

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06563-4 - The Autobiography of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury:

With Introduction, Notes, Appendices, and a Continuation of the Life

Edited by Sidney L. Lee

Excerpt

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THE LIFE
OF
EDWARD, LORD HERBERT
OF CHERBURY.



I do believe that, if all my ancestors had set down their lives in writing and left them to posterity, many documents necessary to be known of those who, both participate of¹ their natural inclinations and humours, must in all probability run a not much different course, might have been given for their instruction; and certainly it will be found much better for men to guide themselves by such observations as their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather might have delivered to them, than by those vulgar rules and examples, which cannot in all points so exactly agree unto them. Therefore, whether their life were private and contained only precepts necessary to treat with their children,

¹ *i.e.*, sharing.

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[More information](#)*Life of Lord Herbert.*

servants, tenants, kinsmen, and neighbours, or employed abroad in the university, or study of the law, or in the court, or in the camp, their heirs might have benefited themselves more by them than by any else; for which reason I have thought fit to relate to my posterity those passages of my life, which I conceive may best declare me, and be most useful to them. In the delivery of which, I profess to write with all truth and sincerity, as scorning ever to deceive or speak false to any; and therefore detesting it much more where I am under obligation of speaking to those so near me: and if this be one reason for taking my pen in hand at this time, so as my age is now past threescore,¹ it will be fit to recollect my former actions, and examine what had been done well or ill, to the intent I may both reform that which was amiss, and so make my peace with God, as also comfort myself in those things which, through God's great grace and favour, have been done according to the rules of conscience, virtue, and honour. Before yet I bring myself to this account, it will be necessary I say somewhat concerning my ancestors, as far as the notice of them is come to me in any credible way; ² of whom yet I cannot say much, since

¹ Lord Herbert was probably writing in 1643.

² Lord Herbert apparently possessed a number of family papers. Dugdale, in his account of the family (Baronage, ii. 256), quotes several particulars about William Herbert,

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[More information](#)

Life of Lord Herbert. 3

I was but eight years old when my grandfather died, and that my father lived but about four years after ; and that for the rest I have lived for the most part from home, it is impossible I should have that entire knowledge of their actions which might inform me sufficiently ; I shall only, therefore, relate the more known and undoubted parts of their lives.

My father was Richard Herbert, Esq., son to Edward Herbert, Esq., and grandchild to Sir Richard Herbert, Knight, who was a younger son of Sir Richard Herbert of Colebrook, in Monmouthshire, of all whom I shall say a little. And first of my father, whom I remember to have been black-haired and bearded, as all my ancestors of his side are said to have been, of a manly or somewhat stern look, but withal very handsome and well compact in his limbs, and of a great courage, whereof he gave proof, when he was so barbarously assaulted by many men in the churchyard at

the first Earl of Pembroke, from "a certain manuscript book in the custody of Edward, now Lord Herbert of Cherbury," and he notes in the margin (*ibid.* ii. 258), when speaking of Sir Richard Herbert, Lord Herbert's great grandfather "ex cod. MS. penes Edward D. Herbert de Chirbury." I have collected a few additional facts about Lord Herbert's ancestry in Appendix I. Izaak Walton says generally of the Herberts—"A family that hath been blessed with men of remarkable wisdom and a willingness to serve their country, and indeed to do good to all mankind, for which they are eminent" (*Life of G. Herbert*).

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[More information](#)4 *Life of Lord Herbert.*

Llanerfyl,¹ at what time he would have apprehended a man who denied to appear to justice; for, defending himself against them all, by the help only of one John ap Howell Corbet, he chased his adversaries, until a villain, coming behind him, did, over the shoulders of others, wound him on the head behind with a forest-bill until he fell down; though recovering himself again, notwithstanding his skull was cut through to the *pia mater* of the brain, he saw his adversaries fly away, and after walked home to his house at Llyssyn,² where, after he was cured, he offered a single combat to the chief of the family, by whose procurement it was thought the mischief was committed; but he [*i.e.*, the chief] disclaiming wholly the action as not done by his consent, which he offered to testify by oath, and the villain himself flying into Ireland, whence he never returned, my father desisted from prosecuting the business any farther in that kind, and attained, notwithstanding the said hurt, that health and strength, that he returned to his former exercises in a country life, and became the father of many children. As for his integrity in his places of deputy lieutenant of the county,

¹ In the hundred of Caereimion, Montgomeryshire.

