EXTRACTS AND COMMENTS

'The innumerable aficionados of Simenon will wish that John Raymond’s book [Simenon in court. Hamish Hamilton, 30s.] had an index, which in simple form could easily have been added to the useful bibliography printed as an appendix.'

Thus the reviewer, Alan Pryce-Jones, in an article entitled ‘Man behind Maigret’ in The Sunday Telegraph of 14th July, 1968.

* * *

'The text includes very few footnotes and—an extraordinary omission in a book of this kind—neither a bibliography nor an index.'—Peter Quennell, reviewing Cagliostro, by F. Ribadeau Dumas, translated by Elizabeth Abbott (Allen & Unwin, 50s.), in The Sunday Telegraph (14th April, 1968).

French books notoriously lack indexes; but that is no reason why English publishers of translations should emulate this slovenly habit.

* * *

Dermot Morrah’s superbly treated ‘privileged account of the early life and education of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, written with the approval of H.M. the Queen’ and published by Hutchinson under the title of To be a king, was reviewed in the May West Indies Chronicle by ‘G.N.K.’, who commented at the end of his notice: ‘I can only fault it in one particular: the publishers have seen fit to dispense with an index, which in a work of this calibre should certainly have been a sine qua non’.

* * *

‘The author gives statistics in a digestible form in the text, and the index [compiled by Robert Welham] is a good one.’ This rather rare instance of a reviewer’s not merely calling attention to the absence or indifference of an index but actually praising it occurs in the Church Times’s notice (2nd February, 1968) by Margaret Cansdale of Prison, by Michael Wolff (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

‘The book itself is near perfect . . . The lay-out is excellent. It is a pity, though, the book does not have an index or a list of plates.’


It is difficult to conceive, however, how an expensive biography suffering from such a gross deficiency can be described as either ‘near perfect’ or as ‘doing justice’ to the eminent sculptor.

* * *

‘[President] Johnson can’t read books. But he’s probably worked his way through the index.’

This amiable judgment, according to the Evening Standard’s Washington correspondent (27th March, 1968), was delivered by Eliot Janeway, an American economist, apropos of his best-seller, The economics of crisis, in which he predicts an approaching calamity as bad as the financial panic of 1921 and lays the blame on the blundering leadership of his old companion Lyndon Johnson.

* * *

‘Scarcely a book of name-dropping reminiscence, published in hundreds between, say, 1910 (when it became permissible, even chic, to remember Wilde in his dining-out period) down to, say, 1950 when it became a mark of senility, is without at least one entry under Wilde, Oscar, in its index.’—Feasting with panthers, by Rupert Croft-Cooke, (W. H. Allen, 1967).

* * *

Writing in the Sunday Times (17th March, 1968) about Tolstoy by Henri Troyat (W. H. Allen), Raymond Mortimer complains that ‘the book has been badly produced with an unclassified index’.

* * *

. . . It’s great table-talk; but an index would be helpful so that we can consult the menu.—Lorna Houseman in The Times
(Saturday Review) of 15th June, 1968, on J. B. Priestley's *Trumpets over the sea* (Heinemann).

* * * * *


* * * * *

'... My second criticism concerns the inadequacy of the index. The catalogue contains a mass of factual information, yet the only means of reference to this information is in geographical terms through the list of sites. A comprehensive index would permit simpler access to the contents and would increase its value enormously to researchers in a wide range of fields.'—so writes M. H. Day in *Nature* of 20th April, 1968, when reviewing the *Catalogue of fossil hominids, Part I: Africa*, edited by K. P. Oakley and B. G. Campbell (Trustees of the Natural History Museum).

* * * * *

J. G. Widdicombe, reviewing (in the *British Medical Journal* for 20th April, 1968) *Claude Bernard and experimental medicine*, edited by Francisco Grande and Maurice B. Visscher (Cambridge, Mass., Schenkman, $8.95), writes: 'The book has other omissions. There is no index, possibly because the prospect of indexing the researches and ideas of Bernard must have been daunting'.

* * * * *

A review of A. Conan Doyle's *The annotated Sherlock Holmes*, edited by W. S. Baring-Gould, 2 vols. (Murray, 9 gns.) in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 19th May, 1968, reads as follows:

'... What, however, renders these volumes almost useless for serious students is the absence of an index or, at least, of an adequate system of cross-references. Take, for instance, the classic case of Dr. Watson and the jezail bullet ...' *(et seq.)*

**RESEARCH INVESTIGATION INTO INDEXING SYSTEMS**

The Aslib Cranfield Research Projects into the efficiency of indexing systems have shown that some widely held ideas about systems of information retrieval can be called in question. Many problems remain to be solved before information systems can be designed with the confidence that the results will fit the requirements. As part of the research effort in this country, the College of Librarianship, Wales, has begun a two-year investigation into indexing systems, supported by a grant of £6,881 from OSTI (the Office for Scientific and Technical Information).

Four types of indexing system will be compared, two typical of those in current use and two further systems (one using a computer) which are currently being tested experimentally. The four to be studied are:

1. A post-co-ordinate keyword system
2. A faceted classification scheme
3. Relational indexing
4. The SMART computer system using document abstracts

These systems display sharp differences in the amount of control over the words used as indexing terms and in the amount of effort required in indexing and searching. The keyword vocabulary will be developed specially for the Project. The classification scheme to be used is the one for Library Science developed by the Classification Research Group. This scheme will be used as the
basic vocabulary for the relational indexing technique devised by J. Farradane. The SMART system uses the natural language of the documents, and thus requires no intellectual effort on the part of an indexer.

