

PIERCE, William Matthews, and Elizabeth. SCRAP-BOOK AND COMMONPLACE BOOK compiled by the Rev. W.M. Pierce and his wife Elizabeth (née Rockcliffe); later owned by the Rev. Walter Currer Holliwell. [West Ashby, Lincs., and elsewhere, c. 1840-1880]

Folio (approx. 420 x 280mm), 85 album leaves (not counting stubs or endpapers; but including two or three loose album leaves; some leaves clearly removed); with many items pasted to the leaves and a lesser number tipped in (not counted in foliation); early 19th century half morocco, worn, but generally sound. Small leather label with royal arms on upper cover.

William Matthews Pierce (c. 1800-1864) came from Middlesex and went up to St John's College, Cambridge, in 1817 as a sizar. This category of undergraduate, which necessitated some time spent serving the college in menial tasks, usually indicated a man of limited means and lower social class: neither his father's name nor occupation is mentioned in Venn. Pierce, however, entered the Church of England and progressed up the social and economic ladders: he became a deacon in 1821 and was ordained priest in 1822; and quickly gained curacies and then parishes in Lincolnshire, more specifically the comparatively hilly area of the county known as the Lincolnshire Wolds. He was to spend the rest of his life in this district: first as a curate at Salmonby (June 1821) and at Tetford (September 1822), then as Vicar of both Gouceby and Burwell (together 1823-27). In August 1826 he was appointed Perpetual Curate of West Ashby, near Horncastle (just outside the Wolds district), and in the same month he became Rector of Fulletby, a couple of miles to the east. In 1838 he added the post of Rector of Moorby, several miles to the south of Horncastle. The income from all these parishes must have made for a comfortable standard of living – and in 1852, as we learn from this volume, he appointed a curate (John Richard Johnson, a young Cambridge graduate) to Moorby, which would have alleviated the workload.

W.M. Pierce was almost certainly involved in the publication – perhaps only as promoter but probably as editor and writer – of *The Christian's Monthly Magazine and Universal Review*, a periodical which lasted from 1844 to 1846 and which was founded in militant opposition to the Tractarian movement of the 1840s. William Matthews Pierce is referred to below as **WMP**.

The same year that he moved to the parish of West Ashby, Pierce married **Elizabeth Rockcliffe**. She was the daughter of the Rev. Francis Rockcliffe, who had died in 1824, and had been Rector of Fulletby for the previous forty years. It is easy to speculate about the motives for this marriage, for both parties: it would have brought security for her, with her father recently dead, and social position for him – as well as inheriting (in effect) her father's parish, there was quite probably money and land involved. Pierce and his wife lived in West Ashby Manor House and appear to have been very well off. Nevertheless, even if there were mercenary motives for the marriage, it turned out to be a success, as the poems addressed by Elizabeth to her husband in this volume show, and from the way that he kept so many of her literary productions and defended her reputation as an author. Elizabeth Pierce is referred to below as **EP**.

The couple appear to have had just one child, a son, **Francis Rockcliffe Pierce**. Born in 1828, Francis went to school in High Wycombe, and thence to Winchester College. Almost immediately something seems to have gone wrong: according to Venn, he stayed at Winchester only five days, and after that was taught privately by the Rev. Anthony Crowdy, an Oxford graduate who was Vicar of Winnall, a suburb of Winchester. Whatever the reason for this – perhaps persistent physical illness – Francis went up to Cambridge (Gonville & Caius) in 1847 and then (after only two years) on to Lincoln's Inn to read for the bar, in 1849. He was duly called in 1854, but seems not to have practised for long: he had other posts in Lincolnshire, as a captain in the Lincolnshire Militia, and as JP for the county. In 1851 he was living at the house with his father. He died in December 1862, aged only 34. Francis Pierce is referred to below as **FRP**.

It is possible that Elizabeth died before her son: the latest of the annual poems to her husband on his birthday is dated 1858; what is certain is that William Pierce outlived his son, dying two years later, in 1864.

