

---

**NEW TITLES**


---

*History*

**THE VICTORIANS AND  
ANCIENT GREECE**  
by Richard Jenkyns  
Harvard, 1980  
386 pp. \$30

In 19th-century Victorian England, the well-to-do were learning to preside over an empire. They embraced the model of ancient Greece. Conversational knowledge of Homer, Aristotle, and Praxiteles became the measure of gentility. Novelists George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Oscar Wilde, architects, painters, and sculptors alluded to or imitated the classical style. "There was always some tendency for people to use the Greeks as a means of confirming their own prejudgements," writes Jenkyns, a lecturer in classics at the University of Bristol. And the Victorians made up a fairy-tale antiquity that collapsed under scrutiny. They saw life in ancient Greece as calm and harmonious. The British Empire, they assumed, was the natural heir to that superior legacy. So, for example, the class hierarchy implicit in the writings of Homer reinforced the Victorian belief in aristocracy; and Platonic love became, for some leisured dandies, a philosophical rationalization for conspicuous homosexuality. The Victorians' glorified vision of history and of their role in it left England's leaders ill-prepared for 20th-century events—overseas challenges to *Pax Britannica* and the social disruption brought on by World War I.

**THE THREE EDWARDS:  
War and State in England,  
1271–1377**  
by Michael Prestwich  
St. Martin's, 1980  
336 pp. \$25

The reigns of England's first three Edwards during the Middle Ages were marked by continuous warfare against Wales, Scotland, and France. Then as later, financing combat was a major problem—especially after 1294 when hostilities with France broke out, a prelude to the Hundred Years' War. The traditional, feudal means of raising an army had been to summon nobles for military service without recompense; these men were expected to



Courtesy of the Trustees  
of the British Museum.

bring with them knights and squires, who usually provided their own horses and weapons. The system was neither efficient nor reliable. In 1300, for example, one warrior under Edward I (1239–1307) showed up for duty equipped with a single arrow. The best way to guarantee military service was to pay wages, and this the ambitious Edward II (1284–1327) began to do. But salaries substantially boosted the price of war, especially when Edward III (1312–77), with characteristic extravagance, began doling out double wages to men fighting overseas. In 1280, Edward I first petitioned “Parliament”—then an irregular gathering of regional nobles—to tax the populace. Parliament seized the opportunity to force the monarch, and his successors, into negotiations over local grievances. The independent character of Parliament today, according to Prestwich, a British historian, may owe less to the traditions of Roman law than to the three Edwards’ repeated requests to fill the “royal wardrobe.”

**JONATHAN EDWARDS,  
PASTOR: Religion and  
Society in Eighteenth-  
Century Northampton**  
by Patricia J. Tracy  
Farrar, 1980  
270 pp. \$14.95

The Reverend Jonathan Edwards (1707–58) is best remembered for his stern Puritan creed and his hellfire-and-brimstone sermons. But, says Tracy, a Williams College historian, little attention has been given to his unsuccessful performance as a New England parish pastor. In 1729, Edwards stepped up to the pulpit of the Northampton, Mass., Congregational Church, which his autocratic grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, had headed for nearly 60 years. Sin, in Edward’s view, had generally reared its head in the parish as apathy, lust, and contention; a few years later, it was emerging as insidious pride masquerading as zealous piety. Edwards responded by altering his preaching style. Rational discourses on the “sweet reasonableness” of religion gave way to terrifying threats and denunciations of sinners. The Great Awakening, which swept New England in the early 1740s, brought Edwards fame as a guest preacher; but, ironically, it hastened his downfall at home. Northampton was becoming secular-