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HENRY OXINDEN'S AUTHORSHIP.

BY DOROTHY GARDINER.

HENRY OXINDEN's works are so hard to come by that some account of their history and contents may be serviceable to readers of his correspondence. The information given in the *Dictionary of National Biography* is scanty and incomplete.

I

The two Latin poems in hexameters entitled *Religionis Funus* and *Hypocritae Finis* were printed in London by Thomas Whittaker (of King's Arms, St. Paul's Churchyard) in 1647, in a small quarto volume.¹ The frontispiece is an oval portrait of the author, finely engraved, (probably the "medallion" referred to in Letters CLIV and CLXIX);² above it are Henry's coat-of-arms and crest; and beneath is his motto, "Non est mortale quod opto".

The title page has no author's name, but bears two Latin mottos: "Quasi Vulpes in deserto Prophetæ tui O Israel", Ez. 13. 4.; and the lines:

"Ne rodas, jubeo, mea carmina Mome, sed Orbi
Ede tua, et Momos etiam tu Momus habebis".

The first poem is an attack on the Directory for Public Worship, issued in January 1644-5; the second on the personnel of the Puritan ministry. The poet in search of True Religion goes first into princes' palaces, but finds in high place only fraud and wickedness. Next he questions the Army; their God is the sword in their right hand; their creed is to overthrow the temples of the gods, not the creed which shuts the gates of war. After this he begs the Lawyers to tell him where to find Religion. Holy writ, they reply, is child's play to our English Law, which is based on solid reason; to supersede it by the Law of Moses or of Christ would bring about chaos.

Next the author considers approaching the Physicians, but remembers the saying that given three doctors, two of them are unbelievers, and determines to seek his "Spouse Beloved" among the Priests. One of these, clearly a virtuous if not a saintly person, meets him and asks why he looks so sad. He explains his quest and is told the Bride

¹ Whittaker died about 1650, which may account for Henry's change of printer in his later books (cf. Plomer, p. 192).

² Reference to *The Oxinden and Peyton Letters, 1642-1670*, edited by Dorothy Gardiner (Sheldon Press, 1937).

has fled away: Religion is nowhere, only her counterfeit remains among men, who pursue shadows and abandon piety.

The priest's duty is to proclaim the heavenly mysteries, and to teach others his own faith. Yet everywhere suspicion is rife, the son hostile to his father, the husband to his wife. The priesthood arrogate divine powers, yet impart to their people one interpretation of scripture while they reserve another for themselves. From the pulpit they proclaim the imminent return of the Creator of Heaven and Earth to destroy His whole creation; happy, they cry, he who prepares for Christ's appearing; but in their secret hearts they regard this universe as indestructible, and ridicule the Lord's coming as a thief; their reason sees no impending change in the heavens but a constant ordering of sun, moon and stars.

Much of their own teaching they regard as mere fable; they despise lay-hearers for their lack of reasoning power; they preach the vanity of riches but covet their gift at the altar and call this a sacred hunger. Useless to search for religion among the priests, where all is pride and deceit. At length it occurs to the poet to pursue his quest within London walls. He hastens thither, asking everybody for his Spouse. At length he discovers her torn fragments; the citizens (fathers of the sects) stand round weeping; Good Directory alone honours her funeral, while she is buried in an unnamed grave. "Farewell Religion, Farewell, I said", concludes the poem; "Until Charles comes thy resurrection cannot be looked for."

II

The *Hypocritae Finis* contains a word-portrait of the Puritan minister; he who walks with head bent looking earthwards, utters long sighs, puffs out long prayers through his nostrils, wears cropped hair with a supercilious smile; pretends a pious soul behind a face like a mask, and under a lamb-like exterior conceals the wild beast. The volume closes with the author's fervent prayer for peace:

"Et veniat, veniat, veniat (Christo auspice) noster
Carolus, et Deus ille meus, quem semper amabo."

This strikes the modern reader as a courageous aspiration at that date for one who claimed to be a neutral; his friends admired his independence of mind, although Henry complained that his aim in writing the poems was misunderstood.

