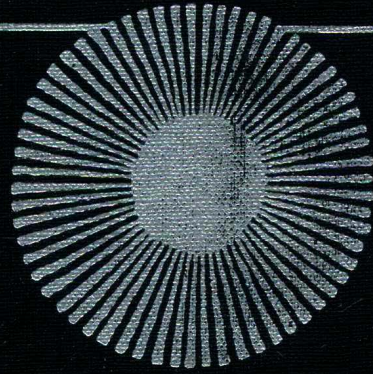


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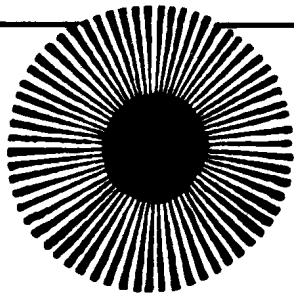
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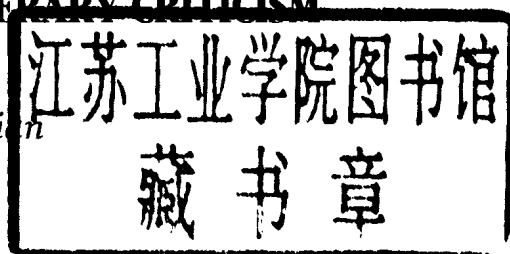
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**HAROLD BLOOM**



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# ANDREW MARVELL

1621–1678

Andrew Marvell was born on March 31, 1621, near Hull, in Yorkshire. His father, a clergyman with Calvinist leanings, was Master of the Almshouse at Hull. Marvell was educated at the Hull Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge, from which he graduated with a B.A. in 1639. After his mother's death in 1638 and his father's in 1640, Marvell left England to travel on the Continent. Little is known of the ten years that followed; he was abroad from 1642 to 1646, possibly as a tutor in France.

In 1650 he became tutor to Lord Fairfax's daughter, and it was about Fairfax's home that he wrote one of his best-known poems, "Upon Appleton House." Marvell remained at Nun Appleton for two years, and it is from that period that much of his lyric poetry seems to date.

While his sympathies appear to have been with the Royalists during his years with Fairfax, who was himself in exile because of his monarchist leanings, Marvell later came to admire Cromwell. The admiration was mutual, and in 1653 Marvell became tutor to William Dutton, a ward of Cromwell's. In 1657 he was appointed assistant to John Thurloe, Secretary of State, a position for which Milton had recommended him in 1652. He became the Member of Parliament for Hull in 1659 and served in that capacity, apart from a brief interruption, until his death. Milton's championing of Marvell was repaid in kind in 1660, when Marvell defended him against charges of regicide. From 1662 until his death Marvell published various satires, including *The Rehearsall Transpros'd* in two parts in 1672 and 1673. He died on August 18, 1678, in London and is buried at St. Giles-in-the-Fields. His *Miscellaneous Poems*, containing most of his poems, was purportedly published by his housekeeper, claiming to be his widow, in 1681; it appears, however, that Marvell never married.

## Personal

He had not been long there (at Cambridge), before his Studys were interrupted by this remarkable Accident. Some *Jesuits*, with whom he was then conversant, seeing in him a Genius beyond his Years, thought of Nothing less than gaining a Proselyte. And doubtless their Hopes extended farther. They knew, if that Point was once obtained, he might in Time be a great Instrument towards carrying on their Cause. They used all the Arguments they could to seduce him away, which at last they did. After some Months his Father found him in a *Bookseller's Shop* in *London* and prevailed with him to return to the College.—JOHN NORTON, Letter to Reverend Marvell (c. Jan. 1640)

My Lord,

But that it would be an interruption to the publick, wherein your studies are perpetually employd, I should now & then venture to supply this my enforced absence with a line or two, though it were my onely busines, & that would be noe slight one, to make my due acknowledgments of your many favours; which I both doe at this time & ever shall; & have this farder which I thought my parte to let you know of, that there will be with you to morrow upon some occasion of busines a Gentleman whose name is Mr. Marvile; a man whom both by report, & the converse I have had with him, of singular desert for the State to make use of; who alsoe offers himselfe, if there be any employment for him. His father was the Minister of Hull & he hath spent foure yeares abroad in Holland, France, Italy, & Spaine, to very good purpose, as I beleeve, & the gaining of those 4 languages; besides he is a scholler & well read in the latin & Greeke authors, & noe doubt of an approved conversation; for he com's now lately out of the house of the Lord Faifax who was Generall, where he was intrusted to give some instructions in the Languages to the Lady his Daughter. If upon the death of Mr. Wakerley

the Councell shall thinke that I shall need any assistant in the performance of my place (though for my part I find noe encumbrance of that which belongs to me, except it be in point of attendance at Conferences with Ambassadors, which I must confesse, in my Condition I am not fit for) it would be hard for them to find a Man soe fit every way for that purpose as this Gentleman, one who I beleeve in a short time would be able to doe them as good service as Mr. Ascan.—JOHN MILTON, Letter to Lord Bradshaw (Feb. 21, 1652/3)

He was of middling stature, pretty strong sett, roundish faced, cherry cheek't, hazell eie, browne haire. He was in his conversation very modest, and of very few words: and though he loved wine he would never drinke hard in company, and was wont to say that, he would not play the goodfellow in any man's company in whose hands he would not trust his life. He had not a generall acquaintance.

In the time of Oliver the Protector he was Latin Secretarie. He was a great master of the Latin tongue; an excellent poet in Latin or English: for Latin verses there was no man could come into competition with him.

I remember I have heard him say that the Earle of Rochester was the only man in England that had the true veine of Satyre.

His native towne of Hull loved him so well that they elected him for their representative in Parliament, and gave him an honourable pension to maintaine him.

He kept bottles of wine at his lodgeing, and many times he would drinke liberally by himselfe to refresh his spirits, and exalt his Muse. (I remember I have been told that the learned Goclenius (an High-German) was wont to keep bottells of good Rhenish-wine in his studie, and, when his spirits wasted, he would drinke a good Rummer of it.)

Obiit Londini, Aug. 18. 1678; and is buried in St. Giles church in-the-fields about the middle of the south aisle. Some suspect that he was poysoned by the Jesuites, but I cannot be

positive.—JOHN AUBREY, "Andrew Marvell," *Brief Lives*, 1669–96

The way having been made ready after this fashion, at the beginning of the next fit [the fourth, that is, of tertian ague] a great febrifuge was administered, that is to say, a draught of Venice treacle, etc. By the doctor's orders the patient was covered up close with blankets, or rather buried under them; and composed himself to sleep and sweat, in order to escape the cold shivers that ordinarily accompany the onset of the ague-fit. Seized with the profoundest sleep and sweating profusely, in the short space of twenty-four hours after the last fit he died comatose [*Apopleptic*]. Thus the patient died who, had a single ounce of Peruvian bark been properly administered, might easily have escaped, in twenty four hours, from the jaws of death and the grave. This is what I, burning with anger, informed the doctor when he told me this story without any sense of shame.—RICHARD MORTON, *Pyretologia*, 1692

Amongst these lewd Revilers, the lewdest was one whose name was *Marvell*. As he had liv'd in all manner of wickedness from his youth, so being of a singular impudence and petulancy of nature, he exercised the province of a Satyrist (. . .) Being abandon'd by his father, and expell'd the University, (. . .) A vagabond, ragged, hungry Poetaster, (. . .) At length, by the interest of *Milton*, to whom he was somewhat agreeable for his ill-natur'd wit, he was made Undersecretary to *Cromwell's* Secretary. (. . .) But the King being restor'd, this wretched man falling into his former poverty, did, for the sake of a livelihood, procure himself to be chosen Member of Parliament for a Borough, in which his father had exercis'd the office of a Presbyterian teacher. (. . .) In all Parliaments he was an enemy to the King's affairs. (. . .) But out of the House, when he could do it with impunity, he vented Himself with the greater bitterness, and daily spewed infamous libels out of his filthy mouth against the King himself. (. . .) But this *Bustuarius*, or fencer, never fought with more fury, than near his own grave, in a book writt'n a little before his death, to which he gave this title, *An Account of the Growth of Popery, and Arbitrary Government in England*.—SAMUEL PARKER, *History of His Own Time*, 1727

### General

Is this the Land, where, in those worst of times,  
The hardy Poet rais'd his honest rimes  
To dread rebuke, and bade contumelious speak  
In guilty blushes on the villain's cheek,  
Bade Pow'r turn pale, kept mighty rogues in awe,  
And made them fear the Muse, who fear'd not Law?  
—CHARLES CHURCHILL, "The Author," 1763

His pen was always properly directed, and had some effect upon such as were under no check or restraint from any laws human or divine. He hated corruption more than he dreaded poverty; and was so far from being venal, that he could not be bribed by the king into silence, when he scarce knew how to procure a dinner. His satires give us a higher idea of his patriotism, parts, and learning, than of his skill as a poet.—JAMES GRANGER, *Biographical History of England*, 1769–1824

By his writings Marvell obtained the character of the wittiest man of his time, and doubtless was of great service to the cause he espoused, which had in general been defended rather by serious argument than by ridicule. He occasionally threw out a number of poetical effusions of the humorous and satirical kind, in which he did not spare majesty itself. These are careless and loose in their composition, and frequently pass the

bounds of decorum; but they were well calculated for effect as party pieces, and became very popular. He exercised his wit still more copiously in prose. In 1672, Dr. Sam. Parker, afterwards bishop of Oxford, a flaming and intolerant high churchman, published a work of bishop Bramhall's, to which he added a preface of his own, maintaining the most extravagant positions concerning the rights of sovereigns over the consciences of their subjects. This piece Marvell attacked in the same year in a work which he entitled *The Rehearsal Transposed*. With a profusion of witty sarcasm, it contains much solid argument, and may be reckoned one of the ablest exposures of the maxims of religious tyranny. Parker wrote an answer, to which Marvell replied; and the reverend champion did not choose to carry the controversy further.—JOHN AIKIN, *General Biography; or Lives of the Most Eminent Persons*, 1799–1815

Marvell abounds with conceits and false thoughts, but some of the descriptive touches are picturesque and beautiful. His description of a gently rising eminence is more picturesque, although not so elegantly and justly expressed, as the same subject is in Denham. (. . .) Sometimes Marvell observes little circumstances of rural nature with the eye and feeling of a true poet:

Then as I careless on the bed  
Of *gelid strawberries* do tread,  
And through the hazels thick, espy,  
The hatching throstle's shining eye.

