

A NOTE ON JASPER MAYNE.

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JASPER MAYNE lived in an age when people gave no thought to leaving records of their lives, and we can only wish that he had left a note of his early life and education at Hatherleigh and of his subsequent connection with the town, and that he had told us, in the manner of the Rev. Samuel Woodforde, of his journeys to school and university from his little native town where "the people have been poor for ever and ever."

Little evidence of the connection of the Mayne family with Hatherleigh seems obtainable. Prince, without much foundation, suggests that the Hatherleigh Maynes were sprung from a certain Joel de Mayne, who was given lands at King's Nymet by Henry I. There is an Alexander Mayne "of Hatherleigh" who was born in 1549, became Sheriff of Exeter in 1597, and died in 1617. He seems to have been the grandfather of Jasper Mayne, the dramatist. But the first mention of the Maynes in the Hatherleigh Parish Registers is July 20th, 1596, when "Jasper the son of Jasper Maine" was baptized. This boy apparently did not live long, as a person of that name was buried on October 30th of that year. On September 19th, 1600, John the son of Jasper Maine was baptized, and he was followed in 1603 by Martin, who died in infancy. But the note which most concerns us follows:

"1604 November Jasper the sonne of Jasper Maine was baptised 23d. daye."

A daughter, Joan, was born in 1606. Apparently the mother, "Mary Mayne gentl.," died in April, 1632, and was buried at Hatherleigh on April 5th, but there appears no record of the father's death. Two children, Richard

and Robert, of John Mayne were baptized in 1621 and 1636.

It seems that the family was held in esteem in Hatherleigh: in all the records the various members are styled "gent.," and Jasper Mayne has to pay 16d. on the family property (which I think is probably Essworthy) in the rate made on April 17th, 1620. There are only four greater amounts in this rate, two of them being Jo. Yeo 22½d. and Alexand. Lethbridge 17½d.

But the name is not found in any of the deeds of public properties of the period, nor does any member of the family appear to have helped in local affairs: and it seems probable that during the Commonwealth, when John Mayne lost his property at Hatherleigh, the family left the neighbourhood.

Little can be found of the early life of Jasper Mayne, but he was educated till about the age of nineteen at Westminster School. The only records that were kept at the school at that time were of those boys who were elected on to the Foundation, that is, King's Scholars, and Mayne's name does not appear in this list. Prince, however, gives Westminster as Mayne's school, and, of course, Prince was almost contemporary with Mayne at Oxford, and must have heard of the latter's reputation in the University. At Westminster Jasper Mayne's contemporaries were a son of John Donne, Thomas Randolph the poet, and J. Heminge, a son of Shakespeare's friend. He was therefore early in good company, and the influence of such boys, with their stories of their home life and of their parents' friends, must have developed the literary bent of the young Devonian.

Mayne seems early to have come under the influence of Dr. Bryan Duppa, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, himself an old Westminster boy, and it is therefore no surprise when he enters that college in 1623. His time at Oxford was very successful: he was elected a student of Christ Church in 1627, and followed this up by taking his B.A. in 1628 and his M.A. in 1631.

He early took to the writing of verse, and when William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, died in 1630, Mayne wrote an English elegy to his memory. Indeed, says Sir Sidney Lee, "Mayne had much literary taste, and was soon known in the university as a 'quaint preacher and a noted poet.'"

In 1633 the University of Oxford presented a volume containing a hundred poems to King Charles I, congratulating him on his recovery from his recent illness. Included in this volume, which was edited by Bryan Duppa, is a poem by Mayne, and it is worthy of note that his verses follow immediately after those by the Vice-Chancellor, heads of colleges and professors. This would seem to point to the fact that already, at the age of twenty-nine, Jasper Mayne was held in high esteem by the University. Another congratulatory poem by him appeared in 1638, when he addressed some verses to Queen Henrietta on the birth of a daughter.

All this time, too, he must have been trying his hand at play-writing, for when his *Citye Match* was published by Richard Lichfield in 1639, he wrote the following preface: "The Author of this Poem had no ambition to make it this way public. . . . Yet hath he at length consented it should pass the Press; not with an aim to purchase a new reputation, but to keep that which he hath already from growing worse; for understanding that some at London, without his approbation or allowance, were ready to print a false, imperfect copy, he was loth to be libelled by his own work, or that his play should appear to the world with more than its own faults." The play apparently met with considerable success at the time and was acted at Whitehall before the King, and later at Blackfriars.

