

WOODFORDE'S DIARY

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A SIDE of English life in the eighteenth century very different from that displayed in the letters of Horace Walpole is shown in the diary of Parson Woodforde of Somerset and Norfolk. Instead of the world of fashion, of the nobility, of high government officials, we now mingle with the common folk of a country parish. We meet the squire, the clergy, the tradesmen, the farmers, the poor. In the place of Walpole's easy, polished style with its vivacity and wit, we read a rather humdrum account of life that is on the whole uneventful: "their homely joys and destiny obscure". But by the light of this faithful and unpretentious record of happenings and observations we get a clear view of a phase of English life that but for the diary would be clouded in oblivion.

Woodforde's diary is divided into two unequal parts: the first, covering the eighteen years he spent at Oxford and as curate near his father's home in Somerset; the second, about five times as long, devoted to the twenty-six years of his term when he was rector of a parish in Norfolk.

His father was a country clergyman, Rector of Ansford and Vicar of Castle Cary in East Somersetshire, not far from Wells. James received his early education at Winchester, and in October, 1759, entered New College, Oxford. Accompanied by his father's man he rode on horseback to Oxford, a two days journey. His outfit may be inferred from the list he made when he returned to college for his fourth year:

I packed up my things for Oxford this afternoon and they were these—9 shirts—9 stocks—2 cravats—7 pr. of stockings, 2 white handkerchiefs—5 coloured handkerchiefs—2 night caps—1 towel—2 pr. of breeches—besides the things that I wear, which are 1 pr. of leather breeches—1 white coat—1 buff waistcoat—1 greatcoat.

He does not say much about his studies, though several times he notes that he declaimed in chapel and gives the subject. For instance:

I declaimed this morning in Chapel with Reynell upon—*An omnes artes habeant inter se quoddam commune vinculum?* I had Affirmatur.

In these debates (in Latin no doubt) his training at Winchester stood him in good stead. He writes of listening to a lecture by Dr. Blackstone on the Crown being hereditary, and of reading some Moral Philosophy and the Greek Testament.

If in the entries for his college years little is said about books or studies, there is a good deal about drink. The first purchase at Oxford mentioned in the diary was a hogshead of port to be divided among three; and later he bought for £8.15.0. half a hogshead of port, which filled 150 bottles. Several times he notes that his companions got very drunk; and on the evening of the day on which he took his B. A. degree there was a regular carousal which lasted all night. "At four o'clock in the morning several of our fellows went for Stow all drunk; some in a phaeton, some in a buggy, and some on horseback." He tells of a curious wager that was made in the Common Room:

Dyer laid Williams 2s.6d. that he drank 3 pints of wine in 3 hours and that he wrote 5 verses out of the Bible right,—but he lost. He drank all the wine, but he could not write right for his life. He was immensely drunk about 5 minutes afterwards.

Woodforde himself decided to be temperate. Toward the end of his course he mentions drinking wine in the Common Room one afternoon with two companions who got very drunk; but he adds,

I was very sober, as I had made a resolution never to get drunk again, when at Geree's rooms in April last, when I fell down dead and cut my Occiput (back of the head) very bad indeed.

Tea was fairly expensive in 1763; he paid 8d. for an ounce of green tea and 4d. for an ounce of bohea. Smoking the pipe seems to have been common at Oxford and among the country gentry. Woodforde, who had acquired the habit, has this item among his Oxford accounts: "For an ounce of Indian Bark to put into my pipe when smoking pd. 0.0. 6d. It gives the tobacco a pretty smell and taste."

He describes an extraordinary scene in a courtroom at Oxford wherein he played an impudent part, though he hardly seems to recognize that he was disorderly:

Went up into the Hall this afternoon after the Judge was in, and I could not get a tolerable place some time, but at last I jumped from two men's shoulders and leaped upon the heads of several men and then scrambled into the Prisoner's Place where the Judge said I must not stay, so one of the Counsellors (barristers) desired me not to make a noise, and he would let me have his place, which was immediately under the prisoners

and opposite the Judge, where I sat and heard three or four trials. . . . 1 condemned to die, 4 transported for seven years, 1 burnt in the hand and acquitted.

