*The 'Memoirs' of Sir Richard Bulstrode*¹

BULSTRODE'S 'Memoirs' are frequently referred to as one of the minor authorities for the history of the great civil war, but the question of their historical value has scarcely been discussed, much less decided. They were first published ten years after their author's death. Two other posthumously published works by the author had previously seen the light. In 1712 a certain Edward Bysshe, best known as the author of a once popular book called 'The Art of English Poetry,' printed a collection of letters from Bulstrode to Arlington, written whilst the former was English agent at Brussels. They give an account of the war in the Netherlands during the year 1674. In 1715 Sir Richard's son, Whitelocke Bulstrode, printed a volume of his father's essays, mostly moral and religious. They are amongst the dullest of their kind. The 'Memoirs' themselves were printed in 1721, with a preface by Nathaniel Mist, the publisher, in which he gives an account of the manner in which they came into his possession.

When I was last year in Paris it was my good fortune to contract some acquaintance with a younger son of Sir Richard Bulstrode, who then resided there, as governor in the family of the young earl of Fingal. I had not long enjoyed the honour of his conversation before he frankly gave me the copy of these 'Memoirs,' with free liberty to make them publick to the world, and assured me they were all wrote by the hand of Sir Richard, his father.

To this Mist adds, after mentioning the essays—

If these sheets could stand in need of any other proof of their being genuine, than the assertion I have given from whose hands I received them, I could not desire a stronger concurring testimony than those essays. Every judge, who will do himself the pleasure of a comparison, will find both those and the 'Memoirs' penned in the same style, and with the same cast of thought and spirit of language.

The account given of the origin of the 'Memoirs' seems

¹ *Memoirs and Reflections upon the Reign & Government of King Charles the Ist and K. Charles the IInd*. Containing an account of several remarkable facts not mentioned by other historians of those times: wherein the character of the Royal Martyr and of King Charles II are vindicated from fanatical aspersions. Written by Sir Richard Bulstrode.

sufficiently probable. Many members of Bulstrode's family were alive, and had no such reminiscences existed it would not have been safe to invent such a circumstantial story. And, moreover, the internal evidence appealed to is to a certain extent convincing. There are long passages in the 'Memoirs,' mostly moralisings and political reflections, which are written in a style very like that of Bulstrode's essays. On the other hand a close examination of the 'Memoirs' at once throws a doubt on their value, by revealing the fact that much that they contain is derived from previously published narratives of the civil war.

Clarendon's 'History of the Rebellion,' published in 1702-1704, is frequently followed with great closeness in the 'Memoirs.' In many cases it is summarised, adopting here and there a sentence of Clarendon's, and making the alterations necessary to fit the passage selected for the place it is to fill in Bulstrode's narrative.

1. The most flagrant case of this borrowing is the account of the scene between Charles I and Sir Richard Willis at Newark in October 1645. A comparison of pp. 127-30 of the 'Memoirs' with book ix. §§ 128-31 of the 'Rebellion' shows that the author of the account given in the former must have written with Clarendon open before his eyes.

2. In the account of the career and character of Lord Goring, given in the 'Memoirs,' reminiscences and adaptations of Clarendon's words are very frequent. The well-known parallel between Wilmot and Goring is continually plundered. Compare 'Memoirs,' pp. 68-71, 115, 149, and 'Rebellion,' v. 440, 441, viii. 169, ix. 102.

3. The account of Hopton's appointment to the command of the king's western army, and the description of the battle of Torrington, supply a third instance in which the 'Memoirs' summarise and adapt the narrative of Clarendon. Compare 'Memoirs,' pp. 151-4; 'Rebellion,' ix. §§ 134-9, 143. The description of the army left by Goring as 'a dissolute, undisciplined, wicked, beaten army' ('Memoirs,' p. 151) is an example of the unblushing manner in which a striking phrase is appropriated.

4. The character of Cromwell given by Clarendon (xv. 146, 147, 149, 152) is the source from which the brief character given on pp. 205, 206 of the 'Memoirs' is derived. A few sentences will serve to show this.

