

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07734-7 - Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century:
Consisting of Authentic Memoirs and Original Letters of Eminent Persons, and Intended
as a Sequel to the 'Literary Anecdotes': Volume 1

John Nichols

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES

OF

DANIEL WRAY, Esq. F.R.S. AND F.S.A.

By GEORGE HARDINGE, Esq.

VOL. I.

B

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

PHILIP, EARL OF HARDWICKE,

VISCOUNT ROYSTON, K. G. F. R. S. F. S. A.

HIGH STEWARD OF CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY,
LORD LIEUTENANT AND CUSTOS ROTULORUM OF THE

COUNTY OF CAMBRIDGE ;

PRESIDENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY ;

A TRUSTEE OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM, &c. &c.

MY DEAR LORD,

It is a debt of honour to your Lordship, that my attempts to redeem, from *Horace's* complaint of the "*chartæ silentes*," a character no less exemplary, than amiable, should pay their tribute of grateful thanks to *you*, above all others, to whom I am obliged for a gift, or loan of the materials which form this *votive tablet* ; not only because the Letters of Mr. DANIEL WRAY to your Uncle, the second EARL OF HARDWICKE, are of such pre-eminent value in themselves, and throw such light upon the portrait, but also upon account of the affectionate intercourse which united those dear friends,—attracting to this union, by its natural influence, the genius, and the virtues of your accomplished father.

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Nor

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Nor are these your Lordship's only demands upon me.

You gave to me, as a *keepsake*, a copy of the *Athenian Letters* in their last, and beautiful edition.

You reposed unlimited confidence in my selection of Letters, from a series of the originals.

But I can proudly, as well as gratefully, say more : I can thank, and bless you, for your patronage of a dear friend, whose interest I had much at heart, when you were the Viceroy in Ireland.

Nor am I selfish enough to suppress your Lordship's higher claims upon all to whom you are personally endeared: claims to that homage of the heart, which is a debt of honour to an elevated station, when rank and wealth are animated by public virtue, are disciplined by useful knowledge, and are graced by the charm of benevolent affections.

I remain, my dear Lord,

Your Lordship's affectionate Servant,

GEORGE HARDINGE.

Walton Grove,
Sept. 30, 1815.

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BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES

OF

DANIEL WRAY, Esq. F. R. S. AND F. S. A.

[*I have much pleasure in opening this Volume of Anecdotes with a picture of a singular, but interesting character, imparted by a zealous friend, Mr. JUSTICE HARDINGE, who has enabled me to lay it before the Reader, as a votive tablet of memory to virtue, and genius.* J. N.]

TO JOHN NICHOLS, Esq. F. S. A.

DEAR SIR,

Sept. 30, 1815.

You call upon me to lay before you what I can personally recollect, or can learn from others, of DANIEL WRAY, to whom a note alludes in the second volume of your entertaining "*Anecdotes*;" — a work, distinguished not only by zeal for the honour of literature, but, in a degree perhaps unexampled, by that vein of impartial benevolence, which runs through every page of it.

"*Critic without malevolence, you have thought it your province, to display beauty, as well as to expose defects; to examine with respect, and praise with alacrity;*" words applied by *Dr. Johnson* to *Mr. Spence*, and perhaps justly, as writer of the "*Essay on the Odyssey*;" but not, I think, due to his general

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general character, which appears to have been that of an eves'-dropper, in gossiping reports of spleen against amiable characters, dropt in the hectic of the moment by offended competitors.

If Collections like these, of yours, by their compass, and varieties, made us less warpt against those who are not our favourites, — less polemical in the factions of Literature,—and less imperious in the oracles of contempt, by developing the merits of accomplished men (whether *Trojans* or *Tyrians*) with honest praise; they would be of inestimable value: they would moralize Criticism, as well as enlighten it.

It has often struck me, that a little of the *humourist*, without pride, or self-indulging passion, which no eccentricities, however amusing, can palliate, recommends the effect of talents, and virtues themselves, in the moral, and social world.

More invidiously, than philosophically, it has been argued, that such an effect arises from our envy, that is, from a base, and mean spirit, which tempts us to rejoice in these whims of good, or great men; because they lessen our superiors, and bring *us* nearer to *them*, by discovering *the hero behind the scenes*, in some of his harmless defects. I cannot, for one, be of that opinion; or even think it lowers *the hero*, to see him appear like other men, with human frailties, or singularities; and, as it is well expressed, “*no hero to his Valet de chambre.*” To *my* conception, it elevates him; or, at the worst, it endears him to his inferiors, without prejudice to their candour in feeling his advantage over them, or their humility in attesting it.

Wit, if it is not overbearing, but is like that of *Yorick*, so well described in *Sterne*, though indiscreet, never offends. Playful habits, and even levities of manner, especially if they have the advantage “*desipere in loco,*” are delightful in accomplished men. But, above all, the amiable simplicity

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DANIEL WRAY, ESQ.

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simplicity of good-natured mirth, displaying the perpetual feast of cheerful, and sportive habits in a gifted, and richly cultivated intellect, under the discipline of a religious, and moral character, will in every age, and scene of life, attract, by its native influence, the best affections of the taste, and of the heart.

“*A very singular man*”—“*a very odd creature*,” &c. are popular words, too indefinite, and very little understood. They are like the *adjective*, as *Lilly* describes it, when he says, that it cannot “*stand by itself*,” but waits till the *substantive* puts it upon its feet. Sense, and folly, — Virtue, and her opposite, vice, — Pride, or humility, — the poet, and the calculator, — the benevolent, and the selfish, — may be all of them *Comets*, like the *Wharton* of *Pope*, or the *Villiers* of *Dryden*; but with no other affinity, or centre of union. The *amiable humourist* is the only *original*, who deserves to be the hero of social intercourse in the moral world.

