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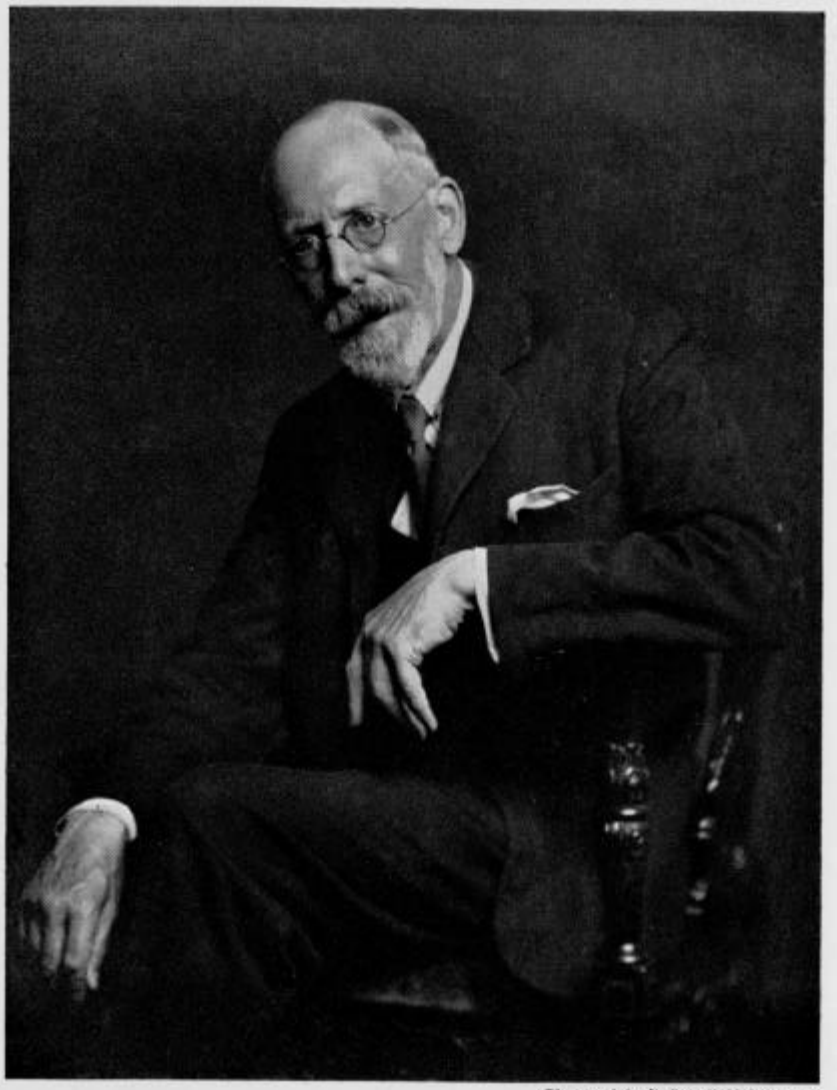

Photograph by J. Russell & Sons, 1935

CHARLES JOHNSON, C.B.E.

CHARLES JOHNSON

1870–1961

CHARLES JOHNSON was born at Newcastle upon Tyne on 2 May 1870. His father, Edmund White Johnson, was a timber merchant, and his mother, Elizabeth Hannah, was the daughter of his father's senior partner, John Herring. The only child of middle-class parents, he had learned his letters before he reached the age of two and had already some notion of reading. He can have been little more than three years old when he was sent to his first school, kept by two Quaker ladies. After a more strenuous spell at another dame school he attended the preparatory class of the Newcastle Grammar School. He did not settle down well in the school proper and was moved to the care of a clergyman at Alwinton in Northumberland, where he stayed till he was about 11. There he was taught the rudiments of Latin enough to read and enjoy the sixth book of the Aeneid and acquired an interest in the language which never left him. In 1881 he was moved to Giggleswick School, which until 1870 had been a village grammar school, but in that year was reorganized to serve as a 'modern school' devoting special attention to the natural sciences. Under its headmaster, George Style, it had already achieved a high reputation.