He could never have done half that mischief without great parts of courage and industry and judgment. And he must have had a wonderful understanding in the natures and humours of men, and as great a dexterity in applying them, who from a private and

He could never have done half that mischief he did without having great parts of industry, courage, and judgment. He must have had a wonderful insight into the affections and humours of men, who from a private birth, without any interest, estate, or alliance,

obscure birth (though of a good family), without interest of estate, alliance, or friendships, could raise himself to such a height, and compound and knead such opposite and contradictory tempers, humours, and interests into a consistence that contributed to his designs and to their own destruction. . . . What Velleius Paterculus said of Cinna may very justly be said of him, *Ausum eum quae nemo aude-ret bonus; perfecisse quae a nullo nisi fortissimo perfici possent*. Without a doubt no man with more wickedness ever attempted anything, or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty. (CLARENDON.)

could raise himself to so great a height. He attempted that which no good man durst undertake, and performed that which none but a wicked valiant man could succeed in. There was certainly never a more wicked man, nor one that ever brought to pass what he designed more wickedly.

(BULSTRODE.)

Other passages from the character of Cromwell might be quoted, and other parallels of a similar nature might be adduced from the 'Memoirs,' but these are sufficient to demonstrate the manner in which the book was put together.

Another book laid under contribution in the 'Memoirs' is Whitelocke's 'Memorials,' first published in 1682. The 'Memoirs' contain not only statements of fact obviously derived from the 'Memorials,' but sentences and short passages copied with very slight verbal alteration.

Compare the following passages relating to Strafford:—

'Memoirs,' p. 39.

" p. 44.

" pp. 45, 46.

'Memorials,' i. 108, ed. 1858.

" i. 128.

" i. 132, 133.

'Thus fell this noble earl,' concludes Whitelocke, 'who for natural parts and abilities, and for improvement of knowledge by experience in the greatest affairs, for wisdom, faithfulness, and gallantry of mind, hath left few behind him that may be ranked equal with him.'

The 'Memoirs' adopts the first three lines verbatim, and continues, 'for wisdom, fidelity, obedience, and gallantry left no equal behind him' (p. 46).

A second instance is supplied by the account of the treaty at Oxford in the spring of 1643.

In this treaty the king manifested his great parts and abilities, strength of reason and quickness of apprehension, with much pa-

In this treaty the king showed his great parts and abilities, strength of reason, and quickness of apprehension, with much pa-

tience in hearing what was objected against him; wherein he allowed all freedom, and would himself sum up the arguments, and gave a most clear judgment upon them. His unhappiness was that he had a better opinion of others' judgments than of his own, though they were weaker than his own; and of this we had experience, to our great trouble. (WHITLOCKE, *Memorials*, i. 199.)

tience hearing what was objected against him, wherein he allowed the commissioners all freedom, and when he differed from them in opinion he would tell them, 'By your favour, my lord Northumberland' (who was the chief of the commissioners), 'I am not of your opinion,' or, 'I think otherwise,' and would himself sum up their arguments, and give a clear judgment upon them. The king's great unhappiness was that he had a better opinion of others' judgment than of his own (tho' weaker than his own), and of this these commissioners at that time had a sad experience, to their great trouble. (BULSTRODE, *Memoirs*, pp. 89, 90.)

Only one touch is here added to Whitlocke, and that touch, as it will be shown, is taken from Sir Philip Warwick.

On pp. 192, 193 of the 'Memoirs' is an account of Whitlocke's conferences with Cromwell in the years 1651 and 1652, which is simply a summary of pp. 372-4 and pp. 468-74 of vol. iii. of the 'Memorials.'

Whitlocke has a habit of making moral reflections of the most trite and obvious nature on the revolutions which he witnessed. In several places these are copied word for word in the 'Memoirs.'

'Memoirs,' p. 160.

(On the revolt of the army against the parliament in 1647.)

'Memoirs,' p. 170.

(On Hamilton and the Scots invading England in 1648.)

'Memoirs,' p. 195.

(On the dissolution of the long parliament by Cromwell in 1653.)

'Memorials,' ii. 185, 140.

'Memorials,' ii. 356, 357.

'Memorials,' iv. 6, 7.

The third author to whom the writer or editor of these 'Memoirs' was indebted is Sir Philip Warwick, whose 'Memoirs of the Reign of Charles I' were published in 1701. I print below the description of Charles's character from the 'Memoirs' of Bulstrode, p. 184, side by side with extracts from Sir Philip Warwick's recollections, taken from his 'Memoirs,' pp. 64-73.

There were few gentlemen in the world that knew more of useful or necessary learning than this prince did; and yet his proportion of books was but small, having, like Francis I of France.

