

**THE LIFE OF WILLIAM
CAVENDISH: DUKE OF
NEWCASTLE TO WHICH
IS ADDED THE TRUE RELATION OF
MY BIRTH, BREEDING AND LIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649107506

The life of William Cavendish: Duke of Newcastle to which is added the true relation of my birth, breeding and life by Margaret Cavendish Newcastle & C. H. Firth

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MARGARET CAVENDISH NEWCASTLE & C. H. FIRTH

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MY BIRTH, BREEDING AND LIFE**

The London Library

MEMOIRS OF
WILLIAM CAVENDISH
DUKE OF NEWCASTLE
AND MARGARET HIS WIFE

THE LIFE OF
WILLIAM CAVENDISH
DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

TO WHICH IS ADDED THE TRUE RELATION OF MY
BIRTH BREEDING AND LIFE

By
MARGARET, DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED, WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES

With Twelve Appendices and an Index



LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS LIMITED
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE first edition of this *Life of the Duke of Newcastle* was published in 1667. It is a thin folio of about 200 pages. This was followed in 1668 by a Latin version, translated by Walter Charlton, well known in his later days as President of the College of Physicians. In 1675 was published the third edition, a quarto; for the translation, like the original edition, is in folio. In 1872 a careful reprint of the first edition, edited by Mark Antony Lower, was included in Russell Smith's 'Library of Old Authors'. In the present edition, the spelling has been modernized, and the punctuation occasionally altered.

The three editions published during the lifetime of the subject testify to the popularity of the book at a time when the events recorded in it were still fresh in the memories of those who read it, and it still retains an enduring interest for later generations. Somewhat contradictory have been the judgments passed upon it. The volume of *Letters and Poems in Honour of the Incomparable Princess, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle*, printed in 1676, preserves the opinions of the learned persons and learned bodies to whom the Duchess sent presentation copies. The response of the University of Cambridge was worthy of the gift and the giver. 'Hereafter, if generous and highborn men shall search our library for a model of a most accomplished general, they shall find it expressed to the life, not in Xenophon's Cyrus, but in the Duchess of Newcastle's William! . . . In regard we could not be admitted to the favour of kissing your hand, we cease not to bestow ten thousand embraces upon every page of that book which hath so noble and immortal a subject as is his grace the Duke of Newcastle.' Whilst the heads of the University were expressing themselves with the mixture of gallantry and respect which becomes learned bodies on such occasions, Pepys was confiding to paper his contempt for the

book and its writer: 'March 18, 1668—Thence home, and there in favour to my eyes staid at home, reading the ridiculous history of my Lord Newcastle, wrote by his wife; which shows her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an ass to suffer her to write what she writes to him and of him. So to bed, my eyes being very bad.' Without stopping to inquire how far the state of the worthy Secretary's eyes influenced his critical faculties, it may be taken for granted that his recollections of the authoress influenced his judgment of her book. Describing her visit to the Royal Society on May 30, 1667, he had come to the conclusion that 'her dress was so antick and her deportment so ordinary' that he did not like her at all, and expressed his terror lest her conduct should make the Royal Society ridiculous. Perhaps it was these very eccentricities and extravagances which had so shocked Pepys which recommended the Duchess to Charles Lamb. Certainly his larger sympathy, and keener insight, enabled him to perceive in the style and in the writer those finer qualities which the more conventional judgment of Pepys had refused to recognize. Lamb never mentions without praise 'that princely woman, thrice noble Margaret of Newcastle'. For a book such as the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle*, a book 'both good and rare', he held no binding too good. 'No casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable to honour and keep safe such a jewel.'