Mayne does not seem to have erred on the side of discretion, for on April 6th, 1638, Wood tells us Mr. Jasper Mayne, according to summons, appeared before the Vice-Chancellor and three doctors of divinity, who charged him that "in a sermon preached by him in the Cathedral the last Passion Day, he offended against the King's Declaration by handling such controversies and matters that were therein forbidden." Mayne's reply was that he did not know of the King's decree as he was absent when it was published. He was discharged on this occasion, but "for the future he would have a care lest he fall into the same fault."

And now for a time Mayne abandoned verse-writing, and in 1639 he accepted his college living of Cassington, near Woodstock. But he took full opportunity of his proximity to Oxford, and was often there. During the Civil War he preached there several times before the

King, and for this he was elected a D.D. in 1646. (His B.D. was granted in 1642.) Mayne had frequently argued that the Church should depend on the State, and on May 30th, 1646, his arguments were put into tangible form in a well-reasoned pamphlet, which he dedicated to Parliament, and which bore the title, *The Difference about Church Government*. This he followed up on August 9th, 1646, by preaching at Carfax Church, "concerning unity and agreement." He entered, too, into the question of the Civil War in another pamphlet, Ὀχλο-μάχια, or *the People's War*, which was published on July 25th, 1647, "in answer to a letter sent by a person of quality who desired satisfaction." Mayne had published a sermon against false prophets, in 1646, to which a Mr. Francis Cheynell replied. This moved Mayne to wrath and in a published letter in 1647, entitled *A late printed sermon against false prophets vindicated*, he stated fully his case against Cheynell's "causeless aspersions."

But after 1646, Mayne suffered much on account of his political views. At all times a staunch Royalist, he had made himself conspicuous during the first years of the Civil War when the court was at Oxford by his preaching before the King. Such action would obviously make him well known to the Parliamentarians, and he was deprived of his preferments, and, as Walker phrases it, "put to his shifts."¹ On May 4th, 1648, he was summoned before the Parliamentarian Visitors at Oxford, but Wood says that "hearing of their coming by the Butler, he rose up suddenly from the dinner table, giving out certain scornful words against the visitors." Even after a positive command he did not appear, and on Thursday, November 2nd, 1648, Jasper Mayne was expelled from his studentship at Christ Church, and later deprived of his living at Cassington.

Meanwhile, at Hatherleigh, his brother, John Mayne, on June 7th, 1647,² asked to compound for delinquency on the Truro Articles, and on August 10th, 1648, the appeal was renewed as no notice had been taken of the former appeal. But no order was made. On April 6th, 1648, in a list of Papists sequestered in North Devon, John Mayne appears as a "Delinquent, notorious, poor." On August 4th, 1652, John Mayne "petitions that his

¹ *Sufferings of the Clergy*.

² *Calendar of State Papers*, Commission for Compounding.

estate was not under actual sequestration on December 1st, 1651, nor has the Commonwealth received anything from it, on pretence of delinquency, yet the County Committee, finding in the books of the late Committee that he was ordered to be sequestered, have seized on his estate, he being not permitted to make his defence by appeal; begs to compound for it." His appeal does not seem to have been granted.

Jasper Mayne might have been worse off at this time, for on March 30th, 1648, he was given the Christ Church living of Pyrton in Oxfordshire, and here he lived during the majority of the following eight years. He was a popular Vicar of Pyrton, for when he answered the petition of Joel Barnard,¹ who disputed Mayne's right to the living, the latter was able to bring forward a testimonial from the inhabitants of the village, who desired that "Jasper Mayne may be continued among them in his just and rightful possession." But his life at Pyrton was not happy; for in his prefatory verses to the collected edition of Cartwright's plays (1651), he says:—

"The wildnesse of the place in which I dwell
 The desert of my unfrequented cell
 My want of quick recruits made from the city,
 And times which made it treason to be witty . . .
 Have made me dull; my friends with some remorse
 See me, who wrote ill alwaies, now write worse.
 The little fire which once I had is lost;
 I write, as all my neighbours speak, in frost."

