

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

A JOURNAL OF MY JOURNEY TO PARIS IN THE YEAR 1765. The REV. WILLIAM COLE, M.A., F.S.A. Edited by FRANCIS G. STOKES. 8vo. pp. xxxii & 410. Price 16s. London: Constable.

It was from 1762 onward that *Sterne* visited Paris and travelled in France and recorded his impressions in "The Sentimental Journey." In 1775 Dr. Johnson with the Thrales visited Paris. The diurnal register of observations kept by him for 26 days is included in "Boswell's Life." Neither of these can compare with Cole's minute account with criticisms recorded in the diary of his six weeks' sojourn in Paris. Though he praises some things in France, he writes, "I experienced I had left, in my native island, beauties of every kind." Bucks was superior to France; London far finer than Paris. Dessein the innkeeper, Foley the banker, Pascal the coachmaker, the 'desobligeant,' Montreuil, Nampont, etc., are all alike mentioned by Cole and Sterne.

He remarks the position of the Altar in St. Sulpice Church, perhaps thinking of the former position of the Communion Table at Bletchley, "in a dinner posture in the middle of the chancel." At St. Sulpice "the High Altar is immensely fine, being built according to the stile of St. Peter's at Rome in the middle of the church."

Great men write or dictate their memoirs; lesser or inferior intellects keep diaries. It is to the last that we look for the commonplace things of existence. Cole was one of these. The prices of various articles of food, rent of rooms, cost of clothes, expenses of travelling, wages, doctors' fees, etc., rival in detail the *Purefoy Letters*.

The diary is not wholly concerned with Paris. Essentially a gossip, Cole easily deviates from his narrative, when 'that reminds me,' calls up some reminiscence. His digressions are frequent, lengthy and interesting to Bucks readers, for they are chiefly about Bucks people and places. One long digression deals with the provosts of Eton in the mid 18th century; another 20 pages deal with John Wilkes, John Whaley, Rousseau and the Walpoles. A slightly satirical account of the Hanmer and Lowndes families is ten or twelve pages long.

Cole comments severely on French behaviour and lack of reticence. The embarrassing conduct of the kitchen maid on the ship crossing the Channel was equalled by the sang froid of Madame de Rambouliet on the journey to Paris with Sterne (see *Sentimental Journey* end of Part I.). The coarse and unclean habits of the French find frequent mention. The revolting but interesting account of the cemetery of the Holy Innocents is a commentary on methods of interment which obtained in England up to recent times.

Cole had more than a feeling of toleration for the Roman Church and was meditating retirement to a Benedictine House in Paris, "but Mr. Browne Willis, my most worthy Friend & Patron, just then (1753) presented me to the Rectory of Bletchley." He often attended Mass in Paris, and visited a large number of churches, of which he records long descriptions; the number of 'heart burials' he mentions is remarkable.

A sidelight on English speech is shown by the lad who wished to accompany a gentleman to England, "but his parents would not let him go, merely from their observation of the common & bad practice of the English in larding their common conversation with Oaths & profane swearing at almost every word; an observation but too just."

In the original MS. are many coloured drawings of coats-of-arms. These are omitted from the book—a great mistake—which seriously impairs both the appearance and interest. The index might have been better; however, the book should be welcomed by all classes of readers.

WILLIAM BRADBROOKE.

PUREFOY LETTERS, 1735-1753

Edited by GEORGE ELAND, F.S.A. Two 4to. volumes, pages xl & 464. £2 2s. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Bound in buckram, with 28 full page illustrations of fac-simile letters, portraits, furniture, etc., printed in a fine fount of clear type on thick hand-made paper, these volumes have a most attractive appearance.

The Letters are an example of how interesting and valuable small-beer chronicles can become when sanctified and mellowed by age. By far the greater part of such correspondence is destroyed, but in this instance the writers living a restricted and commonplace existence but possessing well ordered minds, remembering that "writing makes an exact man," carefully kept copies of their letters, account books and diaries. The Editor has had access to these and presents them in a form which facilitates their study by the serious and their easy enjoyment by the average reader.

