

More Boswell Papers

PRIVATE PAPERS OF JAMES BOSWELL FROM MALAHIDE CASTLE. In the Collection of LT. COLONEL RALPH HEYWARD ISHAM. Edited by FREDERICK A. POTTLE. Volumes 13 and 14. New York: William Edwin Rudge. 1932.

Reviewed by ARNOLD WHITRIDGE

THE two latest volumes of the Boswell papers covering the period 1777-1781, contain plenty of new material to delight the heart of the Boswellian, but for those readers who still think of Boswell as Johnson's impresario they will be something of a disappointment. Vol. 13 contains the journal at Ashbourne, the home of Dr. Taylor, an old schoolfellow of Johnson's with whom Boswell also became intimate, and the jaunts to London in 1778 and 1779, but these journals were used in the writing of the Life, and all the Johnsonian juice has already been extracted from them. We knew, for instance, that Johnson considered Prior a "Lady's Book." What we did not know is that Boswell disagreed with the great Doctor, that he thought Prior's tales "rather too wanton for modest women, according to the established opinion. But I have my own private notions as to modesty," continues Boswell, "of which I would only value the appearance: for unless a woman has amorous heat she is a dull companion, and to have amorous heat in elegant perfection, the fancy should be warmed with lively ideas." This is the sort of comment that abounds in these journals and that enables us to know Boswell as we can never hope to know Johnson or indeed anybody except Boswell. No one, not even Pepys or Rousseau, possesses Boswell's uncanny capacity for self-revelation.

Professor Pottle spreads before us the daily records of Boswell's life with the same scrupulous care that he devoted to the bibliography. It can have been no easy task to decipher Boswell's handwriting with its cryptic abbreviations, and to reconstruct the passages that Boswell blotted out. "I have often been guided," says Professor Pottle, "by slight indications of the MS (dots of missing 'i's,' fragments of ascending and descending letters, etc.) which can hardly be indicated in a printed text." Verily of such is the scholar's kingdom of heaven. No detail of Boswell's life is too sordid or too trivial for this most conscientious of editors to ignore. Boswell's zest for life finds its match in his editor's zest for scholarship.

It need hardly be said that Boswell could ask for no better apologist. Knowing as much about him as he does, Professor Pottle refuses to strike a balance between what was noble and what was contemptible in Boswell's character. Complete understanding, as so often happens, involves complete sympathy. Among the noble elements in his character Professor Pottle rates highest "the disinterested love that he showed for his friends and relations." Perhaps Mrs. Boswell is not included in either category for it would be difficult for the most ardent Boswellian to expatiate on the disinterested love that he shows for his wife. The editor maintains that Boswell's isolation within the family was pathetic, that Mrs. Boswell, "admirable woman though she was, was given to deflating his swelling vanities with pointed sarcasms." That may be so, but did any woman ever have better cause for exercising whatever talent for sarcasm she possessed? The casual reader, unless he starts out prepared to make every allowance for Boswell's temperament, is more likely to be impressed with Mrs. Boswell's almost unbelievable forbearance than with her husband's pathetic isolation. Boswell himself records the "angelic attentions" of his "invaluable spouse" more often than her sarcasms. On one occasion, after he had told his wife that he had been "dallying with strumpets," he remarks, "she was goodhumored and gave me excellent beefsoup, which lubricated me and made me well." And yet Professor Pottle maintains that there was no member of the family to whom Boswell could turn for affectionate and uncritical support.

Professor Pottle also maintains that Boswell was a kind and thoughtful father.

