

VII.—CRITICAL NOTICES

John Locke, a Biography. By MAURICE CRANSTON. Longmans, Green & Co. Pp. xvi + 496.

IN his Introduction to this work Mr. Cranston lists and comments upon the materials which are known to exist for a biography of Locke, and explains how a large and important fraction of these have become available only after 1876, when Fox Bourne published the book which has ever since then been the standard biography of the philosopher.

Locke left all his papers, together with most of his other property, to Peter King. Peter was a son of Jeremy King, a grocer of Exeter, and his wife Anne, daughter of Locke's uncle Peter Locke. King subsequently became Lord Chancellor and was raised to the peerage as Baron King of Ockham. The eldest son of the seventh Lord King became first Earl of Lovelace, and these papers (which remained in possession of the family until 1948) are therefore known as the 'Lovelace Collection'. This consists of nearly 3,000 letters and about 1000 manuscripts. The manuscripts include (beside accounts, library lists, notebooks, recipes, inventories, and certificates) several more elaborate compositions, and ten volumes of Locke's *Journal* (1677-1704). The collection now contains also a set of 166 additional letters from Locke to King, acquired (it is not said how or from whom) by the Bodleian Library in 1953.

The seventh Lord King (1776-1833) published a life of Locke in 1829. This is based on the Lovelace Collection, which was then in his possession. Mr. Cranston describes the book as careless and incomplete. But neither Fox Bourne nor any other scholar had access to any part of this material, except the extracts published by the seventh Lord King, until some time after 1914. The Lovelace papers were then seen by Dr. Benjamin Rand of Harvard, whose dealings with them are described by Mr. Cranston, for reasons which he does not state, as 'devious enough'. Dr. Rand later published some of the papers in his *Correspondence of John Locke and Edward Clarke*. The next scholars to make use of the Lovelace Collection were Mr. Jocelyn Gibb and Professor Aaron. Mr. Gibb did much to keep it intact, and prepared a summary catalogue of it. From a notebook, which was then in the collection, but was sold separately in 1952 to Mr. Arthur Houghton, Jr., of Queenstown, Maryland, U.S.A., Aaron and Gibb published in 1936 *Locke's Essay, an early Draft*. (This sale, which occurred after 1948, when the Bodleian acquired the collection, strikes one as a mysterious transaction. No explanation of it is offered by Mr. Cranston.)

The collection was exposed to hair-raising risks during the second world-war. At the beginning all the papers were in a wooden cottage in Sussex in the *escritoire* in which Locke had originally placed them. During the height of the blitz they were in a furniture-depository at

Tunbridge Wells. In 1942 they were placed in the Bodleian Library. There they were carefully examined and reported on by Dr. von Leyden. As a result, the Bodleian bought them in 1948 from the Earl of Lovelace for £5,000. The additional 166 letters from Locke to King, mentioned above, were acquired in 1953.

Mr. Cranston has had the whole of this material at his disposal, and this has been his chief source. He remarks that Locke was a very secretive man. He used his own modification of a contemporary system of shorthand, he employed cyphers, often cut out signatures and other identifiable names from letters, and occasionally used invisible ink. Mr. Cranston acknowledges great indebtedness to Dr. von Leyden in dealing with difficulties thus created, and in other matters. The minor sources for the book have been the Shaftesbury Papers, the Remonstrants' MSS. (in Holland), manuscripts in the British Museum, and papers in public and in private collections in England and abroad. Mr. Cranston would appear to have worked with exemplary patience and thoroughness upon a far more complete basis of documentary material than any of his predecessors. He has presented the results of his labours in a clear, consecutive, and readable narrative. It seems likely, therefore, that his book will become and long remain the standard life of Locke in English.

The order followed is in the main chronological. The story begins with an account of Locke's ancestry and social background, and of his birth and early childhood in north Somersetshire. It ends with his latest years as a beloved and honoured paying guest at Oates, the home in Essex of his former flame, Damaris Cudworth, and her husband, Sir Francis Masham. This chapter concludes with the very moving scene of his brief last illness and his death in his seventy-third year. In between are twenty-four chapters. Such titles as 'The Westminster Boy', 'The Oxford Tutor', 'The Physician', 'In France', 'Amsterdam', 'London', and 'Oates', indicate one part of the ground covered. Another part of it is illustrated by such titles as 'First Philosophy', 'Some Treatises of Government', 'Thoughts concerning Education', and 'The Essay concerning Human Understanding'. Yet another set of topics is indicated by the titles 'Anthony Ashley Cooper', 'The Popish Plot', 'The Protestant Plot', and 'Public Controversies'.