At this point the album seems to have passed to the Rev. **Walter Curren Holiwell** (1835-99), another Lincolnshire clergyman: he was son of the Rev. George Marshall Holiwell (d. 1854) of Swallow, Lincs, and in 1859 was a curate in Leicestershire. We know that he was not Pierce's son-in-law, because he married Georgina Sophia Cumming, but he had deep Lincolnshire roots, and in later life (in 1880) became Rector of Irby-upon-Humber, which is almost next door to Swallow, his father's old parish. An undated letter (see f. 12r) from F.G.M. Holiwell addresses EP as 'My dearest Cousin', and refers to WMP as 'My kind cousin', so we can assume that W.C. Holiwell was in some way related either to the Rockcliffes or the Pierces (or, conceivably, both). The Holiwells were certainly around at a much earlier date: in 1774, another George Holiwell was involved in the purchase of Thomas Rewcastle's library by Thomas Rockcliffe.

Although as a boy Holiwell had been a chorister at Magdalen College, Oxford, he went to Durham University; but afterwards he may have had a connexion with the parish of St Philip & St James, Oxford, as there are many service sheets and parish notices relating to this church in the volume.

The compilation of the volume seems to have rested with Pierce himself, but perhaps the most interesting member of the family was Elizabeth Pierce. She was the author of two published books: *Village Pencillings in Prose and Verse* (London, William Pickering, 1842), and *Frank Merrivale; or, Dissolving Views from the Glass of Time* (London, G. Bell, 1845). She also published a set of educational cards, titled *Conversational Cards on Ecclesiastical Biography*; and wrote numerous occasional poems which remained in manuscript, including one every year for her husband's birthday: these are preserved in this volume.

Village Pencillings is a collection of sentimental poems, interspersed with didactic prose: the longest piece in the volume is 'The Light of the Parsonage', a defence of married clergy, reaching back to the earliest church and making the parson's wife an essential part of the Christian ministry. The volume as a whole is prefaced by a frontispiece showing West Ashby church, and the author's farewell (p. 280) admits that this is her 'first step on the beaten path

of literature'. Elizabeth dedicated the book to Queen Adelaide (d. 1849, the widow of William IV), and the Queen's royal arms on the upper cover of the British Library copy match those on the upper cover of this book. A second edition, with a new preface defending herself from an attack in the *Christian Remembrancer*, was published in 1844.

Frank Merrivale is a shorter but more ambitious work. The dedication is dated from West Ashby, 1 January 1845, and the action takes place over the Christmas holidays: it sees young Frank Merrivale ('gay and joyous, with a spirit as free from fear as his heart was from care') experience a series of visions at New Year's Eve, which give him lessons about how to live wisely. The fact that this book appeared a year after *A Christmas Carol* (published December 1843), and relates a series of visions to a slumbering hero – even if Frank Merrivale does not at all resemble Scrooge – strongly suggests that Dickens's huge success of the previous Christmas was a powerful inspiration.

Advertisements at the end of *Frank Merrivale* promote the second edition of *Village Pencillings* (also published by Pickering). A second work which is announced there, *Conversational Cards on Ecclesiastical Biography* (George Bell, 1843), is also the work of Elizabeth Pierce; although it was enthusiastically reviewed in the *Christian's Monthly Magazine* (vol I p. 109), I can find no copy of this in any union catalogue.

There is another dimension to this album, which can be inferred from the geography but which is never spelt out in its contents. Fulletby and West Ashby, where Francis Rockcliffe and William Pierce served as parish priests from 1784 onwards, are just a few miles from Somersby. From 1807 to 1831 the Rector of this parish was George Clayton Tennyson, who he lived at Somersby Rectory with his large family, among them the poets Frederick (b. 1807), Charles (b. 1808) and Alfred (b. 1809). George Tennyson's wife, Elizabeth Fytche (1781-1865), was the daughter of another local cleric, who held livings in Louth and Withcall – also not far from West Ashby and Fulletby.

It is quite impossible that Francis Rockcliffe should *not* have known George Tennyson, who held the neighbouring parish for seventeen years; and William Matthews Pierce must have known him too: for the first five years of his rectorship of Fulletby, and the last five of George Tennyson's life, Pierce would certainly have been conscious of the presence at Somersby of that large, difficult, gloomy but brilliant family. Elizabeth, Rockcliffe's daughter and Pierce's wife, an aspiring poet and novelist, must also have been aware of the literary family in the rectory only a few miles down the road. Both William and Elizabeth Pierce were, after all, only a few years older than the Tennyson children.

