

**THE LIFE OF
ANDREW MARVELL**

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The Life of Andrew Marvell by Hartley Coleridge

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“ Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, uneduc'd, untterrify'd,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal,
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single.”

MILTON.

MILTON MARVELL



ANDREW MARVELL.

It is the privilege of posterity to adjust the characters of illustrious persons. ANDREW MARVELL has therefore become a celebrated name, and is now known as one of the most incorruptible Patriots that England, or any other country, ever produced. A character so exalted and pure, astonished a corrupt age, and overawed even majesty itself. His morals and his manners were Roman:—he lived on the turnip of Curtius, and would have bled at Philippi. As a Poet, too, Marvell possessed no vulgar genius; and as a Satirist, he was one of the keenest in the luxuriant age of Charles II. It is to be regretted that our notices of him are less ample and continuous than his personal merit deserves, or his exalted walk of public action would induce us to expect. His name, indeed, is generally known—a few anecdotes of his honesty are daily repeated—and a single copy of verses, no adequate sample of his poetic powers, keeping its station in the vestibule of *Paradise Lost*, records him as the friend and admirer of Milton. But the detail of his daily life—the simple background of the stirring picture—the inestimable transactions which should make up the unity and totality of his history—might indeed be easily supplied by imagination, but cannot be derived from document, or tradition.

The mind of Marvell, like the street and the wall of Jerusalem, was built in troublous times. From his youth upwards, he was inured to peril and privation; and, though he does not appear to have been personally engaged in civil conflict, he could not escape the tyrannous trials of those 'evil days'—reproach and wicked solicitation, and sundering of dearest ties, by violent death, and exile, and crueler alienation. Yet if his heart was often wounded, it was never hardened. He ever retained and cherished his love of the gentle, the beautiful, and the imaginative. His virtue, firm and uncompromising, was never savage; nor did his full reliance on his own principles make him blind to perceive, or dumb to acknowledge, whatever goodness appeared in men of other faith and allegiance. He was a wit and poet, and as these qualities made him no worse a patriot or christian, so they probably made him a more agreeable man.

MARVELL was born at *Kingston-upon-Hull*, on the 15th of November, 1620. At the age of fifteen he was sent to Cambridge, and admitted of Trinity College. His academical progress was proportionate to the growing powers and native energy of his mind. But error, which youth can never wholly escape, peculiarly besets the nonage of an active intellect. And none are more obnoxious to the attacks of the wicked spirits "that lie like truth," than the young and ardent, to whom truth is a passion, and a deity. The JESUITS, the subtlest spawn of the subtle serpent, who were then compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, and like all proselytists, religious and political, directed their machinations especially against boys and women, had stolen into the Universities. Young Marvell was a tempting prize; and their plausible equivocations so far prevailed over his inexperience, as to seduce him to London. It was one of the devices of Jesuitism, which held all means indifferent or laudable, whereby the power of their church was to be sustained and enlarged, to pretend a zeal for civil liberty, and to speak lightly of the *jus divinum*. Probably by this means they ingratiated themselves with Marvell, who in his innocence might not perceive, that not popular freedom, but the despotism of an order, was to be substantiated for regal prerogative. Moreover, the Catholics, and the Catholic priesthood in particular, were at that time the objects of mob fury, and legal pillage, sometimes timidly protected, and sometimes nearly given up by the Court. It is not the least evil of intolerance, that it oftentimes sets the Martyr's crown on the brow of the bigot and the traitor, without recollecting, that it is the saint which makes the martyr, not the martyr the saint. But the Jesuits' craft could not sophisticate the filial duty of Marvell, though their principles on this head were as lax as those of the Pharisees. His excellent father pursued him to the Metropolis, and quickly restored him to the University.

On the 13th of April, 1638, as appears in his own hand writing, young Marvell was again received at Trinity College. From this time till the year 1640, it seems that he pursued his studies with unremitting application, when his father's lamentable death gave a new turn to his mind.

The Rev. ANDREW MARVELL, A.M., father of the patriot, was a native of Cambridge, and in that University he completed his studies. He was a student of Emanuel College, where he took the degree of Master of Arts. Afterwards he was elected master of the Grammar School at Hull, and in 1624, made Lecturer of Trinity Church.

