

**PIERCE THE PLOUGHMANS CREDE
(ABOUT 1394 A.D.). TRANSCRIBED AND
EDITED FROM MS. TRIN. COLL., CAM. R.
3-15 COLLATED WITH MS. BIBL. REG. 18
B. XVII. IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM, AND
WITH THE OLD PRINTED TEXT OF 1553**

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WALTER W. SKEAT

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HENRY FROWDE, M.A.
PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON, EDINBURGH
NEW YORK AND TORONTO

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'What knoweth a tillour at the plow
The popes name, and what he hat?
His Crede saffyseth him y-row.'

THE PLOWMANS TALE, 453-5.

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PREFACE

DESCRIPTION OF FORMER EDITIONS, AND OF THE MSS.

§ 1. THE present edition of 'Pierce the Ploughman's Crede' is mainly reproduced (with some additions and corrections) from my edition for the Early English Text Society, which first appeared in 1867, and was reprinted in 1895 for the same Society. That edition was, practically, a *new* one; the Text being new throughout, as was also a large part both of the Notes and Glossary. In order to explain whence this new text was derived, it will be proper to give, first of all, an account of former editions.

§ 2. I. The first edition, and the most important, is that of 1553. The title-page contains solely the words 'Pierce the Ploughmans Crede' within a square space in the midst of a wood-cut illustrating the story of Pyramus and Thisbe; the picture being by no means unsuitable for Chaucer's version of the poem. The wood-cut is clearly of continental workmanship, and a copy of the lower part of it, not very well executed, may be seen at p. 96 of 'A book of Roxburghe Ballads,' edited by J. P. Collier; 1847. The colophon, on a separate leaf, is—IMPRINTED AT LONDON BY REYNOLD WOLFE, ANNO DOMINI M.D.LIII. It was no doubt issued owing to the success of 'The Vision of Piers Ploughman,' which had been printed by Robert Crowley, in 1550; and considering the tone of the poem, we may safely conclude that it was issued in the early part of the year 1553, while Edward VI was still alive; for he died on the sixth of July in that year. The reign of Mary was not favourable to its existence, and copies