January 5, 1805. "The Passionate Pilgrim."


I was about to congratulate Mr. Humphreys on his printing when, upon turning to the end of this dainty little volume, I discovered the well-known colophon of the Chiswick Press--"Charles Whittingham & Co., Took's Court, Chancery Lane, London." So I congratulate Messrs. Charles Whittingham & Co. instead, and suggest that the imprint should have run "Privately Printed _for_ Arthur L. Humphreys."

This famous (or, if you like it, infamous) little anthology of thirty leaves has been singularly unfortunate in its title-pages. It was first published in 1599 as _The Passionate Pilgrims. By W. Shakespeare. At London. Printed for W. Jaggard, and are to be sold by W. Leake, at the Greyhound in Paules Churchyard._ This, of course, was disingenuous. Some of the numbers were by Shakespeare: but the authorship of some remains doubtful to this day, and others the enterprising Jaggard had boldly conveyed from Marlowe, Richard Barnefield, and Bartholomew Griffin. In short, to adapt a famous line upon a famous lexicon, "the best part was Shakespeare, the rest was not." For this, Jaggard has been execrated from time to time with sufficient heartiness. Mr. Swinburne, in his latest volume of Essays, calls him an "infamous pirate, liar, and thief." Mr. Humphreys remarks, less vivaciously, that "He was not careful and prudent, or he would not have attached the name of Shakespeare to a volume which was only partly by the bard--that was his crime. Had Jaggard foreseen the tantrums and contradictions he caused some commentators--Mr. Payne Collier, for instance--he would doubtless have substituted 'By William Shakespeare _and others_' for 'By William Shakespeare.' Thus he might have saved his reputation, and this hornets' nest which now and then rouses itself afresh around his aged ghost of three centuries ago."

That a ghost can suffer no inconvenience from hornets I take to be indisputable: but as a defence of Jaggard the above hardly seems convincing. One might as plausibly justify a forger on the ground that, had he foreseen the indignation of the prosecuting counsel, he would doubtless have saved his reputation by forbearing to forge. But before constructing a better defence, let us hear the whole tale of the alleged misdeeds. Of the second edition of _The Passionate Pilgrim_ no copy exists. Nothing whatever is known of it, and the whole edition may have been but an ideal construction of Jaggard's sportive fancy. But in 1612 appeared _The Passionate Pilgrime, or certaine amorous Sonnets between Venus and Adonis, newly corrected and augmented. By W. Shakespeare. The third edition. Whereunto is newly added two Love Epistles, the first from Paris to Hellen, and Hellen's answere back again to Paris. Printed by W. Jaggard._ (These "two Love Epistles" were really by Thomas Heywood.) This title-page was very quickly cancelled, and Shakespeare's name omitted.

Mr. Humphrey's Hypothesis.
"Shakespeare, who, when the first edition was issued, was aged thirty-five, acted his part as a great man very well, for he with dignity took no notice of the error on the title-page of the first edition, attributing to him poems which he had never written. But when Jaggard went on sinning, and the third edition appeared under Shakespeare's name _solely_, though it had poems by Thomas Heywood, and others as well, Jaggard was promptly pulled up by both Shakespeare and Heywood. Upon this the publisher appears very properly to have printed a new title-page, omitting the name of Shakespeare."

Upon this I beg leave to observe—(1) That although it may very likely have been at Shakespeare's own request that his name was removed from the title-page of the third edition, Mr. Humphreys has no right to state this as an ascertained fact. (2) That I fail to understand, if Shakespeare acted properly in case of the third edition, why we should talk nonsense about his "acting the part of a great man very well" and "with dignity taking no notice of the error" in the first edition. In the first edition he was wrongly credited with pieces that belonged to Marlowe, Barnefield, Griffin, and some authors unknown. In the third he was credited with these and some pieces by Heywood as well. In the name of common logic I ask why, if it were "dignified" to say nothing in the case of Marlowe and Barnefield, it suddenly became right and proper to protest in the case of Heywood? But (3) what right have we to assume that Shakespeare "took no notice of the error on the title-page of the first edition"? We know this only—that if he protested, he did not prevail as far as the first edition was concerned. That edition may have been already exhausted. It is even possible that he _did_ prevail in the matter of the second edition, and that Jaggard reverted to his old courses in the third. I don't for a moment suppose this was the case. I merely suggest that where so many hypotheses will fit the scanty data known, it is best to lay down no particular hypothesis as fact.

Another.

