence" is Boswell as always - observer and actor, describer and self-confessor, as much a recorder of himself as he is of Johnson. Readers of this chronicle must now eagerly await its successor, as the strong boxes in the strong room at Yale University disgorge a further instalment of the Journal.

H. A. Morgan.

THE POLITICS OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

by Donald J. Green. Pp.xix, 354.  
Yale University Press, 1960. London, O.U.P., 44/-.

This book is based upon a thesis for a doctorate at Columbia University and bears the appropriate characteristics; it is scholarly and academic and at times dry, but stimulating of thought and very well worth reading. Its purpose is to show that Johnson was not a mere bigoted Tory, - and it succeeds in its purpose. Mr. Greene commences by relating Johnson's views to the political structure of his time. This has not been done before and though the author disclaims more than tentative results, he in fact provides us with a weighty guide both to Johnson's opinions, written and spoken, on politics in his day, and to his relationship to the parties in Parliament at that time. Of necessity, Mr. Green is concerned at the outset with definitions, of "Whig" and "Tory", and his first chapter is a useful analysis of these parties, and indicates how Johnson's Toryism was partly a natural affinity with those independent country gentlemen in Parliament who are generally dubbed Tory, and partly a natural distaste for the "career politicians" of whom the Whigs provided outstanding examples. Mr. Greene has assimilated the Namier outlook on political parties in the mid-eighteenth century, and for the non-academic reader his first two chapters are likely to be salutary. Again and again we have our attention drawn to the point, that attempts to interpret politics in Johnson's days by British standards of the twentieth century, must fail. The set-up was much closer akin to that in vogue in America today; like the President of the United States, George III was the head of the executive and accepted as such; as in American elections now, the Englishman of the eighteenth century inclined to support not political Parties so much as individuals, or, at most, factions. Something must be allowed for changing opinions and expressions of opinion on Johnson's part; like most men, he mellowed somewhat with the passage of years. In his early days in London, poverty and dissatisfaction with a world in which "slow rises worth" led him to inveigh violently against Walpole and all he stood for; to detest George I and George II, whilst he had a moderate enthusiasm for George III. But Johnson was never subservient or uncritical towards the King and his ministers; the "blind Toryism" often attributed to him is shown to be much exaggerated. Johnson never relinquished his personal judgment on affairs; the man who disliked the first two Georges for allowing the country to be kept under the thumbs of the Whig career politicians, was also the man who, on North's fall from office, "prayed with Francis, and gave thanks". As with Johnson's legal

dissertations, so in his political thinking, he was concerned to push down to fundamental principles and Mr. Greene does well in reminding us of the need to read the famous but too-neglected Parliamentary Debates in the Gentleman's Magazine (1740-43), and the musings contained in the Literary Magazine (1756-57). Johnson was never a very consistent man; but neither was he a complacent one. Though a believer in "subordination", he was himself remarkably individualistic; not by nature a reformer, he saw clearly and was prepared to denounce unsparingly the faults he found in any political or social policy, irrespective of its origins. "A wise Tory and a wise Whig, I believe, will agree. Their principles are the same, though their modes of thinking are different. A high Tory makes government unintelligible....a violent Whig makes it impracticable". This is the Cross-bench mind, a type that seldom fits into Party politics.

T. S. Blakeney.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE BY EDWARD GIBBON;

an Abridgment by D. M. Low. 1960. London. Chatto & Windus.  
Pp.924. Price 36/-.

Gibbon's great work is not easily handled or stored in a modern house. Its vast extent may be a deterrent to the modern reader. Now we have an abridgment, in one substantial volume, which we hope will lead many to purchase, and to read, a history which has commanded the interest of the literary world for nearly two hundred years.

The editor, Mr. D. M. Low, was a scholar of Westminster School and of Oriel College, Oxford; for many years a schoolmaster; and then for a long period Sub-Dean and Lecturer in Classics in that great centre of learning, King's College, London. Mr. Low has already written a standard life of Edward Gibbon (1939) and has edited his Journal (1929); so that both by his knowledge of classical history and of the working methods of Gibbon he is well prepared to undertake the abridgment which is now before us.