There now occurred an incident which shows Mayne to have been a man of considerable grit. A certain John Pendarves (1622–1656), a Cornishman, who took his degree from Exeter College, Oxford, and was a "tolerable disputant," became a puritan controversialist. "He sided with the rout and, by a voluble tongue having obtained the way of canting, went up and down (unsent for) preaching in houses, barns, under trees, hedges, etc." This man challenged some clergymen of the Church to a public debate. There appears to have been some delay, and at length Jasper Mayne undertook to meet him. On September 11th, 1652, the debate took place at Watlington Church. Pendarves "was back'd by a great party of Anabaptists and the scum of the people who behaved very rude and insolent." Mayne, too,

¹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, 7th Report, p. 52.

had a good body of supporters, and that his arguments were very strong appears in *A Sermon against Schisme* (published in London, 1652). Apparently the result of this dispute was very indefinite, as must of necessity be the case on all such occasions, but Jasper Mayne carried off the honours of the day.

The year 1656 saw Mayne ejected from Pyrton, but he was able to take refuge with William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire. Here he met Thomas Hobbes, and it seems that Mayne was quite capable of holding his own against the great philosopher, though, as is usual when two great men meet, there were frequent disputes not altogether of a friendly nature. He was not very happy here, for in a letter he states that he can write no verses as the rude place in which he is dwelling abates his fancy.

The Restoration saw Mayne once more in happier circumstances. He was reinstated in his benefices, appointed Canon of Christ Church, Archdeacon of Chichester, and Chaplain in Ordinary to the King.

Again his powerful mind makes itself felt: his opinion of the state of the University in 1662 was very low, for on May 27th he preached a Latin sermon at Oxford (published August, 1662), in which "his drift was to display the duncery of the University in the late intervall, calling the doctors and professors 'plumbeos aldermannos' and 'aldermannos plumbeos' all one and Crumovellum cancellarium."

Another published sermon of 1662, namely, that preached at the consecration of Herbert, Lord Bishop of Hereford, is dedicated to Bryan Duppa (now Bishop of Winchester), and contains a very grateful acknowledgment of the help received by Mayne in his early days at Westminster and Oxford.

Once more Mayne entered into the spirit of Oxford, and Wood says that on Friday, January 8th, he was present at a play acted at Christ Church, where "the undergraduates, actors thereof, arrived to strange degree and streyn of impudence, especially from the encouragement of the deane and canons." There seems to have been a bibulous time, and "Dr. Mayne spoke them a speech, commending them for their ingenuity, and told them he liked well an acting student." We read, too, that when Dr. John Wall, Canon of Christ Church, died on October 20th, 1666, he left nothing to his College, "because that Jasper

Mayne and the deane would be alwaies gibing him at meales, when they meet togeather." It was not wise to be on the bad books of Jasper Mayne.

He was a man of means now, and in 1665, when the restoration of the building at Christ Church was completed, Mayne gave £100. On August 28th, 1667, the Government repaid him a loan of £100, and on April 9th, 1668, he was paid £2 "for procuring £100."¹

Jasper Mayne died on Friday, December 6th, 1672, and was buried in "one of the north isles joining to Christ Church choire." The inscription on his tombstone, which was erected by his executors, Robert South and John Lamphire, reads as follows:—

H. S. E.
JASPERUS MAYNE, S. T. D.
Hujus Ecclesiæ Canonicus
Natus Hatherlæ
In Agro Devon 1604
Denatus Oxon : Dec 6
1672.

To his memory Robert Thynne wrote verses : " In obitum Rev. viri D. Dris. Mayne, Aedis Christi nuper Præbendarii."

By his will, Mayne left £500 to the rebuilding of St. Paul's and £100 to each of his benefices, Cassington and Pyrton.² He left nothing to Christ Church, for " he had taken some distaste for affronts received from the dean of his college and certain students encouraged by him in their grinning and sauciness to him." His practical joking lasted to the end : he told an old servant that he would be left something in an old trunk to make him drink after his master's death. The man later discovered there a red herring.