Evidently much was tolerated from a young gentleman of Oxford.

Toward the end of his third year he decided to read for holy orders, and began to apply himself to the Greek Testament. About a year later he was ordained as deacon, after which as opportunity arose he read prayers and preached in churches not far from Oxford. On the completion of four years of residence, he returned to his father's rectory in Somerset, and for the next decade (1763-1773) he acted as curate in several parishes within easy riding distance of his home. The diary for this period gives a pleasant picture of country society: of clerical duties not too seriously regarded, of frequent interchange of visits, of balls and dinner parties, of little quarrels generally made up, of occasional visits to Bath not so far away.

During these years Woodforde as a young curate was settling down, practising self-discipline, conforming himself to the clerical type of life. When he spoke in anger to his brother Jack who had been drinking heavily, he wrote in his diary, "Keep me O Lord from passions of every kind *pro futuro*." When his razor broke in his hand as he was stropping it one Sunday morning, he took it as a warning not to shave on the Lord's Day. Once he wrote a short prayer for "grace to walk in Thy ways more circumspectly than I have done lately". As is sometimes the case in churches even to this day, he had occasionally trouble with the choir. Once the young curate had to speak to them from the pulpit, with the result that next Sunday they absented themselves and there was no singing at the service. This choir had an odd way of striking back at those who had offended them. Old William Burge had got into their bad graces, and they showed their displeasure by singing as a voluntary the 36th psalm: "My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly. . . He imagineth mischief upon his bed. . . neither doth abhor anything that is evil." No doubt the curate and congregation understood perfectly what was going on; probably they enjoyed the "roasting" of William Burge. He notes an odd feature of a marriage at which he officiated: "The parish of Cary made him marry her, and he came handbolted to church for fear of running away."

After ten years of curacies in Somerset, followed by a year at Oxford as Junior Proctor, he was presented by his fellows of New College with a good living in Norfolk, the parish of Weston Longeville, about nine miles from Norwich. In May, 1776, he settled

in the rectory there, and took up the round of his parochial duties. He was never married, but his niece Nancy came from her Somerset home and lived with him as companion and mistress of his household. In this quiet country parish, with frequent trips to Norwich and occasional visits to London and to his circle of relatives and friends in Somerset, Parson Woodforde spent the rest of his life.

II

Besides the rector and his niece, the household at Weston included five servants. Being a methodical man, Woodforde entered their names and wages in his diary. There was Ben who looked after the rectory farm, sold the produce, and attended to the horses and stock, for £10 a year; Will, the parson's personal attendant, whose duties included dressing his master's wigs, received in all yearly £4.14. 0; "my boy Jack" was paid 10s. 6d. with a tip of 2s. 6d; the head maid, Betty, received £5. 15s. 0. a year, and the lower maid, Lizzy, £2. 0s. 6d

What did English country life a hundred and fifty years ago look like to Parson Woodforde? In many respects not widely different from what it is to-day. There was the routine of daily life at the rectory, and the seasonal changes and duties in connection with the farm and garden. Ben ploughed and sowed and harvested; he bought a new horse or cow, sold farm produce at Norwich, and accounted to the rector. Fine apricots and apples grew in the parson's orchard, and many presents of fruit were interchanged between the hall and the rectory.

Houses were often very cold in winter, as entries like these show: "Bitter cold day again, with high wind; it froze in all parts of the house"; . . . "Frost intense. . . Milk and cream though kept in the kitchen all froze. . . Meat like blocks of wood. . . It froze in the kitchen even by the fire in a very few minutes. . . The thermometer in my study with a fire down to 46." Apparently the rectory coal bill amounted to about 18 pounds a year. Houses are probably warmer now even in country districts in Norfolk. Washing day, instead of being a weekly event, came only every five weeks and was then prolonged to four days to take in the ironing. An unpleasant feature of the rectory buildings was the prevalence of rats. As soon as Mr. Woodforde settled at Weston, he engaged a rat-catcher, and some years later he noted that he had engaged one Cobb "to kill all my rats and all my mice for one guinea a year."

