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BOOKS and REVIEWS

Johnson And Boswell

By Hesketh Pearson. New York, Harper & Bros.

Reviewed by **HERB FISHER**

For his latest biography, Hesketh Pearson has chosen to knit the lives of Dr. Samuel Johnson and the man most responsible for preserving his genius, James Boswell. Certainly there is material here to inspire any biographer, for Johnson and Boswell were two of the most remarkable men of their time, or any other time.

The awesome Dr. Johnson—leographer, poet, philosopher, moralist, biographer—a man of letters, indeed, with a prodigious intelligence and wit, Johnson, with his passionate devotion to truth and his insistence to whatever or whoever stood in the way of his stating that truth.

Johnson, a man of contradictions—massive intellect combined with narrow sectarianism in politics (ardent Toryism) and religion (the church of England); ruthless with those who opposed his views, but generous and charitable to a fault with those close to him; plagued with fears about the life hereafter, fears which could not be reconciled with his reasoning powers; bigoted and autocratic; yet humble and compassionate.

and revered a woman 20 years his senior; author of the English-speaking world's definitive dictionary; author of biographies unequalled in their brilliance; leader of the literary club whose membership included Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Edmund Burke and David Garrick; moralist, whose every word was attended for preservation; a man with scandalous manners and a hypochondriac who constantly lamented this miserable life.

AND equally incredible was Boswell, the volatile Scotsman. His own "Journals", published in 1950, enchanted readers with his ambitious, lecherous, imbibing boisterous with his irresistible charm and buoyancy. The central image of Boswell presented by Mr. Pearson is of an unstable personality, lacking any semblance of moral fortitude, and possessed of a social ambition that respected no rules.

Despite the absorbing material it is difficult to appreciate this book. Pearson has simply gathered together the more dramatic material available on Johnson and Boswell. He contributes nothing new. If he fulfilled the promise of helping us to understand the dynamic relationship between the two men, if he had a theme, it would be a valuable contribution.

INSTEAD, Pearson has simply offered some sketches, highlighted the material and provided chatty anecdotes about the good Doctor and the winsome Boswell, all of which has been told before and told more pertinently by those on the scene.

rest of the story was sent from a suburban railroad depot. These are only two of the many facts Robert Cromie, former Birmingham resident uses to vividly recreate the story of one of the most terrible fires in this nation's history.

The fire really did begin in Mrs. Patrick O'Leary's barn. But whether or not it was caused by her now kicking over a lantern is not known.

THE FIRE might have been confined to a relatively small area but for an incredible series of blunders, errors and just plain bad luck.

The city's fire department was exhausted from battling a huge fire the previous day. Most of Chicago's buildings were constructed of wood, and they had been baking for months in unseasonably hot weather. The seriousness of the fire was not realized at the beginning, allowing it to spread rapidly.

These and many other reasons combined to turn the original small blaze into an all-consuming inferno that raged across much of the city for nearly two days. When it had run its course, 100,000 persons were homeless and millions of dollars worth of property had been destroyed. Only 120 bodies were recovered after the fire, but official estimates placed the death toll at between two and three hundred.

CROMIE's account of the fire is an excellent one. His book is well-written and includes dozens of fascinating stories related by people who were there. This is a book that should be read.

The Great Chicago Fire

By Robert Cromie. 282 pp. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. \$5.00.

Reviewed by **TOM PHILLIPS**

"THE VERY LATEST"—The entire business portion of the city is burning up, and the TIMES building is doomed!

This was a bulletin the Chicago Times never had a chance to print. By the time the newspaper decided to go to press, it was too late. What was later to become known as "The Great Chicago Fire" roared down upon the newspaper and half an hour after it caught fire, the building was gone.

The final Western Union message to leave the burning city that terrible evening of Oct. 8, 1871, was sent by an Associated Press reporter. It read: "The block immediately across the street from the telegraph office, one of the finest—"

THE REPORTER was sending a story on the fire when the flames overwhelmed the building which housed the Western Union office. He was forced to stop transmitting in mid-sentence and flee. The

Justice of the Heart

By E. Arnot Robertson. 273 pp. New York, The MacMillan Co. \$4.50.

Reviewed by **BETE GILLESPIE**

Romance and adventure await you in "Justice of the Heart," as they awaited British journalist Louisa Downes in Zanibar.

The story begins in London and I felt that E. Arnot Robertson took a bit too much time establishing Louisa's character, inner conflicts and motivations before getting her on the road to Zanibar. But once there, the book is exciting and masterfully written.

There is terror as Louisa is pursued by would-be killers through the filthy native section, there is humor in her relationship with do-gooder Mrs. Corryman, there is beauty and peace in the fishing village at which Louisa stays, there is intrigue and mystery with fellow journalists and there is love with Hollander van Epp.

THIS IS primarily the story of a war-widow-turned-journalist, who throws aside a good job with a London daily to take on a strange crusading mission in Zanibar, where she believes injustice has been done a news editor.

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