The chief interest of the book is the stress it lays on the rationalizing tendency of the churchmanship which Puritan "hypocrisy" of a less intellectual cast superseded. At the Restoration Henry seems to have considered republishing the volume, and consulted Dr. Thomas Tullie, Principal of St. Edmund Hall, where his nephew, James Oxinden, was

an undergraduate. Dr. Tullie in reply praised Henry's outspokenness : "you have shewed your selfe to be a vates in both senses of the word ; a Poet and a Prophet. You have compos'd an Heroick verse in a double notion ; for to deliver your mind so plainly to the world at such a time was no les then Heroicall. You have pictur'd the Hypocrisie of the Age (which it selfe is but a picture) to the life . . .". As regards a re-issue, however, his letter continues, "In my slender judgment the re-publishing of your poem might be a little more seasonable when things are brought to some better compromise than at present they are. . . . I am the more tempted to this presumption of Counsaile by his Majestie's late proclamation, wherein he seems averse from the renuall of provocations ; and I know you would not willinglie . . . swerve from a copy set us by so faire a hand."¹ It is uncertain whether or not the book was reprinted by Thomas Newcombe.

III

Henry's second book, *Jobus Triumphans*, is exceedingly scarce ; it seems doubtful whether any copy survives except the one, originally belonging to the author's great grandson Lee Warly, formerly in the possession of the late Dr. F. W. Cock, F.S.A., of Appledore, and sold with his library in June 1944.²

Probably in the first instance not more than 100 copies were printed, and since, on the testimony of Thomas Oxinden in 1667, it was "read in schooles beyond the sea", this may help to account for its scarcity. No publisher's name is on the title page, but a fragmentary letter from Thomas Newcombe, dated June 21th [*sic*], 1660, states : "for *Jobus Triumphans*, I [have] none of them left, neither more or less [but I] intend to print both the one and the other ; the [general] sense is that your book *Religionis Funus* is the Nobler Volume".³ This suggests that Newcombe, then of the King's Printing House, Savoy, originally printed the *Jobus*, and produced, at some time after 1660, a reprint of both works, if indeed, in the collapse of Henry's fortunes, it ever saw the light. Newcombe was probably introduced to him by Marchmont Nedham. In Dr. Cock's copy the printed date 1651 has been for some reason unknown corrected in ink by Lee Warly to 1656. The poem was certainly completed, if only handed about in manuscript for friendly criticism, as early as April 1649.⁴

¹ Undated, but about 1660. MS. 28,001, f. 59.

² The Catalogue of Sale gives the purchaser's name as Pickering.

³ MS. 28,004, f. 132.

⁴ cf. Letter XCV ; also cf. MS. 28,001, f. 309, where Thomas Denne writes on December 26th, 1647, "I have heare inclosed your Jobian Muse", but this may refer to *Religionis Funus*.

IV

Numerous miscellaneous notes in Oxinden's handwriting appear on the fly-leaves of Dr. Cock's copy, made at various dates up to 1667. One of these says that "Edmund Paxton in Paul's Chaine, at the Castle (i.e. the Castle Tavern), bound these books". Paxton was also a bookseller.¹ Another has, "The edition of Feild 1648, in quarto, is 1s price". This probably refers to the quarto edition of the Bible published in 1648 by John Field, the London and Cambridge printer, at that date living in Addle Hill, near Baynard's Castle. Henry may have consulted the book for information about the history of Job.²

Among the notes there is also a long poem in Latin addressed "Ad clarissimum virum Henricum Oxinden" by John Peirce, dated March 20th, 1657. He may have been the "Mr. Pierce" whom Thomas Williams "satisfied" by the payment of 4s. 3d., possibly for this very poem (Letter CLII). Another manuscript Latin poem signed H.B. may be assigned to Henry Bradshaw, Headmaster of Wye Grammar School, while yet a third was written by Richard Oxinden, Henry's grandson, a pupil of Mr. John Reader's at Faversham. It is entitled "Ad Zoilum et Momum, ut parcerent avo suo, Henrico Oxinden Armigero, Jobi Triumphantis auctori Ric. Oxinden Exhortatio", and has corrections by the proud grandfather.

The authorship of the numerous printed dedicatory verses is of interest in connection with the correspondence. Alexander Ross leads off, followed by William Nethersole, of the Inner Temple and of Womenswold, and by another neighbour, Francis Howard ("Ad verè Nobilem ducem Henricum Oxinden") who lived at Barham Court. "H. Jacob", author of the succeeding verses, was Henry Jacob, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford,³ son of Henry Jacob, pastor of the first congregation of Independants in England, who went to America and died there in 1624. The younger Henry was the friend of Selden, and was expelled from his office in 1648. He was buried in All Saints' Church, Canterbury (now demolished). Henry Birkhead published a collection of his Greek and Latin verses.