An outstanding feature of the diary is that the great majority of entries include the bill of fare for the day's dinner. This feature

was not unreasonable, for the parson was a good liver, like Chaucer's Frankelyn; "It snowed in his house of meat and drink", and in the houses of most of his friends as well. While he was still a young curate living at his father's home in Somerset, he gave a little dinner party for five, who "dined, supped, and spent the evening with me:"

I gave them for dinner a dish of fine tench. . . . ham and 3 fowls boiled, a plumb pudding; a couple of ducks roasted, a roasted neck of pork, a plumb tart and an apple tart, pears, apples and nuts after dinner; white wine and red, beer and cyder. Coffee and tea in the evening at six o'clock. Hashed fowl and duck and eggs and potatoes, etc., for supper. We did not dine till four o'clock nor supped till ten.

Some years after he took charge of his parish at Weston, he was one of a dinner party at the home of a neighbouring rector. Fifteen sat down, and they were "very crowded at table—rather unpleasant". But the dinner, he wrote, was very excellent:

A fine piece of fresh salmon with tench and eel, boiled ham and fowls, the best part of a rump of beef stewed, carrots and peas, a fore Qr. of lamb roasted, cucumbers and mint sauce, a couple of ducks roasted, plain and currant puddings. After dinner 2 large dishes of strawberries, some blanched almonds with raisins and apples.

One afternoon Squire Custance and three friends came to the rectory for dinner:

We gave them a couple of boiled chicken and pigs face, very good peas soup, a boiled rump of beef very fine, a prodigious fine large and very fat cock turkey roasted, maccaroni, batter custard pudding with jelly, apple fritters, tarts and raspberry puffs. Desert, baked apples, nice nonpareils, brandy cherries and filberts. Wines, port and sherries, malt liquors, strong beer, bottled porter etc. After coffee and tea we got to cards.

Even when there were no guests, there was always a good table at the rectory, especially well provided with meats, a fact which the butcher's bills attest. If Pitt in 1796, when meat was very high, suggested that people should eat meat to save bread, as it is said he did, he must have found middle-class households quite ready to accept the suggestion.

Not only meats but alcoholic liquors were consumed in large quantities in the homes of Parson Woodforde and his friends. In these years there was a good deal of smuggling going on along the Norfolk coast, and a blacksmith not far from Weston was one of the distributors. From him the parson got

his supplies of gin, rum, and brandy. Such entries in the diary as this are not infrequent: "pd. £1. 8s. 0d. for a tub of coniac brandy of four gallons by Moonshine Buck, and £2. 6s. 0d. for two tubs of Geneva of four gallons each." Another entry informs us how such supplies were sometimes delivered. "Had another tub of gin and another of the best brandy brought me this evening abt. 9. We heard a thump at the front door about that time, but did not know what it was till I went out and found the other two tubs—but nobody there." Such transactions, it would appear, were not considered to be related to morality. Port, which the parson bought in generous quantities from a dealer in Norwich, was looked upon not merely as a beverage but as a household remedy. When Nancy was ill for several weeks the family physician recommended port, "and to drink rather more than less. She drank to-day between a pint and a quart without having the least effect upon the brain." The parson's opinion of the effect of port on himself changed from time to time. Once when he thought he had been drinking too much of it—nearly a pint a day—and limited himself to two or three glasses, he felt better for it; but at another time, when he felt "languid and low," he drank plentifully of port after dinner, "instead of one glass, 7 or 8 wine glasses, and it seemed to do me good." Home brewed beer was the ordinary drink of the household.

These details of food and drink are not given as something peculiar to the habits of Parson Woodforde, but as typical of part of the every-day life of a middle-class household in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The parson would, no doubt, have declared, and with much justice, that he was a temperate man. As we have said, he had resolved while at college never to get drunk again, and as far as we know he kept this resolution. But while he discouraged drunkenness, if anyone had proposed that he should practise total abstinence, the parson would have stared at him in mild incomprehension, and probably have concluded that his adviser was afflicted with "bats in the belfry."

