

AN INTERESTING CENTENARY.

BY THE REV. F. BATE, D.D.

THIS year the church generally known as "The Embassy Church," Paris, will celebrate its centenary and so bring to an end one hundred years of eventful history. The story of its origin and early years reads almost like romance.

There have been English chaplains at work in Paris, as in other Continental cities, almost from the day that England was represented at the various Courts. Invariably a chaplain was attached to the ambassador at Paris and held English Church services in the embassy itself. There remains, for example, a letter written by the Bishop of Oxford (John Fell) to Sir William Trumbull in 1685, where he expresses a hope that the ambassador's chaplain, Mr. Holy, will endeavour to render himself serviceable "by diligent performance of the offices of piety in your family and giving assistance to those of our nation who will want sober advice in the time of health and much more in that of sickness." It was not, however, until after the Napoleonic wars that attempts were made to hold services in other buildings than the embassy. Perhaps the first to attempt these outside services was Edward Forster, who at one time shared with the famous Sydney Smith the preaching in the pulpit of the Berkeley, Grosvenor, Park Street and King Street chapels. Almost immediately after the peace in 1815, he took up his residence in Paris and succeeded in securing the use of the French Protestant Church of the Oratoire where until 1827 he held English Church services. For some years he held, at the same time, the appointment as Embassy Chaplain. Forster has secured a place in national biography by his "editions" of standard authors and by his *British Gallery of Engravings*.

Before Forster's death another remarkable man had commenced work in Paris. He was Lewis Way, a great protagonist on behalf of the Jews. Macaulay produced the gibe: "Lewis Way loves a Jew, the Jew the silver spoons of Lewis Way." Way appeared in Paris in 1823 as a purchaser of the Hôtel Marbœuf, where he immediately established Church of England services in a large gallery, as a chapel for the British Embassy and for the English residents generally. Here one Easter, to a congregation of nearly 500, Charles Simeon preached and helped to administer communion to over 200, among whom were Prince Leopold and the Duchess of Somerset.

The third outstanding figure, and one who made the Embassy Church possible, was Michael H. T. Luscombe. Luscombe was a graduate of St. Catherine Hall, Cambridge. After ordination he served a period as curate of Clewer. In 1806 he was master at the East India Company School in Hertfordshire and assistant curate of St. Andrew's, Hertford. About 1819 he removed to Caen in

Normandy where he continued his work as a schoolmaster. While there he had sufficient opportunity to become acquainted with the condition of English Church life on the Continent of Europe and to be made aware of the great need for adequate episcopal supervision. Nominally, since 1633, the whole of Europe had formed part of the diocese of London. In actual practice, it was no man's concern. Few clergy held a bishop's licence; none was subject to real supervision; confirmations were almost unknown and everywhere was laxity of practice.

Luscombe began to explore possible remedies and succeeded in securing the interest and help of Archdeacon Hook and his son. They suggested to the authorities that for the continental work of the Church, there should be appointed and consecrated a suffragan bishop to the Bishop of London. After considerable discussion the Bishop of London, Peel, Canning and others concerned decided against the proposal, chiefly on the grounds that the French Government might regard such an appointment as a "piece of unwarrantable intrusion."

Finding this avenue blocked, W. F. Hook turned his thoughts in another direction. Recalling the consecration by Scotch bishops, in 1784, of Dr. Seabury, the first American bishop, he suggested similar procedure in this case. After prolonged correspondence it was agreed to consecrate Luscombe as missionary bishop to the British residents in Europe. With the tacit consent of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, Peel and Canning, Luscombe was consecrated by the Scotch bishops on March 20, 1825. The Letters of Collation delivered to him contained this commission: "He is sent by us, representing the Scotch Episcopal Church, to the continent of Europe, not as a diocesan bishop in the modern or limited sense of the word, but for a purpose similar to that for which Titus was left by St. Paul in Crete, 'that he may set in order the things that are wanting' among such of the natives of Great Britain and Ireland and the Episcopal Church in Scotland, and to these may be added any members of the Episcopal Church of America, who may choose to be resident in Europe."

