

AN ETON BOY'S LETTERS

Some years ago was printed an early 17th century Eton bill.¹ Apart from that there is nothing in the RECORDS, from the boy's point of view, about the famous Eton College. The publication of a sixteenth century will in the last number of the RECORDS has had a very interesting sequel. The will was that of John Purefoy, of Shalstone, and the present owner of the estate, Admiral Purefoy, was induced, upon reading it, to look amongst papers relating to his family which had descended to him. Amongst them were a very surprising set of letter books, dairies, and account-books all written by the last Purefoy in the direct male line who lived at Shalstone, and by his mother. It is hoped that some means may be found of printing a portion at least of these. They relate to the first half of the 18th century, but there are two letters from a Bucks boy who was at Eton in 1793. This was Richard Purefoy Jervoise, born in 1778, who died, a Major in the Royal Dragoons, near Abrantes, in Portugal, on 16 Sept., 1811. He was great-grand-father of the present Admiral Purefoy, to whom the Society is deeply indebted for permission to make use of these letters.

The accompanying illustration is from a portrait of the Major at Shalstone.

The first letter is addressed to:

Miss Purefoy
 at Miss Pickering's
 Brightelmstone. and

runs thus :—

MY DEAR SISTER,

By your desire of hearing from me I take this present opportunity of writing to you to thank you for your kind letter which I received to-day. I am also much obliged to you for your kind letter which you sent me in my Mother's parcell.

¹ Records, Vol. X., p. 435

I received last Wednesday a Parcell from Mrs. FitzGerald; she mentioned in her letter that she had received a letter from you. I expect to spend my Easter Vacation here, because somebody has broke the side stove belonging to the fireplace in the long Chamber. We have tryed to find out the Offender, but cannot. We are neither allowed coles because we cannot find out who it is that broke it. I wrote to my uncle at Bridford ² yester-day. I will always send my Letters franked by Mr. Jervoise or Mr. Le Mesurier, never mind have them franked to me. Pray write often, if it is only a few lines. I was sorry to hear in your letter that you have lost one of your school-fellows, and also a neighbour at home. There are here upwards of fife hundred boys. All the Cakes are gone that my sister was so good to send me. We live here worse than when I saw you last, Our mutton stinks so that it is im-possible to eat it. Pray tell me in your next letter whether you are got acquainted with any of the Ladys at Brighton. You must excuse my Wrighting as you know I cannot write well. I shall be in the fifth form in the Summer than I shall be out of fagging. If we should go home next holydays I should be very glad to spend my holydays at Shalston but I am afraid I shall go to Britford. I should like very much to come and see you at Brighton. My old Dame is very well, I suppose the Miss Longfords continue still at Hayes, if they do I have a good mind to write to them. I must now conclude my Dear Sister in kind love to you.

Your ever affectionate brother

R. PUREFOY.

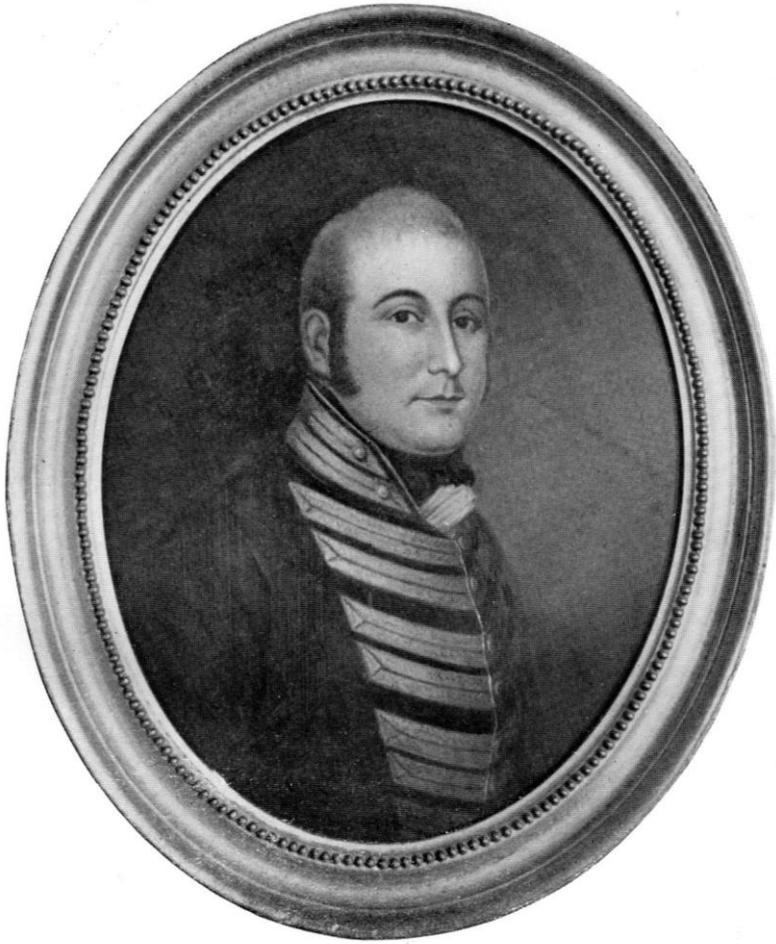
Pray do not forget to write to me
as it will not be much trouble to you.

I long to see you.

Eton Coll. Long Chamber

February 15th '93. Adieu

² Britford, near Salisbury, where Mr. F. H. Jervoise (his uncle) lived.



The next letter is imperfect, but more interesting.

DEAR SISTER,

I take this opportunity of answering your very kind letter, for which I return you many thanks, and so also to my Father for his letter, I am very happy to acquaint you that the Removes were made last Saturday, and every one of us won our Remove. Pray write to me when you are settled at Brighton. There are a great number of boys here come from Brighton and Lewes. There has been nothing but what here since I left Bridford. The boys like Mr. Slingsby³ wen well, only now & then he gets his Fiddle stick broke. Pray tell my mother that I am very much obliged to her for the Tea, Sugar & Towells. There is nothing here but talking of the Poor king of France. I suppose it is old news to you about the Poor King being murdered.⁴ There was a man taken up here the other day for high Treason, he made his escape from the People who took him up, and he has not been heard of since. My Old Dame is very well only gouty sometimes. Pray tell my sister Mary that I hope I shall here from her soon. I have jus[t] made a Purchase of some Teacups & saucers pray tell my mother if she has not sent my Tea & Sugar I should be much obliged to her if she would.

Altera desunt.

³ This was the dancing master who was at Eton 1793-1802, probably he was related to two Miss Slingsbys who were boarding dames at Eton c. 1805-1829, and seem to have been daughters of a Mr. John Slingsby, of Windsor. This information was kindly supplied by Mr. R. A. Austen Leigh.

⁴ Louis XVI. was guillotined 21 Jan., 1793.