The parson and several of his friends suffered from gout, which was doubtless connected with their meat diet and their generous consumption of port. Other diseases are frequently referred to in the diary. In 1782 influenza was prevalent: several of his friends had it, and he notes, "Very sickly in London. . . very few escape." Several times he mentions "ague and fever", and when his niece Nancy had it, he gave a detailed account of the local doctor's treatment. Then as now the Bark (quinine) was the chief remedy. When his boy Jack had a touch of the ague, the parson's

treatment was heroic: "I gave him a dram of gin at the beginning of the fit, and pushed him headlong into one of my ponds, and ordered him to bed immediately, and he was better after it and had nothing of the cold fit after, but was very hot." Small-pox broke out in his parish from time to time, though its ravages were greatly reduced by inoculation (vaccination). Soon after he moved to Weston, the parson had two of his servants inoculated and wrote in his diary a detailed account of Dr. Thornton's technique. He used an odd expression about a mild type from which a neighboring family was suffering: "It is a good kind of small pox they have". In all parts of the country "consumption" took a heavy toll of lives. Bleeding was still practised as a hygienic measure when Woodforde was a young man, and he tells of having two ounces taken from him, "very rich and therefore proper to be bled". Dentistry was in a primitive stage. If a tooth ached so badly as to be unendurable, it had to be pulled out. In the parish of Weston the farrier performed this operation, often very crudely. Once the diarist wrote, "He broke away a great piece of my gum and broke one of the fangs of the tooth, it gave me exquisite pain".

Although medical science had made considerable progress in the preceding century, some curious folk remedies were accepted in country places, and were tried even at the rectory. Once when the parson had been troubled with cramps at night, his brother recommended him "to carry a small piece of the roll brimstone sewed up in a piece of very thin linen to bed with me and if I felt any symptom of the cramp to hold it in my hand or put it near the affected part, which I did as I apprehended at one time it was coming into one of my legs, and I felt no more advances of it". Again when he had a sty on his eyelid, he tried a traditional cure, rubbing it with the tail of a black cat. Soon after, he found his eyelid "much abated of the swelling and almost free from pain." A day or two later, however, his eye was again inflamed and painful, and he tried other remedies.

III

Sport did not play a great part in the life of Parson Woodforde, probably a smaller part than in the life of the average lay country gentleman. He tells of skating and playing cricket at Oxford; he was fond of coursing for hares with his dogs; and he did a good deal of fishing. He does not appear to have done much shooting, but he speaks of the "popping of guns" early in September, and his friends sent him many a brace of fine partridge. In the evening,

as a regular thing at the rectory they played cards (cribbage, whist, loo, quadrille etc.) for small stakes, and the rector's gains or losses ranged from 6d. to 2s. 6d. an evening.

Books, music, art, the drama were but minor interests of our diarist, and apparently in the lives of his friends. Living in the country, as he did all his life, he had not many opportunities of going to the theatre. In his youth at his father's home in Somerset he occasionally saw some indifferent plays performed in the court-house by a band of strolling players. Once he saw a more ambitious company give in the same place *The Beggars' Opera* and several plays of Shakespeare. After he moved to Weston, if he was spending the evening at Norwich, and had nothing better to do, he might go to hear a play; or when passing through London he might spend the evening at the theatre. But we have no reason to think that the parson set much store by the drama. Probably he would as soon go to a circus as to a play. When Mrs. Siddons acted in Norwich for a week, he seems to have made no efforts to hear her. . . . His interest in pictorial art was pretty much limited to the career of his nephew, Samuel, who studied painting in Italy and became a member of the Royal Academy. . . . Music the parson enjoyed in moderation. As a young man he took lessons on the spinnet, but after a little gave them up. It is doubtful if there was a musical instrument in the rectory at Weston. He liked to listen to singing, of which there was a good deal at social gatherings of his friends; and he appreciated good work by the church choir. Occasionally he gave the choristers a guinea to help to buy music. Choirs sometimes visited churches in nearby parishes, and took charge of the musical part of the service, as this entry shows: "Mattishall singers were at church and sung exceedingly well, attended with a bass viol and a hautboy". For two or three years the parson and his niece attended the Norwich Musical Festival, but they seem to have given it up after the squire and his wife, with whom they used to go, moved to Bath. At the house of his friend, Mr. Priest of Norwich, he listened to a "very pretty concert" of chamber music—four violins, a bass viol and an organ—but it must be admitted that he wrote a more detailed account of the dinner than of the music.