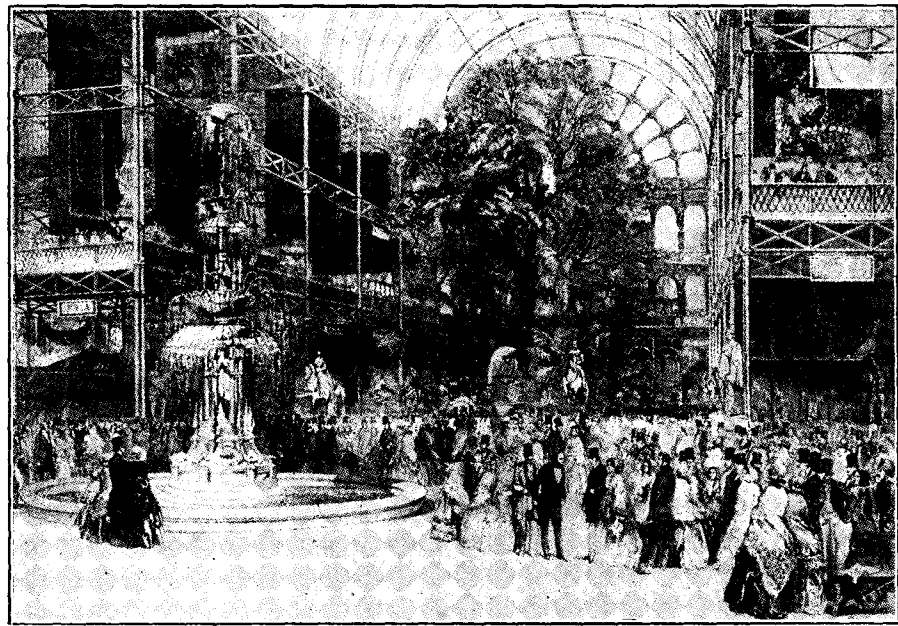
That he was fond of his children no one would deny, but in the two volumes before us there is no indication that they tugged at his heart strings. He liked to hear them recite the divine service, and he was pleased when they did well at dancing school, but they never for a moment deterred him from taking any of his beloved jaunts to London. Boswell was undoubtedly a good friend to John, his mentally deranged brother, but with his younger brother David, who had been in the wine business in Spain for thirteen years and whose homecoming Boswell looked forward to so eagerly, he very soon quarrelled. He complained of David's precision and self-conceit and in a burst of anger said that he would not travel with him for five guineas a day. That may possibly have been David's fault, but Dr. Johnson, not always an easy person to get on with, took a great liking to him. The fact is that Boswell was delightful as a friend but not so delightful in the family circle. Johnson once remarked that Boswell was never in anybody's company who did not wish to see him again. His constant desire to entertain everybody sometimes antagonized but usually endeared him to his friends and acquaintances. We do not hear that it endeared him to his father, to his stepmother, or to his brother.

Apart from the speculations about Boswell's character which the journals inevitably give rise to they contain a good deal of interesting information about distinguished people of the day, some of whom we have met in the journals before and some of whom appear in these volumes for the first time.

General Burgoyne flits through these pages, but unfortunately Boswell's interview with him at the very time when he was being subjected to official enquiry because of his conduct at the battle of Saratoga is not recorded. Boswell merely refers to it as one of the great events of his London jaunt. His sympathy with the American cause, which always annoyed Dr. Johnson, crops out continually. He can take no pleasure in the news of a victory in Georgia over Count D'Estaing and the Americans, "for I considered that it would only encourage a longer continuance of the ruinous war." Another personage of the day whom Boswell much enjoyed meeting was Lord Bute, the prime minister who was responsible for Johnson's pension. It had taken Boswell ten years to get into his lordship's house, like the siege of Troy as he cheerfully explained, but having had to wait so long he marvelled all the more at its splendor. "The Hall was a constellation of laced footmen; all glitter." Even more exciting was his interview with the King, which he was at particular pains to record before dinner on his return home. Conversations recorded after dinner had a sad way of getting twisted. For a moment Boswell was in some uneasiness lest the King should not speak to him, but eventually the King did turn to him and they discussed General Paoli.

It is astonishing how absorbed the reader gets in Boswell's daily struggle against the sins of the flesh. Actually it is a tragic story but his infinite resiliency blinds the reader, as no doubt it did Boswell himself, to the pathos of his situation. As we lay down each successive volume we wonder again why he chose to strip himself naked before the world. The fact that he did not destroy the journal seems to indicate that he contemplated ultimate publication. No doubt he did not want his contemporaries to read the full record of his backslidings but posterity he may have felt would be more lenient. And yet if Boswell had been intent on self-immortalization he would surely, as Professor Pottle suggests, have made specific provision for the publication of his papers at some period after his death, instead of which he left the question for his executors and his children to decide. Now that it has been decided his ghost is probably preening itself with satisfaction, but the welcome that Colonel Isham and Professor Pottle will receive in the next world from Mrs. Boswell is another matter.

