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The History Of English Poetry

From The Close of the Eleventh To The Commencement of the Eighteenth
Century

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London, 1778

Section XVII. Causes of the increase of vernacular composition in the
fifteenth century. View of the revival of classical learning. In Italy. In
France. In Germany. In England.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51407](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51407)

S E C T. XVII.

WE are now arrived at the commencement of the sixteenth century. But before I proceed to a formal and particular examination of the poetry of that century, and of those that follow, some preliminary considerations of a more general nature, and which will have a reference to all the remaining part of our history, for the purpose of preparing the reader, and facilitating our future inquiries, appear to be necessary.

On a retrospect of the fifteenth century, we find much poetry written during the latter part of that period. It is certain, that the recent introduction into England of the art of typography, to which our countrymen afforded the most liberal encouragement, and which for many years was almost solely confined to the impression of English books, the fashion of translating the classics from French versions, the growing improvements of the English language, and the diffusion of learning among the laity, greatly contributed to multiply English composition, both in prose and verse. These causes, however, were yet immature; nor had they gathered a sufficient degree of power and stability, to operate on our literature with any vigorous effects.

But there is a circumstance, which, among some others already suggested, impeded that progression in our poetry, which might yet have been expected under all these advantages. A revolution, the most fortunate and important in most other respects, and the most interesting that occurs in the history of the migration of letters, now began to take place; which, by diverting the attention of ingenious men to new modes of thinking, and the culture of new languages, introduced a new course of study, and gave a temporary

porary check to vernacular composition. This was the revival of classical learning.

In the course of these annals we must have frequently remarked, from time to time, striking symptoms of a restless disposition in the human mind to rouse from its lethargic state, and to break the bonds of barbarism. After many imperfect and interrupted efforts, this mighty deliverance, in which the mouldering Gothic fabrics of false religion and false philosophy fell together, was not effectually completed till the close of the fifteenth century. An event, almost fortuitous and unexpected, gave a direction to that spirit of curiosity and discovery, which had not yet appeared in its full force and extent, for want of an object. About the year 1453, the dispersion of the Greeks, after Constantinople had been occupied by the Turks, became the means of gratifying that natural love of novelty, which has so frequently led the way to the noblest improvements, by the introduction of a new language and new books; and totally changed the state of letters in Europe¹.

This great change commenced in Italy; a country, from many circumstances, above all others peculiarly qualified and prepared to adopt such a deviation. Italy, during the darkest periods of monastic ignorance, had always maintained a greater degree of refinement and knowledge than any other European country. In the thirteenth century, when the manners of Europe appear to have been overwhelmed with every species of absurdity, its luxuries were less savage, and its public spectacles more rational, than those of France,

¹ But it should be remembered, that some learned Grecians, foreseeing the persecutions impending over their country, frequented Italy, and taught their language there, before the taking of Constantinople. Some Greeks, who attended the Florentine council, and never returned for fear of the Turks, founded the present royal library in the city of Turenne. In the year 1401, the Greek emperor, unable to resist the frequent insults

of these barbarians, came into England to seek redress or protection from Henry the fourth. He landed at Dover, attended by many learned Greeks; and the next day was honourably received at Christ-church priory at Canterbury, by the prior, Thomas Chyllenden. In a manuscript called *SPECULUM PARVULORUM*, lib. 5. c. 30. MSS. Bibl. Lambeth.

England,

England, and Germany. Its inhabitants were not only enriched, but enlightened, by that flourishing state of commerce, which its commodious situation, aided by the combination of other concomitant advantages, contributed to support. Even from the time of the irruptions of the northern barbarians, some glimmerings of the antient erudition still remained in this country; and in the midst of superstition and false philosophy, repeated efforts were made in Italy to restore the Roman classics. To mention no other instances, Alberti Mussato^m of Padua, and a commander in the Paduan army against the Veronese, wrote two Latin tragedies, *ECERRINIS*ⁿ, or the fate of the tyrant Ecerinus of Verona, and *ACHILLEIS*, on the plan of the Greek drama, and in imitation of Seneca, before the year 1320. The many monuments of legitimate sculpture and architecture preserved in Italy, had there kept alive ideas of elegance and grace; and the Italians, from their familiarity with those precious remains of antiquity, so early as the close of the fourteenth century, had laid the rudiments of their perfection in the antient arts. Another circumstance which had a considerable share in clearing the way for this change, and which deserves particular attention, was the innovation introduced into the Italian poetry by Petrarch: who, inspired with the most elegant of passions, and cloathing his exalted feelings on that delicate subject in the most melodious and brilliant Italian versification, had totally eclipsed the barbarous

^m He was honoured with the laurel, and died 1329.