With books it was somewhat the same: they cannot be called a ruling passion, or even a steady comfort, in the parson's life. It is true he was a college man, and did a certain amount of desultory reading. He tells of borrowing the six volumes of *Tom Jones*, of "being busy in reading *Evelina*, a novel lent Nancy—there are three volumes of it wrote by a Miss Burney—they are very clever

and sensible", and of finishing *Roderick Random*. He paid 9d. for a small book with some poems of Dr. Goldsmith, but doesn't say whether he read them or not; there is no mention in the diary of Dr. Johnson. In the texture of English life displayed by Parson Woodforde the threads of music, literature, and art are inconspicuous.

One kind of reading is often mentioned,—reading the news. While he was living with his father in Somerset he used to go to a near-by inn to read the news, for which privilege he paid a few pence. At Weston, however, he got his newspapers, though somewhat irregularly, by sending his man to Norwich for them. He mentions "our Norwich paper", *The Ipswich Journal*, *Lloyds Paper (The List)*, and London papers, though he does not tell us which London paper he read. Certainly in the last quarter of the eighteenth century there was plenty of foreign news, much of it of a startling character.

From the pages of the diary the outline of religious or church life in a country parish takes form. It appears to have been a unified parish in church matters: there is almost no mention of dissenters or Roman Catholics. The bitter controversies between High and Low Church, which had raged so fiercely at the beginning of the century, had died down, and the parson was adverse to argument on theological subjects. While there are many brief prayers and pious ejaculations in the diary, there are few signs of enthusiasm or fervour, and it could hardly be inferred that the parson was a deeply religious man. He performed faithfully his clerical duties: reading prayers, preaching, administering the sacrament, baptising, marrying, burying, helping the poor, visiting the sick. Parson Woodforde led his flock toward heaven along the King's highway at an easy pace, and none of them aspired to travel thither in chariots of fire. He has so little to say about his sermons that one wonders whether he was greatly interested in them. Possibly they were rather pedestrian, and the average member of the congregation might have said with Tennyson's Northern Farmer (not so far removed in either time or place from Woodforde and Weston)

An' I niver knaw'd whot a mean'd, but I thowt a 'ad summut to saay,

An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said, an' I coom'd awaay.

Despite some drunkenness and illegitimacy, the parish seems on the whole to have been orderly and well behaved, and to have given a great deal of neighbourly help to the unfortunate. Both the rector and the squire were generous men, ready to subscribe liberally to aid the poor and afflicted.

IV

Though it was a great change for the young curate to leave the large circle of his relatives and friends in Somerset, and take up a new life among strangers in a parish distant four days journey from his old home, he soon made many new acquaintances and friends, whom we too come to know through the pages of the diary. The squire, the farmers and other parishioners, neighbouring clergymen, some of the Norwich tradesmen, all pass before our eyes as we read.

A few months after his arrival at Weston, Mr. Woodforde became a member of a social club composed almost entirely of parsons and their wives. They met every Monday, dined early in the afternoon, chatted and played cards. Little is said about the conversation, but we are generally told what they had for dinner, and how much the diarist won or lost at cards. Sometimes they were quite merry, as when they sent Mrs. Howes "to Coventry" for an hour, and all laughed immoderately. At another time there were a number of disturbing incidents:

Mrs. Howes found great fault with many things, especially about stewing the fish—she could not eat a bit of them with such sauce, etc. Mrs. Davy fell down stairs, but did not hurt herself. Miss Donne swallowed a barley corn with its stalk. Many accidents happened, but none very bad.

Once when they met at the Weston parsonage, the night came on dark and rainy, and all but one stayed till morning. As there were not enough beds, the host and two others sat up all night, and "about 6 in the morning we serenaded the folks that were a bed with the hautboy. We were exceedingly merry indeed all the night."

With the squire, Mr. John Custance, the parson's relations were very pleasant; in fact the Custances and the Woodfordes became lifelong friends. Mr. Custance appears in the diary as an agreeable, charitable, patriotic gentleman, well-bred even to the degree of being "nice in his gentility". Woodforde's picture of him tends to support Trevelyan's conclusion, that "by the end of the peaceful century the rough and ignorant Osbaldistones and Squire Westons had disappeared". In the sixties, however, when the diarist was a young curate in Somerset, he met a squire who was nearer the Western type. A Mr. Cross, with whom he lodged for some months, had a "noble house" and lived very well but drank heavily:

One Farmer Major of this parish spent the afternoon and evening here drinking with Mr. Cross all the time, neither of them eat any supper, and I left them drinking when I went to bed, which was about 10.