The last circumstance is new, highly poetical, and could only have been described by one who was a real lover of nature, and a witness of her beauties in her most solitary retirement. It is the observation of such *circumstances* which can alone form an accurate descriptive rural poet. In this province of his art Pope therefore must evidently fail, as he could not describe what his physical infirmities prevented his observing. For the same reason Johnson, as a critic, was not a proper judge of this sort of poetry.—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES, "Introduction" to *The Works of Alexander Pope, Esq.*, 1806

The humour and eloquence of Marvell's prose tracts were admired and probably imitated by Swift. In playful exuberance of figure he sometimes resembles Burke. For consistency of principles, it is not so easy to find his parallel. His few poetical pieces betray some adherence to the school of conceit, but there is much in it that comes from the heart warm, pure, and affectionate.—THOMAS CAMPBELL, *Specimens of the British Poets*, 1819

His poems possess many of the finest elements of popularity; a rich profusion of fancy which almost dazzles the mind as bright colours dazzle the eye; an earnestness and heartiness which do not always,—do not often belong to these flowery fancies, but which when found in their company add to them inexpressible vitality and savor; and a frequent felicity of phrase, which, when once read, fixes itself in the memory, and will not be forgotten. (. . .) His mind was a bright garden, such a garden as he has described so finely, and that a few gaudy weeds should mingle with the healthier plants does but serve to prove the fertility of the soil.—MARY RUSSELL MITFORD, *Recollections of a Literary Life*, 1851, pp. 532–33

Fundamentally, the Poetry of Marvell is genuine as a bird's singing, or the singing of the brook on its gleaming way under the leafage. There is the breath and fragrance of inviolate Nature in every page of the *Poems of the Country* and *Poems of Imagination and Love*, and in *Poems of Friendship* and *State Poems* such THINKING and aspiration as were worthy of their

greatest themes; and I am here remembering, and wish it to be remembered, that John Milton and Oliver Cromwell and Blake are celebrated by him.—ALEXANDER B. GROSART, "Memorial-Introduction" to *The Complete Poems of Andrew Marvell*, 1872, p. lxvi

Marvell holds a unique place in the seventeenth century. He stands at the parting of the ways, between the extravagancies of the lyrical Jacobeans on the one hand, and the new formalism initiated by Waller on the other. He is not unaffected by either influence. The modish handling of the decasyllable couplet is very marked here and there. You have it, for instance, in the poem on Blake:

Bold Stayner leads; this fleet's designed by fate  
To give him laurel, as the last did plate.

And elsewhere, of course, he has conceits which cry aloud in their flagrancy. But his real affinities are with a greater than Waller or Suckling. Milton in those days "was like a star, and dwelt apart"; but of all who "called him friend," Marvell is the one who can claim the most of spiritual kinship. The very circumstances of their lives are curiously similar. Each left poetry for statecraft and polemic: for Milton the flowering time came late; for Marvell, never. And their poetic temper is one: it is the music of Puritanism,—the Puritanism of Spenser and Sidney, not uncultivated, not ungracious, not unsensuous even, but always with the same dominant note in it, of moral strength and moral purity. Marvell is a Puritan; but his spirit has not entered the prison-house, nor had the key turned on it there. He is a poet still, such as there have been few in any age. The lyric gift of Herrick he has not, nor Donne's incomparable subtlety and intensity of emotion; but for imaginative power, for decent melody, for that self-restraint of phrase which is the fair half of art, he must certainly hold high rank among his fellows. The clear sign of this self-restraint is his mastery over the octosyllable couplet, metre which in less skilful hands so readily becomes diffuse and wearisome.

Marvell writes love poems, but he is not essentially a love poet. He sings beautifully to Juliana and Chlora, but they themselves are only accidents in his song. His real passion—a most uncommon one in the seventeenth century—is for nature, exactly as we moderns mean nature, the great spiritual influence which deepens and widens life for us. How should the intoxication of meadow, and woodland, and garden, be better expressed than in these two lines—

Stumbling on melons, as I pass,  
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

unless indeed it be here—

I am the mower Damon, known  
Through all the meadows I have mown,  
On me the morn her dew distils  
Before her darling daffodils;  
And if at noon my toil me heat,  
The sun himself licks off my sweat;  
While, going home, the evening sweet  
In crowslip water bathes my feet.

These mower-idylls, never found in the anthologies, are among the most characteristic of Marvell's shorter poems. I cannot forbear to quote two stanzas from "The Mower to the Glowworms":

Ye living lamps, by whose dear light  
The nightingale doth sit so late,  
And studying all the summer night,  
Her matchless songs doth meditate.

Ye country comets, that portend  
Nor war, nor prince's funeral,  
Shining unto no higher end  
Than to presage the grass's fall.

Observe how Marvell makes of the nightingale a conscious artist, a winged *dira*. Elsewhere he speaks of her as sitting among the "squatted thorns," in order "to sing the trials of her voice."

I must needs see in Marvell something of a nature-philosophy strangely anticipative of George Meredith. For the one, as for the other, complete absorption in nature, the unreserved abandonment of self to the skyey influences, is the really true and sanative wisdom. Marvell describes his soul, freed of the body's vesture, perched like a bird upon the garden boughs—

Annihilating all that's made  
To a green thought in a green shade.

The same idea is to be found in the lines "Upon Appleton House," a poem which will repay careful study from all who wish to get at the secret of Marvell's genius. It shows him at his best—and at his worst, in the protracted conceit, whereby a garden, its flowers and its bees, are likened to a fort with a garrison. And here I am minded to enter a plea against the indiscriminate condemnation of conceits in poetry. After all, a conceit is only an analogy, a comparison, a revealing of likeness in things dissimilar, and therefore of the very essence of poetic imagination. Often it illumines, and where it fails it is not because it is a conceit, but because it is a bad conceit; because the thing compared is not beautiful in itself, or because the comparison is not flashed upon you, but worked out with such tedious elaboration as to be "merely fantastical." Many of Marvell's conceits are, in effect, bad; the well-known poem, "On a Drop of Dew," redeemed though it is by the last line and a half, affords a terrible example. But others are shining successes. Here is one, set in a haunting melody, as of Browning:

Gentler times for love are meant:  
Who for parting pleasures strain,  
Gather roses in the rain,  
Wet themselves and spoil their scent.

Next to green fields, Marvell is perhaps happiest in treating of death. His is the mixed mode of the Christian scholar, not all unpaganised, a lover of heaven, but a lover of the earthly life too. There is the epitaph on a nameless lady, with its splendid close:

Modest as morn, as mid-day bright,  
Gentle as evening, cool as night:  
'Tis true: but all too weakly said;  
'Twas more significant. She's dead.

There is the outburst on the death of the poet's hero, the greater Portector:

O human glory vain! O Death! O wings!  
O worthless world! O transitory things!

And to crown all, there are these lines, which remind me, for their felicities, their quaintness, and the organ-note in them, of the *Hydriotaphia*:

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near.  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
Thy long-preserved virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,

And into ashes all my lust:  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none, I think, do there embrace.

I have left myself no room to speak of the Satires. They are not a subject to dwell upon with pleasure. One sees that they were inevitable, that a man of Marvell's strenuous moral fibre, in all the corruption of the Restoration court, could not but break forth into savage invective; yet one regrets them, as one regrets the *Defensio* and *Eikonoklastes*.—EDMUND K. CHAMBERS, *Academy*, Sept. 17, 1892, pp. 230–31

One of the most original poets of the Stuart period, the new tentative features of the age in poetry, again, are clearly marked. The lyrical work belonging to his early life has often passages of imaginative quality, equally strong and delicate. If we exclude Milton, no one of that time touches sweeter or nobler lyrical notes; but he is singularly unequal; he flies high, but is not long on the wing. The characteristic Elizabethan smoothness of unbroken melody was now failing; the fanciful style of Donne, the seventeenth century *conchetti*, seized on Marvell too strongly, and replaced in him the earlier mythological landscape characteristic of the Renaissance.—FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE, *Landscape in Poetry*, 1896, p. 154

### Works

We copy a portion of Marvell's "Maiden lamenting for her Fawn"—which we prefer not only as a specimen of the elder poets, but in itself as a beautiful poem abounding in pathos, exquisitely delicate imagination and truthfulness, to anything of its species:

It is a wondrous thing how fleet  
'T was on those little silver feet,  
With what a pretty skipping grace  
It oft would challenge me the race,  
And when 't had left me far away,  
'T would stay, and run again, and stay;  
For it was nimbler much than hinds,  
And trod as if on the four winds.  
I have a garden of my own,  
But so with roses overgrown,  
And lilies that you would it guess  
To be a little wilderness;  
And all the spring-time of the year  
It only loved to be there.  
Among the beds of lilies I  
Have sought it oft where it should lie,  
Yet could not till itself would rise  
Find it, although before mine eyes.  
For in the flaxen lilies shade,  
It like a bank of lilies laid;  
Upon the roses it would feed  
Until its lips even seemed to bleed,  
And then to me 't would boldly trip,  
And print those roses on my lip,  
But all its chief delight was still  
With roses thus itself to fill,  
And its pure virgin limbs to fold  
In whitest sheets of lilies cold.  
Had it lived long it would have been  
Lilies without, roses within.

