

# **'William Cole of Milton' - extract**

*by W.M. Palmer*  
**1935**

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William Mortlock Palmer was the Doctor in Linton and the surrounding villages in Cambridgeshire, including Horseheath in the early 1900's.



# Extracts from 'William Cole of Milton'

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## HIS DIARY.

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but did not chuse to appear in it. Mr. Essex said it was fairly worth 1½ guineas of anybody's money. It is the chair he now uses, but he has taken the lace off it, which may possibly be on his wife's or Mrs. Halifax's petticoat." Mrs. Halifax was the Provost's daughter, wife of Dr. Halifax.

The two peers mentioned as father and son are: Henry Bromley, born 1705; at Eton and Clare; M.P. Cambridge Town 1727-41; Baron Montfort 1741; died 1755. Thomas Bromley, born 1732; succeeded 1755; Colonel of Cambridgeshire Militia; married 1772; died 1799. Owned a celebrated menagerie. References to his high spirited and riotous behaviour can be found in the Hardwicke MSS. in the British Museum.

Horseheath Hall, at which Cole was such a constant visitor for many years, was built by Lord Alington in 1665, and enlarged by John Bromley, grandfather of the first Lord Montfort, in 1688. The great hall was 50 feet by 40 and 40 feet high. It was pulled down and the materials sold in 1777. Parts of the stonework can still be found in neighbouring cottage gardens and rockeries. (Illus. No. XXX.)

One of the interesting side lights of the diary is that which makes clear the depth of the friendship between Thomas Bromley, second Lord Montfort of Horseheath, and William Cole. Montfort was a man of loose morals, a drunkard and a gambler, who ran through a large estate. Cole was a priest of the Church of England, somewhat strait-laced considering the period in which he lived, and a studious antiquary. He was eighteen years older than Montfort, but a genuine friendship between them existed. The origin seems to have been that Cole was a friend and great admirer of the first Lord Montfort, father of the younger peer. The young man was used to Cole's company from his earliest days and so had a real affection for him and evidently paid some attention to the priest's reproofs concerning his loose living.

Cole writes thus of the first Lord Montfort:—

Addit. MS. 5808, p. 39.

"He died suddenly *manu propria* on Jan. 1st. 1755, at his house in London, leaving behind him, with those who

knew him not, but an indifferent character, but with those who knew him more perfectly, the character of a man of as much honour and integrity as is to be met with amongst the greatest examples of it. I knew him personally from a child, and notwithstanding the present clamour of the world against him, I declare solemnly that I would as soon have taken my Lord Montfort's word as I would another's bond."

In a letter written by Cole on August 24th, 1780 is this sentence: "My love to my Lord Montfort, his family and connections will never leave me till death. Horseheath Hall was the place of my education from a boy, and everything that belongs to it has my sincere attachment." Addit. MS. 5855, p. 53.

Cole spent his vacations or vacant times, as he puts it, at Horseheath Hall, at Abington Lodge where his godfather Colonel Vachell lived, or at Babraham Hall with Mr. and Mrs. Benet. (Illus. xxxiv. shows an open hearth at Abington Lodge, where Cole may have warmed his toes.)

During the Cambridge Election of 1768, Sir John Cotton insisted on introducing Cole to the Marquis of Granby, and while Cotton was "explaining him" as Cole puts it, Lord Montfort broke in with the statement that Cole was his father's oldest living and most intimate friend. The Marquis did not know what to say to the country clergyman so Cole says "for want of something better, I told him that I had the honour of dining with him the first day he was entered at Eton Schole." His lordship was no longer at a loss. "I recollect you," he said, "you were one of the first who taught me to drink." But Cole was not able to see a joke against himself, and his answer was an amazing one, "Your lordship must certainly mean someone else, for however bad I was in other respects at Schole, I was never other than a water drinker through my whole life." Then says he "I left the hall and drank tea and coffee with my cousin Gray." And Granby must have thought that Montfort had queer friends.

"1767, Nov. 1st. Letter from my Lord Montfort to invite me to his grand ball at Horseheath on Friday next. I answered that I could not possibly come." He was then living at Bletchley.