ⁿ Printed at Venice, 1636. fol. with his *EPISTOLÆ, ELEGI, SOLILOQUIA, ECLOGÆ, CENTO OVIDIANUS*, Latin History of Italy, and *BAVARUS ad Filium*. And in Muratori's *RER. ITAL. SCRIPTOR.* tom. x. Mediolan. 1727. P. 1. 123. 569. 769. 785. See also in *THESAUR. ITAL.* tom. vi. part. ii. Lugd. Bat. 1722. Among his inedited works are mentioned, *LIBER*

DE LITE NATURÆ ET FORTUNÆ, on Natural Causes and Fate. And three books in heroic verse, on the War against the Veronese above-mentioned. The name and writings of Mussato were hardly known, till they were brought forward to the public notice in the *ESSAY ON POPE*; which I shall not be accused of partiality, as I only join the voice of the world, in calling the most agreeable and judicious piece of criticism produced by the present age.

beauties of the Provencial troubadours; and by this new and powerful magic, had in an eminent degree contributed to reclaim, at least for a time, the public taste, from a love of Gothic manners and romantic imagery.

In this country, so happily calculated for their favourable reception, the learned fugitives of Greece, when their empire was now destroyed, found shelter and protection. Hither they imported, and here they interpreted, their antient writers, which had been preserved entire at Constantinople. These being eagerly studied by the best Italian scholars, communicated a taste for the graces of genuine poetry and eloquence; and at the same time were instrumental in propagating a more just and general relish for the Roman poets, orators, and historians. In the mean time a more elegant and sublime philosophy was adopted: a philosophy more friendly to works of taste and imagination, and more agreeable to the sort of reading which was now gaining ground. The scholastic subtleties, and the captious logic of Aristotle, were abolished for the mild and divine wisdom of Plato.

It was a circumstance, which gave the greatest splendour and importance to this new mode of erudition, that it was encouraged by the popes: who, considering the encouragement of literature as a new expedient to establish their authority over the minds of men, and enjoying an opulent and peaceable dominion in the voluptuous region of Italy, extended their patronage on this occasion with a liberality so generous and unreserved, that the court of Rome on a sudden lost its austere character, and became the seat of elegance and urbanity. Nicholas the fifth, about the year 1440, established public rewards at Rome for composition in the learned languages, appointed professors in humanity, and employed intelligent persons to traverse all parts of Europe in search of classic manuscripts buried in the monasteries*.

* See "Dominei Georgii DISSERTATIO "Viros Patrocinio." Rom. 1742. 4to. Add-
de Nich. quinti erga Lit. et Literat. ed to his LIFE.

It was by means of the munificent support of pope Nicholas, that Cyriac of Ancona, who may be considered as the first antiquary in Europe, was enabled to introduce a taste for gems, medals, inscriptions, and other curious remains of classical antiquity, which he collected with indefatigable labour in various parts of Italy and Greece¹. He allowed Francis Philephus, an elegant Latin poet of Italy, about 1450, a stipend for translating Homer into Latin². Leo the tenth, not less conspicuous for his munificence in restoring letters, descended so far from his apostolical dignity, as to be a spectator of the *POENULUS* of Plautus; which was performed in a temporary theatre in the court of the capitol, by the flower of the Roman youth, with the addition of the most costly decorations³: and Leo, while he was pouring the thunder of his anathemas against the heretical doctrines of Martin Luther, published a bulle of excommunication against all those who should dare to censure the poems of Ariosto. It was under the pontificate of Leo, that a perpetual indulgence was granted for rebuilding the church of a monastery, which possessed a manuscript of Tacitus⁴.