In the year 1640, a melancholy accident put an end to this good man's life; the particulars of which are thus related:—"On that shore

of the Humber, opposite Kingston, lived a lady whose virtue and good sense recommended her to the esteem of Mr. Marvell, as his piety and understanding caused her to take particular notice of him; from this mutual approbation arose an intimate acquaintance, which was soon improved into a strict friendship. This lady had an only daughter, whose duty, devotion, and exemplary behaviour, had endeared her to all who knew her, and rendered her the darling of her mother; whose fondness for her arose to such a height that she could scarcely bear her temporary absence. Mr. Marvell, desiring to perpetuate the friendship between the families, requested the lady to allow her daughter to come over to Kingston, to stand god-mother to a child of his; to which, out of her great regard to him, she consented, though depriving herself of her daughter's company for a longer space of time than she would have agreed to on any other consideration. The young lady went over to Kingston accordingly, and the ceremony was performed. The next day when she came down to the river side, in order to return home, it being extremely rough, so as to render the passage dangerous, the watermen earnestly dissuaded her from any attempt to cross the river that day. But she, who had never wilfully given her mother a moments uneasiness, and knew how miserable she would be, insisted on going, notwithstanding all that could be urged by the watermen, or by Mr. Marvell, who earnestly entreated her to return to his house, and wait for better weather. Finding her resolutely bent to venture her life rather than disappoint a fond parent, he told her, as she had brought herself into that perilous situation on *his* account, he thought himself obliged, both in honor and conscience, to share the danger with her, and having with difficulty persuaded some watermen to attempt the passage, they got into the boat. Just as they put off, Mr. Marvell threw his gold-headed cane on shore, to some of his friends, who attended at the water-side, telling them, that as he could not suffer the young lady to go alone, and as he apprehended the consequence might be fatal, if he perished, he desired them to give that cane to his son, and bid him remember his father. Thus armed with innocence, and his fair charge with filial duty, they set forward to meet their inevitable fate. The boat was upset, and they were both lost.*

* We have seen the circumstances of the elder Marvell's death somewhat differently related; and though the narrative may not exactly accord with modern theories, we shall give it for the benefit of such as know—

“There are more things in heaven and earth,
Than are dream'd of in our philosophy.”

According to this tradition, Mr. Marvell's apprehensions arose, not from the fears of watermen, nor from the minacious murmurs of the wind; but from that prophetic

Thus perished Mr. Marvell, in the 54th year of his age, a man eminent for virtue and learning, universally lamented by his friends, and the people of Hull in general. The son gives this character of his father, in *The Rehearsal Transposed*:—"He died before the war broke out, having lived with some reputation both for piety and learning; and was, moreover, a conformist to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England, though I confess none of the most over-running, or eager in them." *Eckard*, in his history, styles Mr. Marvell "the facetious Calvinistical Minister of Hull."

The extreme grief in which this melancholy event plunged the young lady's mother may be conceived: however, after her sorrow was somewhat abated, she sent for young Marvell, who was then at Cambridge, and did what she could towards supplying the loss he had sustained, and at her decease left him all that she possessed.

Whether Marvell went down to Hull to take possession of the small fortune his father had left him, and by possessing it, grew negligent of his studies, is uncertain; but it appears that he, and four other students had absented themselves from their exercises, and been guilty of other indiscretions, which made the Masters and Seniors come to a resolution to refuse them the benefits of the College. In the conclusion Book, Sept. 24th, 1641, appears the following entry:—"It is agreed by the Masters and Seniors, that Mr. Carter, Dominus Wakefield, Dominus Marvell, Dominus Waterhouse, and Dominus Maye [who afterwards translated *Lucan*,] in regard that some of them are reported to be married, and the others look not after their dayes nor acts, shall receive no more benefit of the College, and shall be out of their places, unless they show just cause to the College for the contrary, in three months."

From the circumstance of this collegial record, we may infer that young Marvell left Cambridge about 1642, as we do not find that he ever attempted to vindicate himself against the charge. After this we presume he commenced his travels through the most polite parts of Europe. It appears he was at Rome, from his Poem entitled "Fleecnoe,

presentiment, that second sight of dissolution, which, like the shadow on the dial, points darkly at the hour of departure. The morning was clear, the breeze fair, and the company gay; when stepping into the boat the reverend man exclaimed—"Ho for Heaven," so saying, threw his staff ashore, and left it to providence to fulfil its awful warning. Of course we ask nobody to believe this unless he chooses, but we should as readily believe it, upon sufficient evidence, as any event in history. So many are the similar cases on record, that he who would reject them all, must be a person of indefatigable incredulity. The prophetic warnings have occurred to young and old, kings and rustics, saints and sinners; to Bentley, the orthodox; to Oliver Cromwell, the fanatic; to Littleton, the rake; to Nelson, the hero; and to Alexander Stephens, the buffoon.