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INTERIOR OF THE GREAT EXHIBITION IN HYDE PARK IN 1851
"The triumph of my beloved Albert."—Queen Victoria.

The Blameless Prince

ALBERT THE GOOD. By HERBERT BOLITHO. New York: D. Appleton & Company. 1932. \$3.50.

Reviewed by DAVID OWEN
Yale University

VIRTUE as impregnable as Albert's doubtless has its rewards, but many popular biographers would find it only a bother. Their zeal for humanizing has placed us on our guard against the "modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise." It is therefore no small part of Mr. Bolitho's achievement that he has accepted the Albertian legend substantially as it fell from the respectful hands of Sir Theodore Martin and has made it credible. "Albert the Good" will give cold comfort to the reader who prefers his idols tarnished.

Mr. Bolitho approaches his subject with the reverence that becomes one who has lived for some years at Windsor Castle and who has been admitted into the archival holy-of-holies of Coburg. We are to take the Prince Consort almost as seriously as he was taken by the Queen herself. This is perhaps just as well, for Albert is not a proper target for flippant irony. When his life is viewed of a piece, it seems to hold unmistakable elements of tragedy. The Prince was not always a disciple of the Gospel of Work, the human Clothos, who, under the green lamp, spun interminable state papers. As a youth in the seclusion of a minor German state, he was romantic and introspective, though even then the scholar. It was the work of Leopold and Stockmar, representatives of a royal house on the make, to bend the twig. From the dreamy adolescent they fashioned a political mechanism which served their purpose admirably, though in the process were sacrificed some of the less pedantic qualities of Albert's nature. Always a foreigner in England, he could recapture the delicious sensations of his youth only by a visit to his beloved Rosenau. But on his last trip, Coburg too proved an alien country, and Albert found himself a stranger in both his houses.

Whatever may have been the inward tragedy of Albert's career, none can quarrel with his record of practical achievement. With the Prince usefulness amounted almost to a mania, and the ideal was not inappropriate to a generation whose war cry was sounded by Carlyle, "Produce . . . in God's name." Was the royal household graft-ridden, a chaos of overlapping jurisdictions? Did the minions of the Lord Chamberlain clean the inside of the windows and those of the Woods and Forests Department the outside? It was a task after Albert's own heart, and within a few years his economies in the household had made possible the purchase of Osborne House. Had the Crimean War revealed shocking ineptitude on the part of the military organization? Albert was ready with memoranda on army reform. Did the great god Progress require a temple where he could receive the world's homage? The Crystal Palace became that temple, and on the altar of Albert's Exhibition (which, I think, was not as exclusively the Prince's

as Mr. Bolitho would intimate) were laid the oblations of a triumphant bourgeoisie. Horrors there were aplenty, knives and forks so elegant as to be of doubtful utility, and furniture in which design had been utterly routed by ornament. But succulent fruits may come from unlikely vines, and the Kensington institutions, which had their origin in the profits from the Exhibition, remain to confound its critics. Albert's efforts were given unsparingly—to the Fine Arts Commission of which he was president, to his housing schemes, and to questions of foreign policy. Yet the most terrifying of his accomplishments finds little place in political histories. Within a few years he had recreated the Queen in his own image, and it was Victoria who, in the end, was more Albertian than Albert himself.

Mr. Bolitho's talents as a biographer are considerable. His style is effectively unassuming, and, as a result of his explorations in the Coburg papers, he has made a genuine, if minor, addition to our knowledge of the century's most unselfish prince. But even under Bolitho's skilful touch, Albert does not emerge as an exciting figure. It is not merely that the Prince was virtuous. Goodness, on occasion, can be exciting enough. It is rather that his character lacked that element of surprise, of inspired perversity, which often lends glamor to personality. Stockmar and his own self-discipline had confirmed Albert in the not altogether happy faculty of always doing what was expected of him. This devotion to the cult of duty showed itself in the worst possible light when he undertook the education of the Prince of Wales. Copybook maxims had molded a prince consort, why not a king as well? It was an almost fatal mistake, but it was an easy one for such a nature as Albert's. Stockmar had somehow forgotten that imagination was no less a virtue than honesty and industry.