Having mentioned the sources and the scope of the book, I will make some comments on certain topics, which I have chosen for no better reason than that they happened specially to interest me.

(I) *Locke's Personality*. Locke seems to have been both attracted by and attractive to the opposite sex. One need not linger over the mild early flirtations with now forgotten young women in Oxford and in Somerset, the details of which Mr. Cranston seeks to unravel under the heading 'Sentimental Friendships'. It is of more interest to note that the experienced, if somewhat illiterate, Lady Mordaunt, whom Locke accompanied from Holland to England at her husband's request, plainly fell in love with him when he was in his late fifties.

It is clear that he returned her flame, within the limits imposed by the fact that he was a strictly decent responsible man, and that she was the wife of an old friend of his.

The story of Locke's relations with Damaris Cudworth is of greater practical importance in his life. It seems that each was at some time in love with and desirous of marrying the other, but never at quite the same moment. I should judge that this was lucky for both of them. For, in the end, Locke secured all the non-sexual advantages of a happy marriage, without its inevitable sexual and other inconveniences; whilst Damaris obtained a wealthy and amiable, if unexciting, husband, who provided her with a son and a fine house, and enabled her to enjoy as much of Locke's company as she wanted.

One could wish that Locke's letters to his women friends were not so heavily loaded with elephantine badinage. At his best, he is a dull, clumsy and verbose writer; but, when he is gambolling, charity bids one draw a veil. It must be confessed, however, that their writings to him have the same defect. Possibly this intolerable archness was fashionable at the time, as punning was in the first seventy years or so of last century.

A pleasing feature in Locke's personality was that he seems to have liked and to have been liked by children and young persons. After a slight initial upset, over money-matters, he got on well with young Caleb Banks, in the difficult relationship of bear-leader to bear in France from 1677 to 1679. He was evidently on familiar terms with 'Toetie', 'Broer Benny', and 'Broer Jan', the young children of Benjamin Furly, with whom he was living as a paying guest in Rotterdam in 1687 and 1688. As an old man, living at Oates, he was plainly on affectionate and easy terms with Damaris's son, young Francis Masham, and with the latter's half-sister, Esther Masham. He called them respectively 'Totty' and 'Dab' (short for 'Laudabridis'). It is fair to remember that with the Furly children, and still more with the young Mashams, Locke enjoyed much the same privileged position as a well-to-do bachelor uncle does *vis-à-vis* his nephews and nieces. This is notoriously a much easier relationship to sustain than that of parent and child. The uncle gives the ha-pence, whilst the parents give (and receive) the kicks.

(II) *Locke's financial Position.* It emerges that Locke, at his father's death in 1661, inherited a modest competence. Mr. Cranston reckons this at about £240 p.a. In addition he had for many years his Studentship at Christ Church. He was never in serious want, and by the end of his life he had (like his friend Newton) accumulated a considerable fortune. His estate at his death was worth £20,000, and I suppose that that would be equivalent to at least 150,000 of our present depreciated pounds, though it is fair to remember that much that we now regard as necessities could not have been bought at any price then. He was careful of money, and, during Shaftesbury's heyday and again after 1688, he would no doubt have many opportunities for profitable investment and speculation.

He seems to have derived little *direct* reward from his association with Shaftesbury. The only item which can be traced is an investment (of his own money) in an annuity of £100 p.a., secured on a farm at Kingston on Shaftesbury's Dorsetshire estates. This was a mixed blessing, for it led in after years to a squabble with Shaftesbury's heirs, who attempted to alter the conditions in a way which Locke held to be to his disadvantage. Mr. Cranston says that Locke never received a penny of his salary of £500 to £800 p.a. as Secretary to the Council of Trade and Plantations, to which he was appointed through Shaftesbury's influence in 1673.

It is of interest to note some of Locke's investments. In 1673 he invested £200 in a company formed by Shaftesbury to trade with the Barbados, and later sold out at a profit. Between 1671 and 1675 he advanced in short term loans an aggregate sum of £1,016 to Richard Thompson's Company. In 1673 he ventured £400 in the raw-silk trade; in 1674-5 he invested altogether £600 in the Royal African Company (largely engaged in the slave trade); and in 1676 he lent £600 at 6 per cent on mortgage to Lady Windham. He was, as might be expected, one of the original stockholders in the Bank of England, subscribing a sum of £500 to that essentially Whig institution.

