THE LICENSING OF MONTAGU'S 'MISCELLANEA SPIRITUALIA.'

HERE are good notices of Walter Montagu and Sir Nathaniel Brent in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' but in neither is there any reference to the subject-matter of this note.

Montagu was the son of the first Earl of Manchester, and became a convert to the Church of Rome. On the subject of his change of religion he wrote to the gallant Falkland, and letter and reply were both printed. Before this he was employed in the negotiations that resulted in the marriage of Henrietta Maria, with whom he remained on friendly terms to the end. Montagu, as a Cavalier partisan, had his share of troubles, including imprisonment and exile. He had the position of commendatory abbot of Pointoise, and died at Paris in 1677. Like his father, the author of 'Manchester al Mondo,' Walter Montagu had a taste for literary and philosophical speculation. Having composed his 'Miscellanea Spirituality,' he wrote a letter to soften the heart of the Licenser of the Press. This is printed in Blount's 'Academy of Compliments,' and forms an interesting document in the history of the freedom of the press.

A Letter from Mr. Wal. Montagu to Sir Nath. Brent, upon his licensing his Book intituled 'Miscellanea Spirituality.'

'SIR,

'This hand which hath stood so long before your Bar, comes now to accuse itself of a fault, by which the Judge, must needs have suffered much from the Offender, since the foulness of the Copy, is like to have tried your

patience, more than the worth of the cause can hope to have recompenc'd your pains; Wherefore these lines come before you to offer satisfaction at least to your Civility, if they fail in giving it to your Judgment, and the course of my life qualifies me better for civil discharges, than for literate satisfactions. You shall then, Sir, receive by this a return of much sense of your fair and obliging Carriage towards me in the examination of my Papers: wherein I must desire you to consider the whole Design, which aims solely at Moral Regulations, and does rather decline than accept any inducements to Controversial Doctrines; if there be any Point so incident to the Subjects, as my Opinion must needs appear in some dark light, this may well be conniv'd at by so ingenuous a Judg as your self, who cannot expect I should dissemble my Principles, though in discretion I was forbid to declaim upon them; So that I conceive your abilities will make a due difference, between what may critically be sifted out, and what does literally profess it self; and of this last sort, I presume you will find nothing in the whole *Work*, that has an open face of Contention or Offence; Wherefore upon your *Animadversions*, I have changed the looks of such places, as had any apparent features of Enmity, and have offer'd you such satisfaction upon the other Points I have not alter'd, as I hope your Candour and dispassionate Temper may admit; Upon the opinion whereof, I shall conclude, that if you have found, in these my Meditations, more matter promising good influencies upon the affections of your Countrey, than projecting any dangerous Infusions, you will allow them your contribution to that effect I have singly proposed in them; In order whereunto my Prayers shall intend the supplement of my Pens deficiency; which the less worthy it is of this exposure to the World, the more must it owe your patience and civility for your favour to

'Sir,

'Your most affectionate Servant,

'W. M.'

The appeal was successful. The fact that Brent discharged the duties of Licensor is not mentioned by his biographer. The 'Miscellanea Spiritualia' deserves a somewhat fuller description than it has so far received.

'Miscellanea Spiritualia, or Devout Essayes. Composed by the Honourable Walter Mountague, Esq. Serò te amavi Pulchritudo tam nova et tam antiqua. S^t Aug. W. Marshall sculpsit. London. Printed for William Lee, Daniel Pakman, and Gabriell Bedell, and are to be sold at their Shoppes in Fleet-street, 1648.' 4°. 405[8]. Printer to the Reader. 1 leaf.

There is a fine emblematic frontispiece in which 'Per-versus,' a ruffling gallant, is contrasted with 'Conversus,' a plainly dressed kneeling figure. The first has a label, 'Ubi Thesaurus ibi Cor;' and the other, 'Cor mundum in me Deus.' The book is dedicated to 'Henrietta Maria, daughter of France, and Queen of Great Britain.' In this he alludes to the close ties that bind him to the queen, and speaks of his 'civil death.'