² There is still a large farm of this name in the parish of Llanerfyl. It doubtless occupies the site of Richard Herbert's house (see p. 28, note 4).

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[More information](#)

Life of Lord Herbert. 5

justice of the peace, and *custos rotulorum*,¹ which he, as my grandfather before him, held, it is so memorable to this day, that it was said his enemies appealed to him for justice, which they also found on all occasions. His learning was not vulgar, as understanding well the Latin tongue, and being well versed in history. My grandfather was of a various life; beginning first at court, where, after he had spent most part of his means, he became a soldier, and made his fortune with his sword at the siege of St. Quentin in France,² and other wars, both in the north, and in the rebellions happening in the times of King Edward the Sixth, and Queen Mary, with so good success, that he not only came off still with the better, but got so much money and wealth, as enabled him to buy the greatest part of that livelihood which is descended to me; although

¹ He was Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1576 and 1584, and is probably the Richard Herbert who sat as M.P. for Montgomeryshire in the Parliament of 1585–86. He died in 1596, and was buried in Montgomery Church on 15th October of that year (see p. 10, note 1).

² Edward Herbert, as captain-general over 500 men, under his kinsman, William Herbert (created Earl of Pembroke, 11th October 1551), joined the Spaniards in the storming and sacking of St. Quentin two days after it had been taken (10th August 1557) from the French. The latter were commanded by Anne, Duc de Montmorency, Constable of France, whose son and grandson are often mentioned by Lord Herbert below.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)6 *Life of Lord Herbert.*

yet I hold some lands which his mother, the Lady Anne Herbert,¹ purchased, as appears by the deeds made to her by that name, which I can show; and might have held more, which my grandfather sold under foot at an under value in his youth, and might have been recovered by my father, had my grandfather suffered him. My grandfather was noted to be a great enemy to the outlaws and thieves of his time, who robbed in great numbers in the mountains of Montgomeryshire, for the suppressing of whom he went often, both day and night, to the places where they were; concerning which, though many particulars have been told me, I shall mention one only.² Some outlaws being lodged in an alehouse upon the hills of Llandinam, my grandfather and a few servants coming to apprehend them, the principal outlaw shot an arrow against my grandfather, which stuck in the pommel of his saddle; whereupon my grandfather coming up to him with his sword in his hand, and taking him prisoner, he showed him the said arrow, bidding him look what he had done; whereof the outlaw was no farther sensible, than to say, he was sorry that he left his better bow at home, which he

¹ Anne, daughter of Sir David ap Evan (or Euion) ap Llewellyn Vaughan, Knt., and wife of Sir Richard Herbert of Montgomery (see p. 10).

² A few notes on the general condition of Wales in Lord Herbert's youth are collected in Appendix II.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*Life of Lord Herbert.*

7

conceived would have carried his shot to his body ; but the outlaw, being brought to justice, suffered for it. My grandfather's power was so great in the country, that divers ancestors of the better families now in Montgomeryshire were his servants, and raised by him.¹ He delighted also much in hospitality ; as having a very long table twice covered every meal with the best meats that could be gotten, and a very great family. It was an ordinary saying in the country at that time, when they saw any fowl rise, " Fly where thou wilt, thou wilt light at Blackhall ;" which was a low building, but of great capacity, my grandfather erected in his age ;² his father and himself, in former times, having lived in Montgomery Castle. Notwithstanding yet these expenses at home, he brought

¹ He was appointed deputy-constable of Aberystwith Castle (16th March 1543-4), by his cousin Sir William Herbert (see extract from Lord Powis' MSS. in Powysland Collections, xi. 361); was Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1537 and 1568; was M.P. for the county in 1553 and 1556-7; was knighted in 1574 (Metcalf's Knights, p. 128). His local influence is illustrated by a correspondence with Leicester in November 1580, as to the appointment of a sheriff of the county. He successfully insisted on the choice of Griffith Lloyd and the rejection of John Vaughan (Cal. State Papers, 1577-80, p. 686). He was at one time esquire of the body to Queen Elizabeth.

² This house, also called Lymore, was standing in the middle of the seventeenth century. Lord Herbert retired to it during the troubles of the civil wars.

