



The Mitred Earl: An Eighteenth-century Eccentric - Frederick Hervey

Brian Fothergill

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The eccentricities of the Hervey family in the eighteenth century caused it to be said that when God created the world he made men, women, and Herveys. By far the most eccentric of them all was Frederick Hervey (the subject of this biography), Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry. Traveller, politician, rabble-rouser, scholar, collector and the subject of a series of amorous adventures, his life was a continual source of amazement to his contemporaries. Horace Walpole condemned his profligate folly, John Wesley praised his plenteous good works, and George III denounced him as 'that wicked prelate'. As a patron of the arts he was responsible for building three great houses, of which Ickworth in Suffolk is now the only survivor. As a traveller he spent money lavishly and startled foreigners by his extraordinary dress (the many Bristol hotels in Europe are named after him). In politics he was a staunch Whig and though an Anglican Bishop he bravely defended the rights of Catholics and Presbyterians in Ireland, joining vigorously in the movement for emancipation and reform. His political intrigues in Europe at the time of the French Revolution landed him, for a brief spell, in prison but failed to suppress his irresistible zest for life and adventure. Frederick Hervey lived the sort of life that was well suited to Brian Fothergill's biographical penchants that always flourished on the more outre margins of eighteenth and early nineteenth century history. Faber Finds is reissuing four of Brian Fothergill's books: "The Cardinal King", "The Mitred Earl", "Nicholas Wiseman" and "The Strawberry Hill Set".

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