For I imagine that anyone can, in five minutes, fit up an hypothesis quite as valuable as Mr. Humphreys'. Here is one which at least has the merit of not making Shakespeare look a fool:--W. Jaggard, publisher, comes to William Shakespeare, poet, with the information that he intends to bring out a small miscellany of verse. If the poet has an unconsidered trifle or so to spare, Jaggard will not mind giving a few shillings for them. "You may have, if you like," says Shakespeare, "the rough copies of some songs in my _Love's Labour's Lost_, published last year"; and, being further encouraged, searches among his rough MSS., and tosses Jaggard a lyric or two and a couple of sonnets. Jaggard pays his money, and departs with the verses. When the miscellany appears, Shakespeare finds his name alone upon the title-page, and remonstrates. But, of the defrauded ones, Marlowe is dead; Barnefield has retired to live the life of a country gentleman in Shropshire; Griffin dwells in Coventry (where he died, three years later). These are the men injured; and if they cannot, or will not, move in the business, Shakespeare (whose case at law would be more difficult) can hardly be expected to. So he contents himself with strong expressions at The Mermaid. But in 1612 Jaggard repeats his offence, and is indiscreet enough to add Heywood to the list of the spoiled. Heywood lives in London, on the spot; and Shakespeare, now retired to Stratford, is of more importance than he was in 1599. Armed with Shakespeare's authority Heywood goes to Jaggard and threatens; and the publisher gives way.

Whatever our hypothesis, we cannot maintain that Jaggard behaved well. On the other hand, it were foolish to judge his offence as if the man had committed it the day before yesterday. Conscience in matters of literary copyright has been a plant of slow growth. But a year or two ago respectable citizens of the United States were publishing our books "free of authorial expenses," and even corrected our imperfect works without consulting us. We must admit that Jaggard acted up to Luther's maxim, "_Pecca fortiter_." He went so far as to include a piece so well known as Marlowe's _Live with me and be my love_—which proves at any rate his indifference to the chances of detection. But to speak of him as one would speak of a similar offender in this New Year of Grace is simply to forfeit one's claim to an historical sense.

The Book.
What further palliation can we find? Mr. Swinburne calls the book "a worthless little volume of stolen and mutilated poetry, patched up and padded out with dirty and dreary doggrel, under the senseless and preposterous title of _The Passionate Pilgrim_." On the other hand, Mr. Humphreys maintains that "Jaggard, at any rate, had very good taste. This is partly seen in the choice of a title. Few books have so charming a name as _The Passionate Pilgrim_. It is a perfect title. Jaggard also set up a good precedent, for this collection was published a year before _England's Helicon_, and, of course, very many years before any authorized collection of Shakespeare's 'Poems' was issued. We see in _The Passionate Pilgrim_ a forerunner of _The Golden Treasury_ and other anthologies."

Now, as for the title, if the value of a title lie in its application, Mr. Swinburne is right. It has little relevance to the verses in the volume. On the other hand, as a portly and attractive mouthful of syllables _The Passionate Pilgrim_ can hardly be surpassed. If not "a perfect title," it is surely "a charming name." But Mr. Humphreys' contention that Jaggard "set up a good precedent" and produced a "forerunner" of English anthologies becomes absurd when we remember that _Tottel's Miscellany_ was published in June, 1557 (just forty-two years before _The Passionate Pilgrim_), and had reached an eighth edition by 1587; that _The Paradise of Dainty Devices_ appeared in 1576; _A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions_ in 1578; _A Handfull of Pleasant Delights_ in 1584; and _The Phoenix' Nest_ in 1593.

Almost as wide of the mark is Mr. Swinburne's description of the volume as "worthless." It contains twenty-one numbers, besides that lofty dirge, so unapproachably solemn, _The Phoenix and the Turtle_. Of these, five are undoubtedly by Shakespeare. A sixth (_Crabbed age and youth_), if not by Shakespeare, is one of the loveliest lyrics in the language, and I for my part could give it to no other man. Note also that but for Jaggard's enterprise this jewel had been irrevocably lost to us, since it is known only through _The Passionate Pilgrim_. Marlowe's _Live with me and be my love_, and Barnefield's _As it fell upon a day_, make numbers seven and eight. And I imagine that even Mr. Swinburne cannot afford to scorn _Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely pluck'd, soon vaded_--which again only occurs in _The Passionate Pilgrim_. These nine numbers, with _The Phoenix and the Turtle_, make up more than half the book. Among the rest we have the pretty and respectable lyrics, _If music and sweet poetry agree; Good night, good rest; Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east_. When as thine eye hath chose the dame, and the gay little song, _It was a Lording's daughter_. There remain the _Venus and Adonis_ sonnets and _My flocks feed not_. Mr. Swinburne may call these "dirty and dreary doggrel," an he list, with no more risk than of being held a somewhat over-anxious moralist. But to call the whole book worthless is mere abuse of words.

It is true, nevertheless, that one of the only two copies existing of the first edition was bought for three halfpence.

(The end)

Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch's essay: "the Passionate Pilgrim"

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By Arthur Thomas Quiller-couch

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