How truthful an air of lamentation hangs here upon every syllable! It pervades all. It comes over the sweet melody of the words—over the gentleness and grace which we fancy in the little maiden herself—even over the half-playful, half-petulant air with which she lingers on the beauties and good qualities of

her favorite—like the cool shadow of a summer cloud over a bed of lilies and violets, "and all sweet flowers." The whole is redolent with poetry of a very lofty order. Every line is an idea—conveying either the beauty and playfulness of the fawn, or the artlessness of the maiden, or her love, or her admiration, or her grief, or the fragrance and warmth and *appropriateness* of the little nest-like bed of lilies and roses which the fawn devoured as it lay upon them, and could scarcely be distinguished from them by the once happy little dāmsel who went to seek her pet with an arch and rosy smile on her face. Consider the great variety of truthful and delicate thought in the few lines we have quoted—the *wonder* of the maiden at the fleetness of her favorite—the "little silver feet"—the fawn challenging his mistress to a race with "a pretty skipping grace," running on before, and then, with head turned back, awaiting her approach only to fly from it again—can we not distinctly perceive all these things? How exceedingly vigorous, too, is the line,

And trod as if on the four winds!—

a vigor fully apparent only when we keep in mind the artless character of the speaker and the four feet of the favorite—one for each wind. Then consider the garden of "my own," so overgrown—entangled—with roses and lilies, as to be "a little wilderness"—the fawn, loving to be there, and there "only"—the maiden seeking it "where it *should* lie"—and not being able to distinguish it from the flowers until "itself would rise"—the lying among the lilies "like a bank of lilies"—the loving to "fill itself with roses,"

And its pure virgin limbs to fold  
In whitest sheets of lilies cold,

and these things being its "chief" delights—and then the pre-eminent beauty and naturalness of the concluding lines—whose very hyperbole only renders them more true to nature when we consider the innocence, the artlessness, the enthusiasm, the passionate grief, and more passionate admiration of the bereaved child—

Had it lived long, it would have been  
Lilies without—roses within.

—EDGAR ALLAN POE, "Old English Poetry" (1845), *Complete Works*, ed. James A. Harrison, Vol. 12, pp. 143–46

Andrew Marvel, a thoughtful and graceful poet, a masterly prose-writer and controversialist, a wit of the first water, and, above all, an incorruptible patriot, is thought to have had no mean hand in putting an end to the dynasty of the Stuarts. His wit helped to render them ridiculous, and his integrity added weight to the sting. The enmity, indeed, of such a man was in itself a reproach to them; for Marvel, though bred on the Puritan side, was no Puritan himself, nor a foe to any kind of reasonable and respectable government. He had served Cromwell with his friend Milton, as Latin Secretary, but would have aided Charles the Second as willingly, in his place in Parliament, had the king been an honest man instead of a pensioner of France. The story of his refusing a *carte blanche* from the king's treasurer, and then sending out to borrow a guinea, would be too well known to need allusion to it in a book like the present, if it did not contain a specimen of a sort of practical wit.

Marvel being pressed by the royal emissary to state what would satisfy his expectations, and finding that there was no other mode of persuading him that he had none, called in his servant to testify to his dining three days in succession upon one piece of mutton.

Even the wise and refined Marvel, however, was not free



from the coarseness of his age; and hence I find the same provoking difficulty as in the case of his predecessors, with regard to extracts from the poetical portion of his satire. With the prose I should not have been at a loss. But the moment these wits of old time began rhyming, they seem to have thought themselves bound to give the same after-dinner license to their fancy, as when they were called upon for a song. To read the noble ode on "Cromwell," in which such a generous compliment is paid to Charles the First,—the devout and beautiful one entitled "Bermuda," and the sweet overflowing fancies put into the mouth of the "Nymph lamenting the loss of her Faun,"—and then to follow up their perusal with some, nay most of the lampoons that were so formidable to Charles and his brother, you would hardly think it possible for the same man to have written both, if examples were not too numerous to the contrary. Fortunately for the reputation of Marvell's wit, with those who chose to become acquainted with it, he wrote a great deal better in prose than in verse, and the prose does not take the license of the verse.—LEIGH HUNT, *Wit and Humour*, 1846

Marvell's "Horatian Ode," the most truly classic in our language, is worthy of its theme. The same poet's Elegy, in parts noble, and everywhere humanly tender, is worth more than all Carlyle's biography as a witness to the gentler qualities of the hero, and of the deep affection that stalwart nature could inspire in hearts of truly masculine temper.—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, "Dryden" (1868), *Among My Books*, 1870, p. 19

By way of flourishing my Eyes, I have been looking into Andrew Marvell, an old favourite of mine—who led the way for Dryden in Verse, and Swift in Prose, and was a much better fellow than the last, at any rate.

Two of his lines in the Poem on "Appleton House," with its Gardens, Grounds, etc., run:

But most the *Hewel's* wonders are  
Who here has the *Holtstetster's* care.

The "Hewel" being evidently the Woodpecker, who, by tapping the Trees, etc., does the work of one who measures and gauges Timber; here, rightly or wrongly, called "Holtstetster." "Holt" one knows: but what is "stetster"? I do not find either this word or "Hewel" in Bailey or Halliwell. But "Hewel" may be a form of "Yaffil," which I read in some Paper that Tennyson had used for the Woodpecker in his Last Tournament.

This reminded me that Tennyson once said to me—some thirty years ago, or more—in talking of Marvell's "Coy Mistress," where it breaks in—

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged Chariot hurrying near, etc.

"That strikes me as Sublime—I can hardly tell why." Of course, this partly depends on its place in the Poem.—EDWARD FITZGERALD, Letter to W. A. Wright (Jan. 20, 1872)

As a poet Marvell is very unequal. He has depth of feeling, descriptive power, melody; his study of the classics could not fail to teach him form; sometimes we find in him an airy and tender grace which remind us of the lighter manner of Milton: but art with him was only an occasional recreation, not a regular pursuit; he is often slovenly, sometimes intolerably diffuse, especially when he is seduced by the facility of the octosyllabic couplet. He was also eminently afflicted with the gift of 'wit' or ingenuity, much prized in his day. His conceits vie with those of Donne or Cowley. He is capable of saying of the Halcyon:—

The viscous air where'er she fly  
Follows and sucks her azure dye;  
The jelling stream compacts below,  
If it might fix her shadow so.

And of Maria—

Maria such and so doth hush  
The world and through the evening rush.  
No new-born comet such a train  
Draws through the sky nor star new-slain.  
For straight those giddy rockets fail  
Which from the putrid earth exhale,  
But by her flames in heaven tried  
Nature is wholly vitrified.

'The Garden' is an English version of a poem written in Latin by Marvell himself. It may have gained by being cast originally in a classical mould, which would repel prolixity and extravagant conceits. In it Marvell has been said to approach Shelley: assuredly he shows a depth of poetic feeling wonderful in a political gladiator. The thoughts that dwell in 'a green shade' have never been more charmingly expressed.

'A Drop of Dew', like 'The Garden', was composed first in Latin. It is a conceit, but a pretty conceit, gracefully as well as ingeniously worked out, and forms a good example of the contrast between the philosophic poetry of those days, a play of intellectual fancy, and its more spiritual and emotional counterpart in our own time. The concluding lines, with their stroke of 'wit' about the manna are a sad fall.

'The Bermudas' was no doubt suggested by the history of the Oxenbridges. It is the 'holy and cheerful note' of a little band of exiles for conscience sake wafted by Providence in their 'small boat' to a home in a land of beauty.

'Young Love' is well known, and its merits speak for themselves. It is marred by the intrusion in the third and fourth stanzas of the fiercer and coarser passion.

The 'Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland' cannot be positively proved to be the work of Marvell. Yet we can hardly doubt that he was its author. The point of view and the sentiment, combining admiration of Cromwell with respect and pity for Charles, are exactly his: the classical form would be natural to him; and so would the philosophical conceit which disfigures the eleventh stanza. The epithet *indefatigable* applied to Cromwell recurs in a poem which is undoubtedly his; and so does the emphatic expression of belief that the hero could have been happier in private life, and that he sacrificed himself to the State in taking the supreme command. The compression and severity of style are not characteristic of Marvell; but they would be imposed on him in this case by his model. If the ode is really his, to take it from him would be to do him great wrong. It is one of the noblest in the English language, and worthily presents the figures and events of the great tragedy as they would impress themselves on the mind of an ideal spectator, at once feeling and dispassionate. The spirit of Revolution is described with a touch in the lines

Though Justice against Fate complain  
And plead the ancient rights in vain  
(But those do hold or break  
As men are strong or weak).

Better than anything else in our language this poem gives an idea of a grand Horatian measure, as well as of the diction and spirit of an Horatian ode.

Of the lines 'On Milton's *Paradise Lost*' some are vigorous; but they are chiefly interesting from having been written by one who had anxiously watched Milton's genius at work.