By modern standards the Giggleswick of the 1880's would be considered rather a rough school and his first year there was not happy for a boy of timid disposition, physically not well developed, and with little skill at football or cricket. But on the whole he enjoyed his schooldays and remembered the school and his masters there with gratitude, retaining an interest and belief in it to the end of his life.

He left Giggleswick in the summer of 1888 to go to Trinity College, Oxford, where he had been elected to a scholarship in classics in the previous November, largely on the strength of his English essay. In later years he regarded the four happy years he spent at Oxford as the opening of a new chapter in his life. This he ascribed to the good fortune which took him to Trinity College, rather than to Queen's, where, like so many boys from Yorkshire schools, he had expected to go and where he would have found a comfortable north-country environment and continued in the habits and speech of his native province. At Trinity he was introduced to a wider society. At that time the

college had about 180 undergraduates, who were all supposed to know one another and actually very nearly did so. Among them he did not aspire to be a person of note, but accepted the role of absorbed spectator. The nickname 'scholar Johner' served to distinguish him from the Fellow of All Souls who acted as history tutor at Trinity, from an undergraduate 'doggy Johnstone', and from an elderly scout. Although he made few close friends, he felt that he got a good deal out of Oxford on the social side. A pencil sketch of him made soon after he had come down from Oxford by Laurence Binyon, who had been his neighbour in college and whose friendship continued throughout his life, portrays an intelligent and sensitive, but rather remote personality.

At the end of his third year at Oxford he spent the long vacation in a voyage to Canada to visit his grandfather's younger brother, William Herring, and his wife. He went out on the Allan Line *Mongolian*, a boat which carried emigrants out and brought cattle home. It took a few passengers, and among them he made acquaintances who remained his good friends as long as they lived, as did two of his great-uncle's neighbours in Quebec. Most of the time was spent in reading Herodotus and Thucydides for final schools the next year, but he managed to visit Lake St. John and see some Indians and half-breeds, and to go to Montreal and Toronto, and step into the United States at Niagara. He took a great liking to Canada and enjoyed the friendliness and hospitality he found everywhere. He got a poor opinion of Canadian politics at the time since the provincial Liberal government at Quebec was involved in the Baie des Chaleurs scandal, which discredited Mercier, while the Conservative central government at Ottawa was in similar trouble over the Parliament buildings there. The tension was sufficiently severe to crop up even in ordinary casual conversation and great care had to be exercised not to tread on anybody's toes. He successfully avoided the pitfalls and regarded the whole visit as a successful and profitable experience.

On his return he worked steadily for his final examination. He had not been happy in Honour Moderations and had been placed in the Second Class. Greats, however, he enjoyed in spite of a ninety-minute viva, and succeeded in getting his First. As he had no expectation of a fellowship when he graduated, he looked about for a teaching appointment, but was offered nothing better than a non-resident post worth £100 a

year. So he decided to try the examination for the Civil Service, where athletic qualifications were not demanded. He had taken some interest in palaeography at Oxford and had attended lectures on it by Robinson Ellis and Falconer Madan. With this in mind he looked for vacancies at the British Museum and the Public Record Office. The former had nothing to offer in the Department of Manuscripts, but there were two posts to be filled at the latter, which fell to the last two of the eight successful candidates in the Civil Service Examination, Johnson and A. E. Stamp.

After his appointment to the Record Office in February 1893 he lived in lodgings in Chelsea with three old schoolfellows and at the suggestion of one of them, A. H. Blundell, later a member of a firm of London solicitors, he joined the Artists' Rifles, having already served for a year in the University corps. In May 1895 he left Chelsea to live with his parents at St. Albans, where they had moved from Newcastle. He lived with them until September 1907, when he married his cousin Mabel Catherine Rudd and set up house in Hampstead.