Cole did not like Lord Montfort as an officer of the militia. When asked to get him lodgings at Ely with his friend Dr. Gooch, Cole put him off with excuses, and when Montfort returned with his battalion from Ely in May, 1768, and was exercising the men on Waterbeach Green, our antiquary "got on horseback to avoid seeing them and being troubled with him and rode to Denny point." And when in the following May Lord Montfort asked Cole to dine with him, the Militia Captains, and the Mayor and Corporation at the "Rose," he refused, as he was afraid his lordship "might be riotous, as he and Mr. Tom Ward drew their swords at each other a few days ago."

Cole makes a curious remark about the militia officers whom he saw at Ely. On his return from vespers in the Cathedral, "where the choir sang an excellent anthem from the 16th Psalm with admirable taste and voices," he met, "Captain Wiles very sober at 7, but Major Harkness was very drunk. These officers must needs do a great deal of good in a sober quiet town." The good they did does not seem very obvious to us, perhaps that word is a slip for harm.

The nature of Cole's social intercourse with Lord Montfort and his friends may be gathered from these extracts. Monday, August 22, 1768. "Before I was up my lord Montfort's chaise was in the yard"—it had come over twenty miles—"My Lord met me in his own horse chaise between Horseheath and Linton and got into my chaise with me. Promised to be quite sober and sedate and much pressed me to live in one of his houses in or about his park. And offered me to turn out Mr. Scarcroft from his curacy of Wickham, and to get me to Linton on the first vacancy. His Fanny a decent modest country girl dined with us; his son by Mrs. Timbooth at home. Dined at 5. Powell the fire-eater showed his tricks in the Hall after dinner, and we walked to the menagerie before Coffee at 8."

Monday, Sept. 5th, 1768. "Tom drove me to Cambridge and old Levet rode my little horse there. Dined at the Town Hall with the Corporation and went home to Horseth with my Lord Montfort in the Post Coach and Tom on my little horse behind, and

Levet carried my coach horses to Bech. Cards in the evening. I lost." This latter was usual.

Tuesday, Sept. 6th. "I dined with Lord Montfort and went in his Post Chaise to Weston Colville to Colonel Hall who married Miss Betty Carter. The shortest and poorest dinner I ever sat down to for company. Cards. I lost."

Colonel Hall was the ancestor of the Bullock-Halls, who owned the estate until recently. His wife was the daughter and heiress of Mr. John Carter, "a very cheerful and pleasant companion," who voted for Cole on his admission to the Society of Antiquaries. Weston Colville Hall is now a farmhouse.

Thursday, Sept. 8. "Nativity of Our Lady. My Lord, the Provost of King's" and I sat up till 3 in the morning."

Saturday 10th. "Jem here from Waterbeach by nine o'clock with my coach and horses. My Lord gave me a beautiful red and blue parrot. I called on Alderman Gifford with about 18 message cards. Sir John and Lady Cotton, Sir Thomas and Lady Hatton and most of the heads of Colleges to go to my Lord's ball on Friday, Sept. 30th." Persons who wanted invitations to this ball applied to Cole to get them invitations. The Mayor asked him to get a card for his brother (James Bentham of Ely) and Dr. Gooch. The same for Mr. and Mrs. Beverley. "But my Lord seemed not well disposed, especially to the latter, but however told me to ask them."

Monday, Sept. 12th. "I went with my Lord in his post coach to Westow to dine with Mr. Lockwood, where were Sir Wm. Maynard and his three sons, of Eton school and others."