Marvell's amatory poems are cold; probably he was

passionless. His pastorals are in the false classical style, and of little value. 'Clorinda and Damon' is about the best of them, and about the best of that is

Near this a fountain's liquid bell  
Tinkles within the concave shell.

The Satires in their day were much admired and feared: they are now for the most part unreadable. The subjects of satire as a rule are ephemeral; but a great satirist like Juvenal or Dryden preserves his flies in the amber of his general sentiment. In Marvell's satires there is no amber: they are mere heaps of dead flies. Honest indignation against iniquity and lewdness in high places no doubt is there; but so are the meanness of Restoration politics and the dirtiness of Restoration thought. The curious may look at 'The Character of Holland,' the jokes in which are as good or as bad as ever, though the cannon of Monk and De Ruyter have ceased to roar; and in 'Britannia and Raleigh' the passage of which giving ironical advice to Charles II is a specimen of the banter which was deemed Marvell's peculiar gift, and in which Swift and Junius were his pupils.

Like Milton, Marvell wrote a number of Latin poems. One of them had the honour of being ascribed to Milton. —GOLDWIN SMITH, "Andrew Marvell," *The English Poets*, ed. Thomas Humphry Ward, 1880, Vol. 2, pp. 382–84

'He earned the glorious name,' says a biographer of Andrew Marvell (editing an issue of that poet's works, which certainly has its faults), 'of the British Aristides.' The portly dullness of the mind that could make such a phrase, and, having made, award it, is not, in fairness, to affect a reader's thought of Marvell himself nor even of his time. Under correction, I should think that the award was not made in his own age; he did but live on the eye of the day that cumbered its mouth with phrases of such foolish burden and made literature stiff with them. He, doubtless, has moments of mediocre pomp, but even then it is Milton that he touches, and not anything more common; and he surely never even heard a threat of the pass that the English tongue should come to but a little later on.

Andrew Marvell's political rectitude, it is true, seems to have been of a robustious kind; but his poetry, at its rare best, has a 'wild civility', which might puzzle the triumph of him, whoever he was, who made a success of this phrase of the 'British Aristides'. Nay, it is difficult not to think that Marvell too, who was 'of middling stature, roundish-faced, cherry-checked', a healthy and active rather than a spiritual Aristides, might himself have been somewhat taken by surprise at the encounters of so subtle a muse. He, as a garden-poet, expected the accustomed Muse to lurk about the fountain-heads, within the caves, and by the walks and the statues of the gods, keeping the tryst of a seventeenth-century convention in which there were certainly no surprises. And for fear of the commonplaces of those visits Marvell sometimes outdoes the whole company of garden-poets in the difficult labours of the fancy. The reader treads with him a 'maze' most resolutely intricate, and is more than once obliged to turn back having been too much puzzled on the way to a small, visible, plain, and obvious goal of thought.

And yet this poet two or three times did meet a Muse he had hardly looked for among the trodden paths; a spiritual creature had been waiting behind a laurel or an apple tree. You find him coming away from such a divine ambush a wilder and a simpler man. All his garden had been made ready for poetry, and poetry was indeed there, but in unexpected hiding and in a strange form, looking rather like a fugitive, shy of the poet

who was conscious of having her rules by heart, yet sweetly willing to be seen, for all her haste.

For it is only in those well-known poems, 'The Garden', translated from his own Latin, and 'The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn', in that less familiar piece 'The Mower against Gardens', in 'The Picture of T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers', with a few very brief passages in the course of duller verses, that Marvell comes into veritable possession of his own more interior powers—at least in the series of his garden lyrics. The political poems, needless to say, have an excellence of a different character and a higher degree. They have so much authentic dignity that 'the glorious name of the British Aristides' really seems duller when it is conferred as the earnings of the 'Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland' than when it inappropriately clings to Andrew Marvell, cherry-cheeked, caught in the tendrils of his vines and melons. He shall be, therefore, the British Aristides in those moments of midsummer solitude; at least, the heavy phrase shall then have the smile it never sought.

Marvell can be tedious in these gardens—tedious with every ingenuity, refinement, and assiduity of invention. When he intends to flatter the owner of the *Hill and Grove at Billborow*, he is most deliberately silly, not as the eighteenth century was silly, but with a peculiar innocence. Unconsciousness there was not, assuredly; but the artificial phrases of Marvell had never been used by a Philistine; the artifices are freshly absurd, the cowardice before the plain face of commonplace is not vulgar, there is an evident simple pleasure in the successful evasion of simplicity, and all the anxiety of the poet comes to a happy issue before our eyes. He commends the Billborow hill because 'the stiffest compass could not strike' a more symmetrical and equal semi-circle than its form presents, and he rebukes the absent mountains because they deform the earth and affright the heavens. This hill, he says, with a little better fancy, only 'strives to raise the plain'. Lord Fairfax of the soil are dedicated, and whose own merit they illustrate, is then said to be admirable for the modesty whereby, having a hill, he has also a clump of trees on the top, wherein to sequester the honours of eminence. It is not too much to say that the whole of this poem is untouched by poetry.

So is almost that equally ingenious piece, 'Appleton House', addressed to the same friend. It chanced that Appleton House was small, and out of this plain little fact the British Aristides contrives to turn a sedulous series of compliments with fair success and with a most guileless face. What natural humility in the householder who builds in proportion to his body, and is contented like the tortoise and the bird! Further on, however, it appears that the admired house had been a convent, and that to the dispossessed nuns was due the praise of proportion; they do not get it, in any form, from Marvell. A pretty passage follows, on the wasting of gardens, and a lament over the passing away of some earlier England. (. . .) But nothing here is of the really fine quality of 'The Picture of T.C.', or 'The Garden', or 'The Nymph Complaining for the Death of Her Fawn'.

In these three the presence of a furtive irony of the gentlest kind is the sure sign that they came of the visitings of the unlooked-for muse aforesaid. Marvell rallies his own 'Nymph', rallies his own soul for her clapping of silver wings in the solitude of summer trees; and more sweetly does he pretend to offer to the little girl 'T.C.' the prophetic homage of the habitual poets. (. . .)

The noble phrase of the 'Horatian Ode' is not recovered again high or low throughout Marvell's book, if we except one

single splendid and surpassing passage from 'The Definition of Love'. The hopeless lover speaks:

'Magnanimous despair alone  
Could show me so divine a thing.

'To his Coy Mistress' is the only piece, not already named, altogether fine enough for an anthology. The Satires are, of course, out of reach for their inordinate length. The celebrated Satire on Holland certainly makes the utmost of the fun to be easily found in the physical facts of the country whose people 'with mad labour fished the land to shore'. The Satire on *Flecknoe* makes the utmost of another joke we know of—that of famine. Flecknoe, it will be remembered, was a poet, and poor; but the joke of his bad verses was hardly needed, so fine does Marvell find that of his hunger. Perhaps there is no age of English satire that does not give forth the sound of that laughter unknown to savages—that craven laughter.—ALICE MEYNELL, "Andrew Marvell," *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 14, 1897

### HENRY RODGERS From "Andrew Marvell"

*Edinburgh Review*, January 1844, pp. 90–104

The characteristic attribute of Marvell's genius was unquestionably wit, in all the varieties of which—brief sententious sarcasm, fierce invective, light raillery, grave irony, and broad laughing humour—he seems to have been by nature almost equally fitted to excel. To say that he *has* equally excelled in all would be untrue, though striking examples of each might easily be selected from his writings. The activity with which his mind suggests ludicrous images and analogies is astonishing; he often absolutely startles us by the remoteness and oddity of the sources from which they are supplied, and by the unexpected ingenuity and felicity of his repartees.

His *forte*, however, appears to be a grave ironical banter, which he often pursues at such a length that there seems no limit to his fertility of invention. In his endless accumulation of ludicrous images and allusions, the untiring exhaustive ridicule with which he will play upon the same topics, he is unique; yet this peculiarity not seldom leads him to drain the generous wine even to the dregs—to spoil a series of felicitous ralleries by some far-fetched conceit or unpardonable extravagance.

But though Marvell was so great a master of wit, and especially of that caustic species which is appropriate to satirists, we will venture to say that he was singularly free from many of the faults which distinguish that irritable brotherhood. Unsparing and merciless as his ridicule is, contemptuous and ludicrous as are the lights in which he exhibits his opponent; nay, further, though his invectives are not only often terribly severe, but (in compliance with the spirit of the age) often grossly coarse and personal, it is still impossible to detect a single particle of malignity. His general tone is that of broad laughing banter, or of the most cutting invective; but he appears equally devoid of malevolence in both. In the one, he seems amusing himself with opponents too contemptible to move his anger; in the other, to lay on with the stern imperturbable gravity of one who is performing the unpleasant but necessary functions of a public executioner. This freedom from the usual faults of satirists may be traced to several causes; partly to the *bonhommie* which, with all his talents for satire, was a peculiar characteristic of the man, and which rendered him as little disposed to take offence, and as placable when it

was offered, as any man of his time; partly to the integrity of his nature, which, while it prompted him to champion any cause in which justice had been outraged or innocence wronged, effectually preserved from the wanton exercise of his wit for the gratification of malevolence; partly, perhaps principally, to the fact, that both the above qualities restricted him to encounters in which he had personally no concern. If he carried a keen sword, it was a most peaceable and gentlemanly weapon; it never left the scabbard except on the highest provocation, and even then, only on behalf of others. His magnanimity, self-control, and good temper, restrained him from avenging any insult offered to himself; his chivalrous love of justice instantly roused all the lion within him on behalf of the injured and oppressed. It is perhaps well for Marvell's fame that his quarrels were not personal: had they been so, it is hardly probable that such powers of sarcasm and irony should have been so little associated with bitterness of temper.