At the time of Johnson's entry the Public Record Office was emerging from a period of crisis. The appointment of H. C. (*later* Sir Henry) Maxwell Lyte as Deputy Keeper seven years before had been bitterly resented by senior members of the staff. By 1893 most of them had retired or resigned and Maxwell Lyte had largely lived down his unpopularity and begun to accomplish his purpose of making the office efficient. The staff itself was underpaid and prospects of promotion were poor, so as many as could of Johnson's immediate predecessors had made their way to other departments. Some improvement of conditions followed a measure of reform which took effect in 1894, transfer to other departments having already been prohibited in 1892.

The office buildings were not yet completed. Sir James Pennethorne's block, begun in 1851 and extending from Fetter Lane to the Rolls Chapel, was finished and in use as the repository. Work had begun on Sir John Taylor's block facing Chancery Lane, entailing the destruction of the Rolls Chapel, which was, however, still in use. Johnson must have been one of the last people to attend divine service there. On the south side of the estate stood the former Judges' Chambers, known as officers' chambers since 1881, when they were taken over and used to accommodate office staff. Here it was that Johnson began his official career.

By good fortune a place was found for him in the room shared by Arthur Hughes and C. G. Crump and he was initiated by them into the work of the office. With them and their families he formed lasting ties of friendship, and stood godfather to Hughes's son Richard and Crump's daughter Helen. Hughes was considered one of the best readers of manuscripts in the office and his early death in 1904 was a great blow to its textual scholarship. Of Crump, Johnson held the opinion that he had the best and most original brain in the office and he said that his own work, since he came to know Crump, had owed everything to his wisdom and common sense. Another colleague who greatly influenced Johnson's development was Hubert Hall, the literary director of the Royal Historical Society, whose extensive knowledge of the records and wide interest in historical studies were generously used to promote the advancement of his younger colleagues.

His early employment is described by him in his paper on the Public Record Office contributed to *Studies presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson* (O.U.P., 1957).

> The first thing I was to learn was how little my acquirements [from attendance at lectures on palaeography at Oxford] counted for in the actual work I had to do. I doubt whether they saved me more than a week's training. Like other novices I was set to copy from actual documents until I had obtained a certain facility, getting the necessary explanations from my room mates. As soon as I had some acquaintance with a variety of hands I was given an 'office copy' to do. This had to be written on a system corresponding with the 'record type' then widely used for printing documents. In this an effort was made to reproduce the contractions and suspensions of the original. It gave a false impression of accuracy; but in fact it was only possible to transcribe correctly if the copyist had correctly interpreted the abbreviations and could visualize the passage in its extended form. It was, however, good training, because any sheet on which the examining assistant keeper had made three corrections had to be recopied. I had also two or three Close Rolls of Henry III to copy in extended form. I escaped, how I know not, from the task of cataloguing a few hundred Ancient Deeds, which every junior was supposed to do. I was then employed on compiling a new list of Lay Subsidies from the 'slip-books' bound up from the original descriptions made by Green, Gairdner, Redington and Nelson. This involved a re-examination of the documents and substitution of a brief description in English for the Latin of the slips.

Members of the staff of the Record Office were encouraged to undertake the indexing of official publications outside their