¹ See Fr. Burmanni PRÆFAT. ad Inscription. Gruterian. Amstel. 1707. fol. Baluz. MISCELL. tom. vi. p. 539. Ant. Augustini DIALOG. DE NUMISMAT. ix. xi. Voss. de HISTOR. LAT. p. 809. His ITINERARIUM was printed at Florence, by L. Mehus, 1742. 8vo. See Leon. Aretini EPISTOL. tom. ii. lib. ix. p. 149. And GIORNAL. de Letterati d'Italia. tom. xxi. p. 428. See the COLLECTION of Inscriptions, by P. Apianus, and B. Amantius, Ingoldstat. 1634. fol. at the MONUM. GADITAN.

² Phileph. EPIST. xxiv. l. xxxvi. l. In the EPISTLE of Philephus, and in his ten books of SATIRES in Latin verse, are many curious particulars relating to the literary history of those times. Venet. fol. 1502. His NICOLAUS, or two books of Lyrics, is a panegyric on the life and acts of pope Nicholas the fifth.

³ It was in the year 1513, on occasion of Julian Medicis, Leo's brother, being made

free of Rome. P. Jovius, HIST. lib. xi. ad calc. And VIT. LEON. lib. iii. p. 145. Jovius says, that the actors were *Romanæ juventutis lepidissimi*. And that several pieces of poetry were recited at the same time. Leo was also present at an Italian comedy, written by cardinal Bibienna, called *CALANDER*, in honour of the Dukes of Mantua. It was acted by noble youths in the spacious apartments of the Vatican, and Leo was placed in a sort of throne. Jov. in VIT. p. 189.

⁴ Paulus Jovius relates an anecdote of pope Leo the tenth, which shews that some passages in the classics were studied at the court of Rome to very bad purposes. I must give it in his own words. "Non caruit etiam infamia, quod parum honeste non nullo e cubiculariis suis (erant enim e tota Italia nobilissimi) adamare, et cum his tenerius atque libere joculari videretur." In VITA LEONIS X. p. 192.

It is obvious to observe, how little conformable, this just taste, these elegant arts, and these new amusements, proved in their consequences to the spirit of the papal system: and it is remarkable, that the court of Rome, whose sole design and interest it had been for so many centuries, to enslave the minds of men, should be the first to restore the religious and intellectual liberties of Europe. The apostolical fathers, aiming at a fatal and ill-timed popularity, did not reflect, that they were shaking the throne, which they thus adorned.

Among those who distinguished themselves in the exercise of these studies, the first and most numerous were the Italian ecclesiastics. If not from principles of inclination, and a natural impulse to follow the passion of the times, it was at least their interest, to concur in forwarding those improvements, which were commended, countenanced, and authorised, by their spiritual sovereign: they abandoned the pedantries of a barbarous theology, and cultivated the purest models of antiquity. The cardinals and bishops of Italy composed Latin verses, and with a success attained by none in more recent times, in imitation of Lucretius, Catullus, and Virgil. Nor would the encouragement of any other European potentate have availed so much, in this great work of restoring literature: as no other patronage could have operated with so powerful and immediate an influence on that order of men, who, from the nature of their education and profession, must always be the principal instruments in supporting every species of liberal erudition.

And here we cannot but observe the necessary connection between literary composition and the arts of design. No sooner had Italy banished the Gothic style in eloquence and poetry, than painting, sculpture, and architecture, at the same time, and in the same country, arrived at maturity, and appeared in all their original splendour. The beautiful or sublime ideas which the Italian artists had conceived from the contemplation of antient statues and antient temples,
were

were invigorated by the descriptions of Homer and Sophocles. Petrarch was crowned in the capitol, and Raphael was promoted to the dignity of a cardinal.