Another entry reads, "Farmer John Major dined and spent the afternoon here; Mr. Cross sat drinking with him from 10 in the morning till 8 at night". With another Somerset squire, Justice Creed, the young curate became quite intimate. While for the most part Mr. Creed is shown as a pleasant neighbour and a useful member of society, he was at times arbitrary and headstrong. When the parish singers tried to keep one of his men out of the gallery, he tried to have the gallery taken down, went to the bishop about it, and "put the church wardens of Cary into Wells court". There was a local tempest, the whole parish was against the squire, and his effigy was burnt in front of his house; when to prevent the scandal of the impending law-suit the curate and some leading parishioners effected a compromise. The gallery, being twice as large as was needed for the singers, was to be partitioned off, one part for the choir and the other for any member of the congregation. It is an amusing, almost Hogarthian, picture. Apart from this incident, Squire Creed appears as a man not neglectful of the amenities of life, and as a reasonable and worthy citizen.

Every year about the first of December, when the farmers of the parish came to pay their tithes, the parson gave them a dinner, which he called a Frolic. The guests were seated in the kitchen and the parlor; though once with rustic shyness most of them preferred the kitchen, where there was only beer to drink, to the parlor where punch and wine were flowing. The food was abundant as well as the drink:

I gave them for dinner the best part of a rump of beef, a slip-marrow bone of beef, both boiled, a leg of mutton boiled and capers, a fine sirloin of beef, salt fish, a couple of rabbits boiled and onion sauce, and plum and plain puddings in plenty. Small beer and strong, punch and wine as much as they pleased to make use of—strong beer amazingly liked and drank in great quantity—six bottles of rum made into punch, one dozen of lemons, and about five bottles of port wine drank to-day.

It is not surprising to learn that when the farmers left the parsonage at night, some were "much disguised in liquor", but, adds the diarist, "They were all extremely well pleased with their entertainment and very harmonious". On Christmas Day the parson regularly had six or seven poor old men of the parish to dinner, and gave each of them a shilling. On Valentine's Day the children of the parish under fourteen called at the rectory, and on saying "Good Morrow Valentine" each was handed a penny. It was a popular call; one year as many as fifty-six appeared.

Another old custom, Beating the Bounds, was observed at Weston, as we learn from the entry of May 3, 1780, which gives

a detailed account of it. At ten o'clock in the forenoon about thirty men met at the Hart Inn, and headed by the squire and the rector set off on their twelve-mile walk around the boundaries of the parish. Certain trees were marked, and in places holes were dug and stones thrown in. When after five hours the party arrived at their starting point, the squire with his usual liberality gave five old men half a guinea apiece, and sent the rest to the inn to eat and drink as much as they would at his expense.

V

As Mr. Woodforde from time to time returned to Somerset to visit his friends and relatives there, we learn from the diary some interesting details about travel in England during the latter part of the eighteenth century. In 1769, when he was a student at New College, he made the journey from his father's home to Oxford on horseback in two days. In 1776 when he went to Norfolk to his new living of Weston, he sent his boxes by wagon, while he, his nephew Bill, and a man-servant rode in as a little group of horsemen accompanied by "our great dog". After he had settled at Weston, whenever he decided to spend a holiday amid the scenes of his youth, he regularly took the coach from Norwich to London, stayed in the city a day or two, and then went on by coach either to Bath or to Salisbury, whence he completed his journey to his sister's in Somerset by post chaise. His detailed accounts of these trips all fall within the last twenty years of the eighteenth century.