Following his consecration he took up residence at Paris and undertook work as chaplain. He was, in more than one way, the direct successor of Edward Forster. He became responsible for English Church services in the French Protestant Church of the Oratoire. He succeeded Forster in 1828 as Embassy Chaplain and continued morning service in the ballroom of the Embassy. Then he determined to erect a church that would more adequately meet English needs than the Protestant Church hitherto used. In 1833 he purchased the site in the Rue d'Aguesseau of the present Embassy Church for Frs. 15,000 and took over a mortgage upon the land for Frs. 25,000.

The next year at a cost of £6,000 he erected the church, with a body capable of seating 450, an ambassador's gallery, and two other galleries capable of accommodating 150 people. At this time there were said to be 10,000 British people in Paris. Without doubt

Bishop Luscombe proposed to recover the money he had expended from the finances of the church. Bishop Luscombe ministered in the church from 1834 until his retirement, owing to ill-health, to Switzerland twelve years later. How far he was recouped for his outlay is very uncertain. The finances of the chaplaincy were probably very good. All who occupied seats in the body of the church paid one franc admission. The British Government, for part of the time at least, made a grant of £300 a year. Expenses were not very heavy, the most serious item probably being £30 a year set aside to pay an organist.

When he felt that the time had come for him to retire, Bishop Luscombe is said to have offered the church to the British Government for an annuity of £1,000, but his offer was declined despite the fact that the Bishop of London had urged the Earl of Aberdeen to make the purchase. When again Lord Cowley and the Earl of Aberdeen pressed Sir Robert Peel to reconsider the matter, the Government declined, so Luscombe sold the church to the Rev. William Chamier, a descendant of Daniel Chamier, the Apostle and martyr of the Protestant Church of France in the early seventeenth century. Chamier agreed to pay the Bishop an annuity of £1,000 a year and to take over the Frs. 25,000 mortgage. From a worldly point of view he made a good bargain, for two months later Bishop Luscombe died at Lausanne. Chamier ministered in the church until his health gave way in 1857, when it became apparent that he would have to discontinue his ministrations. As soon as the British Ambassador heard of the possibility of Chamier's retirement he entered into negotiations for its purchase. He was told that Chamier was too ill to attend to business and that in any case the church had already been sold to an American, Dr. Evans, acting on behalf of a religious body in the U.S.A. The Ambassador, Earl Cowley, was however insistent, and finally persuaded Dr. Evans to surrender to the British Government the right of purchase. In March, 1857, Earl Cowley signed an agreement to purchase for a price of £9,000, which would include £3,000 in connection with a mortgage. The church was repaired at a cost of £460 and arrangements were made for the continuation of the services. It was agreed to abandon the entrance charge but to substitute a charge for seats in the galleries, calculated to produce £200 a year. For the moment the services themselves were to be continued by Chamier's assistant until the Foreign Office could appoint a chaplain.

Then came a crushing blow. The Lords of the Treasury had advised the purchase of the building. The actual agreement for purchase had been signed and a payment of £2,000 had been made on account. Suddenly in the late summer, Earl Cowley was hastily informed that the House of Commons had refused to vote the money for the purchase of the Church. He was instructed to close the church at once and to make arrangements for its sale.

It transpired that few voices were raised in the House of Commons in support of the proposed vote, whereas a great many members objected. It was pointed out that the nation was unable to set

apart more than £10,000 for the provision of religious instruction for the poor at home. Extremists urged that "gentlemen who went to reside in Paris ought to pay for their own place of worship"; that the majority attending the Embassy services "were dressed out in a manner almost exceeding anything which was to be seen in London." In their ignorance members used such phrases as "Noblemen and squires living in palaces at Paris," "drawing large revenues from home." More to the point was the objection that by purchasing the building the Government would not be increasing church accommodation in Paris but rather decreasing it, for by closing the room in the Embassy itself they would be reducing the number of seats available for worshippers.

It is not difficult to guess something of Earl Cowley's disappointment. He recognised that it was impossible to think of raising in Paris from English people who were not wealthy so large a sum as £9,000. Every possible means was attempted: suggestions were made even of a lottery. Ultimately it was decided that nothing was possible except the sale of the building. Consequently there appeared in *Galignani's Messenger* for the month of October the following advertisement: "To be sold, the chapel in the Rue d'Aguesseau, built by the late Bishop Luscombe."

