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978-1-108-07405-6 - The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London: With the Lives and Characters of More than a Thousand Contemporary Divines and Other Persons of Literary Eminence: Volume 2

Edited by John Nichols

Excerpt

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Selections

FROM

THE MISCELLANEOUS WORKS

OF

JOHN DUNTON.

CHAPTER XI.

DUNTON'S JOURNAL, PART II.

OR, A PANEGYRICK ON THE MOST EMINENT PERSONS FOR PIETY, LEARNING, COURAGE, MODERATION, CHARITY, AND OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS, NOW LIVING IN THE THREE KINGDOMS*, 1706.

I SHALL begin the "Second Part of my Journal" with this assurance, that I will praise no person (whether rich or poor) but such as I think deserve it.

And the first person I intend to characterize is the *divine Sabina*; being obliged thereto by the following Letter, directed "To the Author of the Panegyrick on Eminent Persons: to be left at Claypool's Coffee-house in Swan-alley, in Birchin Lane."

* This and the Twelfth Chapter are selected from a small and very scarce volume published by Dunton in 1706, intituled, "The Whipping Post;" which contains nothing worth notice except what will be here extracted. EDIT.

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“ SIR, *Manchester, April 6, 1706.*

“ I thought myself obliged, though at this distance, to make some return for the pleasure which the niceness and curiosity of your *Living History* has given me in effigy. I would have you begin your History with the Character of a Lady in these parts, commonly called ‘The divine Sabina.’ The accomplishments of this lady have sufficiently signalized her, though the bashfulness of her residence has done all that in it lay to shroud her from applause. I am very sensible she is like to suffer, as your most racy and generous liquors do, in the transfusion. She flourishes in her own soil, but will look faint and withering in comparison of the primitive piece. However, I hope it may provoke a hand as celebrated as her own to ravish the pencil from such a Dauber as I am about to shew myself. I confess, too, I were better have initiated my hand with an inferior draught; yet suppose me in the best circumstances, and I am only like to give it you in shade and miniature, and therefore ascribe none of the unfinished strokes to the original. I shall further add, that, if this first Character meets with encouragement, I shall send you the Characters of Dr. Row, Mr. Cunningham, Dr. Lee, &c. and of other eminent persons in Manchester.

“ But to return to the Character of ‘the divine Sabina.’ She is a Lady by birth and fortune, and is not only an ornament to her own illustrious family, but to the age she lives in. She hath wit, not only above most of her sex, but even of that too which pretends so much to it, and values itself so much upon it; to which is joined a judgment very correct and solid — two things seldom found together in the Fair Sex. This is the reason that she never runs into those little extravagances, or commits those witty fooleries, which many of them who possess the first are guilty of for want of the latter (Wit in Women being often a very ungovernable thing); but she bears her advantages with less ostentation and more temper than those of her sex who have any excellency above the rest usually do; which is a virtue by which she is as much distinguished from them, as they are from the ordinary rank of women. She is a very good judge of persons; and as there is nobody more competently

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[More information](#)

PANEGYRICK ON EMINENT PERSONS. 415

qualified to give their opinion of another, so there is none who does it with a more severe exactness, or with less partiality; for she always speaks her mind, and spares nobody; but then (I know not how) she orders it so well, that it may be understood as an obligation; and her severest reproofs have something in them so sweet, so gentle, and so allaying of their own gall, that there is hardly any of the bitter to be found; like pills wrapt up in sweetmeats, you swallow them with a pleasing relish. And as dextrous Executioners perform their office with such a sleight, that it is with little pain, and almost insensible to the sufferers—so she manages her most *kill-ing* reflections with such admirable art and softness, that the persons concerned are never offended at it; for she does it in terms very ambiguous, like antient Oracles, that might be interpreted either way; it requires some consideration to find out which it is she intends; and what she designs as a reflection, without a very strict examination, may pass for a panegyrick.—She is extremely critical, and likes or dislikes upon great niceties. The last is much more frequent to her than the first, for she seldom finds any body to her mind: her friendship, therefore, is obtained with great difficulty, and very easily lost; for, to the keeping of it up, it is necessary one should have all that in the same degree which was the cause of her contracting it; for, upon the first discovery of any failure, her kindness fails too; that is, she cannot pass by the little errors and miscarriages of her Friends. So that it is in her Friendship as it is in Musick, where, if the instruments are not kept up to the same key and pitch, it disturbs the harmony; though, if she always continues to proceed by this rule, she will hardly ever have any very durable friendship, it being difficult for her to make it upon equal terms. She is very scrupulous in all the little and indifferent actions of her life; and a most rigorous observer of that which they call Decency, even to the smallest punctilios; and makes herself a great slave to Custom and Opinion: that is, she will never do any thing till she hath first very well considered with herself what other people may think of it.—Her conversation is very agreeable, and she hath complaisance enough, yet loves you should oppose her,