The coach for London left Norwich at nine p. m., travelled all night, stopped a short time for breakfast, and arrived at the "Swan and two Necks" in Lad Lane between two and three in the afternoon. The fact that the Post Coach was able to do approximately 120 miles in 17 hours implies that the highway was in pretty fair condition. The fare was thirty shillings, to which Mr. Woodforde added a tip of five shillings to the coachman when he was paying for three. In 1786 the parson travelled from London to Bath in the "Baloon Coach", so called "on account of its travelling so fast, making it a point to be before the Mail Coach. We trimmed it off indeed, tho' only a pair of horses". They left London at seven in the evening, and reached Bath about ten the next morning, having stopped about four o'clock for breakfast—say 110 miles in 14 hours.

In London Mr. Woodforde and his niece stayed several times at the Bell Savage on Ludgate Hill, which he pronounced a very good house except for one thing: "I was terribly hit by the buggs last night." Some years later, passing through London, he put up at

the same inn and met the same enemies. "I did not pull off my clothes last night, but sat up in a great chair with my feet on the bed and slept very well considering, and not pestered with buggs". What did they see and hear in London? They went to St. James's Palace to see the guard changed; they spent a day at the Tower, and saw among other things the Regalia and the wild beasts (this was before the days of Zoological Gardens); they visited Kensington Gardens; they took in a circus; they treated themselves to a performance at the Haymarket Theatre, "a play and farce both performed incomparably well". Highwaymen are mentioned several times in the early part of the diary, though Mr. Woodforde was never molested by them; apparently toward the end of the century they disappeared from the road.

VI

The parson's remarks on national events and public men are of little historical importance, beyond showing us the state of public opinion in country districts. For the parson was not much of a politician, and his views were for the most part those of his friends and of his social group. When John Wilkes was engaged in his famous struggle with the ministry, young Woodforde, then a curate in Somerset, attended a meeting of gentlemen of the shire to draw up and present to His Majesty a petition concerning freedom of elections. During dinner "Britons never will be Slaves" was played. And when Wilkes gained his suit against Lord Halifax (representing the Government), the church bells of Castle Cary and Ansford rang for most of the day. But the parson never liked Charles Fox. He paid two shillings in London for a caricature of the great Whig statesman; and when news reached Weston that Fox had entered into a coalition with Lord North, he wrote in his diary, "O North, how low art thou fallen!" Burke is not mentioned in the diary. He saw Pitt once when both were delayed at a village inn for lack of fresh post horses; and he often mentioned him in connection with increasing taxes to pay for the American Revolutionary war and later for the wars with France. Some of the parson's tax bills are interesting, as this one for instance:

To Jno. Pegg for 3/4 of years servants tax for males and being a batchelor, double pd. 1. 17. 6. To ditto for female servants tax also for 3/4 year and being a batchelor pd. 0. 15. 0. To ditto 1/2 years horse tax pd. 0. 10. 0. I pay for 1 male servant, 2 female servants, and 2 horses. For every male servant per annum 2. 10. 0. For every female servant per annum 0. 10. 0.: for every horse for riding per annum 0. 10. 0.

In other places he mentions taxes on land, on house and windows, on dogs, on income, and on hair powder.

National events, if noticed at all, are generally dismissed with mere mention; as "Great rejoicings on the taking of Quebec", or "This day (Feb. 8, 1782) being appointed to be observed as a fast on the present troubles and wars abroad... I read prayers". On a few occasions, however, the diary gives more details. The entries for April, 1798, show how great was the alarm, especially near the sea coasts, at the prospect of a French invasion. The names of all people in the parish between the ages of 15 and 63 were taken, it was proposed that all should arm themselves, and plans were drawn up for "what was necessary and proper to be done on a sudden attack". A few months later, however, relief came with the news of the Battle of the Nile. There were great rejoicings in Norwich "on Lord Nelson's great and noble victory over the French near Alexandria in Egypt". An ox was roasted whole in the market place, thanksgiving services were held in the churches, and there was general festivity in the evening. "I gave my servants some strong beer and some punch to drink Admiral Lord Nelson's health on his late grand victory, and also all the other officers with him and all the brave sailors with them."

