

## REVIEWS.

*An Historical Introduction to the Marprelate Tracts. A chapter in the evolution of civil and religious liberty in England. By William Pierce. Constable & Co. 1908. xvii. + 350 pp.*

**I**F we except a pioneer essay by Maskell, written more than sixty years ago, the handsome volume lying before us is the first attempt ever made to cover the whole ground of the Marprelate controversy. It would seem to be almost impossible to write dispassionately on this subject. Mr. Pierce, at least, makes no pretence of so doing. His intention is quite frankly to vindicate Martin and his associates, and to lay out Whitgift 'in his colours.' We must confess that we feel Mr. Pierce would often have served his own cause better had he allowed the facts to stand unsupported by hostile comment; but it is useful to have the whole case presented from the Puritan point of view, and by one who is thoroughly acquainted with the Puritan literature of the period. We do not remember to have seen any previous study of Elizabethan Puritanism which avails itself of that valuable collection of documents, in Dr. Williams' library, known as 'A Second Part of a Register.' Mr. Pierce makes ample use of this, which fact alone should lend importance to his book.

The sub-title of Mr. Pierce's book calls for a word. The Elizabethan controversies over vestments and the form of ecclesiastical policy are certainly important, since they are the first of a series of disturbances which eventually led to the establishment of democratic forms of government in England and America. But it is surely going too far to claim that Martin Marprelate was fighting the battle of religious and civil liberty. Of religious liberty no one in that age, if we except a few despised separatists like Browne, had any idea; and we have no doubt that had Cartwright and his party come to power, as they very nearly succeeded in doing, they would have employed force quite as readily as Whitgift. Religious toleration was the outcome, by reaction, of religious strife; but she can claim descent from no particular religious party. Democracy again was quite an accidental product of what was primarily a theological wrangle. Episcopacy and vestments, like the theatre, were able to support themselves against the rising bourgeois class which hated extravagance and display, solely by the aid of the monarch, to whom spectacle was the breath of life. In the tracts of Martin's day, we can see that the Puritan party was bound to come into collision with the crown sooner or later; but while Elizabeth lived she was able to retain its fervent loyalty. This Mr. Pierce admits; but to do so is tantamount to saying that Martin and his associates had no conscious political intentions. The battle they were fighting was the battle of Church discipline. For anything wider than this horizon they had no eyes.

On the history of the Marprelate press Mr. Pierce has been able to shed new light by his discovery of two fresh documents, printed as appendices to his book, which give us a very full description of the movements of Hodgkins and his apprentices. Mr. Pierce's account of the press is extremely interesting, and commands attention as coming from one who has evidently given much time and thought to the matter, and has been at great pains to carry his researches into local history, often, as in the case of Penry's marriage, with the happiest results. Yet the topic is a thorny one, and we do not think Mr. Pierce has emerged quite unscathed. We have noticed, for example, the following errors: (1) p. 152.—Mr. Pierce is obviously confusing the raid on Waldegrave's house on 16th April, 1588, with a second raid, mentioned in 'Hay any Worke,' the date of which is quite correctly given as November, 1588, in the useful chronology at the end of the book. (2) p. 153.—We are told that the first edition of Penry's 'Exhortation' appeared about the end of April, but no reason is given for the statement. The second edition we know, and Mr. Pierce admits, was printed on or immediately after 6th May. This would give us two editions of the same book within a fortnight, or thereabouts, which seems to us absurd. (3) p. 183.—Mr. Pierce states that Waldegrave printed Cartwright's 'Confutation of the Rhemish Testament' in 1602. What he printed then was Cartwright's 'Answere to the Preface of the Rhemish Testament.' The 'Confutation' was not printed until 1618, long after

Waldegrave's death. (4) p. 204.—It is suggested that Serjeant Puckering's brief was compiled immediately after Sharpe's confession on 15th October, 1589. This cannot be the case, since the brief embodies the results of Udall's first examination, taken on 13th January, 1590.

Mr. Pierce evidently takes little interest in the anti-Martinist tracts, and we partly sympathise with him. But what reasons has he for dating some of them as he does, contrary to all usually accepted theories on the subject? Again, why does he assign 'A Petition directed,' etc., to the years 1589 or 1590? It refers to 'An Almond for a Parrat,' which was certainly printed in 1590, and it speaks also of Udall's sufferings in a manner which seems to indicate that it was written after his trial on 24th July, 1590. The tract was answered by Sutcliffe in December, 1592, and was probably printed in 1591 or early in 1592. The book on the whole, we feel, would have gained considerably in value had the author taken us a little deeper into his confidence and furnished us with more reasons for his statements. We should, for example, have liked to know his grounds for thinking that Penry made two journeys to Scotland at the end of 1589. He has also taken what seems to us an unwarrantably dark view of Shârp's character. This man let the Marprelate cat out of the bag, it is true, but Mr. Pierce does not seem to have noticed that he was examined by the authorities more than once, and may quite likely have succumbed to torture. Nor is it fair to imply that he voluntarily turned queen's evidence; he

was arrested like the others, though apparently on another charge. Among minor points it may be noticed that Mr. Pierce is not quite accurate in what he says concerning the carrying of a box of type to Mistress Crane's house. He tells us that Waldegrave's wife performed the task 'the day after the seizure of the press,' whereas Tomkins tells us that Waldegrave and his wife brought the type, and describes the time as 'shortly after Waldegraves his Lettres were defaced.' It is a small matter, but not unimportant, if we would determine the quantity of type which was rescued upon this occasion. In any case it serves to show how easy it is to go wrong in this matter of the Marprelate press, and a false step often leads to serious consequences.

In conclusion it may be mentioned that Mr. Pierce has some interesting, but not very definite, speculations in his final chapter on the inexhaustible topic of the authorship of the Marprelate tracts. We suppose that the balance of probability lies with Throgmorton: we are never likely to get farther than that. The book is nicely got up, with a portrait of Sir Richard Knightley and reproductions of title-pages; but we could have wished that more care had been bestowed upon the index. In a book of this nature, a good index is a matter of importance. But in spite of this and the slips indicated above, we may heartily congratulate Mr. Pierce on a most interesting piece of work, which no future student of Elizabethan Puritanism can afford to ignore.

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