official work and Johnson was given the task of making an index to the *Calendar of Petitions to the Pope, 1342–1419*, edited by W. H. Bliss, and of writing an Introduction to it. This involved a study of the working of the Papal *dataria* and was in effect a first essay in administrative history and presage of future interests. The first volume of the *Calendar of Papal Letters*, also edited by Bliss, had come in for severe, but not invariably fair, criticism, and as a temporary measure Johnson was sent to Rome in January 1896 to act as assistant in the preparation of the third volume. It might have been an uncomfortable position for the young and inexperienced assistant, but any discomfort was rapidly relieved by Bliss's kindness and good temper and they worked happily together until a permanent assistant, J. A. Twemlow, had been found to take Johnson's place. Bliss had been sent to Rome to replace Father Stevenson in his commission to obtain transcripts of documents bearing on British history in the Papal archives and elsewhere. For this purpose he was admirably equipped, having a gift of making friends and obtaining access to papers in private collections not normally open to the public. But he had no wish to prepare a calendar and did not feel himself properly qualified to do so. He was therefore most grateful for help in the more mechanical work of calendaring and wrote to Maxwell Lyte to thank him for sending 'an agreeable playmate'. Johnson had five months in Rome and enjoyed the experience exceedingly, making many friends, among whom were Father J. Pollen, S.J., Professor Eugène Déprez, Professor S. R. Gardiner and his wife, Monsignor Stanley, and Dom F. N. (later Cardinal) Gasquet.

Soon after his return to London he began the work which was to occupy a great part of his time and to give him an unrivalled insight into the working of the medieval Chancery. The ancient miscellanea and files of the Chancery comprised two great collections of files and loose documents, one taken over with the Tower records and ranging in date from John to Charles II, the other coming from the Rolls Chapel and ranging from Henry VII to Charles II. Following the demolition of Rolls Yard and later of the Rolls House and Chapel in the years 1886 to 1893 a great reclassification was undertaken in which many documents were found, both among the existing files and in the bulk of new matter, which belonged or appeared to belong to well marked and recognized classes. Hence it became necessary to suppress the old lists and to make up new classes of a corresponding nature. In the process the Tower

Files were reduced to a skeleton, so they were amalgamated with a quantity of similar miscellanea from the roof of the Rolls Chapel and elsewhere and a new series of Chancery Files was created. Johnson's share in this work resulted in the published lists of *Chancery Diplomatic and Scottish Documents*, many manuscript lists of other sections of the miscellanea and the rearrangement, which still awaits completion, of the files. At times he was assisted by various colleagues, notably S. C. Ratcliff, but the work could only proceed spasmodically in the intervals free from other occupations, which, for Johnson, included the supervision of the production of the *Calendar of Papal Registers*, and substantial contributions to the *Feudal Aids* and *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions*.

In 1912 he was appointed a member of the Committee of Inspecting Officers for the purposes of the Public Record Office Acts, 1877 and 1898, which empowered the Master of the Rolls to make rules for the disposal of documents which had been deposited in or could be removed to the Public Record Office but were not of sufficient public value to justify their preservation there. Preliminary to disposal a schedule, with particulars, of the documents or classes of documents whose disposal was at any time proposed had to be prepared and laid before both Houses of Parliament. The schedules and the documents concerned had to be inspected by a committee of Inspecting Officers whose members included the Deputy Keeper of the Records, an Assistant Keeper, and a barrister of not less than seven years standing. For a time Johnson acted as secretary of the committee, of which he proved an invaluable member, particularly when it had to decide on the preservation or destruction of the financial documents of modern government departments. At such times the knowledge of accountancy acquired in early years and maintained thereafter enabled him to guide his colleagues with confidence. As part of his work for this committee he prepared reports on the records of such diverse courts and departments as the Exchequer of Receipt, the Lord Steward's Department, the High Court of Admiralty, and the High Court of Justice.

Following the first report of the Royal Commission on Public Records of 1910, the Master of the Rolls appointed, towards the close of 1912, an advisory committee of historical experts to assist him in his duties with regard to publications. Johnson was appointed secretary of this committee, whose other members were C. H. Firth, P. Vinogradoff, R. L. Poole, H. W. V.

Temperley, A. F. Pollard, and T. F. Tout, together with the Deputy Keeper of the Records, A. E. Stamp, and C. G. Crump. The committee got vigorously to work, but its plans were frustrated by the economies necessitated during the war years and it expired after a short revival in 1929, when it recommended the extension of the Calendar of Patent Rolls to the end of the reign of Elizabeth I.