On October 29, 1795, Mr. Woodforde and Nancy arrived in London on their way home from a visit to the West Country, and heard that the King was to open the sessions of the Houses of Parliament that afternoon. Accordingly they walked to St. James's Park to see the King leave the Palace. Owing to the War, prices had risen steeply, and the mob clamoring for "Peace and Bread" was in an ugly mood. Woodforde tells of the great crowd (it was said that there were near two hundred thousand people in St. James's Park about three o'clock), of the insults to the King, and of the danger he was in:

We saw the King go in his state coach drawn with eight fine cream-coloured horses in red morocco-leather harness... The Park was uncommonly crowded... and I am very sorry to insert that his Majesty was very grossly insulted by some of the mob, and had a very narrow escape of being killed... a ball passing through the windows as he went through old Palace-Yard... On his return from the House to St. James's Palace he was very much hissed and hooted at, and on his going from St. James's to the Queen's Palace in his private coach, he had another very lucky escape, as the mob surrounded his coach, and one of them was going to open the door, but the Horse Guards coming up very providentially at the time prevented any further danger. The state coach windows going from St. James's to the Mews were broke all to pieces by the mob.

VII

Before taking leave of Parson Woodforde, we may refer to occasional naive expressions of apparently unconscious humour that arrest our attention in the matter-of-fact pages of the diary. Once when he was a young curate, he had a bad cold and lost his voice, on which he made this entry: "Sister Jane visited me this morning, and she being deaf and I not able to speak, was good company." This seems like a forerunner of the story of the grand night Tennyson spent with Carlyle. . . . A short while after he became Rector of Weston he wrote in his diary: "Mar. 17. Having heard that Thos. Thurnston's wife (who is and has been ill a long while) longed for some roast veal from my house, having therefore a loin roasted for dinner, I sent her a good plate of it. Mar. 21. . . . The poor woman whom I sent some veal to Sunday died yesterday morning—She eat nothing afterwards till she died, but she eat hearty of the veal I sent her." . . . How a loss may be turned into a gain is told in this story:

Widow Greaves junr., who in the last summer lost a cow, waited on me this morning with the petition that was drawn up for her on the occasion, with the list of subscribers. She had collected near six pounds, had bought another cow for four pounds, so that she was a great gainer by her loss. I gave her 0. 5. 0.

The parson made some observations on lotteries, which seem to have been popular then as now—only they were organized on a much smaller scale, and the prizes not always worth drawing. His man Ben won £1. 4. 6., being 11/16 share of a prize in the present English lottery of £20. "Ben paid for the shares 19s. 6d. . . . Some months earlier his niece Nancy drew a prize in the Irish lottery. She bought 11/16 of a share for 11s. 6d. "and she will receive only 11s. and 3d., by which prize she will be out of pocket 3d. if not more when it is received". He made a brief comment on a raffle. "Raffling for a gown this evening at the Hart; both my maids went, but returned without the gown".

Though hardly a forerunner of "muscular Christianity", Parson Woodforde was not the man to take an affront "lying down". While a student at Oxford, he thrashed an apprentice "who had made some verses upon Nancy Bignell and myself." And he tells how his friend, Mr. Hall, being insulted by one Nelthorpe "and endeavoring to come at him to lick him had greatly hurt his leg between a door and its lintel. Mr. Hall could not get at him, or else would have licked him handsomely; I wish he had done it."

Of course there are in the diary many interesting glimpses of contemporary life not referred to in this paper: the press gang, weather signs and weather breeders, movements of bodies of soldiers, hanging a dog for stealing, poor houses or "Houses of Industry" etc. All that is attempted here is to give the outline of a picture that is presented with photographic detail in *The Diary of a Country Parson*. As to its value, we can not do better than quote the appreciation of Arthur Ponsonby:

It is a window straight into the past, through which we can follow in detail the life of an eighteenth-century village. No history book, no learned treatise on the customs and fashions of a hundred and fifty years ago, can give the atmosphere and reality with which the consecutive reading of *Woodforde's Diary* furnishes our imagination.

DESTINY

EILEEN CAMERON HENRY

There must be a goal toward which I strive,
Though I cannot say that the struggle be
Worth the while—No goal could give
All that the striving took from me.
There must be a reason why I live,
Beyond the eyes of my soul to see,
Some definite thing that only I
Can fashion to suit an infinite scheme,
And probably something I do not dream—
So small, I shall wonder I could not die,
Before I walked in a certain way,
At a certain time, on a certain day.