The Pierces would also have known the Sellwood family: Henry Sellwood, who lived in Horncastle and was a prosperous lawyer, was the father of Emily, who eventually married Alfred Tennyson in 1850.

eighteenth century to its end. These are found on ff. 29-31 of the album. The books seem to have been passed on down and thus the same books recur time and again, but with changes of emphasis according to the profession or taste of the owner. Values, and their alterations (perhaps according to fashion but also, perhaps, guided by self-interest), are most interesting – and it is fascinating to see light literature survive in the collections of country clergy for decades, alongside standard works of more solemn or sacred literature and history.

Selected contents of the album

[Items are in MS unless otherwise designated]

- 1v:** Notes on the parish of West Ashby
Notes on Horncastle Public Dispensary
- 2r:** Annual report of the Horncastle Public Dispensary, 1863
[printed] *WMP was treasurer and a benefactor; FRP noted as a contributor*
Address to the Inhabitants of Horncastle, about a victory 'with the opponents of the Church'
[printed] *Possibly c. 1850*
Copies and drafts of letters relating to the publication of *Village Pencillings*, and whether EP had been the author of a letter commending it to a journal. With copy of a letter from the publishers [i.e. William Pickering] on the same subject. All in WMP's hand
June-July 1842
- 2v:** Copy of a long letter (6pp, 4to) by WMP in defence of his application for the living of Moorby, addressed to the Bishop of Carlisle
13 December 1837
- 3r:** Copy of a statement by WMP appointing John Richard Johnson as curate of Moorby
10 September 1852
Statement partly in the hand of WMP about his assets and where to find his will. Includes mention of Mr Sellwood (presumably Henry Sellwood, Emily Tennyson's father)
Various dates, including 1853 and 1855
- Letter from Edward Clarke, a poor uneducated man, pleading for leniency when he comes up before the magistrates (he took walnuts from the tree in the churchyard)
September 1852
- 3v:** Playbill for a grand amateur performance at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln, by officers of the Royal North Lincoln Militia, on Thursday 15 March [must be 1855 or 1860] [printed]
FRP acted prominent parts in Used Up! and Box and Cox!
- 4r:** Reviews by WMP of: Thomas Ragg, *Hymns from the church services* (London, 1843), and *Verses by a Poor Man* (London and Durham, 1842)
- 4v:** Part of a printed form for FRP's application to become a member of Lincoln's Inn
[printed and MS]
October 1849
- 5r:** Several juvenile copies by FRP of moralistic prose and poetry

One dated 1 Jan 1842

- 5v:** Notices of divine service at Wood Enderby
[printed]
5 September 1861
- 6v:** To the rate-payers of the parish of Horncastle
[printed]
Undated, signed: 'A parishioner'. Protesting about money being held or wasted
- 8r:** Extracts from letters written by WMP and EP, the second much the longer (12pp) and written 'to Mrs Goldsmith'
Both 1844; in WMP's hand I think
- 9r:** Verses, at least some of them by EP, one headed 'Epitaph' and another 'Charade'; also 'The Bell at Sea'
Part dated 20 November 1839
- 9v-11v:** About 20 individual copies of verses by EP, many of them signed and clearly autograph (though one or two copied by WMP), subjects such as 'To my mother on her birth-day', 'Christmas Carol', 'The Ascension' and 'Whit-Sunday' (the last two included in *Village Pencillings*)
Mostly undated, but one dated 1843
- 12r:** Letter from F.G.M. Holiwell to EP, addressing her as 'My dearest Cousin'; undated
- 12v:** 'The Night sounds. Monody suggested by hearing as strains of music, the wind whistle thro Lincoln Minster'.
A poem by EP, dated 23 April 1841. Dedicated to her mother on her birthday
- 13r:** Letter from H. Titford, of Snow Hill, London, comforting WMP on what appear to have been bad reviews of *Village Pencillings*: 'I saw hatred and malignity and envy had had more, much more power over the good the innocent & the virtuous authoress of Village Pencillings than I had thought possible to have been wielded'. Smith Brothers and Titford printed both editions of *Village Pencillings*.
13 September 1842
- 13r:** Notes of the inscriptions in copies of *Village Pencillings*, and those to whom they were sent, including John A. Heraud (1799-1887), journalist and editor, and the poet Allan Cunningham. Also the inscription for Queen Adelaide, the dedicatee
- 13r:** Copy of verses sent to a friend; with a copy of an accompanying letter, unsigned but presumably by EP
- 14r:** 'To my grammatical niece'; and 'A Song'; a copy of verses by 'Mr William Spencer', presumably William Robert Spencer (1770-1834). In another hand than WMP or EP's; annotated as sent by 'Miss Hare of Lincoln'
- 14r:** Poems by EP: 'A Christmas Carol', and 'O'Connell', but possibly copied by WMP. The second is a poem on Daniel O'Connell, the Irish patriot. With two poems by J. Knipe