In 1916 he was given charge of the office library, which largely consisted of collections inherited from the libraries of the Record Commission and the State Paper Office. The secretary of the office exercised a general supervision aided by a library clerk. Johnson was appointed librarian and given the responsibility of selecting new and second-hand books with a view to making the library an adequate tool for the work of the assistant keeper staff. He did this with great success, converting what had been a mere nucleus into a valuable and well selected topographical and historical reference library.

Early in June 1918, at the request of the War Department, he was lent to the Army Contracts Directorate, with whom he remained until the following February, when the office secured his return.

In the hope of improving conditions for existing staff and encouraging recruitment of suitable staff for the future the assistant keeper grade was reorganized early in 1920 and four new Class I posts were created. Johnson was appointed to one of these, thus attaining promotion after twenty-seven years of service and about a month before his fiftieth birthday. During the next ten years he continued to spend much of his time on the work of the inspecting officers, on the improvement of the office library, and on the classification and dating of the Chancery Files and miscellanea. He was also an official member of the Manorial Records Committee set up in 1925 to advise the Master of the Rolls in his general oversight of all manorial documents in the country under the Law of Property Acts of 1922 and 1924. Two of the cadet assistant keepers appointed during these years were placed under his charge for instruction. Both eventually had distinguished careers outside the office, V. H. Galbraith in the Universities of Oxford, Edinburgh, and London, and Miss (*later* Dame) Mary Smieton in the Ministries of Labour and Education.

The retirements of Hubert Hall, C. G. Crump, A. St. John Story Maskelyne, and Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte between 1921 and 1926 broke up a notable group of medieval scholars,

leaving Johnson its surviving representative. Their successors quickly learned to value the ready hearing given by him to any problem concerning medieval documents and institutions and the often laconic and always sufficient reply, so that even before his retirement he had become a figure of legendary erudition in the office. Unfortunately about this time he suffered constant ill health and, perhaps for that reason, he decided to retire on his sixtieth birthday, in 1930.

After the outbreak of war in 1939 he placed himself at the disposal of the Deputy Keeper to assist in the care of the public records dispersed for safety into various parts of the country. His offer was gratefully accepted and after his re-engagement had been agreed by the Treasury he was placed in charge of the largest of the emergency repositories, at Culham Training College. There he found time, in addition to his duties as custodian, to transcribe some of the thirteenth-century Curia Regis Rolls and to reduce to order the bewildering collection of accounts in the records of the High Court of Admiralty. He remained at Culham until March 1946, when he retired for the second time.

In his Introduction to the *Calendar of Papal Petitions* published in 1896 he wrote of the necessity of realizing the importance of administrative machinery and of using the natural relations of historical documents as a guide to the evaluation of their contents and expressed the hope that the appearance of a natural history of our administrative system might not be far off. Much of his extra-official work could be regarded as providing material for such a history, while some of it provided guidance in reading and understanding the documents. The first major work in which he engaged outside his official duty was the edition of the *Dialogus de Scaccario*. Hubert Hall had made proposals for an edition of the Dialogus to be published in the Rolls Series. The plan was not proceeded with, and Hall offered the undertaking, with the Clarendon Press as publisher, to Arthur Hughes and C. G. Crump. They took Johnson into the partnership and the work was shared as equally as possible between them. The volume was produced in 1902 and remains the standard edition of the text. It was reprinted with a few insignificant alterations in 1950 in Nelson's series of Medieval Classics with a translation by Johnson in which sound scholarship and a feeling for vigorous idiom were well combined.