To cover the history of 1250 years was a stupendous task for Gibbon to undertake. The history has been considered to be divisible into three periods, the concluding centuries of the Roman Empire; the invasions of Italy by the barbarians; and the building up of the Roman Empire in the west. Mr. Low has given approximately half of his abridgment to the period from A.D. 150 - 476; and the second half to the remaining 1000 years, when nations and governments

were in a state of flux. The contents pages show clearly where omissions have been made and which are the corresponding chapters in Gibbon's book; in a parallel column calendar dates are shown so that the ground plan of this great history is clearly before the reader.

Gibbon took a broad view of history and gave graphic accounts of the crucial events which formed the political and social course of the peoples about whom he writes. Bagehot accused him of giving but an indifferent description of individual character but anyone who studies in this volume the account of the life and conduct of Constantine, or of Rienzi, to name but two, will not agree with this criticism.

How admirably this volume lends itself to the study of style. It is a liberal education in English to take a paragraph and consider how it is confined to a unity of subject; then to note how the sentences are broken up, sometimes by colons or semi-colons; sometimes by short sub-clauses, but always so that the intention of the paragraph is most clearly expressed.

The paper and binding of this edition are excellent; the type is clear, the lines a little too closely packed for easy reading, but the essentials are here. We believe that this book should be in every public library and in the private libraries of those who wish to bring their families up to value their citizenship in our own great country.

F. N. Doubleday.

#### JOHNSON BEFORE BOSWELL

by Bertram H. Davis. London O.U.P., Yale University Press,  
Newhaven, Conn. Pp.222. Price 36/-.

It is impossible to doubt that Sir John Hawkins was a man of ability and integrity, otherwise Dr. Johnson would not have confided in him or made him his executor. But Sir John was unpopular and had made dangerous enemies, while the London book-sellers did nothing to help him by their efforts to discredit other possible biographers in advance. Anything Sir John wrote, therefore, was likely to be received coldly, and in fact his "Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.", was subjected to a storm of criticism, abuse, and even ridicule. Mr. Davis shows why when he describes the fairness and impartiality of the work and writes, "Hawkins'



theme was judiciously chosen". - There was too much judiciousness for the friends whose opinion of Johnson was that he could take salvation for granted, - too much Hawkins the moralising magistrate and not enough warmth. They wanted a eulogy and found cold criticism. Mr. Davis himself brings an impartial mind to the consideration of the attacks on the work and shows how much was unjustified. He does not, however, lose himself in the mass of material he has studied, but with apt quotations from contemporary letters and publications, makes the past live again. After reading his book others than Johnsonian scholars will find Hawkins readable. Today we can read the work without being annoyed by the lack of warmth, while its oddities of style seem merely quaint and old-fashioned. But posterity has tacitly condemned Sir John by seldom reading him and never reprinting the book, and Mr. Davis again shows why when he writes, "For many people not only Johnsonian biography but all biography begins and ends with Boswell's Life of Johnson. It is understandable that it should be so. Nowhere else are scenes from a great man's life so dramatically and fully recorded; nowhere else has the biographer so perfectly suited his methods to the needs of his subject". In face of such competition what else could Hawkins' Life become except a museum piece?

A. G. Dowdeswell.

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NOTE:- Through Mr. Saeta we have received a copy of a Report by Mr. Herbert Cahoon, of the Pierpoint Morgan Library, N.Y., on the 250th anniversary celebrations of the birth of Dr. Johnson. In the United States there was a nation-wide observance; it consisted of exhibitions of books and autographs, of dinners and of speeches. Our Vice-President, Dr. Powell, was the guest of honour in New York, as representative of Johnsonians in England. Mr. Herman W. Liebert, Professor James Clifford, and Dr. Hilles of Yale University, were among those who took part. Tribute is also paid to Mr. Maurice Saeta, for his broadcasts and for the care with which he organised the celebrations in San Francisco. The Report is of great value to Johnsonians the world over because it gives the location of some first editions and holograph's which are now in the United States. The concluding paragraph pays a pleasing tribute to the close relationship which must always exist between our two countries:- "In March, 1773, Johnson wrote to the Consul, Phineas Bond, 'You are not mistaken in supposing that I set a high value on my American friends, and that you should confer a very valuable favour upon me by giving me an opportunity of keeping myself in their memory'". Mr. Cahoon concludes "The memory of Samuel Johnson not only endures in the hearts and minds of Americans but grows stronger with each passing year".