

# The Library

## WILBERFORCE LETTER

WE print below a letter from William Wilberforce, the Parliamentary leader of the movement for the abolition of slavery, who was admitted to the College as a Fellow Commoner in 1776 and graduated B.A. 1781. The Library already possessed 14 letters from Wilberforce (10 in his autograph, the others signed by him), but they are all of later date than 1800. The present letter, dated 1792, was bought for the College at an auction sale at Christie's on the evening of 22 June 1960, held on behalf of the funds of the London Library. It had been given by Miss Octavia Margaret Wilberforce, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., a great granddaughter of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, and thus a great great granddaughter of William Wilberforce.

The letter unfortunately does not give the name of the recipient, but a later hand has endorsed it "to probably Mr Edwards", meaning no doubt Bryan Edwards (1743—1800), a West India merchant who supported the slave trade with some restrictions, and was called by Wilberforce "a powerful opponent of slave trade abolition".

The volume referred to in the opening sentence consists of two works, "The Debate on a Motion for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, April 18 and 19, 1791" (London, 1792, 133 pp.), and "The Debate on a Motion . . . , 2 April 1792 (n.d., 171 pp.). There is a copy of each in the College Library.

Bath August 7th 1792

Sir,

The accompanying little Volume contains the best printed Report, though not a very good one, of the Debates on my Motions in the Years 1791, & 2 respecting the abolition of the Slave Trade.

A thousand times have I thought of sending it you, & I can scarce distinctly state how it is that I have been prevented. Be this as it may, Let me now beg you will honor me by accepting it. I dare not hope that on a Subject you must have so fully investigated, it will suggest many new Arguments to your Consideration, but besides conveying to you the Assurance of my Respect & Confidence, it will at least convince you that I am not of the Number of those, if any such there be, who bring forward the Charge of Cruelty towards their Slaves against the Gentlemen of the West Indies in general, & rest on that Ground the Merits of the Question of Abolition.

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I cannot but persuade myself (excuse my Freedom, tis an Idea I willingly indulge) that having hitherto differ'd as to Time & Mode rather than on first Principles, we shall ere long agree, that the rapid Improvements which I understand to have taken Place of late will soon produce such an Effect on the Population, as to leave the Possibility of keeping up the existing Stock of Slaves no longer doubtful in the Mind of every observing & impartial Man, & then I trust you will join us in endeavouring to repair to Africa the wrongs she has sustain'd, & to diffuse throughout her extensive Coasts the Blessings of religious Truth & the comforts of civilized Society.

I have the Honor to be

Sir

Your most obedient &

Most humble Servant

W Wilberforce

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DURING last Michaelmas Term the Library came into possession of a collection of documents and volumes of music given to the College by the Rev. A. H. Lunn, one of the five sons of the Rev. J. R. Lunn (B.A. 1853; Fellow 1855—1864; Vicar of Martoncum-Grafton, Yorks., 1863—1899). In addition to the full score of J. R. Lunn's unpublished oratorio *Paulinus* and a MS copy of 48 Sonatas of Corelli written by John Christopher Smith, Handel's amanuensis, the collection included an autograph letter, signed, by the composer Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.

This letter was contained in an envelope ( $4\frac{1}{2}'' \times 2\frac{3}{4}''$ ) addressed to R. Lunn Esquire, Fire Office, Birmingham and bearing a wax seal with the composer's initials in Gothic capitals. The letter has been framed and is now on permanent display in the Song Room in the College Chapel. It runs as follows:

4 Hobart Place  
Eaton Sqre  
4th Mai 47

Sir

The Quartett which you sent me as copied by your son shows that he must possess a very good ear for music & that he must be able to form at once a correct idea of what he is listening to. But this does not enable me to give an answer to the question which you put and as I am going to leave this country to-morrow I can only regret that we did not meet in Birmingham where perhaps I could have given you better advice than it is possible for me to offer at present, because personal acquaintance with your son would be absolutely necessary to me before I could form any opinion on the subject about which you wrote to me

I am Sir  
your obedt. Servt.  
F. Mendelssohn Bartholdy

"Your son" was J. R. Lunn who in 1847 as a boy of sixteen was organist of Edgbaston Parish Church. It appears (from his obituary notice in *The Musical Herald*, April 1899—see also *The Eagle* XX. 119, pp. 728f.) that when the revised version of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* was performed in Birmingham in April 1847 under the composer's direction, J. R. Lunn was among the audience and when he got home wrote down from ear the music of the quartet *Cast thy burden upon the Lord*. His father sent

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this MS version to the composer, no doubt asking advice about whether his son should take up a musical career, and Mendelssohn replied as above. This was the composer's last visit to England; he died not long afterwards—in November 1847.

A. G. L.

### COPIES OF *THE EAGLE*

MR Eric Davies, of Yew Tree Cottage, Medmenham, Marlow, Bucks., has a complete set of *The Eagle* from June 1944 to date (nos. 229 to 256), which he has very kindly offered to anyone who cares to collect them from him, or pay the carriage.