The same triumvirate worked together on the accounts of the Royal Mint in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They

published their results in a series of articles, of which the first, 'The Administration of the English Mint under Edward I', appeared in the *Economic Journal* for 1895. It was followed two years later in the same journal by 'The Debasement of the Coinage under Edward III', and by a note in the *English Historical Review* on the coinage of the three Edwards. Crump and Johnson, finally, contributed 'Tables of Bullion coined under Edward I, II and III' to the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1913. In these articles they brought the historian's techniques to the aid of the numismatist. How much this was needed was illustrated by 'Notes on "a Numismatic History of the Reign of Henry I" by W. J. Andrew' contributed by Crump and Johnson to the *Numismatic Chronicle* for 1902, in which they showed the 'History' to be hopelessly unhistorical when judged by normal academic standards. More than fifty years later Johnson placed English numismatists further in his debt by the publication in 1956 of his translation, with the Latin text, an Introduction, and Notes, of Nicholas Oresme's *De Moneta* and a selection of *English Mint Documents*.

With J. H. Round he was responsible for the Domesday section of the *Victoria History of the County of Norfolk*, which was published in 1906. With Crump he planned the book on *English Court Hand* which was carried out by him with the assistance of Hilary Jenkinson and published in 1915, since when it has been a standard work for the student of the handwritings of English medieval records. At the same time he was engaged on an edition of the register of Hamo de Hethe, bishop of Rochester from 1316 to 1352, for the Canterbury and York Society. The monumental task was to occupy him for over thirty-four years, the first part being issued in 1914 and the last in 1948.

Between 1918 and 1924 the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge published the series of Helps for Students of History afterwards taken over by the Historical Association. The general editors were Johnson and J. P. Whitney, later joined by H. W. V. Temperley. The series was designed to consist of brief handbooks written in simple terms to serve the beginner in research as guides to historical method, sources, auxiliary studies, such as numismatics, chronology, and sigillography, and some few special subjects and periods. Johnson himself contributed three handbooks, each of which could be regarded as a distillation of some part of his work and experience in the Public Record Office. The first, published in 1918, was an account of the office and its contents, particularly the records

of the Chancery, Exchequer, and other ancient courts. Although its primary purpose was professedly to indicate how the ecclesiastical historian might use the records, the scope of the handbook was insensibly widened to cover the contents of the Public Record Office as a whole. *The Care of Documents and Management of Records*, published the following year, contained useful guidance for the arrangement and safekeeping of documents and restated principles set out in a paper Johnson had given at the Historical Congress held in London in 1913. *The Mechanical Processes of the Historian* gave practical directions on the search for evidence on a chosen topic, the arrangement and indexing of the materials when found, and the preparation of manuscript for the printer and seeing it through the press.

The publication in 1934 of the *Medieval Latin Word-List* from British and Irish sources marked the completion of the first stage of a project initiated by R. J. Whitwell in a paper read before the Historical Congress at London in 1913, following a proposal made by many historians and philologists to the British Academy. The project, which was for the construction of a new dictionary of Medieval Latin on the lines of the *New English Dictionary* was referred to a committee appointed by the British Academy, but had to be deferred when war broke out in 1914. It was revived in 1920 by the International Academic Union which requested the co-operation of the British Academy. As the international dictionary was planned to extend only to the eleventh century, while need was felt by British scholars for a dictionary covering the whole of the Middle Ages, the Academy in 1924 appointed two committees to collect materials, the one for the period up to 1086, the other for the period after. Johnson, whose interest had been engaged in the original proposals, was one of the joint-secretaries from 1924 until 1934, and afterwards acted as treasurer. As secretary of the committee concerned with post-Conquest materials he was editor of that part of the work and gave invaluable assistance as adviser and critic to readers engaged on ill-edited texts and original manuscripts. His own contribution as a reader was extensive and covered a very wide range of technical subjects, which otherwise would have been only lightly touched. He was active as a propagandist for new readers in addresses to learned societies and contributions to their journals and to the press. In co-operation with J. H. Baxter, who was responsible for work on pre-Conquest materials, he edited the *Medieval Latin Word-List*, and shared with him and J. F. Willard the compilation of the

pioneer Index of British and Irish Latin Writers, 400–1500, published in the *Bulletin Du Cange* in 1932. The *Word-List* was merely a preliminary sketch, a report of progress, but nevertheless it has proved of enormous value to workers in medieval studies. In the next stage of the work, the revision of the existing materials and making good their deficiencies with a view to an enlarged and revised Word-List, his sustained and practical enthusiasm supplied much of the initiative and he had the satisfaction of knowing before he died that the first part of the *Revised Word-List* was in the hands of the printers, that a competent editor for the Dictionary was available, and that there was hope that funds would be found for the work to be completed.

