

**YALE STUDIES IN ENGLISH;
XX. THE CONTROVERSY
BETWEEN THE PURITANS
AND THE STAGE**

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Yale Studies in English; XX. The Controversy Between the Puritans and the Stage by Elbert N. S. Thompson & Albert S. Cook

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ELBERT N. S. THOMPSON & ALBERT S. COOK

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by

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PREFACE

The precise relations between morality and art have never been determined. Although each age has grappled with the problem, an abiding solution has never been reached. Especially is this true if morality has won the ascendancy. Since it is invariably a false art that is responsible for such a triumph, the ascendancy of morality can remain unquestioned only so long as that art, which must soon perish, endures. Later generations, forgetful of its ephemeral existence, look back only upon the true art remaining, and wonder how mankind could ever have been so prudish. So it has befallen the solution reached by the English Puritan. The world has grown to respect so highly and so justly the unparalleled literary production of Elizabethan England—the work of Shakspeare, Jonson, Marlowe, and the rest—that it has forgotten the lower manifestations of the same inspiring force, and the vital problems presented by them to both moralists and legislators. The natural tendency, therefore, has been for the world to wonder at the stupidity of the Puritan. Here, as in all similar cases, it is only by studying the art of the age in its widest sense, and by reviving its social environment, that we can fully grasp the situation. This I have tried to do in my study of Puritan opinions. And in so doing, I have, perhaps, reached somewhat different conclusions from what a hasty judgment would have warranted. Yet my feelings toward the real literary art of the Elizabethan age remain unchanged. Though I regard more sympathetically the Puritans' espousal of the cause of morality, I can still rejoice that their cause did not triumph—and there is really more than chance at bottom of it—till the work of our greatest dramatists was done.

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My bibliography includes the titles of all works from which I have derived any material help, and on reference to those titles the abbreviated references of the footnotes will become clear. No mention, however, has been made of the work of Symmes, *Les Débuts de la Critique Dramatique en Angleterre jusqu' a' la Mort de Shakespeare*, Paris, 1903, which came into my hands after the completion of my study. Both in purpose and scope this book differs from mine. It is chiefly valuable for its contribution of three hitherto unknown criticisms of the drama. His work I have reviewed at length for the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the English professors of Yale University for the encouragement and assistance that they have given me in the course of my work.

E. N. S. T.

New Haven, Connecticut,
August 15, 1903.

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PART I

THE PURITAN ATTACK ON THE STAGE