The Noble Experiment

PROHIBITION VERSUS CIVILIZATION. Analyzing the Dry Psychosis. By HARRY ELMER BARNES. New York: The Viking Press. 1932. \$1.

Reviewed by REX MAURICE NAYLOR

IN this slender and rather superficial treatment of the liquor issue Dr. Barnes is not so much concerned with demonstrating the failure of the Noble Experiment as he is with questioning its nobility. He attempts to analyze the dry "psychosis," to point out some of the unfortunate results of national prohibition, to offer a solution of the drink problem, and to suggest a way out of the prohibition muddle.

Little time is lost in informing us that the underlying philosophy of prohibition is "a direct outgrowth of the other-worldly perspective of Christianity." The fact that the Catholics and the Episcopalians are not very enthusiastic supporters of the present system causes the author some difficulty, and he finally concludes that "the holy ardor for crusading against liquor, as well as many other earthly joys, has been begotten primarily by evangelical Protestantism." The re-

sponsibility for the whole business can be charged up to the sin-salvation complex, the super-naturalism, and the Puritanical view of life with which these denominations are afflicted. In this connection the author fails to distinguish between the prohibition movement and the temperance movement. The Protestant churches, in espousing the temperance crusade, did not generally and officially take the position that drinking was, in itself, a sin and a deterrent to salvation. Available evidence seems to show that the temperance movement originated among physicians, farmers, and business men, and that the churches got behind it because of the visible social effects of intemperance. Their support of the prohibition movement involved participation in politics and this they attempted to justify on the ground that the rum barons could not be dislodged in any other way. It is clear that prohibition is a political issue. The Drys insist that it is a moral issue, but they do not claim that it is a religious issue. Far more important is the fact that Dr. Barnes, in his anxiety to blame the churches for prohibition, has allowed the real culprits to escape with clean hands. He does not even mention the liquor interests. Had the brewers and distillers not resisted all reasonable measures of regulation, the churches would never have lent their support to the Anti-Saloon League. According to the historian of the League, many years of difficult and persistent endeavor were necessary to "line up the churches on the right side" of that movement.

Dr. Barnes contends that alcohol is a great boon to the human race in its search for happiness, that its mass consumption is not the social evil which the Drys have represented it to be, and that the normal person can drink as much or as little as he pleases. ("I can take it or leave it alone.") His solution of the drink problem is not abstinence, nor yet temperance as he understands the term, but "civilized" or "esthetic" drinking—"the moderate indulgence in pure liquors of a light alcoholic content at the proper time—good liquor taken with the evening meal, with congenial companions during the evening, and the like." While admitting that this is an abstract picture of the "delectable amiability" of civilized drinking, the author thinks that it can be made concrete. He does not tell us how. Of one thing, however, he is certain: it cannot be realized under a prohibition régime. What, then, is the solution of the prohibition muddle?

Believing that a repeal amendment would be defeated by thirteen or more prohibition states and that the simpler method of repealing the Volstead and Jones Acts would be blocked by dry-voting and wet-drinking Congressmen, the author concludes that "sectional nullification, carrying further present tendencies, appears to be the only immediately practicable solution." How, then, are we to bring about his régime of civilized drinking? Nullification implies the continuance of prohibition, and under prohibition we have, as he says, the speakeasy "with its promotion of frantic swilling of hard liquor."

After some study of the question, the reviewer is quite confident that the repeal or revision of the Eighteenth Amendment will be effected in the near future. The reason for this confidence is quite simple. In the same way that the liquor interests, by their defiance of state regulation and state prohibition, forced the adoption of the Amendment, the bootleggers by their defiance of national prohibition are almost certain to force its repeal. In the process the churches may be expected to line up against the bootleggers just as they mobilized against the liquor interests. Dr. Barnes will probably be a fit subject for the psychopathic ward when he finds repeal brought about by the very agencies which he visited with his displeasure in "The Twilight of Christianity."