Using a collection of items in the field of Library Science and Documentation, indexes for the systems will be constructed. Sets of search requests will be obtained and the relevance of each item in the collection to each request will be established by subject experts. The searches will then be performed using the indexes, and the results in each case compared with the established decisions. The systems will be compared with each other both from the point of view of retrieval effectiveness and from that of the amount of effort required to operate them. A further part of the investigation will be concerned with methods for making comparisons of this kind, since experimental techniques for testing indexing systems still require further development.

Results using the SMART computer system will be made available by Professor Gerard Salton, of Cornell University, U.S.A.

INDEXERS' FEES
THEN AND NOW

'Miss Hele paid £7 7s. for the Index.'

The above forms an item in Messrs. Macmillan's 'Authors' Accounts' in respect of their publication of *Lord Randolph Churchill* by Winston S. Churchill in 1906.

Even allowing for the very much higher value of the pound in those days (about four times that of the present debased currency), seven guineas does not at first sight seem particularly high remuneration* for an index to a two-volume biography comprising 1,085 pages. But a closer examination reveals that her index, which was mainly limited to names of persons, only occupied seven pages, so that Miss Hele may not have been ungenerously rewarded after all.

By way of contrast, however, the author received the startling sum of £8,000 in advance royalties alone, with the further stipulation that profits should be equally shared between author and publisher after the latter had cleared a profit of £4,000. These highly favourable terms Winston was able to secure through having employed the plausible Frank Harris (then respected as an editor) as a negotiating intermediary. As commission, Winston paid Harris £400, being ten per cent of the excess over the £4,000 he had been originally offered by Messrs. Longman. So everyone was satisfied, including possibly Miss Hele.

But what is more—and this will be of interest to those members who are authors as well as indexers—the publishers offered the author as many complimentary copies on publication as he cared to ask for ('within a reasonable number'). The *Companion volumes* to Volume 2 of Randolph Churchill's Life of his father, from which much of the above information is derived, do not disclose to what extent Winston availed himself of this 'reasonable' provision.

The two-volume set was priced at 36s. net. But a price-cutting war was raging at this time, and *The Times* insisted on selling the book at ten shillings per volume as a 'loss-leader'.

G.N.K.

INDEX TO
THE CRITICAL QUARTERLY

An index to volumes 1-8, 1959-1966, of *The Critical Quarterly* has been compiled by Mrs. Mary Madden and Lionel Madden. It aims to provide a complete listing of all contributors of poems, articles, reviews and correspondence. Although primarily a guide to personal names, a few entries are provided

---

* The present writer recalls being paid five guineas in 1926 for a simple six-page index to a little volume of 200 pages.
under distinctive titles. The entries have the merit of being all in one sequence, irrespective of the kind of item (review, correspondence, etc.). The typographical lay-out is very generous, resulting in a pamphlet of 56 pages.

INDEXING
BAPTIST PERIODICALS

The Southern Baptist Church in America has issued a \textit{Manual of procedures for indexing Southern Baptist periodicals}. After some years of discussion and the operation of a pilot project, it was decided to extend the methods used to the other denominational periodicals.

The purpose of the \textit{Index of Southern Baptist periodicals} is to provide a composite index of articles on a given subject or by a given author, appearing in Southern Baptist periodicals. After the annual volumes of the \textit{Index} are published, the cards used in its compilation will be incorporated in the master file of a Baptist periodical index which will be maintained in the Dargan-Carver Library for the use of editors, research students and other writers.

The \textit{Manual} gives full instructions for the indexing procedures, a list of the thirty-five periodicals indexed and their abbreviations, and a list of about 450 suggested subject headings.

A separate scheme for the guidance of indexers of state Baptist papers has been compiled.

\textit{L.M.H.}

ABSTRACTS OF MILITARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

The first issue of an abstracts journal with the above title has been received. It is published six times a year in Buenos Aires by the Instituto de Publicaciones Navales, all the abstracts being written in Spanish with a full translation in English. The analysis of each article and the editing of the summaries are carried out by competent members of the armed forces and specialized civilian personnel.

It can be obtained from the Naval Publications Institute, Navy Club, Florida 801, Buenos Aires, Argentina, at U.S. $20 p.a.

CORRESPONDENCE?

With its envelope addressed to:

\textbf{CONFIDENTIAL}

\textit{TO SIR OR MADAM}

\textit{SOCIETY OF INDEXERS.}

the following handwritten missive has been received by the Society:

\textit{Dear Sir or Madam will you send me a list booklet on quite obscure learnit index as I am a sort of writer and it is to know verbs, with value a reply on to this 5 lined reply is a point to me soon. Your truly Mr. John H... 13... St. Ballymena Co Antrim N. Ireland U.K.'}

The only perfectly intelligible part seems to be that the sender is `a sort of writer'!

Incidentally, the Post Office fell in with the spirit of the thing by making no surcharge, although the stuck-up envelope bore only a threepenny Northern Ireland stamp instead of fourpence.

\textit{G.N.K.}