

A FUNERAL IN 1765

The *Purefoy Letters* referred to in the last number of the RECORDS are now being printed and will, it is hoped, be published during 1931. They consist of drafts of letters written by Mrs. Purefoy (1672—1765) and her son Henry (1697—1762), and they furnish a remarkable picture of the domestic life of our oldest county family in the reign of George II.

It will be noticed that the mother outlived the son by three years, dying at the age of 93; a bundle of papers relating to her funeral has been preserved; in the book it will be merely alluded to, but it contains a number of curious facts which seem worth preserving more fully, and Admiral Purefoy has kindly given permission for this to be done.

Mrs. Purefoy was a lady of decided character and wished that there should be no doubt about the form in which her memory should be preserved for posterity; on 3rd March, 1759, therefore she signed an Agreement (in a somewhat shaky handwriting), with Richard Batchelor, of Buckingham, "mason and statuary." By this very wordy deed Mr. Batchelor undertook to make "in a good sound substantial firm neat and workmanlike manner" a marble monument "according to the Plan or Draught thereof hereunto annexed."¹ The dimensions of the "writing table" are defined, then follow the "shafts of the two Columns of Purple Marble and of the Corinthian Order"; the entablature, architrave, cornice, pediment, and "freeze" are separately specified, as well as the principal and under-leger, the carved trusses, and the "Shield, or bottom stone whereon the Coat of Arms and Crest of Purefoy are to be carved." The

¹ This is rather an elaborate drawing and was somewhat closely followed in detail when the monument was erected.

" Busto " is to be about two feet high, and " two Boys " 18 or 19 inches high. Another 500 words, saying this several times over, bring us to the consideration money: £95, of which £90 was to be paid when the monument was erected, and the balance when the inscription was completed, that is to say, after Mrs. Purefoy's death. A paltry matter of 300 more words brings us to the attestation clause, Mr. John Land, the attorney, who often acted for the Purefoys, being one of the witnesses of Mr. Batchelor's signature, and Henry being one of his mother's.

Our next document is the draft of the inscription it was proposed to place on this stately monument; it is in Henry's best writing, with several interlineations. There was something like a " bull" in the original wording which ran: " the present Henry Purefoy Esq. born in this parish the 27th day of February 1697 O.S. and deceased the day of ." The word " present " was unfortunately preserved, but the reference to his decease was observed not to agree with it and it was dropped. The second half of the inscription, as drawn by Henry, described his mother as " an Woman of Excellent Sense and Spiritt, Prudent and frugal "; it was actually carved "a woman of excellent understanding, prudent and frugal." But the concluding lines are the most interesting; in the full expectation that he would outlive a woman of 86 he wrote:

There is Nobody so sensibly feels the Losse of Her
As her much obliged son Henry Purefoy Esq.
Who can answer this Character given of Her
Is not flattery or Ostentation
But True in every Particular.

This raised the obvious question, Who will guarantee the guarantor? It became quite impossible when that guarantor died before his mother; in place of these lines therefore Henry's heir placed on record: " In gratitude to her memory, her kinsman, G. H. J. Purefoy Esq, caused this Inscription to be added."

Like most contractors Mr. Batchelor contrived to make his bill amount to more than the sum named in the contract; he managed at the very start to make it look different, thus:

To a Marble monument sett up in Shalstone Church at	66: 0: 0
To Statuary marble and carving the Bosto and two boys	30: 0: 0
Paid for the moadleing to a likeness	03: 03: 0

Then followed a number of small labour charges amounting to £2, and phonetic-looking entry comes:

To emory and putty and prushen blew used at Mrs. Purefoy's monu- ment	00: 2: 6
---	----------

And finally a true extra, unconnected with the monument:

To preparing the wall and writing the Commandments and sentances in the church	02: 2: 0
--	----------

This brought the grand total up to £103:7:6; a receipt endorsed on the bill proves, however, that the sum paid was £93:13:6, with a further " ffive pounds which is to be paid mee on finishing the Inscription on the said monument. " Extras of £4:14:0 were disallowed therefore. The receipt is dated October 17th, 1759.

Five and a half years later Mrs. Purefoy died and an interesting receipt appears:

Feb. 19. 1765	Received then of G. Purefoy Esq. the sum of two pounds ten shillings being y ^e Penalty due for burying in Linnen y ^e Corpse of the late Mrs. E. Purefoy which money was distrib- uted for the poors' use.
------------------	--

Job Burman

One is so used to seeing affidavits about burial in woollen that evidence of the contrary practice is exceptional ; indeed Mr. Burman, who was churchwarden, had mechanically written " woollen," and then crossed it out in favour of " Linnen."

Our last paper is the receipt of the six bearers at the funeral; they were paid £1:10:0 each, "as directed by the will of the above said Mrs. Eliz. Purefoy."

On the same sheet the clerk acknowledges that he received half a guinea " for performing my office."

The monument thus carefully erected is easily the most imposing object in a church which was practically rebuilt within sixty years of Mrs. Purefoy's death; it retains though a memorial to a lady, who died two and a quarter centuries before Mrs. Purefoy, in the form of a brass to Dame Susan Kyngeston, most exceptionally described as " vowes"; she was born a Fettiplace, but after the Dissolution married and died in 1540 as the widow of "John Kyngeston of Chelrey in the Countye of Berk^e." ²

A nineteenth century rector caused the " boys " on Mrs. Purefoy's monument to be removed, being curiously offended by their cherubic nakedness; luckily they have been preserved and, it is hoped, will be restored to the pediment which Mr. Batchelor intended them to adorn.

² The brass is illustrated by Lipscomb, vol. III., p. 75. She entered Syon Monastery when her husband died in 1514, and thus became a " vowess."