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[More information](#)

up his children well, married his daughters to the better sort of persons near him,¹ and bringing up his younger sons at the university; from whence his son Matthew² went to the Low Country wars; and, after some time spent there, came home, and lived in the country at Dolguog, upon a house and fair living, which my grandfather bestowed upon him. His son also, Charles Herbert,³ after he had passed some time in the Low Countries, likewise returned home, and was after married to an inherétrix,⁴ whose eldest son, called Sir Edward Herbert, Knight, is the king's attorney-general.⁵

¹ He had seven daughters. Mary, the eldest, married Thomas Purcell of Nantcribbe, who was Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1597; Ann, the third daughter, married Charles Lloyd of Leighton, Sheriff in 1601; and Jane, the fourth daughter, married Jenkin Lloyd, Sheriff in 1588. (See Powysland Club Collections, ii. 387.)

² Admitted a student of the Inner Temple, November 1582 (Admission Register, 1571–1625, p. 41). He married Ann, daughter of Charles Fox of Bromfield, and from him was descended in the fourth generation Henry Arthur Herbert, created Earl of Powis in 1748 (second creation).

³ He is probably the “Charles Herbert e co. Montgom.” who matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, 11th May 1582, at the age of fifteen. He lived at Aston, and was Sheriff of Montgomeryshire in 1608.

⁴ Jane, sole heiress of Hugh ap Owen (Dwnn's Visitations, i. 312).

⁵ Of the Inner Temple. Appointed the Queen's Attorney-General, 1635; Solicitor-General, 1640; Attorney-General,

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[More information](#)*Life of Lord Herbert.*

9

His son, George, who was of New College, in Oxford,¹ was very learned, and of a pious life, died in a middle age of a dropsy. Notwithstanding all which occasions of expense, my grandfather purchased much lands,² without doing anything yet unjustly or hardly, as may be collected by an offer I have publicly made divers times, having given my bailiff in charge to proclaim to the country, that if any lands were gotten by evil means, or so much as hardly, they should be compounded for or restored again ; but to this day, never any man yet complained to me in this kind. He died at the age of fourscore, or thereabouts, and was buried in Montgomery Church,³ without having any monu-

29th January 1640–1 ; impeached by the Commons, 8th March 1641–2 ; Charles II.'s Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, 1653 ; died at Paris 1657.

¹ The name of George Herbert does not appear on the books of New College, Oxford, and I believe this statement to be an error. Together with the Charles Herbert mentioned above, a George Herbert matriculated at Magdalen College, 11th May 1582, at the age of sixteen.

² In 1553, Sir William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, granted him the hundred of Cherbury and probably the castle of Montgomery. On 15th May 1570, he received a royal grant of the castle of Lyons, or Holt Castle, with several Shropshire manors.

³ 20th May 1593, according to the parish register. His wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Matthew Price of Newtown, Montgomeryshire, was buried in the same place on 26th May 1588.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)10 *Life of Lord Herbert.*

ment made for him, which yet for my father is there set up in a fair manner.¹

My great-grandfather, Sir Richard Herbert, was steward, in the time of King Henry the Eighth, of the lordships and marches of North Wales, East Wales, and Cardiganshire, and had power, in a martial law, to execute offenders; in the using thereof he was so just, that he acquired to himself a singular reputation; as may appear upon the records of that time, kept in the Paper-Chamber at Whitehall, some touch whereof I have made in my History of Henry the Eighth:² of him I can say little more, than that he likewise was a great suppressor of rebels, thieves, and outlaws, and that he was just and conscionable; for if a false or cruel

¹ This monument, in the Lymore Chancel of the church, was erected by Lord Herbert's mother in 1600. It is a large alabaster canopied tomb with recumbent figures of Richard Herbert (in complete armour) and of his wife, while small images of their seven sons and three daughters stand beside them. Drawings of the tomb, which is still well preserved, appear in the Powysland Collections, vi. 409; and in Dr. Grosart's edition of George Herbert's Works (vol. ii. frontispiece).

² Under date 1520, Lord Herbert says in his History:—"In the greater part [of Wales] and particularly those [parts] in the East, West, and North Wales being about this time administered by my great grandfather, Sir Richard Herbert . . . such justice was used as I find him in our records highly commended to the King's Council by Rowland Lee, now President of Wales."