Perhaps I am prejudiced; for it has really happened, that some of my dearest friends have not been exempted from their *whims* of taste, of manner, of opinions, and of conduct.

When I shall describe my own *first* impressions of Mr. DANIEL WRAY, the reader will smile at the ridicule of his portrait; but, if I am not self-deceived, he will admire, love, and venerate the man, before we part with him.

I had begun to think he was not *born at all*; and I cannot forbear to cite a paragraph in a Letter which I received a little time ago from one of his friends, and as pleasant as he would have been himself upon a similar topic.

“I do not with *accuracy know*, that he had *any parents at all*; but I should *presume* that he came “*into the world*, as we know that he went *out of it*,
“ much

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“ much as others have done before, and since his
 “ time. But, *Mr. Asgill* would say, it was a *violent*
 “ *presumption*. In his ingenious, and most elabo-
 “ rate argument, he acknowledges, that men have
 “ all along been in *the habit* of dying ; but he adds,
 “ that such a *mere habit* is no imperious negative
 “ upon other modes of travelling out of this world
 “ into the next. Analogy, therefore, may argue the
 “ possibility of other ways *into* this world, besides
 “ the habitual one.”

The first hints to me of DANIEL WRAY'S paren-
 tage were parts of an obliging note from *Lady*
Lucas ; who acquainted me, that she heard him say,
 his father had remembered *Cheapside*, and *Fleet*
Street a desert in 1665. From that insulated fact,
 I had only to infer a conjecture, that his father
 was of *London*. I had then little hope to know
 more of his early days. But I was deceived ; and
 have been surprized, as well as gratified, in a degree
 that love to the memory of departed friends alone can
 estimate, by the information, which persevering assi-
 duities have enabled me to obtain, though living
 in the depth of solitude, and of seclusion from the
 world.

He was born upon the 28th November, 1701, in
 the parish of *St. Botolph, Aldersgate* ; the youngest
 of *Sir Daniel Wray's* many children by two mar-
 riages. The father was a *London* citizen, who
 resided in *Little Britain*, made a very conside-
 rable fortune in trade ; and purchased an estate in
Essex, near *Ingatestone*, which the son possessed
 after him.

For that County *Sir Daniel Wray* was *High*
Sheriff ; and was knighted, *March 24, 1707-8*,
 on presenting an Address to *Queen Anne* on
 the French King's attempts to invade these
 Realms, dethrone her Majesty, and substitute in
 her place a Catholic *Pretender*.

There

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DANIEL WRAY, ESQ.

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There is a peculiar simplicity in the *Register* of the Son's birth:

“ DANIEL, SON of DANIEL WRAY—*against the Church.*”

He was the son of his father's old age; and we have his own word for this fact, in his own hand, still preserved. It is in a shape no less amusing, than authentic, a poetical portrait of his life, and character, drawn by himself.

We can trace him to no school before he was thirteen years of age; and we find him then received at the *Charter-house*, as a *day scholar*; his parents residing in *Charter-house Square*, to superintend his education.

He gives his father credit, in the poem to which I have just alluded, for a liberal mind, in educating him with all attainable advantages, and without fear of the cost; instead of hoarding for him, and leaving him, as he well expresses it, “ *a booby-heir.*”

It is idle, and visionary, to enquire, at such a distance of time, near a century ago, what figure he made at this admirable school. Nor, indeed, is *the boy*, of course, a mirror, and prophetic image of the future *man*. But all traces of him at later periods representing him as passionately fond of literature—as a man of bright parts, and of lively manners, animated by incessant habits of diligence, and by a thirst of knowledge insatiable—as an acute, and luminous critic, a deep scholar, and a laughing philosopher; we may at least *naturally* infer that he was accomplished in the best literature of schools at an early period; and that his passion for a jest when a *man*, was equally, if not more, conspicuous in the *boy*.

I must here, as your *Brother Antiquary*, lament that *exercises* of the boys in that School have not been preserved (like those of a period equally remote at *Westminster*, and *Eton*); because I have little doubt, that, if they were extant, they would confer honour upon the boys, and upon the taste of those who had presided over them.

He

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He has told us himself (as you will see) that even at this early period he had *a passion for the Muse*.

In 1718 he left the *Charter-house*; and was entered as a *Fellow-Commoner* at *Queen's College*, in the *University of Cambridge*. To this pride of distinction he alludes humourously in his poem, and says, "*they took him for the son of a Bank-director at least.*" His father was then living*.

That he was at this early period exemplary in morals, the tenor of his life in the world may give unquestioned assurance; for nothing like irregularities of any kind ever touched his character; and there never existed a man who had a deeper sense of Religion.

But a circumstance occurred, even at school, which may in part account for the temperance of his life in the fiery ordeal of youth. Before he left the *Charter-house*, an asthma fell upon him, and it clung to him during the sequel of his life. This may in part account for his abstinence from enervating pleasures at College, or in the world; but it would be invidious to lay stress upon it, when this abstinence had the elevated principle of morality, and virtue for its guide.

It may here be remarked, that, under this afflictive visitation, he attained the age of *eighty-three*, with a serenity of temper, and with a cheerful play of animal spirits, never disconcerted, and much less peevish, or querulous.

Dr. William Heberden, the genuine heir of his venerable parent's intellect, and virtues, acquaints me, that his Father, who was at *Cambridge* intimate with Mr. WRAY, found him there oppressed by this complaint, and with such peril, that he despaired of enjoying his friendship in the world. But, happily for both of them, they were destined

* It appears by the "*Historical Register*" that he died July 2, 1719; and by the Register of *St. Botolph's* that he was buried on the 10th of that month.

for