- 14v-15r:** Various poems by different hands, including one by FRP (dated early 1839, when he was only ten); and a long poem headed 'Titford Club published 1772', said to have been written by 'Mr L. Burton'.
- 15r:** Long poem headed 'To Lord Byron', with first line: 'Knowst thou the Land of the mountains and flood'
- 15v-16r:** Various poems in different hands, including 'Lines written on reading Village Pencilings' by W. Graham (1842); and several poems in one hand on two leaves, which include a poem beginning 'Sweet Mary Chaworth! We have seen the book' – footnoted: 'Wards Poems, formerly the property of Mary Chaworth'. Mary Ann Chaworth (1786-1832) had been the object of Byron's youthful fancy in 1803.
- 17v-18r:** Various papers connected with John James Hopwood, who died suddenly on Midsummer Common, Cambridge, in January 1842: a sketch of his memorial inscription; press cutting; and (oddly enough), printed copies of what appear to be his own Cambridge examination papers in Algebra and other subjects, dated 1839. Hopwood must surely have been a close friend or relation to the Pierce family. He was too old to have been a contemporary or friend of FRP
- 18r:** Copy of a poem by Martin Farquhar Tupper, a funeral dirge for the Duke of Wellington (evidently 1852)
- 18r:** Letter from Emily Drew to WMP, written in raised dots (evidently a primitive form of braille, but using the roman alphabet) asking him to 'write to Mr Foot about my music as it is in his power to speak for us ... I should be most delighted to learn music as it is the only thing I shall be able to get my living at'
- 20r:** Hand-bills for the Blue-John Caverns near Castleton, Derbyshire; and for the Grand Speedwell Mine at the same place
[printed]
- 21r:** Nine poems by EP addressed to 'my dear Husband on his birthday', each dated (1848-58), plus one to her mother on her birthday, undated
- 22r:** Six more similar poems, dated 1842-47, by EP addressed to WMP
- 23r:** Extracts from Crabbe's poems, possibly in the hand of EP; also notes on books by Carlyle and others, in prose, possibly in the hand of WMP
- 24r:** Form, for completion in MS, for the sale of land in Whittington, Derbyshire, owned by WMP; dated 1860. The land is to be sold but the mineral rights for anything under the land are reserved by WMP
[printed]
- 24r:** Broadside headed 'J.B. Stanhope, esqr, and the Rev. Andrew Veitch', giving Stanhope's side of a dispute between him and Veitch. James Banks Stanhope (1821-1904) was the owner of Revesby Abbey; the broadside is dated 1852; he also held land in West Ashby
[printed]
- 25r:** Six leaves, large folio, of 'Anecdotes of convicts in Portland prison'; and other matters; probably in the hand of WMP

26r: 'The Village Churchyard' and 'The Beautiful' [prose and poetry], leaflet by EP; dated from West Ashby
[printed]

26r: Two copies of a printed letter from the Rev. J.C. Williams to WMP, dated 4 January 1848, about his son Francis, with letters appended from the Rev. Anthony Crowdy, and the Rev. J.J. Smith of Caius College Cambridge; apparently produced in pursuit of an Exhibition for FRP at the college
[printed]

Two copies of a cyclostyled letter from WMP to other clergy, soliciting their support for a magazine (unnamed, but surely the *Christian's Monthly Magazine*), which is intended to stand up for 'our Apostolic & Reformed Church amidst the painful divisions which the Tractarian movement has created'. Dated 1846
[printed]

28r: Treatise on the Corn Laws, in the hand of WMP but signed at the end 'EP'; 9pp. Presumably intended for publication; [1846?]