But before I go further give me leave to give you this king's character. He was no great scholar; his learning consisted more in what he had seen than what he had studied: his judg-

learnt more by the ear than by study. His way of arguing was very civil and patient; for he seldom contradicted another by his authority, but by his reason; nor did he by any petulant dislike quash another's arguments; and he offered his exceptions by this civil introduction: 'By your favour, sir, I think otherwise on this or that ground;'² yet he would discountenance any bold or forward address to him. And in suits or discourse of business he would give way to none abruptly to enter into them, but looked that the greatest persons should in affairs of this nature address to him by his proper ministers, or by some solemn desire of speaking to him in their own persons. . . . He kept up the dignity of his court, limiting persons to places suitable to their qualities, unless he particularly called for them. Besides the women who attended on his beloved queen and consort he scarce admitted any great officer to have his wife in the family. . . . And though he was as slow of pen as of speech, yet both were very significant: and he had that modest esteem of his parts that he would usually say, he would willingly make his own dispatches but that he found it better to be a cobbler than a shoemaker. (WARWICK.)

ment was good and better than most of his ministers. The misfortune was that he seldom depended upon it, unless in matters of his own religion, wherein he was always very stiff. His arguing was beyond measure civil and patient. He would seldom or never contradict any man angrily, but would always say, 'By your favour I think otherwise,' or, 'I am not of your opinion.' He would discourage any bold address that was made to him, and did not love strangers; and whilst he was upon his throne he would permit none to enter abruptly with him into business. He was wiser than most of his council, yet so unhappy as seldom to follow his own judgment. He would always (whilst in his court) be addressed to by proper ministers, and still kept up the dignity of his court, limiting all persons to places suitable to their employments and quality, and would there only hear them, unless he called for them in particular. Besides the ladies and women who attended the queen he permitted no minister to have his wife in court. He spoke but slowly, and would stammer a little when he began to speak eagerly. He seldom or never made his own dispatches till his latter days, but would still mend and alter them; and to that purpose he would often say he found it better to be a cobbler than a shoemaker. As to his religion, he was very positive in it, and would hear no arguments against it. (BULSTRODE.)

A touch or two in Bulstrode's character of Charles I are added to Warwick's description from Clarendon. Clarendon it is who says of the king, 'He did not love strangers,' and praises the king's judgment. 'He had an excellent understanding, but was not confident enough of it, which made him oftentimes change his

² Compare the passage quoted from Bulstrode's account of the treaty at Oxford on p. 269.

own opinion for a worse and follow the advice of a man that did not judge so well as himself' ('Rebellion,' xi. 240, 241; cf. ix. 3). The similar phrase used by Whitelocke in his account of the Oxford treaty has already been quoted.

From all these examples it is perfectly plain that the author or compiler of the 'Memoirs' had read and used these three books. It may be argued that Bulstrode himself may have read the books and used them to assist his memory. He was born, according to all accounts, in 1610, and the 'Memoirs' were written in his old age at St. Germain's,³ whither he had attended his exiled master, James II. What more likely than that he should have read the 'Memorials' of Bulstrode Whitelocke, 'my cousin german,' as he is termed at p. 91 of the 'Memoirs'?⁴ If Whitelocke's 'Memorials' alone were in question, this might easily be granted, but the use made of Warwick and Clarendon, and the manner in which passages from those works are interwoven with expressions from Whitelocke, requires that the compiler of the Bulstrode 'Memoirs' should have had all three before him at the time of writing. As Clarendon's 'History of the Rebellion' was not published till 1702-1704, the composition of the 'Memoirs' is thus thrown forward to 1704, when Bulstrode is stated to have been in his 94th year.

It is improbable that he carried a copy of Whitelocke's 'Memorials' with him to St. Germain's, and still more improbable that he procured—when England and France were at war—an early copy of Clarendon's 'Rebellion' to be sent to him in his exile. But so far as the mere writing of the 'Memoirs' was concerned there is no reason to suppose that he was incapable of writing such recollections in 1704. His essay on 'Old Age,' of the advantage of which, he adds, 'I am at present a living testimony,' was written in 1706.⁵ He prided himself on retaining undiminished his power of literary composition.

The poetic fire which is usually soonest extinct in men I have found by experience in myself hath lasted long beyond that period, of which I could give modern proof, but I will leave that to my sons; only this I can with truth affirm, that the poems I have made since my age of 70 have more of force and spirit than those I had written some years

³ 'Our court at St. Germain's, where we live upon alms' (*Memoirs*, p. 19. See also p. 4).

⁴ In his *Essays* (p. 24) Bulstrode tells the following story of Whitelocke's behaviour at Stafford's trial. 'There was one eminent lawyer who urged very smartly against his lordship, but yet with great respect and civility of language. And when the earl came to reply as he did to every one, he said he had been very roughly handled by most of the pleaders; but that he was very much beholding to one civil gentleman amongst them (naming the former person) who though he had touched him nearer the quick than any other, yet he was obliged to return him thanks, because he had cut his throat with a clean knife.'