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LAST May Mr R. Brice-Smith (B.A. 1908) generously presented the Library with an unpublished autograph letter signed by Sir Walter Scott. The letter is addressed to G. T. Gollop Esq., Brompton House, Near Yeovil, Somerset, London, and bears the postmark 18 Feb 1822. It runs as follows:—

Sir

I am honoured with your packet and regret that circumstances prevent my giving the contents more than a very superficial examination I disclaim all pretensions to being a judge of poetry of which I am to say truth (though I should be ashamed) a reluctant peruser. From the great number of gentlemen who with an opinion of me which does me more honour than I deserve have forwarded to me their poetical compositions & from the extreme delicacy of giving an opinion which to be useful must be sincere & to be sincere must often be displeasing I have been induced to lay down the general rule of declining a task which I have neither time nor taste to execute I trust therefore you will be (*sic*) no means consider it as a mark of disrespect to you individually if I am very brief on the present occasion. The version from Schiller seems to me to convey a very just idea of the original but I have strong doubts whether the lyrical poetry of that great German author will ever be very popular in England. The genius of the languages is much alike but that of the people themselves is very different. The German requires strong excitement and likes the wild and the fantastic in composition often hovering between the sublime & the bombast. This strong contrast of light and shade, this mingling as I may say of sense with nonsense or something like it will never be popular with a people like the English. Their power of reasoning does that for them which the French sensibility to the ridiculous produces on the other side of the channel. The English damns the author the instant he gets out of his depth and the Frenchman laughs at him the German on the contrary applauds and admires the author the more the further & deeper he plunges into the mystical & the exaggerated. I am afraid these national prepossessions will stand in the way of your proposed work and would if you pursue it recommend both compression and retrenchment. For the same reason I would recommend some of the ordinary and established English forms of metre instead of those borrowed from the German which sound harsh & new to our ears I think also you might

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with advantage bestow some stricter attention on your rhymes some of which are not now tolerated at least in short poems and perhaps upon revisal you will avoid some harsh turns of construction which are not quite congenial to the spirit of our language.

I would return your packet by post but as the postage is nearly a guinea & a half perhaps you will have the goodness to indicate some less expensive mode of transportation

I am Sir

your most obedient Servant

Edinburgh 17th february

Walter Scott

Scott's hand is elegant and fluent but unclear. For example *d* looks like *cl*, *o* like *e* or *i*, *a* and *n* like *u*. He rarely dots an *i* or crosses a *t*. The full stop is virtually the only punctuation mark he uses and he often omits even that. His compositors must have had a good deal of trouble when setting up the novels. Unless Scott was a careful proof-reader there is probably some scope for the textual critic there.

George Tilly Gollop must have been encouraged by Scott's remarks, for in the next year he published in London *Poems from the German of Schiller*. This is a rare book. There is no copy in the British Museum, our University Library, the Bodleian, the Taylorian or Brasenose (Gollop's college). Mr L. W. Hanson, the Keeper of Printed Books at the Bodleian, writes that the book "is recorded in B. Q. Morgan's *Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation* who cites only a copy in the library of Robert Pribsch."

In the year in which Scott took this trouble over Gollop the following novels of his were published: *The Pirate* (3 vols.), *The Fortunes of Nigel* (4 vols.), *Peveril of the Peak* (4 vols.). Other publications were *Halidon Hill: A Dramatic Sketch from Scottish History*; *Hints addressed to the Inhabitants of Edinburgh*, and *Others, in prospect of His Majesty's Visit*; and *Sketch of the Life and Character of the late Lord Kinmader*.

A. G. L.

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### The R. Brice-Smith Collection

BEFORE his death in November last year Rollo Brice-Smith (B.A. 1908) had expressed the wish that his collection of modern limited editions, mostly from private presses, should go to his old College, and in accordance with this wish and by the good offices of his sister, Miss Margaret Brice-Smith, the books are now in the College Library.

The collection comprises some three hundred and fifty volumes, whose dates of publication range from 1923 to 1956—the large majority dating from the first seven or eight years of that period. Best represented is the Nonesuch Press, with some eighty works, including the five volume Bible, the seven volume Shakespeare and the six volume Dryden. From the Curwen Press come thirty-eight Ariel Poems (published by Faber & Gwyer and later by Faber & Faber), from Hardy's *Yuletide in a Younger World*, 1927, to Roy Campbell's *Choosing a Mast*, 1931, and including Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*, *A Song for Simeon*, *Animula* and *Triumphal March*. The Gregynog Press provides eighteen items, among them *Aesop's Fables* with Agnes Miller Parker's attractive woodcuts; Haslewood Books twenty-one items; Peter Davies twelve; Crosby Gaige ten; Shakespeare Head six, including the eight volume *Plutarch's Lives*; Seven Acres Press and Golden Cockerel Press seven each, including the latter's four volume Chaucer with decorations by Eric Gill; Bowling Green and Fortune Presses five each; Cuala and High House four; three each from Beaumont, Chiswick, Cresset (including the four volume Herrick) and Pleiad; two from Fanfrolico, Fleuron and Officina Bodoni; one from Aquila, Bremer (a fine Tibullus), Cayme, Fountain, Halcyon, Lakeside, Merrymount, Morland, Piazza, Raven, St Dominic's and Scholartis. Also worth special mention are the Heinemann *Fables of La Fontaine* and the Harrap *Aesop*, both with engravings by Stephen Gooden.

The College is most grateful to the late Rollo Brice-Smith for this interesting and valuable collection and to his sister for the gift of two handsome glass-fronted oak cases specially made to house it.

A. G. L.