29r: 'Catalogue of the Books in ye Library': manuscript list on 4pp, folio (approx. 400 x 255mm) of books. The first two pages are in a single, old-fashioned hand (probably mid 18th c), in two columns, listing over 360 books. Pages 3-4 are in a different, more modern hand (c. 1800): this list, in a single column, is headed 'List of Books given FR by the Excise of The Revd. Ar. Rockcliffe 1798'. Both leaves are torn right across the centre, horizontally, but no text is lost.

The original list is mostly of standard works, and the editions are undated, which makes it hard to date, but the age of the hand suggests that this could be a list of the library of EP's great-grandfather (whose name I have not been able to discover), father of Thomas and Arthur Rockcliffe. The bulk of the library is divinity, history and classical literature, with the latter part consisting of more modern but still standard English literature such as the works of Dryden, Fielding and Smollett.

Arthur Rockcliffe was born c 1726-7, went up to Jesus Cambridge 1745 as a sizar, and was ordained in 1751. He became Rector of Haltham with Roughton, Lincs, in the same year. He was married to Margaret Saunderson (possibly the executrix referred to above), and presumably died in about 1798. He was apparently the younger brother of Thomas Rockcliffe and thus uncle to Francis, and great-uncle to Elizabeth Pierce

f. 30r: 'Account of the Library of Books belonging the late Mr Thos. Rockcliffe of West Ashby deceased'. 3 pages, folio (approx. 380 x 230mm), written in a single hand, with condition and values of each title, of which there are approximately one hundred – not including the penultimate entry, 'Stitch'd Pamphlets, Plays, Magazines, &c &c' (with condition given as 'bad').

Thomas Rockcliffe is commemorated by a marble tablet in All Saints, West Ashby: he was born in 1719 and died in 1783. Quite a few of the titles in this list are the same books as those in the previous catalogue – for instance, 'Female Foundling' (a novel published in 1751), and 'Spanish Novels' (possibly *Three Ingenious Spanish Novels*, various editions). There is a smaller concentration on theology in this list and from that (as well as the tablet in the church) we can deduce that Thomas was not a cleric;

he was perhaps a lawyer, as there are several books of law. He was the father of Francis.

- f. 30r:** 'Catalogue of the late Rev. Mr Rewcastles Book's'. 3 pages, folio (approx. 335 x 205mm), written in a single copperplate hand, about 90 titles but also at the end '58 Old Vols, not valued'. The total value is given as £19.11s.

Thomas Rewcastle was from Wakefield, Yorks, and was educated at Cambridge in the 1720s; he was ordained in 1735 and became Vicar of Wrawby, Lincs; he presumably died in 1773. Attached to this list is a note showing that the library was bought in January 1774 by Thomas Rockcliffe, at a cost of £9.9s (only a little over half the valuation), paying the money to 'Mr Geo: Holiwell Junr' – showing that the Holiwells were at this early stage linked with the Rockcliffes.

- f. 31r:** 'Account of Books belonging the late Mr Thos. Rockcliffe of West Ashby purchased by Fras. Rockcliffe'. 3 pages, folio (approx. 375 x 215mm), one page written the wrong way up. Written in a single hand, about 90 titles but including some multiple lots. The total value is given as £29.11s.4d, the values having been based on 'Lackington's catalogues' – i.e. those of James Lackington, the London secondhand bookseller. Below that is a suggestion that one should deduct one third (presumably as a wholesale price), giving the figure £19.4s.2d, but a further note gives Francis's offer of £20 for the whole library – and presumably he acquired the collection at that price.