⁵ *Essays*, p. 377.

before; but this is a particular grace of God, it being very unusual in the generality.⁶

The most probable solution of the question is that Bulstrode did write some autobiographical memoirs which came into Mist's hands, and that the publisher is responsible for putting them together and inserting the composite passages to which attention has been called. All through the first—the pre-Restoration—part of the 'Memoirs' there runs a thin stream of autobiography, which appears to embody genuine recollections told with simplicity and apparent truthfulness. On p. 2 Bulstrode gives an account of his entry into the king's service; pp. 72–9 contain an account of the opening campaign of the war, of Bulstrode's joining the earl of Northampton in Warwickshire, and of the battles of Edgehill and Brentford; pp. 92, l. 28, to 94, l. 18, contain an account of his services under the earl of Northampton up to the time he left him to accept a post under Lord Wilmot; under Wilmot's command Bulstrode appears to have taken part in the battle of Cropredy Bridge (pp. 100–1), and he gives detailed accounts of Wilmot's disgrace in Cornwall, of the surrender of Essex's army to the king (pp. 102–11), of the besieging of Taunton (pp. 116–7, very inaccurate), of the second battle of Newbury (pp. 117–9), of incidents in the war in the west (pp. 120–2), of the quarrels and disorders of Goring's army and of Goring's resignation, and of the battle of Langport (pp. 133–48). Here the autobiographical part of the first half of the 'Memoirs' ends, but a couple of incidental references show that Bulstrode was in England in September 1658 and February 1660 (pp. 207, 210). These autobiographical recollections are sometimes inaccurate in their chronology, but frequently contain information of some little value, which is confirmed by authorities to which it is not likely that the compiler of the interpolated passages had access.

Interspersed through the first part of the 'Memoirs' are what purport to be letters or summaries of documents, which demand a detailed examination. An investigation shows that they ought to be considered as recollections of documents rather than as reproductions or abstracts of papers under the author's eyes at the time of writing. On pp. 103–4 the memoir-writer gives the substance of the petition of the officers of the king's horse on behalf of Lord Wilmot in August 1644. A comparison of this with the original petition, printed in the 'Diary' of Richard Symonds (p. 106), shows that the memory of the writer was tolerably faithful. On p. 114 the 'Memoirs' give a summary of Lord Digby's answer on behalf of

⁶ *Essays*, p. 382. The modern proof referred to is probably the 185 Latin elegies and epigrams, some selections from which are printed in the preface to his *Letters*. He died in 1711.

the king, which is also fairly accurate, if compared with the charge against Wilmot printed on p. 108 of the 'Diary.' These documents had also been previously printed in Rushworth's 'Collections,' v. 693-7.

On p. 125 the 'Memoirs' mention a letter from Lord Goring to the king, giving reasons for declining to raise the siege of Taunton, as ordered by Charles, and advising his master to avoid an engagement. This letter was intercepted, and was one of the reasons which led Fairfax to force on the battle of Naseby. The memoir-writer says—

I wrote the general's answer to the king, having kept the copy of it, which was to this effect: that he was certain in few days to be master of Taunton, and should leave that country free from any enemy, excepting Lyme (which was then, and had been for some time, blocked up); whereas if he should leave the siege the enemy would be masters of that country, and therefore he most humbly prayed the king to forbear any engagement, and to be upon the defensive, upon the river of Trent, which he might very well do, till the siege of Taunton was ended, and then he would bring his army to serve the king to his best advantage; and he did again desire the king to keep at a distance and not engage.

The intercepting of this letter is mentioned, with some hint at its contents, in Sprigge's 'Anglia Rediviva,' p. 52, ed. 1854, in Rushworth, vi. 49, and in a sermon by Hugh Peter entitled 'God's Doings and Man's Duty,' printed in 1646, p. 21. A letter of the same kind, probably taken at Naseby, is given in the 'Calendar of State Papers' for 1644-5, p. 581. A newspaper of the period, 'Perfect Occurrences of Parliament and Chief Collections of Letters from the Armie,' 18-20 June 1645, gives the following account of the letter and its capture:—

Friday, 18 June.—Wee have had so many considerable occurrences this weeke that I am troubled how to contract them into so short a pamphlet. We heard this day that the king had sent a letter to Goring to send him speedily 2,000 horse and 3,000 foot, that were to strengthen his armie to fight with Sr Thomas Fairfax.