Locke's eminently sensible views on wealth are recorded in the following extract from a letter which he wrote in 1666/7 to an Oxford pupil. "Though riches be not virtue, it is a great instrument of it, wherein lies a great part of the usefulness and comfort of life." I think that the truth of the matter is more complex. Each condition of life, from great wealth to extreme poverty, has its characteristic virtues and vices, and its characteristic opportunities for realising the former and its characteristic temptations to develop the latter. The virtues and vices appropriate to the two extremes are more spectacular than those appertaining to the middle state. Only *rather* exceptional individuals at the upper end, and only *very* exceptional individuals at the lower end, are able to realise the virtues and avoid the vices characteristic of their economic situation. But the virtues characteristic of an intermediate position can be achieved, and the vices avoided, by the average man. So for most of us the optimal condition is to have a modest competency, immune (so far as is humanly possible) alike from the moth of inflation and the rust of recession.

(III) *Locke's religious Position.* There is no doubt that Locke was a sincerely religious man, who believed the little that he could believe in a literal and not in a merely Braithwaitean sense. He thought that he could prove the existence of God. And the following extract from a letter, which he wrote to Peter King when he knew that he was about to die, is sufficient evidence for a fairly specific form of the belief in personal survival. "That I loved you I think you are convinced. God send us a happy meeting in the resurrection of the Just." He would have called himself a Christian, and was, Mr. Cranston alleges, somewhat disingenuous in his disclaimers of ever

having so much as read Socinian treatises. But there can be no doubt that in fact his beliefs about the nature and functions of Christ were Unitarian and not specifically Christian. The idea of a Christianity with all the 'nonsense' purged out of it appealed to Locke and to many of his intelligent contemporaries. I imagine that it makes little appeal to anyone nowadays. It seems so plain that the nonsense is an essential ingredient in the mixture, and that 'Christianity not mysterious' would resemble nothing so much as those insipid non-alcoholic Topsy Cakes, which used in my youth to be provided by conscientious hostesses for scrupulously teetotal guests.

Mr. Cranston makes a great to-do about the broadening of Locke's views on the limits of permissible religious toleration from an early position in the 1660s, hardly distinguishable from that of Hobbes, to that which is characteristic of his *Letters concerning Toleration* of 1686 to 1692. The main fact of interest which emerges is that Locke must certainly have read and been influenced by Hobbes's *Leviathan* when he was a young man, though he always publicly denied all acquaintance with and indebtedness to Hobbes's works. Apart from this, I can see nothing surprising or inconsistent in the development, or in the fact that Locke stopped where he did.

From first to last Locke wished to exclude Roman Catholics from toleration. I think that we, who have to deal with the problem of Communists in key positions, should be able to understand and sympathise with Locke's views on this point much better than could our immediate ancestors. The following remark of Locke's about the Papists of his time could be applied without modification to the Communists of our own. "I cannot see how they can at the same time obey two different authorities carrying a contrary interest, especially when that which is destructive to ours is backed with an opinion of infallibility and holiness."

As to Protestant Nonconformists, Locke wished at first to exclude all or most of them from toleration, and he ended by wishing to tolerate all but the most antinomian of them. There seems to me nothing surprising in this change. Locke's school days at Westminster and his earlier years at Oxford were spent under the tyranny of the Long Parliament, the military dictatorship of Cromwell and his major-generals, and the near-anarchy which followed on Cromwell's death. Locke at no time liked 'enthusiasm', and when he was a young man he had had recent and ample experience of the oppressive and incompetent rule of the 'Saints'. By the 1680s the zeal and the power of the sectaries had waned, and all English protestants alike were threatened by an alliance (concealed or open) between their own Papist kings and the King of France, the strongest military power in Europe. The fact that Giant Pagan has revived and seems at present almost irresistible, and that Giant Pope is temporarily impotent, should not blind us to the fact that the boot was on the other foot when Locke wrote his *Letters concerning Toleration*.