This catalogue is presumably from 1783, when Thomas Rockcliffe died. As one would expect, this account of the collection is largely identical with the other of the same man's library, except that the values here are considerably lower: Woty's poems, there valued at 6s, is here priced at 3s; Shakespeare's works, 9 vols, comes down from 18s to 6s; and Bartlet's Farriery is revalued down from 4s to 2s. No wonder that the total in this one is almost half - £29.11s.4d as opposed to £47.19s.10d.

- f. 32r:** Forms of prayer for churches for the recovery of the Prince of Wales, winter 1871-72
[printed]
The future Edward VII nearly died of typhoid in December 1871
- f. 34r:** Various forms and announcements concerning the church of SS Philip and James, Oxford, 1873
[printed]
- f. 36r:** Extracts (in the hand of WMP) from C.B. Elliott, *Travels in the three great empires of Austria, Russia and Turkey* (1838); and from W.R. Wilde, *Narrative of a voyage to Madeira* (1840); 51pp.
- f. 38r:** Notes on travelling in the English Lakes and in Scotland; in the hand of WMP; 7pp.
- f. 57r:** Various notices to do with churches, mainly at Trentham [south of Stoke-on-Trent], 1860s-70s
[printed]
- f. 58r:** More of the same
- f. 58v-59r:** Notices from Oxford churches: St Barnabas (list of preachers in October 1872), and SS Philip and James (various notices from 1871-2)
[printed]
- f. 61v:** Programme for a concert and for church services at Bourton-on-the-Water, apparently celebrating the recovery of the Prince of Wales, presumably 1871-2
[printed]

- f. 64r:** Copies of letters (in the hand of WMP) from EP to Queen Adelaide, asking permission to dedicate *Village Pencillings* to her; and of the reply from Lord Howe (of her household) accepting the dedication

Four letters to EP from various correspondents, all 1842; including one from Gordon Calthrop (cleric and writer), protesting against the 'shameful' review of *Village Pencillings* in the *Christian Remembrancer*. [In a long and harsh review, the magazine commented that 'a volume more contemptible in design and execution, in spirit and in diction, we never read']

- f. 65r:** Four more letters to EP from other correspondents, all 1842 and about *Village Pencillings*; with a copy (in the hand of WMP) of a subsequent statement by the *Christian Remembrancer* defending its original review

- f. 66r:** Seven more of the same; plus a copy of a statement by EP sent to reviewers of the book

- f. 67r:** Eleven more of the same, including one from the Lincolnshire writer Thomas Miller (1807-74) and two more from Gordon Calthrop

- f. 68r:** Sixteen letters from John Abraham Heraud (1799-1887) to EP, WMP and to W.C. Holiwell: 1842-3 and 1864-6.

A substantial correspondence from the poet and miscellaneous writer Heraud, who was known but held in low esteem by the literary luminaries with whom he was acquainted – the Carlyles in particular, but also others. ODNB describes him as 'an ubiquitous presence in the world of Victorian letters' and he seems on this occasion to have been involved in advising, editing, proof-reading and puffing *Village Pencillings*. After the death of WMP he was in correspondence with Holiwell, and a letter of December 1866 expresses his regret on hearing that 'my poor dear friend Mr Pierce's affairs were in such a perplexed condition'. In another he reveals that WMP sent him private papers of EP, and clearly contemplated some sort of memorial volume or biography. Heraud effectively says he would be willing to do this, but that it would cost £150. He adds that 'Mr P. was prevented from raising this literary monument to his Wife's memory by the confused state of his affairs, in consequence of taking on with the Coal mine'.

- f. 69r:** Three poems on scraps of paper, written by EP (one signed); and a sheet of notes in pencil, apparently wishes for disposal of her money after her death

- ff. 70v-82r:** Press cuttings on many subjects: local church affairs, poetry, mines, Bishop Colenso (including an insulting limerick by WMP on the subject), Horncastle Public Dispensary, the Ecclesiastical Commission, etc.

[printed]

- f. 84r:** Press cuttings, reviews of *Village Pencillings* from local papers (all, needless to say, laudatory)

[printed]

- ff. 85r-86v and pastedown:** Flyer promoting the first number of *The Christian's Monthly Magazine*, 1844; plus many press cuttings of reviews of the magazine, marked by WMP

[printed]