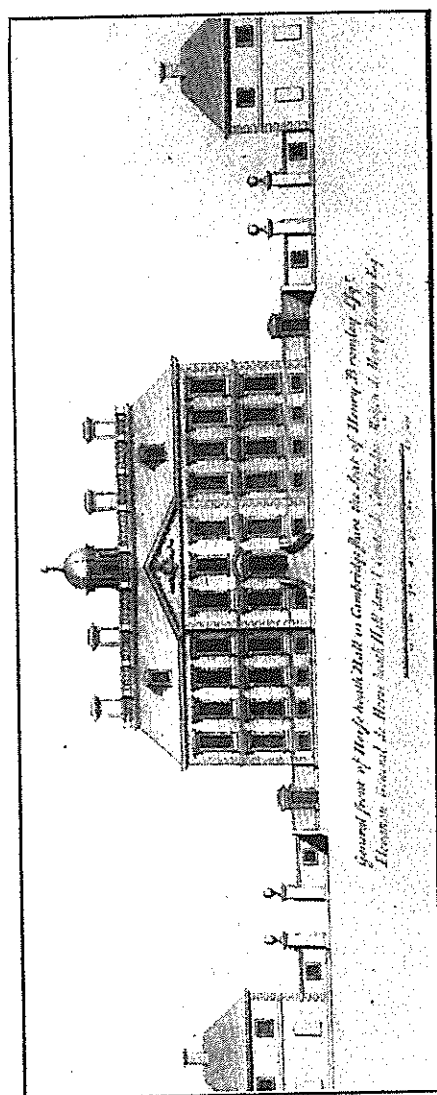
Westhoe House, near Bartlow, but in the parish of Castle Camps, was taken down nearly a century ago.

Saturday 17th. "Morgan brought me my chaise and horses, but as my Lord was anxious of my going with him to Stirbridge Fair Dinner on

\* Dr. John Sumner, 1756-72, Provost Cooke's predecessor.



*Illustration, No. XX.*



Horseheath Hall, from "Vitruvius Britannicus."

Monday, Mr. Alderman Gifford went home in it alone. All the mornings I transcribed things out of Rymer†.

Sunday 18th. "We were all going to church when Commissary Greaves came in and prevented by staying dinner, which was ordered on his account at 3. Gentlemen played cards and I sat by. I won a bet of a guinea of Mr. Leeds, who asserted that the only difference between a Lord Chancellor and a Keeper of the Great Seal was the creation of the latter to a peerage. Yet it was given against him by Mr. Cadogan. He would not pay it, though we had both set our hands to a paper. . . . He seems to be as obstinate, conceited person as I have met with. Did not go to bed till near 3."

Here you will observe that William Cole, the clergyman, "sat by" on a Sunday when cards were played.

When he went to Lord Montfort's ball at Horseheath Hall on August 30th, 1768, he left Waterbeach at eleven in the morning, and went to Mr. John Wood's of Fulbourn, where he dined, and got to Horseheath Hall at six. There were nearly 300 people at supper and dancing. My Lord opened the ball with Lady Bell Gray. One lady was taken so ill that she had to go away before the minuets began. Cole and his friends left at four a.m. and got to bed at Fulbourn at six, and there he stayed until mid-day.

On January 16th, 1769, he drove in his chaise to Horseheath Hall with Alderman Gifford, the money-lender, and stayed there five nights. It was an unfortunate visit for Cole. Too much drinking and card playing went on to please him. Each night he notes in his diary, "Not well." He took little interest in the vast profusion of game that was killed, although he went with my lord in his one-horse chaise to the park keeper's house to see it. On January 20th, he writes: "Mr. John Ward came to dinner. He had lately sent me a hamper in which was a large bust of Sir Levinus Bennet of Baberham which used to stand at the extremity of the top of the fine old chimney-piece in the Hall of Babraham Place, and two pots of Pickles. Mr. Ward did not go till about 12, about

which time my Lord began to get quarrelsome. He attacked me and I was his butt for an hour or two. Before I could get away he talked so scandalously that I reprov'd him without reserve, and told him that I would not live with him or be his dependant for his estate, and he begged my pardon. After they were all gone at 7 in the morning, he opened and drank a bottle of Hermitage. At dinner he had been so good-natured and had ordered his butler to put me up two bottles of Tockey wine worth a guinea a bottle and his gamekeeper to put three braces of hares into my chaise boot, and pressed me to come to London and stay at his house in Seymour Place, where was a bed for me." Sat. 21st Jan. "My Lord was in bed when we left at 12. I told the butler not to put up the Tockey wine, but took the hares."

