

**CHARACTERS AND EPISODES OF  
THE GREAT REBELLION. SELECTED  
FROM THE HISTORY AND  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF EDWARD,  
EARL OF CLARENDON**

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**REV. G. D. BOYLE & EDWARD HYDE CLARENDON**

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## SELECTIONS FROM CLARENDON.

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### BOOK I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

THAT posterity may not be deceived, by the prosperous wickedness of these times, into an opinion, that less than a general combination, and universal apostasy in the whole nation from their religion and allegiance, could, in so short a time, have produced such a total and prodigious alteration and confusion over the whole kingdom; and so the memory of those few, who, out of duty and conscience, have opposed and resisted that torrent, which hath overwhelmed them, may lose the recompense due to their virtue; and, having undergone the injuries and reproaches of this, may not find a vindication in a better age; it will not be unuseful (at least to the curiosity if not the conscience of men) to present to the world a full and clear narration of the grounds, circumstances, and artifices of this Rebellion: not only from the time since the flame hath been visible in a civil war, but, looking farther back, from those former passages, accidents, and actions, by which the seedplots were made and framed, from whence these mischiefs have successively grown to the height they are now at.

And then, though the hand and judgment of God will be very visible, in the infatuating a people (as ripe and prepared for destruction) into all the perverse actions of folly and

madness, making the weak to contribute to the designs of the wicked, and suffering even those by degrees, out of the conscience of their guilt, to grow more wicked than they intended to be; letting the wise to be imposed upon by men of no understanding, and possessing the innocent with laziness and sleep in the most visible article of danger; uniting the ill, though of the most different opinions, divided interests, and distant affections, in a firm and constant league of mischief; and dividing those, whose opinions and interests are the same, into faction and emulation, more pernicious to the public than the treason of the others: whilst the poor people, under pretence of zeal to Religion, Law, Liberty, and Parliaments, (words of precious esteem in their just signification,) are furiously hurried into actions introducing atheism, and dissolving all the elements of Christian Religion; cancelling all obligations, and destroying all foundations of Law and Liberty; and rendering, not only the privileges, but very being, of Parliaments desperate and impossible: I say, though the immediate finger and wrath of God must be acknowledged in these perplexities and distractions, yet he who shall diligently observe the distempers and conjunctures of time, the ambition, pride, and folly of persons, and the sudden growth of wickedness, from want of care and circumspection in the first impressions, will find all this bulk of misery to have proceeded, and to have been brought upon us, from the same natural causes and means, which have usually attended kingdoms, swoln with long plenty, pride, and excess, towards some signal mortifications, and castigation of Heaven. And it may be, upon the view of the impossibility of foreseeing many things that have happened, and of the necessity of overseeing many other things, we may not yet find the cure so desperate, but that, by God's mercy, the wounds may

be again bound up; though no question many must first bleed to death; and then this prospect may not make the future peace less pleasant and durable.

And I have the more willingly induced myself to this unequal task, out of the hope of contributing somewhat to that end: and though a piece of this nature (wherein the infirmities of some, and the malice of others, both things and persons, must be boldly looked upon and mentioned) is not likely to be published (at least in the age in which it is writ), yet it may serve to inform myself, and some others, what we are to do, as well as to comfort us in what we have done; and then possibly it may not be very difficult to collect somewhat out of that store, more proper, and not unuseful for the public view. And as I may not be thought altogether an incompetent person for this communication, having been present as a member of Parliament in those councils before and till the breaking out of the Rebellion, and having since had the honour to be near two great kings in some trust, so I shall perform the same with all faithfulness and ingenuity; with an equal observation of the faults and infirmities of both sides, with their defects and oversights in pursuing their own ends; and shall no otherwise mention small and light occurrences, than as they have been introductions to matters of the greatest moment; nor speak of persons otherwise, than as the mention of their virtues or vices is essential to the work in hand: in which as I shall have the fate to be suspected rather for malice to many, than of flattery to any, so I shall, in truth, preserve myself from the least sharpness, that may proceed from private provocation, or a more public indignation, in the whole observing the rules that a man should, who deserves to be believed.

I shall not then lead any man farther back in this journey,

for the discovery of the entrance into these dark ways, than the beginning of this King's reign. For I am not so sharp-sighted as those, who have discerned this rebellion contriving from (if not before) the death of Queen Elizabeth, and fomented by several Princes and great ministers of state in Christendom, to the time that it brake out. Neither do I look so far back as believing the design to be so long since formed; (they who have observed the several accidents, not capable of being contrived, which have contributed to the several successes, and do know the persons who have been the grand instruments towards this change, of whom there have not been any four of familiarity and trust with each other, will easily absolve them from so much industry and foresight in their mischief); but that, by viewing the temper, disposition, and habit, of that time, of the court and of the country, we may discern the minds of men prepared, of some to do, and of others to suffer, all that hath since happened; the pride of this man, and the popularity of that; the levity of one, and the morosity of another; the excess of the court in the greatest want, and the parsimony and retention of the country in the greatest plenty; the spirit of craft and subtlety in some, and the rude and unpolished integrity of others, too much despising craft or art; like so many atoms contributing jointly to this mass of confusion now before us.

#### THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

THE duke was indeed a very extraordinary person; and never any man, in any age, nor, I believe, in any country or nation, rose, in so short a time, to so much greatness of honour, fame, and fortune, upon no other advantage or recommendation, than of the beauty and gracefulness and



becomingness of his person. And I have not the least purpose of undervaluing his good parts and qualities, (of which there will be occasion shortly to give some testimony,) when I say, that his first introduction into favour was purely from the handsomeness of his person.

He was the younger son of sir George Villiers, of Brookesby, in the county of Leicester; a family of an ancient extraction, even from the time of the Conquest, and transported then with the Conqueror out of Normandy, where the family hath still remained, and still continues with lustre. After sir George's first marriage, in which he had two or three sons, and some daughters, who shared an ample inheritance from him; by a second marriage, (with a young lady of the family of the Beaumonts,) he had this gentleman, and two other sons and a daughter, who all came afterwards to be raised to great titles and dignities. George, the eldest son of this second bed, was, after the death of his father, by the singular affection and care of his mother, who enjoyed a good jointure in the account of that age, well brought up; and, for the improvement of his education, and giving an ornament to his hopeful person, he was by her sent into France; where he spent two or three years in attaining the language, and in learning the exercises of riding and dancing; in the last of which he excelled most men, and returned into England by the time he was twenty-one years old.

King James reigned at that time; and though he was a prince of more learning and knowledge than any other of that age, and really delighted more in books, and in the conversation of learned men, yet, of all wise men living, he was the most delighted and taken with handsome persons, and with fine clothes. He began to be weary of his favourite, the earl of Somerset, who was the only favourite that kept

that post so long, without any public reproach from the people: and, by the instigation and wickedness of his wife, he became, at least, privy to a horrible murder, that exposed him to the utmost severity of the law (the poisoning of sir Thomas Overbury), upon which both he and his wife were condemned to die, after a trial by their peers; and many persons of quality were executed for the same.

Whilst this was in agitation, and before the utmost discovery was made, Mr. Villiers appeared in Court, and drew the king's eyes upon him. There were enough in the Court enough angry and incensed against Somerset, for being what themselves desired to be, and especially for being a Scotsman, and ascending, in so short a time, from being a page, to the height he was then at, to contribute all they could to promote the one, that they might throw out the other. Which being easily brought to pass, by the proceeding of the law upon his crime aforesaid, the other found very little difficulty in rendering himself gracious to the King, whose nature and disposition was very flowing in affection towards persons so adorned, insomuch that, in a few days after his first appearance in Court, he was made cupbearer to the King; by which he was naturally to be much in his presence, and so admitted to that conversation and discourse, with which that prince always abounded at his meals.

And his inclination to his new cupbearer disposed him to administer frequent occasions of discoursing of the Court of France, and the transactions there, with which he had been so lately acquainted, that he could pertinently enlarge upon that subject, to the King's great delight, and to the reconciling the esteem and value of all the standers by likewise to him: which was a thing the king was well pleased with. He acted very few weeks upon this stage, when he mounted higher,

and, being knighted, without any other qualification, he was at the same time made gentleman of the bedchamber, and knight of the order of the Garter; and in a short time (very short for such a prodigious ascent) he was made a baron, a viscount, an earl, a marquis, and became Lord High Admiral of England, lord Warden of the Cinque ports, Master of the horse, and entirely disposed of all the graces of the King, in conferring all the honours and all the offices of the three kingdoms, without a rival; in dispensing whereof, he was guided more by the rules of appetite than of judgment; and so exalted almost all of his own numerous family and dependants, who had no other virtue or merit than their alliance to him, which equally offended the ancient nobility, and the people of all conditions, who saw the flowers of the Crown every day fading and withered, whilst the demesnes and revenue thereof was sacrificed to the enriching a private family, (how well soever originally extracted,) not heard of before ever to the nation; and the expenses of the Court so vast and unlimited by the old good rules of economy, that they had a sad prospect of that poverty and necessity, which afterwards befell the Crown, almost to the ruin of it.

Many were of opinion, that King James, before his death, grew weary of his favourite; and that, if he had lived, he would have deprived him at least of his large and unlimited power. And this imagination prevailed with some men, as the Lord Keeper Lincoln, the earl of Middlesex, Lord High Treasurer of England, and other gentlemen of name, though not in so high stations, that they had the courage to withdraw from their absolute dependence upon the duke, and to make some other essays, which proved to the ruin of every one of them; there appearing no marks, or evidence, that the King did really lessen his affection to him, to the hour of his death.