This freedom from malignity is highly honourable to him. In too many cases it must be confessed that wit has been sadly dissociated from amiability and generosity. It is true, indeed, that there is no necessary connexion between that quality of mind and the malevolent passions, as numberless illustrious examples sufficiently prove. But where wit is conjoined with malevolence, the latter more effectually displays itself; and even where there is originally no such conjunction, wit is almost always combined with that constitutional irritability of genius which is so readily gratified, and which, by gratifying, it transforms into something worse. Half the tendencies of our nature pass into habits only from the facilities which encourage their development. We will venture to say, that there is not a tithe of the quarrels in the world that there used to be when all men were accustomed to wear arms; and we may rest assured, that many a waspish temper has become so, principally from being in possession of the weapon of satire. Not seldom, too, it must with sorrow be admitted, the most exquisite sense of the ridiculous has been strangely combined with a morbid, gloomy, saturnine temperament, which looks on all things with a jaundiced imagination, and surveys human infirmities and foibles with feelings not more remote from those of compassionate benevolence than of good-humoured mirth. Happy when, as in the case of Cowper, the influence of a benign heart and unfeigned humility, prevents this tendency from degenerating into universal malevolence. There are few things more shockingly incongruous than the ghastly union of wit and misanthropy. Wit should be ever of open brow, joyous, and frank-hearted. Even the severest satire may be delicious reading, when penned with the *bonhommie* of Horace, or of Addison, or the equanimity of Plato, or of Pascal. Without pretending these immortal writers, we firmly believe he had as much kindly feeling as any of them. Unhappily the two by no means go together; there may be the utmost refinement without a particle of good-nature; and a great deal of good-nature without any refinement. It were easy to name writers, who with the most exquisite grace of diction can as little disguise the malice of their nature, as Marvell, with all his coarseness, can make us doubt his benevolence. Through the veil of their language (of beautiful texture, but too transparent) we see chagrin poorly simulating mirth; anger struggling to appear contempt, and failing; scorn writhing itself into an aspect of ironical courtesy, but with grim distortion in the attempt; and sarcasms urged by the impulses which, under different circumstances, and in another country, would have prompted to the use of the stiletto.

It is impossible, indeed, not to regret the coarseness, often amounting to buffoonery, of Marvell's wit; though, from the

consideration just urged, we regard it with the more forbearance. Other palliations have been adverted to, derived from the character of his adversaries, the haste with which he wrote, and the spirit of the age. The last is the strongest. The tomahawk and the scalping-knife were not yet discreditable weapons, or thrown aside as fit only for savage warfare; and it is even probable, that many of the things which we should regard as gross insults would then pass as pardonable jests. It is difficult for us, of course, to imagine that callousness which scarcely regards any thing as an insult but what is enforced by the *argumentum baculinum*. Between the feelings of our forefathers and our own, there seems to have been as great a difference as between those of the farmer and the clergyman, so ludicrously described by Cowper, in his 'Yearly Distress':

O, why are farmers made so coarse,  
Or clergy made so fine?  
A kick that scarce would move a horse,  
May kill a sound divine.

The haste with which Marvell wrote must also be pleaded as an excuse for the inequalities of his works. It was not the age in which authors elaborated and polished with care, or submitted with a good grace to the *limæ labor*; and if it had been, Marvell allowed himself no leisure for the task. The second part of the *Rehearsal*, for example, was published in the same year in which Parker's *Reproof* appeared. We must profess our belief, that no small portion of his writings stand in great need of this apology. Exhibiting, as they do, amazing vigour and fertility, the wit is by no means always of the first order.

We must not quit the subject of his wit, without presenting the reader with some few of his pleasantries; premising that they form but a very small part of those which we had marked in the perusal of his works; and that, whatever their merit, it were easy to find others far superior to them, if we could afford space for long citations.

Ironically bewailing the calamitous effects of printing, our author exclaims—'O Printing! how hast thou disturbed the peace of mankind? Lead, when moulded into bullets, is not so mortal as when founded into letters. There was a mistake, sure, in the story of Cadmus; and the serpents' teeth which he sowed, were nothing else but the letters which he invented.' Parker having declared, in relation to some object of his scurrility, that he had written, 'not to impair his esteem,' but 'to correct his scribbling humour,' Marvell says—'Our author is as courteous as lightning; and can melt the sword without ever hurting the scabbard.' After alleging that his opponent often has a byplay of malignity even when bestowing commendations, he remarks—'The author's end was only railing. He could never have induced himself to praise one man but in order to rail on another. He never oils his hone but that he may whet his razor, and that not to shave but to cut men's throats.' On Parker's absurd and bombastic exaggeration of the merits and achievements of Bishop Bramhall, Marvell wittily says—'Any worthy man may pass through the world unquestioned and safe, with a moderate recommendation; but when he is thus set off and bedaubed with rhetoric, and embroidered so thick that you cannot discern the ground, it awakens naturally (and not altogether unjustly) interest, curiosity, and envy. For all men pretend a share in reputation, and love not to see it engrossed and monopolized; and are subject to enquire (as of great estates suddenly got) whether he came by all this honestly, or of what credit the person is that tells the story? And the same hath happened as to this bishop . . . Men seeing him furbished up in so martial accoutrements, like another Odo, Bishop of Baieux, and having never before heard of his

prowess, begin to reflect what giants he defeated, and what damsels he rescued . . . After all our author's bombast, when we have searched all over, we find ourselves bilked in our expectation; and he hath created the Bishop, like a St. Christopher in the Popish churches, as big as ten porters, and yet only employed to sweat under the burden of an infant.' Of the paroxysms of rage with which Parker refers to one of his adversaries, whom he distinguishes by his initials, Marvell says—'As oft as he does but name those two first letters, he is, like the island of Fayal, on fire in threescore and ten places;' and affirms; 'that if he were of that fellow's diet here about town, that epicurizes on burning coals, drinks healths in scalding brimstone, scratches the glasses for his dessert, and draws his breath through glowing tobacco-pipes, he could not show more flame than he always does upon that subject.' Parker, in a passage of unequalled absurdity, having represented Geneva as on the south side of the lake Leman, Marvell ingeniously represents the blunder as the subject of discussion in a private company, where various droll solutions are proposed, and where he, with exquisite irony, pretends to take Parker's part. 'I,' says Marvell, 'that was still on the doubtful and excusing part, said, that to give the right situation of a town, it was necessary first to know in what position the gentleman's head then was when he made his observation, and that might cause a great diversity—as much as this came to.' Having charged his adversary with needlessly obtruding upon the world some petty matters which concerned only himself, from an exaggerated idea of his own importance, Marvell drolly says—'When a man is once possessed with this fanatic kind of spirit, he imagines if a shoulder do but itch that the world has galled it with leaning on it so long, and therefore he wisely shrugs to remove the globe to the other. If he chance but to sneeze, he salutes himself, and courteously prays that the foundations of the earth be not shaken. And even so the author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, ever since he crept up to be but the weathercock of a steeple, trembles and creaks at every puff of wind that blows him about, as if the Church of England were falling, and the state tottered.' After ludicrously describing the effect of the first part of the *Rehearsal* in exacerbating all his opponent's evil passions, he remarks—'He seems not to fit at present for the 'archdeacon's seat, as to take his place below in the church amongst the *energumeni*.' Parker had charged him with a sort of plagiarism for having quoted so many passages out of his book. On this Marvell observes—'It has, I believe, indeed angered him, as it has been no small trouble to me; but how can I help it? I wish he would be pleased to teach me an art (for, if any man in the world, he hath it) to answer a book without turning over the leaves, or without citing passages. In the mean time, if to transcribe so much out of him must render a man, as he therefore styles me, a "scandalous plagiarist," I must plead guilty; but by the same law, whoever shall either be witness or prosecutor in behalf of the King, for treasonable words, may be indicted for a highwayman.' Parker having viewed some extravaganzas of Marvell's riotous wit as if worthy of serious comment, the latter says—'Whereas I only threw it out like an empty cask to amuse him, knowing that I had a whale to deal with, and lest he should overset me; he runs away with it as a very serious business, and so moyles himself with tumbling and tossing it, that he is in danger of melting his spermaceti. A cork, I see, will serve without a hook; and, instead of a harping-iron, this grave and ponderous creature may, like eels, be taken and pulled up only with bobbing.' After exposing in a strain of uncommon eloquence the wickedness and folly of suspending the peace of the nation on so frivolous a matter as 'ceremonial,' he says 'For a prince to

adventure all upon such a cause, is like Duke Charles of Burgundy, who fought three battles for an imposition upon sheep-skins; and 'for a clergyman to offer at persecution upon this ceremonial account, is (as is related of one of the Popes) to justify his indignation for his peacock, by the example of God's anger for eating the forbidden fruit.' He justifies his severity towards Parker in a very ludicrous way—'No man needs letters of marque against one that is an open pirate of other men's credit. I remember within our own time one Simons, who robbed always on the briccole—that is to say, never interrupted the *passengers*, but still set upon the *thieves themselves*, after, like Sir John Falstaff, they were gorged with a booty; and by this way—so ingenious that it was scarce criminal—he lived secure and unmolested all his days, with the reputation of a judge rather than of a highwayman.' The sentences we have cited are all taken from the *Rehearsal*. We had marked many more from his 'Divine in Mode,' and other writings, but have no space for them.