John Neale, who contributed four lines of eulogy, was probably curate of Guston, near Dover. John Ludd who wrote a longer poem "ad Virum verè Philomusum de Tempestivâ", was Headmaster of King's School, Canterbury, 1615-1649; "E.B." who has two poems to his credit dated in 1649, was undoubtedly Edward Browne, Ludd's successor at that date to the headship of the school, where he had been for sixteen years Lower Master.⁴ There are references to both

¹ Plomer, loc. cit., p. 148.

² Ibid., p. 74.

³ So *D.N.B.*; Foster, *Alumn. Oxon.*, p. 797, has Queen's.

⁴ Woodruff and Cape, *Schola Regia Cantuariensis*, p. 110.

pedagogues in the correspondence, also a letter from Browne to Henry Oxinden which may have accompanied his verses.¹ The chorus of praise closes with a poem by Thomas Oxinden to his "beloved father".²

V

The text of the poem occupies pp. 15-39 of the tiny volume, roughly bound in old brown calf. Twenty-five pages are occupied with the story of Job's misfortunes, summarized from the scripture narrative. An apostrophe follows to the man who is master of his soul, unbroken by misfortune, unspoilt by prosperity. A description of sunshine after storm, spring succeeding to winter, leads on to Job's return to the divine favour.

Job's patience exceeded Cato's: it had no equal save in Jesus Christ alone. What wonder if the Lord's disciples could endure poverty and hardship; they were fishermen, ever needy; but Job had known luxury and regal surroundings. So fearless and unperturbed may the Christian keep his unconquerable soul.

Henry's apostrophe "To the oppressed owners of lands", shows clearly enough to what personal experience he owed his inspiration. His contemporaries took the poem as he intended it; they applied it to their own griefs, to their suffering country, above all to their martyred king; they accepted its lesson of endurance until God's good time of returning prosperity. "Jobus" is much more attractively written than the earlier poem, and its tone is loftier—less full of bitterness.

VI

The third and most curious of Henry's productions is the "Eikon Basilike, or an Image Royal, etc.", which has nothing to do with the famous work of that name but is an Epithalamium to celebrate the marriage of Sir Basil Dixwell of Broome Park and Mistress Dorothy Peyton. It bears on the title page the date "March 25. Printed in the year 1660". This was probably the wedding day; the marriage is unrecorded in the registers of Knowlton Church, the bride's home. A woodcut of a laurel leaf tied with flowing ribbons ornaments the title page. No printer's name appears, but Letter CLII shows that it was printed by David Maxwell, of Thames Street, near Baynard's Castle. It is a tiny volume of 22 pages, no less scarce than the *Jobus Triumphans*, if indeed any copy besides the one formerly in Dr. Cock's possession can now be traced.³ The opening congratulatory verses,

¹ cf. MS. 28,002, f. 79.

² cf. *O. and P. Letters*, p. 152.

³ Purchased Pickering, June 1944.

unsigned here, are attributed in one of Henry's numerous notebooks to Charles Nichols and are characteristic of his style.

"Thy heart-enamouring strains did they but see,
The Nunneries would all unpeopl'd be :
Despising Cloysters, Abbesses would throng
About thee, for to beg a Marriage Song."

Half a dozen lines, neatly turned, are contributed by Dr. Thomas Williams, of Elham :

"Prose first conjoyn'd them both till their last Breath,
But in your Verse, they'r wedded after death."

Three short anonymous poems, not improbably written by Henry Birkhead, are followed by the author's address to the Reader, combining judicious compliment on the imminent restoration of the monarchy with congratulations to the bride and bridegroom :

"Reader, here is exposed to thine eye
How (by Heaven authoriz'd) Monarchie
Excels not only rude Democratie
But also choicest Aristocratie.
Here also thou maist see, if thou canst see,
A gift Divine, ev'n Basil Dorothie."

The poem is evidently written *currente calamo*, and shows throughout signs of hurried composition in rhyme and doubtful grammar, while its twofold thread of bridal felicitation and comment on current affairs is but clumsily intertwined. The poet's remarks on Love's single-heartedness lead abruptly into a dissertation on the fickle

"multitude,
of faith and spirits barbarous, base and rude".