There is no mention of Lord Montfort in the diary for some weeks, and then these interesting passages:—

Feb. 14th, St. Valentine. "Gave 60 halfpenny loaves to the poor children. Tom brought me from Cambridge directed to be left for me at Mr. Alderman Bentham's by the Cambridge Fly, a parcel containing a most beautiful quarto MS. Missal on vellum and finely illuminated with about a dozen religious pictures in it bound in red morocco, and £30 marked as the price. In the first leaf was a loose piece of Paper, directed to me as above in my Lord Montfort's handwriting, so I suppose it came from him."

Feb. 17th. "Letter from my Lord Montfort to excuse his behaviour at Horseheath and to give me the book as a peace offering." So Thomas Bromley took some pains to propitiate his father's water-drinking friend.

Later on Cole was rather piqued to find that Montfort had only given £5 for the missal, and when in 1779 Dr. Glyn would take no payment for attendance during Cole's illness, he gave it to him. (Addit. MS. 5854).

The coolness was of short duration, and the diary records further frequent visits to Horseheath Hall. During a visit of five days in October, 1769, he lost at cards each night, on the last day he notes "Je perdis a l'ordinaire." Next month he was

† That is Rymer's *Foedera*, a complete copy of which Lord Montfort afterwards gave him.



sharing Montfort's five o'clock dinner again, and on the following day went with him to an auction of old furniture at Catley Park, Linton. This auction was the dispersal of the household goods collected by Sir Thomas Sclater a century earlier. About this time Lord Montfort gave him three leaden statues for his garden, and a table, two stands and a mirror, all antiques and probably coming from Catley. Early next month my lord sent him a haunch of venison and came to dine with him at Waterbeach. On that day he received a £10 prize from a lottery. On January 2nd he went to Horseheath Hall with Tyson. Next day they drove to a militia meeting at Bourn Bridge in a chaise with four horses and two postillions. "My lord behaved most absurdly with old Mrs. Lagden," making her walk before him into the room and relate to him stories of her early life.

When they passed over the ford at Linton on the way back the river was so high that it ran into my lord's chaise. On this occasion Cole tried to avoid dinner at Horseheath Hall, as Mr. Tom King of Catley and Mr. Harrison, apothecary of Linton, both heavy drinkers, had been invited, but his lordship would take no refusal. He tried to make his guests drunk, but was "overtaken" himself and "en Bravado" drank four large glasses of Rhubarb Tea, which made him very ill. And Cole was glad to leave the company for his bed at two o'clock. Poor water drinker, how dull it must have been, but Michael Tyson was there too.

In the following May he accompanied Lord Montfort to London and stayed with him in Seymour Place. Cole went to dine with his friend Walpole in Arlington Street, but Montfort dined at the Revolution Club. Next day the peer showed signs of his night's debauchery, but he and the water-drinker left Seymour Place at mid-day, and without leaving the coach travelled to Horseheath, arriving for dinner at 7.

Less than a fortnight after, Cole's company was again sought at Horseheath, but he declined. But on Whit-Sunday, after morning service, he started at noon for Horseheath Hall, where he arrived at four o'clock. His lordship had gone to London on Thursday. As it was too late to

return, says Cole, "I ordered dinner and my bed," which shows on what terms he stood in that establishment.

1770, Sept. 19th. "My Lord Montfort promised before Mr. Charles Sloane Cadogan and his son, Capt. Cadogan, to give me his noble set of the Journals of the House of Commons when he had a new set, which he expected, as they were ordered to be printed and given to every member of both houses of Parliament."

1772, August 15th. "My Lord punctually performed his promise by giving me at Horseth, 29 folio vols. all bound, three of which were in MS. and contained an index, being a very noble and generous gift."

One of the pleasing points about William Cole is the sympathy and feeling which he shows towards his domestics and the peasant class generally.

