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## College Books

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## College Books

**A**N UNUSUAL study in the material of the medieval romances is F. Carl Riedel's *Crime and Punishment in the Old French Romances* (Columbia University Press, 1938). No romantic story could develop a plot without villainy of some sort, either against love or property and usually both. The greedy guardians scheming to deprive royal wards of inheritance, the wicked stewards envious of courtly lovers, the faithless brother or companion, all had to be dealt with by methods of judgment and revenge. That such matters were frequently merely resolved by warfare and force is not to be wondered about, for society in the dark ages had no central organization to enforce ordered processes if such had existed. In the Church there were tribunals and the form of trial at least for excommunications, penances, heresy. The clergy supported the ordeals for the part which God had played in sustaining the righteous and putting down the wicked. In the cold water test, the accused was bound hand and foot with cord, and lowered by means of a rope into consecrated water. If he sank, he was innocent; if he floated, he was guilty, the theory being that the pure element would not receive an impure person. The test by fire required the victim to move barefoot over nine red-hot ploughshares. Mr. Riedel remarks that the ordeals were often trained for in advance, and unguents used to harden the skin. Anyone familiar with swimming or floating in water could have contrived to sink in holy water or any other kind by expelling the breath from the lungs. In the English romance, *Athelston*, the king's sister, married to an earl unjustly accused of treason, follows her husband over the hot ploughshares, and is siezed with the pains of child labor at the third ploughshare, but comes across the remainder to go into the ministrations of women who deliver the babe. Ordeals were abandoned in England in 1215, and the later romances show

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increasing respect for tribunal law, witness the romance, "Gamelyn," in which Sir Ote and Gamelyn, each of whom has been grievously wronged, become justice and chief justice respectively and set about giving legal redress to the poor and oppressed. Mr. Riedel's study is a challenge for a similar review of crime and punishment in the English romances, a study he himself suggests should be made.

Thomas Fuller's work, *The Holy State and the Profane State*, has been newly edited and reprinted by Maximilian Graff Walten (Columbia University Press, 1938) to make available to many modern scholars and libraries a somewhat rare item of great value. Fuller has been almost exclusively known for his *History of the Worthies of England* to which we turn for biographical commentary upon figures so diverse as Archbishop Laud and Sir Francis Drake. *The Holy State, etc.*, likewise is filled with biographical commentary, but introduced at every point by interpretation of the type of personal or political virtue, or vice the individual best represents. The essay on "The Good Wife," with which the whole study begins, draws upon St. Paul, Comenius, Erasmus, Jean Bodin, three of whom were churchmen, and at least two of them unmarried. Nevertheless, their advice is good, and excellent is Preacher Fuller's choice of Monica, mother of St. Augustine, as the model wife, for she tamed a harsh husband and along with the help of St. Ambrose led her son to repent of evil ways and take to the path which eventually led him to sanctity. So in the choice of Nicholas Ridley as the type of good bishop we concur in Fuller's estimate, though there is little added here that is not found in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. But when Fuller comes to pick his "Athiest" and "Schoolmaster" or "Witch," how we wish he had found English illustrations: Sir Walter Raleigh, perhaps, for the first; Richard Mulcaster, for the second; the Scottish witches with the poor schoolmaster, Dr. Fian, who was grievously tortured for tales brought about him in connection with a poor woman who confessed to having ridden to sea. All

Hallow's eve with two hundred other witches, all of them on a riddle or sieve. Fuller admonishes the schoolmaster to be absolute monarch in his school and especially to reject bribes or threats from parents to show favor to particular students. He advises moderation in punishment, quoting Francis Dujon, the famous Junius, in his complaint that he had a master who beat him seven or eight times every day. This seventeenth century compendium is the type of book which took the place then which essay, biography, books on etiquette, even the gossip column supply today. It is no less interesting because of it.

Two books which fall together chronologically, since they both deal with the epoch when Puritanism made its greatest gains in England, have recently emerged from the Columbia University Press. Both owe their genesis and much of their corporeal substance to John Milton, the poet.