Apart from the Embassy Church there were in Paris at that particular time four centres for English Church worship. At the Marbœuf Chapel, Bishop Spencer, formerly of Madras, was carrying on the work initiated by Lewis Way. The Rev. Dr. Hale was holding services in a French Lutheran Church, L'église de la Rédemption. The Rev. Archer Gurney had commenced, in a disused gymnasium, services which Dr. Pigou described as being "feeble imitations of the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church and serving only to provoke the ridicule of Roman Catholics." Lastly on the invitation of Earl Cowley the Colonial Church and Schools Society (now the Colonial and Continental Church Society) had recently hired a building in the Rue de l'Arcade and had just appointed as permanent chaplain the Rev. E. Forbes, incumbent of St. George's, Douglas, Isle of Man.

There was, however, great need to preserve to the English Church a building such as that in the Rue d'Aguesseau, specially erected for its services. Behind the scenes great efforts were being made to find a solution of the financial difficulty. The Bishop of London was ceaseless in his efforts to preserve the church. He solicited the help of the Hon. A. Kinnaird and through him of the Committee of the C.C. and S.S. On the invitation of the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Bishop of London, an influential meeting met in February, 1859, at the house of the Hon. A. Kinnaird, to devise plans for raising the required amount and to secure the church in the Rue d'Aguesseau for Evangelical worship. As a result of this meeting the Committee of the C.C. and S.S. commissioned the Hon. A. Kinnaird, Lord H. Cholmondley and its Secretary, Mesac Thomas (afterwards the first Bishop of Goulburn), to visit Paris for the purpose of meeting a body representative of the residents and to become acquainted with all the possibilities of local support.

Eventually the Committee of the Society empowered the Bishop of London to offer the Lords of the Treasury £7,000 for the building. That offer was not accepted. Finally, they empowered him to agree to the price of £9,000 originally asked.

Almost the first contributions towards the cost was a gift of £100 from Queen Victoria. Among others who gave liberally were the Hon. A. Kinnaird, Lord H. Cholmondley, R. C. L. Bevan, Lord Calthorpe, Earl Radnor, the Marquis of Cholmondley, Sir R. P. Glyn, the Earl of Roden, and Lord Radstock. About £2,000 was raised among the British in Paris.

The Committee decided to transfer the Rev. E. Forbes, recently appointed to take the services in the Rue de l'Arcade, to the Embassy Church which was reopened for Divine worship on May 29, 1859, the preacher at the opening services being the Rev. Prebendary Burgess.

Mr. Forbes continued his work, interrupted only by the Franco-Prussian War, for twenty-one years, leaving Paris to become Vicar of St. Olave's, Old Jewry, London. His successors, including the Rev. H. Gill, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Ormsby, Dr. H. E. Noyes, the Rev. A. S. V. Blunt, the Rev. W. Marshall Selwyn and the Rev. Walter Green, have contributed richly and each in his own way to the life and well-being of the church which begins its second century under a chaplain newly appointed, the Rev. R. S. Lound. He will no doubt fully maintain the fine traditions which his predecessors have established.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN. By H. Erskine Hill, D.D.
Elliot Stock. 2s. 6d.

The Introduction to these studies gives the author's point of view. He believes that St. John is the author of the Fourth Gospel, and that he is "an honest man truthfully relating the sayings and doings of his Master."

He does not believe that St. John's motive is "an attempt to explain away the mistaken sayings of our Lord about His immediate Coming by changing the true accounts of His Words as given by Synoptists into fabricated accounts which put into the mouth of Christ words which the author knew He never uttered."

"It is hard to find a motive for the supposed action of the Evangelist. We are left with but little ground for faith if we have to choose between accepting synoptic accounts of predictions which were falsified by events and speeches put into the lips of Jesus by a writer who knew that they were not genuine."

Dr. Hill believes that the coming of the Lord is a spiritual coming. From this point of view he gives us delightful descriptions of, and comments on, some of the most familiar scenes in the Gospel. Quite apart from his views upon the Advent these sketches are well worth reading.

H. D.