But he who supposes Marvell to have been nothing but a wit, simply on account of the predominance of that quality, will do him injustice. It is the common lot of such men, in whom some one faculty is found on a great scale, to fail of part of the admiration due to other endowments; possessed in more moderate degree, indeed, but still in a degree far from ordinary. We are subject to the same illusion in gazing on mountain scenery. Fixing our eye on some solitary peak, which towers far above the rest, the groups of surrounding hills look positively diminutive, though they may, in fact, be all of great magnitude.

This illusion is further fostered by another circumstance in the case of great wits. As the object of wit is to amuse, the owl-like gravity of thousands of common readers, would decide that wit and wisdom must dwell apart, and that the humorous writer must necessarily be a trifling one. For similar reasons, they look with sage suspicion on every signal display, either of fancy or passion; think a splendid illustration nothing but the ambushade of a fallacy, and strong emotion as tantamount to a confession of unsound judgment. As Archbishop Whately has well remarked, such men having been warned that 'ridicule is not the test of truth,' and that 'wisdom and wit are not the same thing, distrust every thing that can possibly be regarded as witty; not having judgment to perceive the combination, when it occurs, of wit and sound reasoning. The ivy wreath completely conceals from their view the point of the *thyrsus*.'

The fact is, that all Marvell's endowments were on a large scale, though his wit greatly predominated. His judgment was remarkably clear and sound, his logic by no means contemptible, his sagacity in practical matters great, his talents for business apparently of the first order, and his industry indefatigable. His wit, would, if sufficiently cultivated, have made him a poet considerably above mediocrity: though chiefly alive to the ludicrous, he was by no means insensible to the beautiful. We cannot, indeed, bestow all the praise on his Poems which some of his critics have assigned them. They are very plentifully disfigured by the conceits and quaintnesses of the age, and as frequently want grace of expression and harmony of numbers. Of the compositions which Captain Thompson's indiscriminate admiration would fain have affiliated to his Muse, the two best are proved—one not to be his, and the other of doubtful origin. The former, beginning—

When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,

is a well-known composition of Dr. Watts; the other, the ballad of 'William and Margaret,' is of dubious authorship. Though probably of earlier date than the age of Mallet, its reputed

author—the reasons which Captain Thompson gives for assigning it to Marvell, are altogether unsatisfactory. Still, there are unquestionably many of his genuine poems which indicate a rich, though ill-cultivated fancy; and in some few stanzas there is no little grace of expression. The little piece on the Pilgrim Fathers, entitled the 'Emigrants,' the fanciful 'Dialogue between 'Body and Soul,' the 'Dialogue between the Resolved Soul and Created Pleasure,' and the 'Coronet,' all contain lines of much elegance and sweetness. It is in his satirical poems, that, as might be expected from the character of his mind, his fancy appears most vigorous; though these are largely disfigured by the characteristic defects of the age, and many, it must be confessed, are entirely without merit. With two or three lines from his ludicrous satire on Holland, we cannot refrain from amusing the reader. Some of the strokes of humour are irresistibly ridiculous:

Holland, that scarce deserves the name of land,  
As but the off-scouring of the British sand;  
And so much earth as was contributed  
By English pilots when they heav'd the lead;  
Or what by th' ocean's slow alluvion fell,  
Of shipwreck'd cockle and the muscle-shell;  
This indigested vomit of the sea  
Fell to the Dutch by just propriety.  
Glad then, as miners who have found the ore,  
They, with mad labour fish'd the land to shore;  
And dived as desperately for each piece  
Of earth, as if it had been of ambergris;  
Collecting anxiously small loads of clay,  
Less than what building swallows bear away;  
For as with pigmies, who best kills the crane,  
Among the hungry he that treasures grain,  
Among the blind the one-eyed blinkard reigns,  
So rules among the drowned be that drains,  
Not who first see the rising sun commands:  
But who could first discern the rising lands.  
Who best could know to pump an earth so leak,  
Him they their lord, and country's father, speak.

His Latin poems are amongst his best. The composition often shows no contemptible skill in that language; and here and there the diction and versification are such as would not have absolutely disgraced his great coadjutor, Milton. In all the higher poetic qualities, there can of course be no comparison between them.

With such a mind we as we have ascribed to him—and we think his works fully justify what we have said—with such aptitudes for business, soundness of judgment, powers of reasoning, and readiness of sarcasm, one might have anticipated that he would have taken some rank as an orator. Nature, it is certain, had bestowed upon him some of the most important intellectual endowments of one. It is true, indeed, that with his principles and opinions he would have found himself strangely embarrassed in addressing any parliament in the days of Charles II., and stood but a moderate chance of obtaining a candid hearing. But we have no proof that he ever made the trial. His parliamentary career in this respect resembled that of a much greater man—Addison, who, with wit even superior to his own, and with much more elegance, if not more strength of mind, failed signally as a speaker.

Marvell's learning must have been very extensive. His education was superior; and, as we have seen from the testimony of Milton, his industry had made him master, during his long sojourn on the Continent, of several continental languages. It is certain also, that he continued to be a student all his days; his works bear ample evidence of his wide



and miscellaneous reading. He appears to have been well versed in most branches of literature, though he makes no pedantic display of erudition, and in this respect is favourably distinguished from many of his contemporaries; yet he cites his authors with the familiarity of a thorough scholar. In the department of history he appears to have been particularly well read; and derives his witty illustrations from such remote and obscure sources, that Parker did not hesitate to avow his belief that he had sometimes drawn on his invention for them. In his Reply, Marvell justifies himself in all the alleged instances, and takes occasion to show that his opponent's learning is as hollow as all his other pretensions.

The style of Marvell is very unequal. Though often rude and unpolished, it abounds in negligent felicities, presents us with frequent specimens of vigorous idiomatic English, and now and then attains no mean degree of elegance. It bears the stamp of the revolution which was then passing on the language; it is a medium between the involved and periodic structure so common during the former half of the century, and which is ill adapted to a language possessing so few inflections as ours, and that simplicity and harmony which were not fully attained till the age of Addison. There is a very large infusion of short sentences, and the structure in general is as unlike that of his great colleague's prose as can be imagined. Many of Marvell's pages flow with so much ease and grace, as to be not unworthy of a later period. To that great revolution in style to which we have just alluded, he must in no slight degree have contributed; for, little as his works are known or read now, the most noted of them were once universally popular, and perused with pleasure, as Burnet testifies, by every body, 'from the king to the tradesman.'

Numerous examples show, that it is almost impossible for even the rarest talents to confer permanent popularity on books which turn on topics of temporary interest, however absorbing at the time. If Pascal's transcendent genius has been unable to rescue even the *Lettres Provinciales* from partial oblivion, it is not to be expected that Marvell should have done more for the *Rehearsal Transposed*. Swift, it is true, about half a century later, has been pleased, while expressing this opinion, to make an exception in favour of Marvell. 'There is indeed,' says he, 'an exception, when any great genius thinks it worth his while to expose a foolish piece; so we still read Marvell's answer to Parker with pleasure, though the book it answers be sunk long ago.' But this statement is scarcely applicable now. It is true that the 'Rehearsal' is occasionally read by the curious; but it is by the resolutely curious alone.

Yet assuredly he has not lived in vain who has successfully endeavoured to abate the nuisances of his own time, or to put down some insolent abettor of vice and corruption. Nor is it possible in a world like this, in which there is such continuity of causes and effects—where one generation transmits its good and its evil to the next, and the consequences of each revolution in principles, opinions, or tastes, are propagated along the whole line of humanity—to estimate either the degree or perpetuity of the benefits conferred by the complete success of works even of transient interest. By modifying the age in which he lives, a man may indirectly modify the character of many generations to come. His works may be forgotten while their effects survive.

Marvell's history affords a signal instance of the benefits which may be derived from well-directed satire. There are cases in which it may be a valuable auxiliary to decency, virtue, and religion, where argument and persuasion both fail. Many, indeed, doubt both the legitimacy of the weapon itself, and the success with which it can be employed. But facts are

against them. To hope that it can ever supply the place of religion as a radical cure for vice or immorality, would be chimerical; but there are many pernicious customs, violations of propriety, ridiculous, yet tolerated, follies, which religion can scarcely touch without endangering her dignity. To assail them is one of the most legitimate offices of satire; nor have we the slightest doubt that the 'Spectator' did more to abate many of the prevailing follies and pernicious customs of the age, than a thousand homilies. This, however, may be admitted, and yet it may be said that it does not reach the case of Marvell and Parker. Society, it may be argued, will bear the exposure of its own evils with great equanimity, and perhaps profit by it—no individual being pointed at, and each being left to digest his own lesson, under the pleasant conviction that it was designed principally for his neighbours. As corporations will perpetrate actions of which each individual member would be ashamed; so corporations will listen to charges which every individual member would regard as insults. But no man, it is said, is likely to be reclaimed from error or vice by being made the object of merciless ridicule. All this we believe most true. But then it is not to be forgotten, that it may not be the satirist's object to reclaim the individual—he may have little hope of that; it may be for the sake of those whom he maligns and injures. When the exorcist takes Satan in hand, it is not because he is an Origenist, and 'believes in the conversion of the devil,' but in pity to the supposed victims of his malignity. It is much the same when a man like Marvell undertakes to satirize a man like Parker. Even such a man may be abashed and confounded, though he cannot be reclaimed; and if so, the satirist gains his object, and society gets the benefit. Experience fully shows us that there are many men who will be restrained by ridicule long after they are lost to virtue, and that they are accessible to shame when they are utterly inaccessible to argument.