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[More information](#)

and delights very much in contradicting you ; but does it so handsomely, and in such a manner, as easily shews her design is only pleasure and divertisement, and she never fails of her end. She hath a sense of things by herself, very subtle and fine notions ; and is rather pleased with something particularly odd, than any thing in the common beaten road ; that is, she had rather make trespasses on Nature, and break into her inclosures, than keep the high-way. She never makes herself a slave to her opinions, nor believes she is always obliged to think as she once did ; nor is so obstinately constant to any one tenet as never to recede from it. By this I mean only such as are not material, but indifferent in themselves, and are the subject of ordinary dispute and conversation. And her design (as I have told you) being only divertisement, you shall see her one time defend a proposition with all the earnestness imaginable ; when, perhaps, the next time you meet her, the stream will be diverted into another current, and she will maintain quite the contrary, and say as many fine things against it as ever she did for it, if it serve better to that purpose of diverting. So that her opinions are like Laws in a State, which change with the circumstances of affairs ; and that which was before of force and valid is made void upon some present exigence and necessity. And for the rest of her life, it is nothing else but Devotion.— To sum up all : she hath a great deal of wit, a true and discerning judgment ; she is hard to be pleased, very nicely scrupulous, singular in her notions, uncertain in her friendship, pleasant in conversation, inoffensive in her raillery, sincere in her piety ; and all these are so qualified, and so intermixed, that, like different elements, they make up a most excellent composition.”

I shall next insert an Epitaph on the Reverend Dr. *Manton*, written by the ingenious Dr. *Wild*. The Gentleman that sent it to me desires I would insert the Character of Dr. Manton in this Journal ; for, though he is characterized by Mr. Calamy, yet (to use my Friend's expression) “ too much can never be said of so worthy a person.” I agree to what this Gentleman says, that “ too much can never be said of Dr. Manton, &c. ;” but the Character that is given of him by Mr. Calamy is so com-

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[More information](#)

PANEGYRICK ON EMINENT PERSONS. 417

plete, that I shall not presume to add any thing to it ; and therefore I hope I shall not disoblige my Yorkshire Friend if I only print Dr. Wild's Verses, which, I am told, were never printed before ; and so refer the Reader for Dr. Manton's Character, to be found in " The Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life," written by Mr. Calamy.

" Two words (but ah! too hard)—*Assent, Consent,*
 Had made this Stone a stately Monument ;
 Then it had run with a more lofty style,
 " The Dean of Rochester lies in the Aile."
 Nay, peradventure, higher, " Here lies dead
 A Learned, Reverend, and Mitred Head."
 Now a *small Character* must serve the turn,
 So Gold lies hidden in an earthen urn.
 Here lies a *Father*, who in Jesus died,
 With six dear Children sleeping by his side.
 Here lies a *Great Divine*, a learned man,
 Smart Disputant, well-read Historian,
 Accurate Textman, Orthodox avow'd,
 If our Church Articles may be allow'd ;
 Severe of brow, but in discourse serene,
 Whose tongue could say well all his mind did mean,
 Hearers inquir'd not how the time did pass,
 Nor listen'd to the clock, nor look'd at glass.
 Tedious he could not be, though much he read,
 The warp and woof were both so fine a thread.
 Black Envy look'd asquint, gnash'd, swell'd, and swore,
 To see so many Coaches throng his door.
 His sentences to many a Noble Ear
 Were richer than the jewels they did wear.
 His Printed Books (pity they were so few)
 Ten times perused, yet appeared new.
 When his bright Soul enter'd the Blessed Place,
 After the smiles of his great Maker's Face,
 Methinks I see those two Apostles rise,
 St. James and Jude, and, with delighted eyes,
 Behold, embrace, welcome with heavenly greet
 Their Scholar, feasting him at their own feet ;
 Then, by th' appointment of the Throne, and Votes
 Of that high House, approv'd and prais'd his *Notes*,
 So faithfully and fruitfully annex'd
 To their Epistles, and the Sacred Text.
 Then glorious David, from his sun-like throne,
 Bedeck'd with stars and many a precious stone,
 Welcom'd the Saint into the Heavenly Quire,
Thanking him for his Lesson on his Lyre :

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[More information](#)

Moving an Order, which not one withstood,
 They might be publish'd for the Church's good.
 Next 't was resolv'd Heaven would be very kind
 To his poor Wife and Children left behind :
 His absence should not make them fare the worse,
 God's *All-sufficiency* should be their purse ;
 His Providence their all—and all this done
 Without their Father's *Intercession*.
 'T was lastly voted, his Remains below
 Should to their dust with Love and Honour go ;
 And that a wise Embalmer make and shed
 A Box of Precious Ointment on his Head."