He must have been one of the most human and adaptable of beings. That fastidious wit Horace Walpole welcomed his company; the loose living Lord Montfort took some trouble to keep in his good graces; the long pedigreed Roman Catholic squire of Sawston was often his host and guest; with the learned world of Cambridge he was intimate; and yet he took the greatest pleasure in being with his workers in the hayfield, where he would have his tea brought to him, and it was with great reluctance that he left the hay cocks when the Chancellor of Lincoln called to see him.

Cole had a manservant named Tom and a maidservant named Molly, who slept up different staircases. The latter had attacks of ague and was rather forgetful. She starved the antiquary's blackbird to death and let his parrot fly away. Soon after he writes: "I had some words with Molly about the cat eating my dinner, and she bade me 'Good-morning.'" But she came back again, for shortly after, Tom, she and three other women spent four days picking paigles for making a barrel of wine. Some months later Molly left to get married and then the matrons of his acquaintance, to his amusement, vied in the efforts to get him a suitable successor to Molly.

Although he cudgelled his man Jem when he was gone too long on an



presents and gave him the curacy of Wickham, which he kept to his death.

The present noble seat of my Lord Montfort in this Parish was built in 1665 by Webb an eleve of Inigo Jones, for my Lord Allington, whom it cost 70,000 pounds, and Lord Montford's father bought the house and estate along with it, for 42,000 pounds: after he bought it there was 30,000 pounds more laid out to make it what it is at present: so that it cost in the end 100,000 pounds. The present owner has laid out, and still continues annually to lay out on it both within and without, and on the Park very large sums, and indeed it may vie with any noble man's house in England, for Stateliness both of Building and situation. The aforesaid Particulars I had from Lord Montford himself, who also told me that the Herald had £60 of him for altering his coat of arms at his being erected a Peer. The Park contains 880 acres, as I was informed by Mr. De la Veau, a Prussian engineer who measured it and took a plan of it in January, 1746-7.

In the *Cambridge Chronicle* of April 27. 1765, is this article:

There is now in the right honourable Lord Montford's Garden at Horseheath, an apple tree in blossom with ripe fruit in full perfection.

In the same journal of Oct. 14, 1769, is this:

Horseheath, Oct. 10, 1769.

Whereas the last 2 years have been wet and occasioned a great rot amongst the Hares, and prevented the partridges from breeding such numbers as usual in the manor of Horseheath, West Wickham, Great and Little Linton, and Miguellots, Lord Montfort, the owner of those several manors desires all gentlemen and others not to sport there this season, that the game may be replenished against next year. This is likewise to give notice that no leave will be given to any persons whatsoever, except those who go out immediately from Horseheath Hall.

[The Linton manors were not paid for, and a little later the mortgages were taken over by Edmund Keene, Bishop of Ely. Miguellots is usually spelt Michaelots.]

## ICKLETON

Addit MS. 5802, p 13. August 21, 1742.

[Drawing of S. view of church, reproduced p. 155.]

This church has the appearance, too much indeed, of very great antiquity, being built in the form of a cross, with two side isles and as many cross isles, with several chantries or private chapels, annexed: with a tower in the middle between the nave and chancel, and on it a large spire, covered over with lead: on the top of which, as I was informed by the Rev. Mr. Say the present vicar, and who has been so for these 53 years, was a large leaden cross, which the rebels in Oliver's time obliged the parish to take down, or threatened to set fire to the church, which to prevent was performed accordingly. But they could not so easily take down, or perhaps they would not have escaped, 2 large crosses patonce of black flint on the outside of the tower, over the S. and E. window. Under the S. window is the clock. The church is built of flint stones and clunch, covered over with a plaister. Every individual part of the church, which is no small one, is covered with lead. At the end of the N. cross isle, which is much longer than the S. one, and is about half stopped up being useless, stands a very ancient worked cross, but much decayed by the weather. The spire, which stands on a very substantial tower, which is supported by 4 very large pillars in the middle of the church, has 2 bells under a sort of penthouse on the outside of it. There are 6 bells in it, one of which is the saints bell. The chancel is in good repair, as is the rest of the church, and is divided from the nave by a lattice screen, with a pretty lofty door to enter by, on each side of which are several oak stalls in the nature of a choir. The E. wall of the chancel has lately been rebuilt, with a modern window and without any painted glass. In the S. wall near the altar is a hole for holy water, and below it under the window, 3 stone benches, arched and one above the other. Below these is the door of the chancel. This wall is forced to be supported by 2 or 3 large brick buttresses by reason of its great age.