On his retirement from the Public Record Office in 1930 he was invited by the Delegates of the Clarendon Press to undertake the continuation of the *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum* begun by H. W. C. Davis, who had died in 1928. Volume I, covering the reigns of the first two Norman kings, had been published in 1913 and materials brought together for subsequent volumes. Johnson secured the help of H. A. Cronne as joint-editor, but the work proved more protracted than had been hoped and was still unfinished when war broke out in 1939, making further progress impossible until some years after the end of hostilities. Eventually, Volume II, covering the reign of Henry I, was published in 1955 and Johnson then relinquished his part in the project to R. H. C. Davis, son of the original editor.

His last published work, which appeared early in 1961, was a translation, with text and Introduction, of Hugh the Chantor's *History of the See of York, 1066–1127*.

He made many contributions to learned journals on historical topics, often in the form of notes on documents which were by-products of whatever work on records engaged him at the time. They ranged from transcripts of hitherto unnoticed documents accompanied by a brief descriptive note, to longer articles such as the valuable 'Notes on Thirteenth-Century Judicial Procedure' in the *English Historical Review* for 1947 or the lately topical article contributed in collaboration with C. G. Crump to the same *Review* in 1912 on the 'Powers of the Justices of the Peace'. He wrote an Introduction describing the sheriff's proceedings at the audit of his account for the first volume of the revised Pipe Roll Society's publications in 1925, and contributed an essay on Royal Power and Administration to the *Legacy of the Middle Ages*. For the Royal Historical Society he read papers on the accounting system in the Wardrobe of Edward I and on

the history of the Camden Society between 1838 and 1938. He contributed essays to the volumes in honour of his friends T. F. Tout, James Tait, and Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the last being a survey of the Public Record Office as he knew it from 1893 to 1956. More detailed appreciation of the work of some of his colleagues occurs in his memoirs on Sir Henry Maxwell Lyte, written for the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. xxvi, on Hubert Hall in the *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1946, and on C. G. Crump in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Very many reviews and short notices, often of works on medieval history or archives published on the Continent, were contributed by him to several learned periodicals. He was a conscientious and indefatigable reviewer, never writing with harshness or for display, but always seeking a just appreciation of the merits of the work under notice, while calling attention to basic defects of scholarship and understanding where they occurred.

He played a useful part in the work of various learned bodies. After serving as chairman of the library committee of the Institute of Historical Research, he was a member of the committee of the Institute from 1933 to 1945, and of the management committee of the Victoria County History from its formation in 1933 until 1955. Elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1919, and of the Society of Antiquaries in 1920, he served on the Councils of both Societies, and as vice-president of the latter from 1938 to 1941. He was honorary auditor of the Royal Historical Society from 1921 to 1923, honorary treasurer from 1924 to 1930, a vice-president from 1930 to 1934 and 1935 to 1939, and an honorary vice-president from 1943. He joined the Canterbury and York Society at its foundation and was a member of its editorial committee, and for many years joint-secretary and a member of council and was elected a vice-president in 1951. He was on the council of the Pipe Roll Society from its revival in 1925. He also gave his support to the St. Albans and Herts. Architectural and Archaeological Society while he was resident in St. Albans, and was a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne and, for several years, of the Newcastle upon Tyne records committee. Of all these institutions and societies he was a loyal and valued member. He was conscientious in his attendance at meetings and, though he spoke rarely and briefly, his interventions were authoritative and notable for their sound judgement and common sense.