If any question whether this Poem was written by the ingenious Dr. Wild (though I think the very style sufficiently shews it) ; if Dr. Manton's Son-in-law will give me a private meeting, I will give him full satisfaction that it was written by Dr. Wild, and left by him with that very Gentleman who sent it to me.

I shall next step into Yorkshire ; for designing a " Pa-negyrick on the most Eminent Persons in the Three Kingdoms," I shall survey every Town and County that comes in my way. And here I shall present the Reader with the Characters of several Eminent Persons, both Men and Women.

The first I shall name is, the truly honourable, noble, and elect Lady *Hewly*, of York ; a person of exemplary piety and seriousness. God hath blessed her with a great estate, and also with a large and bountiful heart and hand. Her Charity is not only a Cistern to supply the present age, but a Fountain to supply generations to come—in that goodly Hospital she hath lately erected in the City of York, and so largely and liberally endowed for aged persons of her own sex ; in which she is so far from assuming any honour to herself, that, like David of old in his preparations to build the Temple*, she gives all the glory to God, as appears by the inscription thereupon, "Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the Poor †." And yet, notwithstanding this public structure, the principal streams of her charity run in secret, according to the rule, Matth. vi. 4. ; this Noble Person, in the distribution thereof, not letting her right

* 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.

† Psal. lxxviii. 10.

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[More information](#)

PANEGYRICK ON EMINENT PERSONS. 419

hand know what her left hand doth; many having been refreshed by the streams of her bounty, that never knew the fountain whence it came. Her endeavour (like our blessed Saviour's) is "to do all good possible, both to the souls and bodies of men, and that in sincerity and singleness of heart, having respect to God's glory; whatever she does doing it faithfully, both to the Brethren and to Strangers." This excellent Lady, notwithstanding her great love to the Public Ordinances, and her conscientious attendance thereupon, when her health and strength will permit, yet she leaves not her Religion there, but hath God duly worshiped in her own Family by the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise. She spends much time also (in her secret retirements) in those sweet duties of prayer, holy meditation, and converse with her own soul; having that serenity of mind and peace of conscience which is the result of well-doing, and which most are strangers to.— God hath been pleased to continue her (though under frequent bodily infirmities) to a good old age, wherein, to use the Psalmist's phrase, she still "brings forth fruit, and is fat and flourishing." May it please the Lord yet long to preserve her precious life; and when her days are determined, that she may sleep with her Fathers, vouchsafe her an *Eὐθανασία*, an easy and comfortable passage out of this World, and an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The neat and accurate Mr. *Thomas Colton*, of the same City, is a person of exemplary piety and seriousness; a very eminent Preacher, as appears in those two excellent Sermons of his lately printed; but would appear much more if the world might be so happy as to see his "Discourses upon the Heads of Divinity." He is a very prudent, peaceable man, of the primitive stamp, no bigot to any party, but a lover of all good men of what persuasion soever; and of such a sweet, regular, obliging conversation, as makes him to be beloved of all—another *Demetrius*, having "a good report of all men," and of the truth itself.

Mr. *Joseph Dawson*, of Morley, is a grave and Reverend Minister of Jesus Christ, "an Israelite indeed, in whom

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there is no guile;" an angelical man for meekness; another Moses; a man of such a holy and exemplary conversation, and venerable behaviour, as gains him respect and reverence from all men; a deep Divine, of great ministerial parts and abilities, and of a sweet and happy delivery, being affectionately desirous of the good of souls; is willing not to impart to them the Gospel of God only, but his own soul also, because they are dear to him; exhorting and charging every one, "even as a father doth his children," as the Apostle speaks, 1 Thess. ii. 8. Though he is now such another as Paul the aged (being near the 70th year of his life), yet he is as indefatigable and diligent in his study as if but just entering upon his work (as our blessed Saviour before him), "doing the work of Him that sent him while it is day, before the night cometh, when no man can work." In a word, he is "a burning and shining light," a very pattern of holiness, meekness, humility, and zeal for God's glory, &c.; one whose whole conversation is in Heaven. He trained up four young men, all sons of a Friend of mine, in Academical Learning; three of which are now actually in the Ministry, and do worthily for God in their generation.