had concerns there with the late Lord Montfort, who had a noble estate also in the same island, which was sold to one Mr. Whittaker. Mr. Gallop died I suppose in no great circumstances; at least his son, my schol fellow at Eton, used to be at Horseth in the holy days, and I with him, and one Mr. Gibbon, who was afterwards a pensioner in Trinity College, and died young, he had but one eye. Mr. Gallop's son was taken as a retainer, by the last Sir Jacob Downing, who used him not well . . . . This William Bromley was Captain Bromley as he was called whom I well remember he was uncle to the late Lord Montfort, and probably hired that house, opposite the Parsonage House at Horseth, in which he died, when he consigned over to Mr. Gallop the house at Barham.

#### PAMPISFORD.

Addit. MS. 5802. Aug. 28, 1742.

This is a very neat pile of building of stone, clunch, etc., with a tower at the W. end, on which is a small spire covered with lead. Nave and chancel tiled, N. isle leaded. The altar is railed in and has 3 steps up to it. In the S. wall within the rails is a hole for holy water, arched over with stone, and opposite to it in the N. wall is another niche\* for an image, and in the E. wall, is a stone\* projecting for an image. The chancel is divided from the nave by a painted screen, and against the N. pillar by the chancel arch stands the present pulpit and desk of old painted wainscote,\* and behind these are a pair of stone stairs in a pillar which leads up to an hole which looks into the body of the church, so I take to be the old pulpit. Over the screen of the nave is painted in frames, the Creed,\* Lord's Prayer<sup>2</sup> and 10 Commandments.\* The N. isle is divided from the nave by 3 very large stone pillars, on the first of which is a projecting stone for an image, and under the arch against the last, stands an old clumsy stone font, with a carved wooden cover to it, on the top of which are the images of St. John Baptist baptising our Saviour. By the first S. window is a projecting stone\* for an image. In the first window of the N. isle in the highest division are the arms of Clovell, and under them in the 6 small top compartments over the 3 large divisions

of the window, were 6 female saints painted in glass, 3 of which are demolished, the rest are intire. The first who holds a pair of pincers in her hand is written *Agatha*, signifying by this instrument the manner of her martyrdom. Under the 2nd, which is broken *Margaret*. Under the 3rd *Anna*. Under the 4th who has a book in one hand and a crosier in the other, and is written *Etheldred*,\* foundress and first abbess of Ely. 5th both name and figure broken and gone. Under the 6th this *Elizabeth*.\* The S. porch is brick\* and more modern, but the steps into the church is very ancient. It appears by its gothic workmanship. On the right as you come into the church is a hole and stone hollow\* for the Holy water. There are 4 bells in the steeple and a handsome clock for the parish, the dial glass which is on the side of it and on the W. end of the tower, At the W. end of the tower on the outside towards the bottom are 2 large windows in black flint and over the E. end of the chancel is still standing an ancient carved cross fleury.

The Vicarage is now in the possession of the Rev. Mr. Mansel of Bartlow, who had it from the Rectory by a marriage into that family.

[In Addit. MS. 5808. p. 48. he gives this account of one of the old landowners in this parish.]

The worshipful William Mansel justice of the peace for the county. This gentleman is my fellow countryman in two respects, as he was first a commoner of Clare Hall and afterwards of King's, but has left the university (1748) these 6 or 7 years. He was with his mother at Cranborne in Surrey, but has a very good estate in many parts of this county, particularly at Pampisford and Southwold. He is a very ingenious young gentleman and a very good scholar, but supposed to be rather inclined to madness, which actually broke upon him some years after he left the university. He was a little lame [i.e. dark] man, and the most legged I ever saw. He died January 1776 and was buried at Pampisford.

\* This has either disappeared or been altered.