He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1934 and received official recognition of his services to historical scholarship when he was appointed C.B.E. in 1951.

Johnson began his working career at a time when historical studies in England were being transformed by the application of new ideas and techniques. To this transformation he was well fitted both by nature and by training to make an important contribution. His influence was particularly felt in the field of medieval history where he helped to promote a new understanding of the interrelation between records and administration and to encourage a scientific rather than an antiquarian approach to the interpretation of documents. He was never tired of insisting that records should be studied not as isolated documents but in their proper context as products of an administrative machine, and that the key to a scientific knowledge of them was to be found in the study of administration. So well did he practise his own doctrine that it could be said of him that he talked about the Exchequer as if he had lived there. He regarded the practice of arranging the records by forming artificial classes according to subjects or species as unscientific and destructive of their historical significance, though possessing some immediate convenience for historians. With Crump he wished to persuade the Royal Commission on Public Records of 1910 to condemn it. They prepared a memorandum setting out their views, but it did not reach the Commission, which failed to make any declaration of the principles to be followed in dealing with large accumulations of records. Johnson, however, made this the subject of his paper to the Historical Congress in 1913 and concluded it with practical recommendations which are now accepted principles.

In matters of record management he exercised a practical common sense. He was always ready to give fair consideration to new ideas and to experiment with new methods of attaining permanent objectives. He never descended to the doctrinaire. His meticulous scholarship and extensive knowledge of the records earned for him a unique authority among his colleagues and the many scholars who sought his advice and profited by his mastery of detail and grasp of complicated subjects. His authority was clothed in modesty and sometimes his questioner might have welcomed a fuller and more elementary exposition, for he was inclined to treat even the most inexperienced as equals and to overestimate their knowledge.

He retained an interest in classical studies throughout his life

and was widely read in English literature. His logician's interest in language found expression in his work on the Medieval Latin dictionary and was displayed in his translations which delight by their simple and unstilted English.

As a young man he took pleasure in walking, cycling, and rowing and, though never of robust appearance, and subject in middle life to bouts of headache, he had a toughness of physique which carried him through some severe illnesses in later life. A few years after his fiftieth birthday he began to wear a beard, largely as a consequence of a serious and disfiguring accident, which might have proved fatal. After his retirement, some years later, the passage of time treated him kindly and he was able to complete the works of scholarship he had planned during his official career.

After the death of his first wife in 1947 he married in 1950 Violet Margaret, the eldest daughter of Arthur Mutrie Shepherd of Boars Hill, Oxford, who survived him.

As he approached his ninetieth year he ceased to go about London and rarely went far from his home. His end was peaceful and without warning. After a day spent in normal activity he died quietly in his sleep in the early morning of 5 November 1961.

His friends will remember him for his great serenity of spirit and generosity of heart. In controversy he was never bitter and never wounding in criticism. His loyalty to his friends was absolute. His delight in scholarship was accompanied by a scholar's virtues, and at the same time he liked to be considered a man of affairs. To the Office, which, as he wrote shortly after his ninetieth birthday, was always in his thoughts, he left a high tradition of achievement and laid foundations on which to build. For the writer of this memoir, who chances to share his name, though not his kinship, and to have taken over work begun by him, there remains the memory of the constant kindness of a wise counsellor and a firm friend.

The early part of this memoir is based on biographical notes prepared by Charles Johnson himself, for the use of which I am indebted to his widow, Mrs. Charles Johnson. I have also used the notices printed in *The Times* (7 November 1961) and *Archives*, vol. v (1962), and unpublished papers in the Public Record Office. Much information has been provided by colleagues in the Public Record Office, especially Mr. L. C. Hector, who provided me with the unpublished paper delivered to the Historical Congress, 1913, and read through the typescript of the memoir.

H. C. JOHNSON