Mr. *Peter Peters*, of Leeds, is a truly good man, and faithful Minister of Jesus Christ; one that fills up his post to very good purpose; of a healing Christian temper and disposition; but, alas! under great indisposition, by reason of the stone or gravel, or some worse distemper, whereby we have great cause to fear his removal, though but a young man, in the midst of his days.

Mr. *Ralph Thoresby*, of Leeds, Fellow of the Royal Society, is a very ingenious, sober Gentleman, and industrious Antiquary, who hath a curious Collection of Natural and Artificial Rarities of many years' standing, and is still as diligent as ever to make additions thereunto. He is also a great Preserver and Ingrosser of Manuscripts of all sorts. He is kind and respectful to his Friends, and never better pleased than when they can present him with some piece of Antiquity, or valuable Manuscript.

Mr. *Nathaniel Priestly*, near Halifax, is of great parts, and excellent Ministerial abilities, an universal Scholar,

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[More information](#)

PANEGYRICK ON EMINENT PERSONS. 421

“*Cui est ingenium subtile in corpore crasso.*” He is of a truly candid Christian temper, a lover of good men of what persuasion soever, and is generally well beloved and respected. He hath a good Collection of the best Books, which he keeps, not for ostentation, but for use and service, being a most industrious and indefatigable Reader. His love and delight in Books is such, that he may (as a great and learned man of this Kingdom once did) truly confess himself “*extatico quodam librorum amore potenter abreptus, et nullius rei preterquam librorum avarus.*” He is much addicted to solitude and retirement. “*Bene vixit qui bene latuit,*” may be his motto in this respect; and I cannot better express the temper of his mind than in that wish of Cicero: “I would give,” said he, “all the wealth in the world, that I might live in my study, and have nothing to hinder me.”

Mr. *Thomas Dickenson* is a man of gravity and seriousness, reads much, and is happy in a tenacious and retentive memory; a hard student, excellent in prayer and preaching, temperate in all things, and of an exemplary conversation. He is a man of learning and worth, very scriptural, solid and substantial in all his Discourses, a judicious Divine, and Workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Mr. *Accepted Lister*, of Thornton in Bradford-dale, is a little man, but one that has a great soul, rich in grace and gifts, of a strong memory, good elocution, *Accepted* with God and all good men, and one that serves God faithfully in the Gospel of his Son, naturally caring for the good of souls, and longing after them in the bowels of the Lord Jesus.

Mr. *John Firth* was forty-five years Vicar of Mansfield, and one of the most famous and eminent Preachers of the age wherein he lived; a man of courage and magnanimity, that feared not any man in the discharge of his duty; but, like John the Baptist, would reprove even a Herod to his face. A very hard student, leaving some thousands of Notes, written exactly, which well deserve the press: one that exceeded the most of his Brethren in his Ministerial parts and abilities. He was an excellent Orator, and engaged the attention of his Hearers by his grave, authoritative, and affectionate delivery,

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[More information](#)

preaching in the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. He was indefatigable in his labours, preaching twice every Lord's-day, so long as strength would permit. He died May the 5th, 1699, aged 74; and whatever invidious reflections some that could not endure sound doctrine may cast upon the memory of this excellent person, Mansfield shall know they had a Prophet amongst them. He lives in his Son, Mr. *William Firth*, a truly candid, courteous Gentleman, an inheritor of his Father's virtues, and one that hath made it appear he can forgive his greatest enemies; who, though a man of the Law, hath at all times a Chancery in his breast and bosom.

Mrs. *Bathshina Brooksbank* of Ealand, is of a good mien and presence; but, which is much more, of a noble genius and elevation of mind and thought, above most of her sex. Her natural parts, which are extraordinary, being so greatly improved by her diligence in reading the best Authors, doth make her a very accomplished Gentlewoman. She is a great friend to Learning, and all laudable and pious designs, which she will spare no cost to promote. She understands a Book well, and hath her Closet richly furnished with a curious collection of the best Authors: in the ordering of which she affects a peculiar neatness, as she does in her other family affairs and concernments. In short, she is a solid and substantial Christian, of a candid temper, a lover of good men and Ministers, whom she esteems very highly in love for their Works' sake. She is, for her seriousness and constancy in the duties of Religion, another *Anna*; for charity and kindness, a *Dorcas*; and the *Phœnix* of her age, for a constant, faithful, generous Friend.

Mr. *Abraham Sharp*, of Horton, is one that enjoys the riches of both the Indies, the pleasures of Court and Camp, City and Country, in his beloved Retirement, and Mathematical Projections and Improvements, in which he is arrived to a great eminency; having a curious mechanical hand also, and performs his operations relating to that Science with an admirable and almost unparalleled neatness. "Through desire," saith Solomon, "a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom;" - as doth this worthy