The bridegroom Basil quickly becomes a figure-head attentive to Henry's vigorous polemic. His

"high worth disdains
The scurrilous humor of such frantick brains . . .
And Hocus Pocus long breath'd Sycophants
Who in such cunning manner set the Plants
Of Treason and Sedition, that they grow
Fast'ning their Roots as deep as Hell below . . .
(Who cloak their crimes in Hoods of holiness
And take God's name to cover wickedness,
Are double Villains, and the Hypocrite
Is most—most odious in God's glorious sight)."

Henry frankly avers his entire distrust of democratic government :

"What is Democracy but a toss'd ship,
Void both of Pole and Pilot in the deep ;
A Senate, fram'd of many a head-strong Clown,
Where number weighs the most judicious down . . .
A gally maufry of brains so possest
As still the vilest is accounted best,
Where who's most bold, busie and void of wit
And speaks least sence, is thought the nail to hit . . ."¹

Government by the aristocracy is not less dangerous to the realm :

"A Stage where those of highest blood
Act their own ends yet pretend common good."

Its one virtue is that it tends at last inevitably to monarchy :

"The World needs but one God, Heav'n but one Sun,
And our Great Brittain, King but only One :
Such as is He whose Wisdom and Fore-sight
Makes Him the Almighty's Picture even right . . .
Monarchy is a quiet House, where's one
Obey'd and serv'd sans contradiction ;
A Garden where Sedition takes no rooting
And all-confounding Anarchy no footing . . ."

As he writes, the end of the present régime is so imminent that he can urge upon Basil a personal loyalty :

"Fear God, thy King Charles honor, give no eare
To fawning hypocrites . . ."
". . . methinks I see the Stars ev'n all
Joyntly prepare themselves against the fall
Of that same many headed Monstrous thing
That hath so long withstood their God and King.
Methinks I Praise-God Bare-bone see lament
That ere unto the headless Parliament
A Phanatick Petition he prefer'd
'Gainst King and Peers, or ere against them stir'd.
And you John Lambert, Disbrowe and others
That in iniquity were all sworn Brothers,
Are you not now with your own coyn paid off,
And to your Foes and Quondam-friends a scoff ?
And thou, O Oliver, who soard'st so high
What hast behinde thee left save infamy ?"²

¹ cf. pp. 4 and 5.

² Ibid., p. 8.

So the first part ends on a God Save the King, and with the second the poet recalls the newly wed couple. He pays a compliment to the bridegroom's good looks and indirectly to his old flame, Madam Elizabeth Dixwell :

"How sweet Basil couldst thou well be other
Descending from so fair and wise a Mother ? "

The bride is a more inspiring theme ; to her he re-dedicates the lines which his own wife Katherine's charms had once suggested :

"Some say so faire was Hero, Venus' Nun,
As Nature wept, thinking she was undone
Because she took more from her then she left
And of such wondrous Beauty her bereft."

There are pretty touches in the description of Dorothy's every feature :

"Her cheeks spread with a coulour of such hew
So lovely as Aurora never knew,
In which those jars are all composèd seen
Which 'twixt the white Rose and the red have been . . .
. . . Her Nose, her Chin and her well-hearing Ears
Such whiteness as her lovely forehead wears,
Her hands so pure, so innocent, nay such
They are that Angels may bow down to touch . . ."¹

The third section is devoted to an eulogy on Dorothy's virtue, which would not have displeased the elder Dorothy Osborne, her aunt :

"Divinitie's the object of her will,
She loves what's good, and hateth what is ill ; . . .
Angelical's her gesture, and her gate,
Most lovely sweet, humbly conjoyn'd with state.
Pure Vertue is her Hand-maid, and her dress
The richest Jewels of all godliness. . . ."

The poem ends with a clumsy conceit on the names of bride and bridegroom :

"Basil and Dorothy, both names so high
As in them all may read Divinity,
What is a King and gift from God conjoyn'd
But Basilean Dorothy intertwined ? "

Henry's poem on the Restoration, "Carolus Triumphans", and his prose work "In praise of the Sacrament", cannot now be traced.²

¹ Ibid., p. 16.

² cf. *O. and P. Letters*, p. 257.