Bennington College, the only institution of higher education in the country with a complete four-year course of progressive education, recently announced the appointment of Genevieve Taggard, poet, and Irving Fineman, novelist and engineer, to its English department.

The Ingenious Balkis

SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON. By HELENE ELIAT. New York: The Viking Press. 1932. \$2.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THIS translation of a satirical fantasy that has had much success on the Continent (the translator is Davod Zablodowsky) is decidedly entertaining for the most part, with occasional passages of dullness. The drawings by Otto Linnekogel, which illustrate it, I cannot praise too highly. They seem to me admirably to embellish the text in its exact spirit. If you do not like to be told that King Solomon was fat or that the Queen of Sheba had hairy legs and was not really pretty, if you object to sly fun being poked at Nathan the prophet,



DRAWING, BY OTTO LINNEKOGEL,
FOR "SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON"

the Judean captains, and the Ephraimites, you should eschew this book. If, on the other hand, you relished the work of the late Anatole France (not that I would mention Miss Eliat in the same breath with that colossus) and are interested to know how Balkis emerged from unattractiveness to experience and hear the charming idyll of little Zud, draw near. Despite the airiness of this writer, she succeeds in conveying the atmosphere of the Orient. She deals with ancient folk of myth as real people. She shows them in all their enchanting weaknesses. The poetry of love is in this book as well as the sophisticated dissection of it. The wit of the writing is satisfying.

This is one of the distinctly better light novels of the season. I commend its manner, which is usually delightful. The author toys charmingly with ancient history. She has the touch of the true artist. I treasure her book along with such diversions as Raucat's "The Honorable Picnic." There is vivid pictorial quality in "Sheba Visits Solomon," and there is an unusual knowledge of the characteristics of Eastern peoples. Wisdom is indicated with a light touch. An excellent antidote for heaviness of the spirit and weariness of the flesh.

Woodforde's Neighbor

MR. DU QUESNE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By JOHN BERESFORD. New York: Oxford University Press. 1932. \$2.50.

Reviewed by CHARLES DAVID ABBOTT

BEFORE Mr. Beresford published eight years ago the first volume of the "Diary of a Country Parson," nobody had ever heard of James Woodforde, the most refreshingly human, innocent, and lovable of eighteenth century gentlemen. Last year the fifth and final volume appeared and now we have the whole (or, at least, as much as the editor thinks it judicious to print) of that indescribably fascinating daily account of the activities and placidities of life in rural Norfolk and Somerset. Parson Woodforde himself, shy, unambitious,

plain man that he was, has taken a place among the lesser immortals where we hope he sips his port, not in the company of those other Georgian chroniclers, like Walpole and Boswell, whose wit would have frightened him, but in the comfortable presence of his familiar associates, the inhabitants of Weston and Cole and their neighboring parishes. If this hope may be taken as fulfilled, certainly not the least convivial and attractive of that celestial gathering is the Reverend Thomas Roger Du Quesne, vicar of East Tuddenham, whom Mr. Beresford with open affection now resurrects from a past that would have remained undisturbed, had not the brief but warm phrases of his diary-writing neighbor already given him a charm that is irresistible.

All the scholarly energy and patience in the world could not succeed in unearthing completely so obscure a personage, but Mr. Beresford has found as much as we need. He has traced back Mr. Du Quesne's distinguished Huguenot ancestry; he has told the tale of his livings, his prebends and canonries (Mr. Du Quesne was an unabashed pluralist); and by means of a manuscript Tythe Book, an extraordinarily long and remarkable will, and a few letters—lamentably few but highly amusing—written to Woodforde on the occasion of the memorable summer visit to Cole, he has filled in many gaps and illuminated many absorbing minutiae. And all this he has done with the editorial graciousness, urbanity, and wisdom that we have now learned to expect from so humane a scholar. Mr. Du Quesne stands forth anew, less brisk than Parson Woodforde makes him, but not so disturbingly incomplete. No lover of that quiet Norfolk circle can afford to miss him.

Mr. Beresford has included in his book a number of other essays, reprinted from various magazines, each of them a pleasant excursion into some literary or social by-path, but it is Mr. Du Quesne who deserves the honors.