These improvements were soon received in other countries. Lascaris, one of the most learned of the Constantinopolitan exiles, was invited into France by Lewis the twelfth, and Francis the first: and it was under the latter of these monarch that he was employed to form a library at Fontainebleau, and to introduce Greek professors into the university of Paris¹. Yet we find Gregory Typhernas teaching Greek at Paris, so early as the year 1472². About the same time, Antonius Eparchus of Corfica sold one hundred Greek books to the emperor Charles the fifth and Francis the first³, those great rivals, who agreed in nothing, but in promoting the cause of literature. Francis the first maintained even a Greek secretary, the learned Angelus Vergerius, to whom he assigned, in the year 1541, a pension of four hundred livres from his exchequer⁴. He employed Julius Camillus to teach him to speak fluently the language of Cicero and Demosthenes, in the space of a month: but so chimerical an attempt necessarily proved abortive, yet it shewed his passion for letters⁵. In the year 1474, the parliament of Paris, who, like other public bodies, eminent for their wisdom, could proceed on no other foundation than that of ancient forms and customs, and were alarmed at the appearance of an innovation, commanded a cargo of books, some of the first specimens of typography, which were imported into Paris by a factor of the city of Mentz, to be seized and destroyed.

¹ Du Breul, ANTIQVITEZ de Paris, liv. ii. 1639. 4to. p. 563. Bemb. HIST. VENET. par. ii. p. 76. And R. Simon, CRITIQUE de la Bibl. Eccles. par du Fin, tom. i. p. 502. 512.

² Hody, p. 233.

³ Morhoff, POLYHIST. iv. 6.

⁴ Du Breul, *ibid.* p. 568. It is a just remark of P. Victorius, that Francis the

first, by founding beautiful Greek and Roman types at his own cost, invited many students, who were caught by the elegance of the impression, to read the antient books. PRÆFAT. AD COMMENT. in octo libr. Aristotelis de Opt. Statu Civitat.

⁵ Alciati EPISTOL. xxiii. inter GUDIANAS, pag. 109.

Francis

Francis the first would not suffer so great a dishonour to remain on the French nation; and although he interposed his authority too late for a revocation of the decree, he ordered the full price to be paid for the books. This was the same parliament that opposed the reformation of the calendar, and the admission of any other philosophy than that of Aristotle. Such was Francis's sollicitude to encourage the graces of a classical style, that he abolished the Latin tongue from all public acts of justice, because the first president of the parliament of Paris had used a barbarous term in pronouncing sentence^b: and because the Latin code and judicial processes, hitherto adopted in France, familiarised the people to a base Latinity. At the same time, he ordered these formularies to be turned, not into good Latin, which would have been absurd or impossible, but into pure French^c: a reformation which promoted the culture of the vernacular tongue. He was the first of the kings of France, that encouraged brilliant assemblies of ladies to frequent the French court: a circumstance, which not only introduced new splendour and refinement into the parties and carousals of the court of that monarchy, but gave a new turn to the manners of the French ecclesiastics, who of course attended the king, and destroyed much of their monkish pedantry^d.

When we mention the share which Germany took in the reformation of letters, she needs no greater panegyric, than that her mechanical genius added, at a lucky moment, to all these fortunate contingencies in favour of science, an admirable invention, which was of the most singular utility in facilitating the diffusion of the antient writers over every part of Europe: I mean the art of printing. By this observation, I do not mean to insinuate that Germany kept no pace with

^b Matagonis de Matagonibus adversus Italogalliam Antonii Matharelli, p. 226.

^c Varillas, HIST. de François I. livr. ix. pag. 381.

^d Brantome, MEM. tom. i. p. 227. Mezerai, HIST. France, sur HEN. III. tom. iii. p. 446. 447.

