

The Travels of Francis Tallents, 1671-1673

In February 1671 the Reverend Francis Tallents, a Dissenting minister of Huguenot ancestry, set off on a tour of continental Europe as tutor to the sons of the English Presbyterians (and Members of Parliament) Hugh Boscawen and Richard Hampden. During the next two and a half years he and his companions travelled huge distances on horseback over much of France and Switzerland, making protracted stays in a number of cities and a brief excursion into northern Italy.

The Journal which Francis Tallents kept at that time is full of wonderful details of the people they met, the places they saw, and the events that they witnessed, although, sadly, one of the young men, Theophilus Boscawen, died of smallpox in Strasbourg as they were about to leave for Paris on the last leg of their journey. After Boscawen's death, Tallents and Hampden stayed in Paris for seven months and were much impressed by the improvements being made by Louis XIV, and by the magnificence of his buildings and the opulence of his court.

Tallents's account of his travels, published here for the first time, offers valuable insights into many aspects of France at that period. He takes a particular interest in the liturgy and practices of the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches and of the Catholic orders, a central concern throughout being the life and situation of the Huguenot communities.

Introduced and annotated, with bibliographical notes and index, by Janice V. Cox