This was just the good that Marvell effected. He made Parker, it is true, more furious; but he diverted, if he could not turn the tide of popular feeling; and thus prevented mischief. Parker, and others like him, were doing all they could to inflame angry passions, to revive the most extravagant pretensions of tyranny, and to preach up another crusade against the Nonconformists. Marvell's books were a conductor to the dangerous fluid; if there was any explosion at all, it was an explosion of merriment. 'He had all the laughs on his side,' says Burnet. In Charles II.'s reign, there were few who belonged to any other class; and then, as now, men found it impossible to laugh and be angry at the same time. It is our firm belief, that Marvell did more to humble Parker, and neutralize the influence of his party, by the *Rehearsal Transposed*, than he could have done by writing half a dozen folios of polemical divinity; just as Pascal did more to unmask the Jesuits and damage their cause by his *Provincial Letters*, than had been effected by all the efforts of all their other opponents put together.

But admirable as were Marvell's intellectual endowments, it is his moral worth, after all, which constitutes his principal claim on the admiration of posterity, and which sheds a redeeming lustre on one of the darkest pages of the English annals. Inflexible integrity was the basis of it—integrity by which he has not unworthily earned the glorious name of the 'British Aristides.' With talents and acquirements which might have justified him in aspiring to almost any office, if he could have disburdened himself of his conscience; with wit which, in that frivolous age, was a surer passport to fame than any amount either of intellect or virtue, and which, as we have seen, mollified even the monarch himself in spite of his prejudices; Marvell preferred poverty and independence to riches

and servility. He had learned the lesson, practised by few in that age, of being content with little—so that he preserved his conscience. He could be poor, but he could not be mean; could starve, but could not cringe. By economizing in the articles of pride and ambition, he could afford to keep what their votaries were compelled to retrench, the necessities, or rather the luxuries, of integrity and a good conscience. Neither menaces, nor caresses, nor bribes, nor poverty, nor distress, could induce him to abandon his integrity; or even to take an office in which it might be tempted or endangered. He only who has arrived at this pitch of magnanimity, has an adequate security for his public virtue. He who cannot subsist upon a little; who has not learned to be content with such things as he has, and even to be content with almost nothing; who has not learned to familiarize his thoughts to poverty, much more readily than he can familiarize them to dishonour, is not yet free from peril. Andrew Marvell, as his whole course proves, had done this. But we shall not do full justice to his public integrity, if we do not bear in mind the corruption of the age in which he lived; the manifold apostasies amidst which he retained his conscience; and the effect which such wide-spread profigacy must have had in making thousands almost sceptical as to whether there were such a thing as public virtue at all. Such a relaxation in the code of speculative morals, is one of the worst results of general profigacy in practice. But Andrew Marvell was not to be deluded; and amidst corruption perfectly unparalleled, he still continued untainted. We are accustomed to hear of his virtue as a truly Roman virtue, and so it was; but it was something more. Only the best pages of Roman history can supply a parallel: there was no Cincinnatus in those ages of her shame which alone can be compared with those of Charles II. It were easier to find a Cincinnatus during the era of the English Commonwealth, than an Andrew Marvell in the age of Commodus.

The integrity and patriotism which distinguished him in his relations to the Court, also marked all his public conduct. He was evidently most scrupulously honest and faithful in the discharge of his duty to his constituents; and, as we have seen almost punctilious in guarding against any thing which could tarnish his fair fame, or defile his conscience. On reviewing the whole of his public conduct, we may well say that he attained his wish, expressed in the lines which he has written in imitation of a chorus in the *Thyestes* of Seneca:

Climb at court for me that will—  
Tottering favour's pinnacle;  
All I seek is to lie still.  
Settled in some secret nest,  
In calm leisure let me rest,  
And far off the public stage,  
Pass away my silent age.  
Thus, when without noise, unknown,  
I have lived out all my span,  
I shall die without a groan,  
An old honest countryman.

He seems to have been as amiable in his private as he was estimable in his public character. So far as any documents throw light upon the subject, the same integrity appears to have belonged to both. He is described as of a very reserved and quiet temper; but, like Addison, (whom in this respect as in some few others he resembled,) exceedingly facetious and lively amongst his intimate friends. His disinterested championship of others, is no less a proof of his sympathy with the oppressed than of his abhorrence of oppression; and many pleasing traits of amiability occur in his private correspondence, as well as in his writings. On the whole, we think that

Marvell's epitaph, strong as the terms of panegyric are, records little more than the truth; and that it was not in the vain spirit of boasting, but in the honest consciousness of virtue and integrity, and that he himself concludes a letter to one of his correspondents in the words—

Disce, puer, virtutem ex me, verumque laborem;  
Fortunam ex aliis.

JOHN ORMSBY  
From "Andrew Marvell"

*Cornhill Magazine*, July 1869, pp. 21–40

When Marvell's name occurs in any work on English literature or any collection of old English poetry, the mention is generally followed by the remark that as a poet he has not received full justice. In his lifetime he does not appear to have ranked as a poet at all, but that was because he himself laid no claim to the rank. The only productions of his in verse that appeared in print during his life were three or four commendatory pieces prefixed to works of friends after the friendly fashion of the time, and some political satires which were necessarily anonymous and unacknowledged. If with posterity he has not held his due place among the minor poets of his time, one cause, undoubtedly, is that he already occupies, in another character, a higher position in the eyes of the world. The "mind's eye" is so far like that of the body, that it finds a difficulty in seeing at once more than one side of any object, and having settled itself to one point of view, it is slow to take up any other. It was Marvell's fate to stand out before the eyes of succeeding generations as an example of purity and integrity in a corrupt age, and the brightness of his virtues has in some degree outshone the lustre of his genius. Had he been less brilliant as a patriot, he would have been more conspicuous as a poet.

It would be unjust, however, to represent Marvell as an altogether neglected poet. Up to the present time five editions of his poems have appeared, a number which implies a greater posthumous popularity than any of his contemporaries obtained.—Milton, Butler, and Dryden excepted. The first, dated 1681, three years after his death, is clearly a mere bookseller's speculation, published without the authority or sanction of his family or friends, and without the editorial supervision of any one in any way qualified by acquaintance with the author or with his works. The surreptitious character of the collection is shown by the impudent address to the "ingenious reader," pretending to come from one "Mary Marvell," who certifies that the contents are printed according to the exact copies in the handwriting of her "late dear husband," found after his death among his other papers. Marvell was never married; and Cooke, the editor of the next edition of his works, gives us to understand that his papers were sold by the woman in whose house he lodged. The volume is a thin folio of 126 pages, which,—at least in every copy we have seen,—are made by an ingenious fault in the pagination to appear 140 in number. It is, however, fairly printed, and is embellished with a portrait somewhat in the manner of Faithorne, though without the finish characteristic of his work. Marvell's violent satires on the court and the court-party are, of course, excluded. Eight years afterwards, when the revolution was an accomplished fact, these, which up to that time had circulated only in manuscript, or else in clandestine printed tracts, came out with the author's name attached in that

curious collection, the *Poems on Affairs of State*, so necessary to every one who wishes to study the history, politics, manners, or scandals of the reigns of the two last Stuarts. In 1726 Curll published a very neat duodecimo edition in two parts: the first containing very nearly the contents of the folio; the second, the political satires, some pieces of Latin and Greek verse, and a selection from Marvell's letters. This was edited, with some care, by Thomas Cooke, who claims to have corrected the errors of the folio, and to have been careful to exclude some pieces which there, and also in the *Poems on Affairs of State*, have been wrongly attributed to the author. He has, however, reproduced everything in the folio except a dozen Latin verses on the Louvre, and every one of the pieces ascribed to Marvell in the *State Poems*, two of which are certainly not by his hand. The two we refer to are *Oceana and Britannia*, and *Hodge's Vision from the Monument*, both of which contain allusions to events that occurred after Marvell's death, especially events in connection with the so-called Popish plot, the execution of Coleman, Wakeman's trial, and the browbeating of the witnesses by Scroggs and Jones. The plot was disclosed on the 12th of August, 1678, and Marvell died four days afterwards, its first victim in the opinion of many at the time; for the suddenness of his death, and the absence of any perceptible cause, were held to be conclusive evidence of poison. The suspicion had no foundation in fact, but at such a time it was not unnatural. Marvell was a marked man as a foremost champion of Protestantism, and an uncompromising enemy of the Popish party which had, or was supposed to have, its hopes set upon the Duke of York; and no name was more likely than his to hold a high place on a roll of obnoxious Protestants to be removed on the earliest opportunity—a document the existence of which was firmly believed in by a large majority. The satires in question belong so nearly to Marvell's time, and, though wanting in the wit, pungency, and earnestness which mark all his writings of the same sort, bear such a general resemblance to his pieces in style and manner, that the error is, perhaps, somewhat excusable. It deserves notice, however, as it is one which has been repeated in every subsequent edition. In 1772, Davies, the friend of Johnson and Boswell, published an exact reprint of Cooke's edition and in 1776 Captain Edward Thompson produced his edition of the works of Marvell in prose and verse in three imposing-looking quarto volumes. This is, in some respects, the most valuable, in others the most worthless of all. Captain Thompson's only qualification for the task he undertook was an enthusiastic admiration for the personal character of his author. His zeal was abundant; it would be more correct to say superabundant; but in judgment, literary taste, and a comprehension of the duties of an editor he was entirely deficient. He had the assistance of a collection of documents previously made with a view to a complete edition of Marvell's works, among which was a manuscript book partly in Marvell's handwriting, containing, with other pieces, the well-known version of the 19th Psalm,—