her

her neighbours in the production of philological scholars. Rodolphus Langius, a canon of Munster, and a tolerable Latin poet, after many struggles with the inveterate prejudices and authoritative threats of German bishops, and German universities, opened a school of humanity at Munster: which supplied his countrymen with every species of elegant learning, till it was overthrown by the fury of fanaticism, and the revolutions introduced by the barbarous reformatations of the anabaptistic zealots, in the year 1534^u. Reuchlin, otherwise called Capnio, cooperated with the laudable endeavours of Langius by professing Greek, before the year 1490, at Basil^w. Soon afterwards he translated Homer, Aristophanes, Plato, Xenophon, Æschines, and Lucian, into Latin, and Demosthenes into German. At Heidelberg he founded a library, which he stored with the choicest Greek manuscripts. It is worthy to remark, that the first public institution in any European university for promoting polite literature, by which I understand these improvements in erudition, appears to have been established at Vienna. In the year 1501, Maximilian the first, who, like Julius Cæsar, had composed a commentary on his own illustrious military achievements, founded in the university of Vienna a COLLEGE of POETRY. This society consisted of four professors: one for poetry, a second for oratory, and two others for mathematics. The professor of poetry was so styled, because he presided over all the rest: and the first person appointed to this office was Conradus Celtes, one of the restorers of the Greek language in Germany, an elegant Latin poet, a critic on the art of Latin versification, the first poet laureate of his country, and the first who introduced the practice of acting Latin tragedies and

^u D. Chytraeus, SAXONIA. l. iii. p. 80. Trithem. p. 993. De S. E. Et DE LUMINARIIS. GERMAN. p. 239.

^w See EPISTOL. CLAROR. VIROR. ad Reuchlin. p. m. 4. 17. Maius, in VITA REUCHLINI, &c. [See supr. p. 376.]

comedies

comedies in public, after the manner of Terence^e. It was the business of this professor, to examine candidates in philology; and to reward those who appeared to have made a distinguished proficiency in classical studies with a crown of laurel. Maximilian's chief and general design in this institution, was to restore the languages and the eloquence of Greece and Rome^f.

Among the chief restorers of literature in Spain, about 1490, was Antonio de Lebrixa, one of the professors in the university of Alacala, founded by the magnificent cardinal Ximenes, archbishop of Toledo. It was to the patronage of Ximenes that Lebrixa owed his celebrity^g. Profoundly versed in every species of sacred and profane learning, and appointed to the respectable office of royal historian, he chose to be distinguished only by the name of the grammarian^h; that is, a teacher of polite letters. In this department, he enriched the seminaries of Spain with new systems of grammar, in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and, with a view to reduce his native tongue under some critical laws, he wrote comparative lexicons, in the Latin, Castilian, and Spanish languages. These, at this time, were

^e Celtes dedicates his AMORES, or Latin Elegies, to Maximilian, in a latin panegyric prefixed; in which he compliments the emperor, "You who have this year endowed most liberally the muses, long wandering, and banished from Germany by the calumnies of certain unskilful men, with a college and a perpetual stipend: having, moreover, according to a custom practised in my time at Rome, delegated to me and my successors, in your stead, the authority of creating and laureating poets in the said college, &c." PANEG. PRIM. ad Maximilian. IMP. Signat. a. ii. AMORES, &c. Noringb. 1502. 4to. The same author, in his DESCRIPTION of the city of Nurembergh, written in 1501, mentions it as a circumstance of importance and a singularity, that a person skilled in the

Roman literature had just begun to give lectures in a public building, to the ingenious youth of that city, in poetry and oratory, with a salary of one hundred aurei, as was the practice in the cities of Italy. DESCRIPT. URB. NORINGB. cap. xii.

^f See the imperial patent for erecting this college, in Freherus's GERMAN. RERUM SCRIPTOR. VAR. &c. tom. ii. fol. Francof. 1602. p. 237. And by J. Henry Van Seelen, Lubec. 4to. 1723. And in his SELECT. LITERAR. p. 488. In this patent, the purpose of the foundation is declared to be, "restituere abolitam prisce sæculi eloquentiam."

^g See Nic. Anton. BIBL. NOV. HISPAN. tom. i. p. 104. — 109.

^h L. Vives, de CAUSIS CORRUPTARUM ART. ii. p. 72.

plans

plans of a most extraordinary nature in Spain; and placed the literature of his country, which, from the phlegmatic temper of the inhabitants was tenacious of antient forms, on a much wider basis than before. To these he added a manual of rhetoric, compiled from Aristotle, Tully, and Quintilian: together with commentaries on Terence, Virgil, Juvenal, Persius, and other classics. He was deputed by Ximenes, with other learned linguists, to superintend the grand Complutenian edition of the bible: and in the conduct of that laborious work, he did not escape the censure of heretical impiety for exercising his critical skill on the sacred text, according to the ideas of the holy inquisition, with too great a degree of precision and accuracy¹.