(IV) *Locke as a political Suspect.* Locke's intimate association with Shaftesbury must have had a decisive influence on his life. It brought him out of the *res angustae* of Somerset and Westminster and Oxford, and launched him into the world of politics and administration, thus giving scope for the exercise of his outstanding practical abilities. The circumstances under which it began are a good instance of the decisive part played by pure accident, lucky or unlucky, in the lives of most of us. That a man like Locke should (as Lady Masham bears witness) have had an abiding respect and admiration for Shaftesbury is perhaps the best testimonial now available to that stormy and ambiguous person. But Shaftesbury was certainly engaged at times in treasonable activities, and it is not at all surprising that Locke should have fallen under the suspicion of being involved in them. If he was by nature secretive, he had every reason to cultivate that tendency. He had before his eyes, first the fate of those falsely accused by Titus Oates and by Dangerfield, and later the barbarous punishment which Oates barely survived and to which Dangerfield succumbed. The age (like most ages) was one of horrible cruelty, and a single false step might have led Locke, innocent or guilty, to the pillory or the gallows.

As is well known, Locke always asserted that he had been entirely innocent of treasonable activities and of connivance with them. Mr. Cranston investigates this claim in the light of the documents now available. The main points which emerge are these :

(1) Both Prideaux and Antony Wood, who were living at Oxford at the relevant time, mentioned circumstances which, in their opinion, showed Locke to have been connected with persons concerned in the Rye House Plot. (2) Locke was certainly lying when he stated (in a letter to Lord Pembroke of Dec. 8th, 1684, asserting his complete innocence) that he had not associated in Amsterdam with any of the Englishmen named by the government in their accusation. For Locke received his money in Holland through *Thomas Dare* ; and Dare, who was a notorious and influential political refugee in Amsterdam, was one of the Englishmen in question. (3) The fact that Locke spent most of his time during the winter of 1684/5 in *Utrecht*, and not in Amsterdam, is irrelevant. For Utrecht was at the time just as important a centre of plotting by disaffected Englishmen as Amsterdam. (4) After the defeat of Monmouth's rebellion, two of his officers, Lord Grey of Wark and Nathaniel Wade, turned informers. Wade alleged that ' Mr. Lock ' had contributed £1000 to Argyle's expedition and £400 to Monmouth's. Grey confirmed this. Mr. Cranston thinks that the ' Mr. Lock ' referred to, was not the philosopher, but a certain London tobacconist of similar name. The point had already been made by Macaulay in a footnote (*History of England*, 5th ed., vol. i, p. 542). Macaulay says there : "... Locke must not be confounded with the Anabaptist Nicholas Lock, whose name is spelt Locke in Grey's confession. . . ." Mr. Cranston cites as evidence a deposition made by Ezekiel Everest to the English

government on 19th January, 1683/4. Here Everest mentions *Lock the tobaccoist*, and associates him with the same named persons as do Wade and Grey.

I do not suppose that many of us today would think the worse of Locke if he had been connected with plotters against such monarchs as Charles II and James II. And, for my part, I should not much blame him if he resorted to *suppressio veri, suggestio falsi*, or even a little straight lying, in awkward situations arising out of such activities. The questions which *are* relevant to a value-judgment about Locke in this matter are: 'What *kind* of plots?' and 'On *whose* behalf?'. If he had connived at a scheme to kidnap and murder Charles or James (as was intended by some at least of the participators in the Rye House Plot), I should be inclined to give him pretty low marks. And if the plot had been to replace James by a nitwit royal bastard, like Monmouth, under the control of crazy Protestant *enragés* and rascally Whig climbers, my marking would be even lower. But I do not think that there is any evidence that Locke was involved in such schemes. That he should have advanced large sums of money for the expeditions of Argyle and of Monmouth, I find quite incredible. I do so, not only on the ground alleged by Mr. Cranston that 'Locke was not a giving man', but still more because he was an eminently cautious and sensible one. It must have been obvious to him that both expeditions were foredoomed to failure, and he can hardly have wished that Monmouth's should be crowned with success.

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Analysis of Perception. By J. R. SMYTHIES. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956. Pp. xiii + 135. 21s.

THE problem of perception, which has so greatly occupied philosophers from the time of Descartes until the present day, has drawn its main sustenance from the so-called argument from illusion. The naïve assumption that we directly perceive physical objects, and perceive them as they really are, is put in question both on the ground that appearances are very often found to be deceptive and on the ground that their existence and character is causally dependent, at least in part, upon the physical and psychological state of the observer. The inference which many philosophers have drawn from this is that our naïve assumptions are false: we do not directly perceive physical objects, or at least we do not directly perceive them as they really are.

This would seem, then, to be an instance in which philosophical conclusions are straightforwardly taken from empirical facts; but the philosophers who have drawn the conclusions have not always