Goring receiving these letters returns answer, the substance whereof is thus: 'May it please your majestie we are now in a fair way of taking Taunton, and the whole West will be easily reduced to your obedience. This designe we are upon is of exceeding great consequence, and if we should send away any part of our forces, the rebels being 4,000 within the towne, our whole strength not above 9,000, our designe would be then quite spoiled and the west in danger to be lost if 5,000 should be drawne away; but I humbly desire that your majestie would be pleased to send your commands by this bearer (who will return within five dayes), to which I desire to submit and continue

'Your most affectionate servant,
'GORING.'

His majestie wondering that no answer came to hand sent again to Goring, for indeed the letter was intercepted which Goring wrote to the king, and therefore on the one side the king wondered no answer came, and Goring thought his judgement was approved of and that the king did not desire the forces; but Goring's back friends have done him such a courtesie at Court that hee may chance to loose his head by it, which Sr Ralphe Hopton is no little glad of, because then he shall be rid of his corivall.

It is evident from this specimen that the letters given by the memoir-writer are at the most imperfect recollections of documents which he had once seen. This assists in determining the value to be attached to the letter from Goring to the king printed on p. 109 of the 'Memoirs,' which, if it could have been accepted as verbally correct, would have had great weight in clearing Goring of the responsibility for the escape of Essex's horse in September 1644. Some of the details given in the letter, however, cannot be reconciled with what is known from other sources, and, while accepting the statement of Bulstrode that some such letter was actually received by Goring, it would be rash to assume that Bulstrode's version of the words is trustworthy. The only one of these letters in the first part of the 'Memoirs' which appears likely to be a verbal reproduction of an original document is the jocular letter from Waller to Goring, printed on p. 120. Unfortunately it is a letter of no historical importance.

The second part of the 'Memoirs' relates to the reign of Charles II, and contains a certain amount of purely autobiographical matter. Bulstrode relates how he first came to be employed as English agent at Brussels (pp. 232-51), and narrates some of the negotiations and pieces of business in which he was employed. These desultory recollections end about August 1685, soon after the accession of James II. They contain a few interesting anecdotes, such as the account of an interview with Charles II (p. 424⁷), but are inordinately swollen by long political digressions (pp. 215-18, 222-30, 391-423), and by the insertion of letters and documents. The digressions are very much in the style of the 'Essays,' which also contain some curious historical anecdotes.⁸ The documents are of several kinds—a well-known letter from Shaftesbury to Lord Carlisle, which was circulated amongst the opposition peers in 1675 (p. 264; cf. Christie's 'Life of Shaftesbury,' ii. 200), and an equally well-known letter from Monmouth to Charles II (p. 356). There are several of the speeches of Charles II to his parliaments (pp. 288, 293, 299, 328), some addresses from the parliament to the king (pp. 284-7), and the dying speeches of Plunket and Fitzharris (pp. 318, 319). Letters containing political news from England and extracts from newletters are very numerous, usually pre-

⁷ See also pp. 280-4.

⁸ *Essays*, pp. 10, 24, 58, 289, 325, 376.

faced by, 'I received this following letter from a very good hand at Whitehall,' or, 'I am told by a good hand at Whitehall' (pp. 321, 348, 360, 376, 383). But the greatest part of this inserted correspondence consists of official letters from Arlington, Henry Coventry, Joseph Williamson, and Leoline Jenkins, on subjects connected with Bulstrode's mission. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these documents, but it is very unlikely that Bulstrode himself strung together this peculiar jumble of autobiographical reminiscences, official papers, and political reflexions. We know from the unimpeachable evidence of his son Whitelocke that Sir Richard left a large mass of diplomatic correspondence. Speaking of his father's employment in Flanders the son observes, 'during which time he held correspondence with most of the courts of Christendom, as I find by his letters made up into annals, which I have by me.'⁹ The collection seems to be now dispersed; at least many letters from it have recently appeared in sale-rooms and catalogues.¹⁰

Putting all these things together, the history of the 'Memoirs' published by Mist is probably something like this: Bulstrode wrote certain autobiographical recollections and some reflexions on the revolutions he had witnessed. Mist obtained possession of these, and of a small portion of Bulstrode's diplomatic correspondence, and by their aid put together the volume of 'Memoirs,' increasing their bulk by inserting characters of Charles I and Cromwell, and narratives of events in which Bulstrode was not personally concerned, and of which he had consequently given no account himself.

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⁹ Preface to Bulstrode's *Essays*, p. ii.

¹⁰ I have five or six which I bought from Mrs. Tregaskis of 232 High Holborn a few years ago.