It Begins

(Continued from page 813)

personal drama of the book begins, to be woven with much skill into the narrative of an expedition in which a planned society encounters the difficulties always waiting for men who force nature into the way of their chosen God.

Miss Carlisle's story of the Pilgrims' exile and their bitter bread of exile in Holland is rich and circumstantial, her narrative of the voyage and the landing at Plymouth is documented with the elaborate and realistic circumstance which modern research has made possible for historical novelists. I do not analyze or even discuss her considerable historical verisimilitude, for the exact accuracy or inaccuracy is not so important as the use she makes of it. Certainly there is a fresh reality in her first encounters with Indians, beasts, and wilderness strikingly different from the old stereotypes. Her Indians, particularly, are excellent.

It is the theme, the dramatic psychology of the Pilgrims which is important, for it is for this and upon this, not for mere chronicle that she has written "We Begin." Eleazar is sex frustrated from the beginning. His love for Anne, thwarted, but kept alive by the proximities of exile and pioneering, and nourished by the long absences of her husband, becomes a mania in which ideals of purity attain the dominance of sex-inversions in an eremite of the desert. Jehovah for him becomes a god of vengeance demanding sacrifice for the lewdness of ordinary flesh. And by an easy transition Eleazar's love and his mania are both transferred to Purity, a lovely child adopted by Anne. Purity chose when the time for choice came, David, John's son, a youth of the Renaissance, who tastes at Merrymount the intoxication of poetry. And in a lurid scene Eleazar's sex repressions break through his fanaticized chastity. He rapes the girl and is hung by the Pilgrim fathers, who are in doubt whether they have killed a devil or a saint.

This sounds like melodrama, and is melodrama, but not because of its theme, which might be described as modernized and somewhat vulgarized Hawthorne, lacking the intuitive sense of the essen-

tials of Puritanism of the master of that genre, bolstered out by Freudian analyses of emotions, and deficient in that inner harmony of event and character which manifests itself in style.

The difficulty is not in Freudianism, which, as an intuitive philosophy, is admirably designed to enrich and make significant the working out of such a story as the Pilgrims supply. The difficulty is in Miss Carlisle's failure to get done with her psychological equipment before she tells her story. There it is, a travelling laboratory, into which Puritan after Puritan, lifted from the narrative, is sent in for psychological tests, then returned to the story. So rich is her documentation, so vivid and so satisfying are the mere circumstances of this dramatic exodus, that the defect which prevents it from being a fine novel in no sense destroys the interest of the reader. But what should be the great crisis will not stand up because the central figure, Eleazar, disintegrates into words. His fanaticism is probable, his mania is probable, his jargon drawn from the Old Testament can be duplicated in a hundred sources (although I think these sources are literary and do not represent the fanatic Puritan as he spoke off the pulpit, away from the meeting house, in life), but one has only to compare him with Arthur Dimmesdale to see the difference between a character realized until the personality is unified in its disharmonies, and a figure put together from the Bible, Puritan history, and Freud.

Nevertheless, even though artistically not successful, this novel has pioneer qualities. It is honest, it is interesting, and it represents (like the artificialities of Gothic romance) a new pathway along which imagination is likely to move. As surely as the new history is resurveying our past, with new emphases, and the resources of new facts, just as surely we shall retell the stories of our ancestors in terms which seem to us infinitely more important than their interpretations. We shall insist on seeing them as a modern alive then would have seen them. It is what Shakespeare did with his classics, Scott with his medievales; and our fresh intuitions of conflicts in the spirit resulting from causes some of which have only recently been named and defined, will lead us far along this path when the historical novel again becomes fashionable. Miss Carlisle has begun.

A Balanced Ration for a Week's Reading

WE BEGIN. By HELEN GRACE CARLISLE. *Smith & Haas.*

The Story of the Pilgrims focussed about the fortunes, sufferings, and passions of a single family.

THE FUN OF IT. By AMELIA EARHART. *Putnam.*

Incidents in her own career as a flyer, and in that of other women, by the heroine of the hour.

OUR WONDERLAND OF DEMOCRACY. By JAMES M. BECK. *Macmillan.*

An arraignment of the Federal Administration system.

The Saturday Review of Literature

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