The spacious firmament on high;  
that of the 114th Psalm—

When Israel freed from Pharaoh's hand;  
the hymn beginning with

When all thy mercies, O my God,  
My rising soul surveys;

and also the ballad of *William and Margaret*. It is not made to appear that these pieces were in Marvell's writing, but the discovery of them in a book which was once in Marvell's possession and contained pieces in his writing, was, to Captain

Thompson's mind, full and sufficient proof that they were his productions. As the claim thus set up has been recently reasserted, at least as regards the first-mentioned piece, by an authority so well qualified to give an opinion on literary questions as the *Athenæum*, it is necessary to state the case somewhat at length. We need scarcely remind the reader that the three first pieces of poetry appeared originally in the *Spectator*, and that the second of them was, a few years later, acknowledged and published as his own by Dr. Watts. Now it is incredible that a man of Dr. Watts's character, a man too so scrupulous in acknowledging the most trifling obligations to other writers, could have purloined an entire poem in so barefaced a manner. The other two have been always attributed to Addison. They belong to a series of "pieces of divine poetry," to use the *Spectator's* favourite description, which appeared from time to time in the Saturday numbers written by Addison. We have the *Spectator's* word for it that they are all by the same author. "I shall never," he says in No. 461, "publish verse on that day (Saturday) but what was written by the same hand." Therefore, if we are to believe both Captain Thompson and the *Spectator*, not only these two but also the version of the 23rd Psalm, in No. 441

The Lord my pasture shall prepare,  
And lead me with a Shepherd's care;

and the verses in Nos. 489 and 513, beginning with

How are thy servants blest, O Lord!

and—

When rising from the bed of death—

are all the productions of Marvell. This is an attempt to prove too much. It in effect charges Addison, or the *Spectator*, with appropriating, not a fugitive piece, but a collection of pieces by an author of whom something at least must have been known to those who had obtained access to his writings. The *Athenæum* considers that the language of Addison in the essays in which these pieces are introduced favours the idea that he was not their author. We confess to holding an entirely opposite opinion: that the manner in which Addison introduced these pieces would be, to call it by the very mildest term, disingenuous, if he himself were not the author of them. That he was the author, however, we have, apart from probabilities and internal evidence, the statement of Pope. "He had," says Pope, as reported in *Spence's Anecdotes*, "a design of translating all the Psalms for the use of churches. Five or six of them that he did translate were published in the *Spectators*." Two only of the five can be strictly called translations; but it is, of course, to these five pieces that Pope alludes. As regards the ballad of *William and Margaret* the case is simpler. It made its first appearance in print in 1724, in Aaron Hill's *Plain Dealer*, and also in the collection called *The Hive*, and was afterwards owned and printed by Mallet among his poems, with some slight alterations, and the explanation that it had been suggested to him by the fragment of the old ballad quoted in Fletcher's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*. Plagiarism has, as Dr. Johnson says, "been boldly charged but never proved" against Mallet in this matter; but, whoever the writer may have been, to any one conversant with old poetry it will be plain that he was a writer of the eighteenth and not of the seventeenth century. The same may be said of another ballad in *The Hive* collection, *The Despairing Shepherd*, which is also claimed for Marvell by Captain Thompson; and indeed, notwithstanding the opinion of the *Athenæum*, we think the poems printed in the *Spectator* bear unmistakably the stamp of the same age. It is necessary to go into these particulars because the claims set up for Marvell must stand or fall together. In vulgar parlance

they “row in the same boat,” and if one sinks all sink. Against those claims there is the improbability of three men, Addison, Watts, and Mallet, all lighting upon the same mine of unpublished manuscript, and each pilfering and publishing as his own what suited him best. As we said before, Captain Thompson effectually disproves his case by attempting to prove too much. There is also the improbability of all of these pieces escaping the notice of a reasonably painstaking editor like Cooke, who was, besides, in communication with and assisted by members and friends of Marvell’s family. All these poems had been already many times printed and published at the time when Cooke’s edition appeared, and it is, to say the least, extremely unlikely that persons interested in Marvell’s name, and in possession of evidence to prove his title to them, should have allowed them to pass unchallenged. From the account, too, which Captain Thompson gives of the manuscript book in which he found these pieces, it would seem that its existence and contents could scarcely have been unknown to Cooke. Captain Thompson had it from Mr. Raikes, who had it from Mr. Nettleton, who was the son of Marvell’s niece, and Marvell’s two nieces are specially thanked by Cooke for having furnished him with manuscripts and materials for his memoir and edition. Against all this we have nothing but the personal conviction of an uncritical sea-captain. There is nothing to show that the book was anything more than a kind of poetical album, originally, it is possible, the property of Marvell, but into which successive possessors copied such pieces as struck their taste or fancy.

To Captain Thompson, however, we owe the addition of three pieces undoubtedly Marvell’s, which were probably considered too eulogistic of Cromwell and the Commonwealth to be inserted in the edition of 1681: the poem on Cromwell’s Government—the genuineness of which is vouched for by Marvell’s old enemy. Bishop Parker,—that on the “Death of His late Highness the Protector,” and the “Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland,” in which occur those noble lines on the death of Charles I. so often quoted. Upon these, and the collection of Marvell’s prose tracts and letters, the merits of this edition rest, for the editor took no pains to correct the errors or supply the deficiencies of his predecessors, and merely flung together, without any attempt at order, method, or examination, all the materials he could lay his hands upon.

The last edition we have to mention is one published in Boston (U.S.) in 1857, a very elegant reprint of that of Cooke, supplemented by the additional poems given by Captain Thompson.

It will be seen, from this statement of the case, that Marvell has not been treated with that utter neglect which the expressions made use of by some of his admirers would seem to imply. None of his contemporaries except those we have named,—neither Cowley nor Waller nor Denham, so famous in their own day, and still so conspicuous on the roll of English poets,—have in modern times received so much attention from editors or publishers. They, however, in a manner discounted their fame. They secured great popularity while they lived, and left extant a sufficient number of editions of their works to supply the demands of posterity for a considerable period. Still, though not overlooked, Marvell cannot be said to have been generally recognized as one of the poets until the present century. That Dr. Johnson should have not thought him worthy of a place beside men whose lives and works are so ardently desired as those of Stepney, King, Duke, Yalden, Sprat, and Smith, is not indeed surprising. Marvell’s earlier poetry is not of a kind at all likely to find favour in the eyes of a critic of Johnson’s mould, and in manner as well as

in matter, his political pieces are not well calculated to conciliate a Jacobite, high churchman, and strict moralist. He who could not forgive Milton could scarcely be expected to acknowledge Marvell. But it is not a little strange that his poetry should have been so generally excluded from the various collections and miscellanies of the last century, and his name so seldom mentioned by any of its writers. When Churchill alludes to him, it is of his “spotless virtue” he speaks; and Mason,—as far as we remember, the only one who seems aware of the fact that he was a poet,—commends him for deserting poetry for politics.

Another impediment to Marvell’s fame as a poet is the undeniable coarseness of some of his political satires. His works come to us weighted with matter in the highest degree offensive to modern taste. This, however, was not the fault of the man but of the age he lived in, and it is one from which few of the writers of his time are free. For a satirist, indeed, it was scarcely possible to avoid it. Disregard of decency in conduct was the crying evil of the time; and in such cases the homœopathic principle of *similia similibus curantur* has always been the one that has been acted upon. Party warfare, too, in those days was a rough struggle untempered by the courtesies and amenities which have been by degrees introduced into the strategy of modern politics. It was rather a *mêlée* fought out with any weapons that came to hand, than an organized and systematic contest waged at long range with arms of precision, and between large bodies of combatants. The periodical press was then barely in its infancy, and for attack and defence men had to trust rather to individual efforts than to the co-operation of numbers. For Marvell, besides, there is an excuse which cannot be pleaded for most of the other satirists of his day. His satires were intended for use simply, not for show. Dryden, like a skilled artificer, prided himself on the artistic finish of the weapon he forged: but Marvell plucked a cudgel from the nearest hedgerow, careless if it became fuel after it had served his purpose. It was meant to hurt, and it hurt all the more for those rough knots and excrescences so unsightly in our eyes. (. . .)

As a poet he is generally classed among the poets of Charles the Second’s reign; but in reality he belongs to an earlier age, and has nothing whatever in common with Waller, Sedley, Dorset, or Rochester. He is, in fact, no more one of the Restoration poets than Milton. His true place is with the men of the preceding period,—with Herrick, Habington, Suckling, Lovelace, and Wither, to each of whom occasional resemblances may be traced in his poetry. But the poet that influenced him most, probably, was Donne. When Marvell was a student at Cambridge the influence of Donne’s poetry was at its height, and it acted in the same way as the influence of Spenser in the preceding generation, of Cowley some thirty years later, and of Byron and Tennyson in modern times. Donne was the accepted poet with the young men, the orchestra-leader from whom they took their time and tone, and whose style, consciously or unconsciously, they assimilated. Marvell’s earliest poem is an illustration of this. His satire on “Flecknoe, an English Priest at Rome,” might easily pass for one of Donne’s, so thoroughly has he caught not only the manner and rugged vigorous versification of Donne’s satires, but also his very turns of thought, and the passion for elaborate conceits, recondite analogies, and out-of-the-way similitudes with which his poetry is so strongly imbued.

Few of the poets of the time of Charles I. and the Commonwealth escaped the infection of this, the metaphysical school of poetry, as Dryden somewhat awkwardly called it, which Donne is generally accused of having founded. In truth,