The book is sufficiently miscellaneous, and handles many themes of religious, philosophical, and ethical interest. 'How a good conscience, and a good courtier are comfortable with one another,' 'Concerning scurrility, or foulness of speech,' 'Whether to be in love and to be devout, are consistent,' 'Of violent solitude, or close imprisonment,' are amongst the topics.

The essays end on page 405, and the verso is,
Imprimatur,
 NA: BRENT.

Junii, 1647.

The table of errata is prefaced by

'The Printer to the Reader.'

'Behold a Printer, extraordinary both in his fault, and his Confession, who acknowledges the having offended all the severall parties of these times, and can think of no excuse, unlesse it be, the influence of the erring Planets

of this Conjunction, raining over our Presses and working *Errata* so commonly, either in the matter or the form of our Trade; and the piety of the Author, having preserved his Pen untainted, the malignity of our Stars hath prevailed much upon our Pensils, in miscopying his Pen; Insomuch, as the *Author* is the onely abused person in this new Book, who having for some years past, enjoyed no liberty but that of his Pen, wee must confesse it a great injury in us, to have so often restrained his sense, in this excellent piece of spiritual Inlargement, his Prison hath presented the whole Nation: For my indulgence from the Author, I will take sanctuary in his own charitable Treatise of *forgiving Injuries*: And for my pardon from the *Reader*, I may resort to a contrary pretence, namely, the merit of having been the deliverer to him of so over-weighty a Piece of Piety and Reason, as may beare a deduction of more sense, than I have clipt from it. And consequently the delight of the Reader, may well endure the allay of so much pains, as the looking often upon my *Errata*.'

There was a long interval before the appearance of the second part.

'Miscellanea Spiritualia: or Devout Essayes: the Second part, composed by the Honorable Walter Montagu, Esq., Abbot of Nanteuil, &c.

'1 Tim. i. 16. Ideo misericordiam consecutus sum, ut in me primo ostenderet Deus omnem patientiam ad informationem eorum, qui credituri sunt illi in vitam æternam. London Printed for John Crooks, Gabriel Bedell, and Partners; and are to be sold at the Ship in S. Paul's Churchyard, and at the Middle Temple-gate in Fleet street. 1654.'

George Thomason has noted 'Octob. 31,' and has in the copy now at the British Museum substituted 1653 for 1654 as the year.

This second part is also dedicated to Henrietta Maria, and is dated, 'From Nanteuil August 1, 1653.' There is a second dedication or address to the Earl of Leicester. There are essays, 'Whether any inquisition into Divine Mysteries be allowable,' 'Of the right use of time,' 'Of

the purgation of souls stain'd with Venial sin,' and similar topics.

Walter Montagu's style has still some Elizabethan echoes mingled with quaint conceits. 'The hair of the Nazareans, after their Consecration, was accepted upon the Altar; and being burnt as a Sacrifice, afforded a sweet smelling savour: So what, of itself was of an offensive, by a Vow became of a pleasing Odour. The hair in this case, signified all the Powers and Faculties of the Brain, which took their favour and acceptance, from their dedication more than from their intrinsick Dignity. I therefore Religiously profess my entering the Temple of these sacred Mysteries, as a devoted Nazarean, not a curious Gentile; come to satisfie my Vow, not mine or others' curiosity in speculating the Divine Providence; and I hope there will be no savour of Wine or strong Drink found in my Reflections, no fumes of Lightness or Presumption appear in this Disquisition: And not being conscious of having tasted any forbidden Liquor in this time of consecrating my Thoughts, I may soberly expect that these Conceptions (which were Devoted as they grew in my Head) may be accepted now they are cut off, and thus Offered up under the notion of a Vow; which manner of kindling and incensing them may give my Speculations some good Odour, that is not conjecturall to their matter (as productions of my Brain) but acquired by this condition, Because the consecration of his God was upon his Head.'¹

A full biography of Walter Montagu, for which there appear to be many materials, would be an interesting addition to the portrait gallery of the seventeenth century.

WILLIAM E. AXON.

¹ Numb. vi. 7.