To decide between these conflicting sentences, and expound the precise amount of truth contained in each, would be a tedious and ungrateful task. This at least may be said, that the 'generous and highborn men' who follow the recommendation of the Cambridge Senate and study this *Life* as a contribution to military history will find little in it which they could not learn more fully and accurately from the pages of Rushworth or Whitelock. An occasional incident or anecdote, the name of a forgotten officer, or the locality of an obscure skirmish, an account of the Duke's personal share in one or two engagements, sum up the amount of its contributions to the military history of the civil wars. The special interest of the book lies rather in the picture of the exiled royalist, cheerfully sacrificing everything for the King's cause, struggling with his debts, talking over his creditors, never losing confidence in the ultimate triumph of the right, and on his return

setting to work uncomplainingly to restore his ruined estate. It lies rather in the portrait drawn of a great English nobleman of the seventeenth century ; his manners and his habits, his occupations and amusements, his maxims and his opinions, his domestic policy and his alliances with neighbouring potentates, all are recorded and set down with the loving fidelity of a Boswell. For the account of her husband's exile and the description of his daily life the Duchess depended on her own observations and recollections. But for that part of the book which treats of his warlike exploits she relied on the information she received from his secretary, John Rolleston.

Rolleston had filled a position which must have enabled him to know the truth on many doubtful points, and to explain, had he thought fit, the causes which determined the strategy of his General. It is therefore much to be regretted that so meagre an account is given of many important incidents and resolutions during the Yorkshire campaigns. For these campaigns exercised a decisive influence on the course of the Civil War in the eastern and midland counties, and had Newcastle been a more capable general, the northern army might have forestalled the New-Model. The first and one of the most important services of Newcastle was the occupation of the town from which he took his title. The ports of the south and east of England, from Bristol to the towns of the Yorkshire coast, were all in the hands of the Parliament, and without communication with the Continent the King could hardly have conducted one campaign. The possession of Newcastle enabled him to receive the arms and ammunition which he urgently needed, and supplied, a landing-place for the old soldiers who flocked from Holland and Germany to officer his armies. In the next place, the great territorial influence of Lord Newcastle enabled him to raise an army in the four northern counties with unusual speed ; and, at a period when 2000 or 3000 men was a large army, to advance with double that number into Yorkshire, and occupy York just when it was on the point of falling into the hands of Lord Fairfax. Considering the great superiority of his forces, Newcastle's operations against Lord Fairfax, which commenced in December 1642, can hardly be considered very creditable to his military talents. It required three separate attacks to expel the Fairfaxes from the West Riding. The first commenced

with the attack on Tadcaster (December 7, 1642); was followed by the repulse of Sir William Savile from Bradford (December 18, 1642); and was brought to an end by the brilliant recapture of Leeds by Sir Thomas Fairfax (January 23, 1643). The second began in April with an unsuccessful attack on Leeds, and was marked by the capture of Rotherham (May 4) and Sheffield (May 9). Again Sir Thomas Fairfax, by the surprise of Wakefield on May 21, 1643, forced the royalists to retreat. The third and successful attack began with the capture of Howley Hall and the battle of Adwalton Moor (June 30), and ended with the capture of Bradford and Leeds, and the flight of the Fairfaxes to Hull.

In the interval between the first and second of these attacks occurred the controversy between Newcastle and Lord Fairfax, recorded in the opposing proclamations printed by Rushworth. Newcastle sent Fairfax a characteristic challenge to come out and fight, to follow 'the examples of our heroic ancestors, who used not to spend their time in scratching one another out of holes, but in pitched fields determined their doubts.' Lord Fairfax replied by a refusal 'to follow the rules of Amadis de Gaulle, or the Knight of the Sun, which the language of the declaration seems to affect in offering pitched battles'; but withal protested his willingness to offer battle wheresoever he found an opportunity. With these taunts were combined legal arguments on the rights of kings and subjects, discussions on the lawfulness of employing Catholics and sectaries, and accusations of plunder and indiscipline against each other's armies.

The conquest of the West Riding left Hull the only important place in Yorkshire in the hands of the Parliament. Charles summoned Newcastle to move southwards, and ordered him to march through the eastern association on London¹. He obeyed so far as to march into Lincolnshire, where he recaptured Gainsborough (July 30) and garrisoned Lincoln, but at the end of August he returned into Yorkshire to besiege Hull. The combined movement on London planned by the King might have changed the fortune of the war, for at the end of July the Parliament had no army capable of keeping

¹ 'He had orders to march into the associated counties, when, upon the taking of Bristol, his Majesty had a purpose to have marched towards London on the other side.' —Clarendon, *Rebellion*, viii, 86. See also vii, 177. Other statements are quoted in the note to p. 29.