The Letters are concerned with the domestic life of the widowed Mrs. Elizabeth Purefoy and her son, Henry Purefoy, living at *Shalstone Manor House*. For 600 years the Manor has passed by direct descent, and Mr. Henry Purefoy was content to live the life

of a country gentleman and devote it to the management of his hereditary estate. Possessing ample means, though intellectual and able, he had not the incentive to ambition supplied by comparative poverty.

The Editor has not presented the 616 letters in chronological order, but has adopted the far better way of classifying them under subjects, *e.g.*, the Parish, the Estate, Housekeeping, Servants, etc. Mention is made of customs, manners, people, and occasional archaic terms are used which require explanation. Not the least interesting part of the work is the many editorial notes. These must have required not only an intimate knowledge of the county but much laborious reference to authorities.

Servants engaged at Shalstone Manor were required not only to be competent but also to "set their hands to a paper to provide for themselves" if they were ill with small-pox. The fear of this disorder during the 18th century when a mother's son was not her own till he had had small-pox, is markedly exemplified by the many references to the disease in these letters; it was always somewhere within reach of Shalstone. In 1737 there was an epidemic in Buckingham and Shalstone was affected several times. Before visiting Bath or London Mr. Purefoy enquired if small-pox were there.

Though not a great sportsman, Mr. Henry Purefoy was fond of coursing, and of chasing deer; this on one occasion brought him much trouble. In 1750 he went hunting buck in the purlieus of Whittlebury Forest; the Duke of Grafton contested his right, and only waived it after much negotiation.

Greyhounds and harriers were kept, and hares, except in one year, seemed to have been plentiful.

The Purefoys did not often go from home. When they did the state of the roads is remarked. Once the journey to Aylesbury took seven hours; another journey to London through Aylesbury and sleeping at Missenden took two days, actual time on the road 14 hours, rate of progress $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles per hour. The absence of made roads or their bad condition, according to the late Lord Rosebery, kept Bucks of the 18th century well into the 19th century. However, an approach to rapid travelling was possible for "the Birmingham coach runs in a day to Buckingham, fair (sic) 10/-." In 1744 mention is made of the quicksand in the lane which "prevents mee coming to Brackley."

Occasional visits were paid to Astrop Wells in Northants. Here the Purefoys had the opportunity of seeing other than the society around the Manor. The Editor adds a long and informative note about this once well-known medicinal chalybeate spring, to which may be added from Thomas Hearn's diary: "Richard Lower discovered the healing well at Eastrope near King's Sutton, Northants. he showed it to Dr. Thomas Willis who recommended it and is now reported to be its finder."¹

Among the acquaintance of the Purefoys was the Price family. Though this family owned Westbury, very little seems to be known about it. Thomas, the son and heir of Roger Price, conveyed to Dr. Browne Willis the site on which Fenny Stratford Church is built for 5/- by lease and re-lease, practically giving the site which entitles him to share the credit given to Willis.

Several mentions are made of the antiquary, Dr. B. Willis, but nothing is added to our knowledge of him.

Through their cool sequestered vale of life, mother and son kept the even tenour of their way. Beyond

¹ Aubrey, in his *Life of Dr. Willis*, makes *him* the discoverer in 1657.

serving as sheriff, Mr. Henry took no interest in affairs outside parish politics. A passing reference to the doings in '45 is the only mention of national events.

Small minded, self-centred on their own well-being in life, we owe to their meticulous sense of order the preservation of trivial domestic minutiae which present us with a picture of the lives of most of the country gentry in the early 18th century.

The book must be in the library not merely of Bucks people, but in that of all students of the Georgian era.

Well got up, adequately edited and fully indexed, criticism can only be favourable.

W. BRADBROOKE.