

**THE PILGRIMAGE TO PARNASSUS
WITH THE TWO PARTS OF THE RETURN
FROM PARNASSUS. THREE COMEDIES
PERFORMED IN ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE, A.D. 1597-1601**

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The pilgrimage to Parnassus with the two parts of The return from Parnassus. Three comedies performed in St. John's college, Cambridge, A.D. 1597-1601 by W. D. Macray

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The Two Parts of

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P. 386A



THE PILGRIMAGE TO
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RETURN FROM PARNASSUS.

Three Comedies performed in ST.

JOHN'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

A.D. MDXCVII-MDCI. Edited

from MSS. by the REV. W. D.

MACRAY, M.A., F.S.A.

OXFORD AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

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PREFACE.

THE present volume contains a trilogy of dramas which, although known to have once existed, has lain *perdu* to the world from the time of its composition, except with regard to the third part. That third part was twice printed in 1606, rather more than four years after the date of its first representation; was reprinted in the last century; was included a few years ago in Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt's edition of Dodsley's *Select Plays*; and in 1879 obtained a place in Prof. Arber's *English Scholar's Library*. But why this third part should alone have been published by its author does not clearly appear; it was described by its eighteenth-century editor, Thos. Hawkins, in somewhat exaggerated terms, as being 'perhaps the most singular composition in our language,' but its singularity of design and character is shared equally by the earlier parts, which display also as much humour and are fuller of illustrations of the academic life of the period. They have, unhappily, as much too of that coarseness which is such a blot on the popular literature of the time, but they have no such pages of repulsive rant as are assigned at the close of the third part to the extravagant characters *Furor Poeticus* and *Phantasma*. Probably the secret of the greater popularity of the third part may be found in the personal satire expressed in the character of the *Recorder*. In him is personified Francis Brackyn, who in his office as Recorder of Cambridge incurred extreme unpopularity in the

University by maintaining the right of the Mayor to precedence over the Vice-Chancellor in certain cases.¹ He had already been satirized in *Club-Law*, a play acted at Clare Hall in 1597-8; and it is possible that he may also be the lawyer who at a later date figures as *Ignoramus* in Ruggles' famous comedy. It may well be that it was on this account that the last part of our trilogy won the greater popularity amongst the academic auditors to whose sympathies it appealed; and the prominence given through its second title, *The Scourge of Simony*, to that portion of the play which represents the lawyer's co-operation with a patron in the sale of an ecclesiastical benefice, makes it also probable that the latter greedy reprobate, called by the different names of Sir Frederick, Sir Raderick, and Sir Randall, may have been some other easily recognised and notorious character of the time. It was only some twenty-five years before that a statute had been passed (13 Eliz. *cap.* 6) forbidding the taking money for presentation to a vacant benefice, and making that an offence by civil law which had before been only cognizable under canon law, but no doubt unscrupulous patrons and lawyers had already begun to find ways for driving the proverbial coach and horses through the technicalities of the enactment.

The first two comedies are now printed from a MS. preserved in one of Thomas Hearne's volumes of miscellaneous collections in the Bodleian Library. With a true sense of the possible value to others, if not to himself, of all remnants of earlier times, of the very rags of writings, Hearne (who, in the words of his self-written epitaph, 'studied and preserved antiquities' in a way for which we of the later generations can never be too grateful) stored up

¹ See Mr. James Bass Mullinger's *University of Cambridge 1535-1625*, published in 1884, p. 526. An abstract of the third play is there given at pp. 522-526.

all kinds of papers, binding them together just as they came to his hands, in most admired confusion. His MSS. now form part of Dr. Richard Rawlinson's vast collection; and there, in one of his mixed volumes numbered Rawlinson D 398, I met with these lost plays. The MS. consists of twenty folio leaves (besides one outside leaf) written evidently by a copyist, who, as evidently, has sometimes been unable to read, or too careless to read, his original correctly. The stage directions are written in pale red ink. There is a curious peculiarity in the scribe's spelling, which may perhaps help to determine his provincial locality; words ending in *ce*, such as 'once,' 'fence,' 'hence,' are written without the final *e*, 'onc,' 'fenc,' 'henc.' *And 'they' is frequently used for 'the.' On the outside leaf is written, as an owner's name, 'Edmunde Rishton, Lancastrensis.' It is possible that, as the plays were acted at St. John's College, this person was a member of the College; but as unfortunately the registers there only reach back to the year 1634 (as I am informed by Mr. J. B. Mullinger), there are no means of tracing him through College records. Nor has Mr. J. Eglington Bailey, whose knowledge with respect to the families and worthies of Lancashire is extensive and well known, been able to identify him by this his short local description of himself. And while this mark of ownership connects this MS. with a northern county, it is worthy of notice that the second MS., to be described further on, came to its present possessor's hands from a library in the north.¹ We should be prepared therefore to look thither for the author; and in the prologue to the second play we seem to find some evidence that he was a native of Cheshire. The two lines in the professed description of the author,

'Hee never since durst name a peece of cheese,
Though Chessire seems to priviledge his name,'

¹ The provincial philologist will, I believe, find words of northern use not infrequent; e.g. 'sooping.'

appear to connect him with that county, although the allusion is one which, in our ignorance of the author, defies explanation. If the lines preceding these are to be taken *au sérieux*, and not simply as jocular, he was one who had failed to secure his B.A. hood at Cambridge, and had migrated thence to Germany, where he had at last obtained some 'silie poore degree'; and then, it would seem, had returned to his Alma Mater.

The plays were all of them 'Christmas toys.' The date of the third has been proved from internal evidence (see Prof. Arber's Introduction to his reprint) to be December, 1601. The fresh readings in the prologue to that play, which have been gained from Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps' MS., show us that the first part (which was written in three days) was acted four years before, *i.e.* in December, 1597, and that the third was the final conclusion of the series. That prologue tells us also that the author and a friend, described as the *Philomusus* and *Studioso* of the comedies, had meanwhile been to Italy, which we learn also from the fourth scene of the first act. The two friends represent themselves as having contemplated, in the mercenary hope of profitable preferment, secession abroad to that Roman Faith for which many others had at that time abandoned both Cambridge and Oxford, but finding that 'discontented clerks' could not get a cardinal's cap as easily as they expected, they preferred want at home to mendicancy at Rome or Rheims; in this, no doubt, satirizing the supposed motives of some of the Roman converts. We learn too that the earlier plays had been acted more than once at Cambridge, although some of the allusions which appear to imply this, *viz.* those to the 'sophisters' knocks' and the 'butler's box,' are by no means clear.

In the former printed texts of the third play there are frequent passages which are unintelligible from errors of the press. These are now rendered clear by readings