Mr. Ernest Brennecke, who is both a choirmaster and a teacher of English, uses his happy combination of talents to write *John Milton the Elder and His Music* (Columbia University Press, 1938). John Milton the Elder went to Oxford as a chorister in Christ Church, in 1573. Fortunately for us, Mr. Brennecke has not been able to find many facts about the life of the elder Milton. Instead of a documented biography of insignificant details, such as the grant of cloth for a uniform or a warrant for a daily pitcher of wine, which have been the great solace of Chaucerian scholarship, Mr. Brennecke gives us an account of a typical day in the life of a chorister at Christ College, during one of the most fertile periods in the history of church music.

The first music lecture at Oxford was not founded until 1626, but it so happened that John Milton, Senior, had come to one of the wealthiest and most thoroughly equipped schools of music in the realm. The chorister in Christ's followed a rigid routine of singing, studying, and composing; he was as thoroughly grounded in the theory of music as in its performance; though his physical, cultural, and histrionic development was not neglected, he lived his art.

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The facts in the life of John Milton, the poet, are, perhaps, better known than in the case of any previous literary figure. Mr. Brennecke has not attained such a high degree of visibility in setting forth the life of the father. As in the opening chapter, so elsewhere, background and pleasing conjecture have frequently been substituted for fact. The chief value of Mr. Brennecke's study lies, not in establishing the eminence of the elder Milton as a composer, for that eminence has long been known, but in his account and analysis of Milton's compositions as typical of the music of Elizabethan and Tudor times, when the traditional music of the Church was being crossed with the fecundity of Palestrina and other Italians.

A work of genuine scholarship is Professor William Haller's *Rise of Puritanism, 1570-1643* (Columbia University Press, 1938). Although the origin and nature of English Puritanism has been generally known to literary historians, there has, up to this time, always been somewhat of a mystery about the growth of this great movement to reform the English Church. Isolated instances of Puritanism like that of pseudonymous Martin Marprelate and William Prynne have been chronicled, together with the somewhat strange appearance of Puritans off the coast of New England. But the usual practice of the scholar and the student is to pluck a whole array of Puritans out of the thin air of vaguely understood religious controversy and exhibit them in the Westminster Assembly of 1643. Professor Haller dispels the mist which has long hung over the origin of this movement; and reveals how naturally it came into being.

Certain zealous souls in the Church of England welcomed the accession of Queen Elizabeth and the return to Protestantism as the beginnings of the reform of Church and State. The Puritans of that day were not ordinary dissenters or ignorant laymen. In fact, they were the intellectuals of the kingdom. The stimulus and ferment of thought and intellectual activity aroused by the Reformation centered in Cambridge University, particularly in Emmanuel

College and Sidney Sussex College, both of which were established expressly for the purpose of training up a preaching ministry. The act, which started these colleges and spread the infectious doctrine of Puritanism throughout England, was the expulsion of Thomas Cartwright, lecturer and professor, from Cambridge University, in 1570. Contrary to expectation. Elizabeth, who wished more than anything else to retain her throne, did not cleanse the Church but was satisfied with "sweeping the trash behind the door." The deficiency thus caused in the spiritual life of the people was supplied by a steady stream of highly trained and zealous preachers from Cambridge.

Elizabeth "allowed the Puritans to bark as long as there was no immediate danger lest they bite." These spiritual preachers, inflamed to eloquence by their very lack of secure subsistence, were scattered all over England at strategic points for founding their new Utopia, based upon the word of God. They became chaplains in the employ of the nobility or preachers on special foundations supported by wealthy patrons. Members of this "spiritual brotherhood" were attached to many of the most important churches as lecturers who made the most of those hours still available after the conventional and perfunctory offices of the Church had been performed by the official incumbent. Others, less fortunate, and, therefore, more radical, went to the growing commercial and industrial communities and worked up congregations of their own.

Later, the disappointment which arose when King James failed to make the expected reform of the Church and the dissatisfaction with conditions which obtained during his reign caused this new doctrine of the priesthood of all believers to spread like wildfire. Archbishop Laud, whom Professor Haller shows to be a man of many excellent qualities, by his persecution of William Prynne and others, injudiciously and unwittingly gave to the new heterodoxy the necessary element of martyrdom which, at the time of

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the Westminster Assembly, in 1643, put the Puritans in what seemed to be complete control of the state.

Though the book is too massive in fact for casual reading, it contains unforgettable portraits of Archbishop Laud and William Prynne.

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