What arms Mayne was entitled to seems a complete puzzle. With rather unusual asperity, Wood, in the note on Mayne's death, gives " argent on a bend sable cotized gules 3 right hands coup'd of the first," and then adds, " He had no right to *these* arms, and knew of none that he had ; but they were drawn for him by Richard Hawkins, the herald painter, upon desire of his executors." But John Gutch's edition of Wood's *Colleges and Halls* gives

¹ *Calendar of State Papers*, Treasury Books.

² Thomas Toovey of Watlington, writing to Dr. John Walker on February 5th, 1714-15, says that the money was left to the poor of Pyrton for ever (and not to the vicarage), with which sum a piece of land was purchased in Watlington parish adjacent to Pyrton Church.

“Erm. on a Bend Sab. cotized Gul. 3 right Hands couped at the Wrist proper.” And Prince (who is supported by Risdon) gives “Gules, a fess argent between four hands, or.”

No attempt will be made here to give an adequate criticism of Jasper Mayne's work, but mention should be made of the rest of his published work. Besides his *Citye Match*, Mayne wrote a tragi-comedy, entitled *The Amorous War* (published 1648), which contains his beautiful poem (in the form of a song), “Time is the feather'd thing,” which has been praised through all the years, and is now immortalised in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. Of these two plays, *The Amorous War* suffers through a too intricate plot, but *The Citye Match*, in spite of a rather confused plot, makes good reading, and should certainly be amusing on the stage, though Pepys, who saw it on September 30th, 1668, writes: “I by coach to the King's playhouse, and there saw *The Citye Match* not acted these thirty years, and but a silly play: the King and Court there.” William Broomfield revised the play in 1755, and it was presented at Drury Lane for charity; but I can find no other record of its being performed, though it has been published in several collections of old plays.

Mayne was certainly successful in writing commendatory verses. In addition to those already mentioned, he addressed some to Queen Henrietta on her safe return from the Continent in 1643, and when verses were published to the memory of Ben Jonson (in *Jonsonus Virbius*), Mayne assisted. He was well known in London literary society, and as late as 1665 he published a poem, *To the Duke of Yorke on the late Sea-fight*. There were congratulatory verses from him, too, in the folio volume of plays by Beaumont and Fletcher, which appeared in 1679. This is no place to discuss the authorship of the lines signed “J.M.S.,” which were prefixed to the Shakespeare folio of 1632, but the claim of Jasper Mayne, Student, should be fully considered in the light of his other commendatory verses.

In addition to this Mayne contributed to John Donne's *Paradoxes, Problems, Essays, Characters, etc.* (1652), a verse translation of the Latin epigrams, which at least shows skilful rhyming. He also started a translation of

Lucian's *Dialogues* from about 1638, but he never finished the work, and it was not published till 1664, when it was completed by another hand.

Bolton Corney, the critic and antiquary, espoused the cause of Jasper Mayne during the last century, and held that his work had been unfairly neglected, though even he does not feel that he ought to take the advice of a critical poet who wrote in 1651 :—

“Gather up all that from Mayne's fancy fell
Whose able muse hath done so oft—so well.”

But Mayne himself was displeased with the way in which his verse was received, for on November 1st, 1653, he declines to prefix verses to Whitlock's *Zωοτομία*, because his published verse was condemned as unbecoming his profession. However, a contemporary notice of his work should be mentioned. Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton, and a sound critic, says of him that “he lived at Oxford for many years in much Credit and Reputation for his florid Wit and Ingenious Vein in Poetry which produced two witty and well approved Comedies.”

Mention has already been made of Mayne's sermons ; all those that he published are well worth the honour of having been preserved through three centuries, and it would not be altogether out of place to compare them in quality with the sermons of his more famous senior, John Donne.

Time has, indeed, been a “feathered thing” with Jasper Mayne, and one is bound to feel that he and his work have been badly treated by posterity : perhaps some day his work will be republished—at least in selections—and then this Devonian will come into his own. One of his translated epigrams, called “His Will,” probably expressed his own sincere wish :—

“Let Heaven my soul, the foe my life, the grave
My corps, my fame let my sav'd countrey have.”