Even Hungary, a country by no means uniformly advanced with other parts of Europe in the common arts of civilisation, was illuminated with the distant dawning of science. Mattheo Corvini, king of Hungary and Bohemia, in the fifteenth century, and who died in 1490, was a lover and a guardian of literature². He purchased innumerable volumes of Greek and Hebrew writers at Constantinople and other Grecian cities, when they were sacked by the Turks: and, as the operations of typography were now but imperfect, employed at Florence many learned librarians to multiply copies of classics, both Greek and Latin, which he could not procure in Greece³. These, to the number of fifty thousand, he placed in a tower, which he had erected in the metropolis of Buda^m: and in this library he established thirty amanuenses, skilled in painting, illuminating, and writing: who, under the conduct of Felix Ragusinus, a

¹ See Alvarus Gomeſius de VITA XIMENIS, lib. ii. pag. 43. Nic. Anton. ut ſupr. p. 109. Imbonatus, BIBL. LATINO-HEBR. p. 315.

² See Petr. Jaenichii NOTIT. BIBLIOTH. THORUNIENSIS, p. 32. Who has written a DISSERTATION De meritis Matthie

Corvini in rem literariam.

³ See Joh. Alex. Brasſicani PRÆFAT. AD SALVIANUM, Baſil. 1530. fol. And MADERUS DE BIBLIOTHECIS. p. 145. 149.

^m Anton. Bonfinii RER. HUNGAR. Decad. iv. lib. 7. p. 460. edit. 1690.

Dalmatian, consummately learned in the Greek, Chaldaic, and Arabic languages, and an elegant designer and painter of ornaments on vellum, attended incessantly to the business of transcription and decorationⁿ. The librarian was Bartholomew Fontius, a learned Florentine, the writer of many philological works^o, and a professor of Greek and oratory at Florence. When Buda was taken by the Turks in the year 1526, cardinal Bozmanni offered for the redemption of this inestimable collection, two hundred thousand pieces of the Imperial money: yet without effect, for the barbarous besiegers defaced or destroyed most of the books, in the violence of seizing the splendid covers and the silver bosses and clasps with which they were enriched^p. The learned Obsopaeus relates, that a book was brought him by an Hungarian soldier, which he had picked up, with many others, in the pillage of king Corvino's library, and had preserved as a prize, merely because the covering retained some marks of gold and rich workmanship. This proved to be a manuscript of the *ETHIOPICS* of Heliodorus; from which, in the year 1534, Obsopaeus printed at Basil the first edition of that elegant Greek romance^q.

But as this incidental sketch of the history of the revival of modern learning, is intended to be applied to the general subject of my work, I hasten to give a detail of the rise and

ⁿ Bellus, APPARAT. AD HISTOR. HUNGAR. Dec. i. cap. 5.

^o Among other things, he wrote Commentaries on Persius, Juvenal, Livy, and Aristotle's *POETICS*. He translated Phalaris's Epistles into the Tuscan language, published at Florence 1491. Crescimbeni has placed him among the Italian poets. Lambecius says, that in the year 1665, he was sent to Buda by the emperor Leopold, to examine what remained in this library. After repeated delays and difficulties, he was at length permitted by the

Turks to enter the room: where he saw about four hundred books, printed, and of no value, dispersed on the floor, and covered with dust and filth. Lambecius supposes, that the Turks, knowing the condition of the books, were ashamed to give him admittance. COMMENT. DE BIBL. VINDOBON. lib. ii. c. ix. p. 993.

^p COLLECTIO Madero-Schmidiana, ACCESS. I. p. 310. seq. Bellus, ut supr. tom. iii. p. 225.

^q In the PREFACE. See Neandri PREFAT. AD GNOMOLOG. Stobæi, p. 27.

progress

progress of these improvements in England: nor shall I scruple, for the sake of producing a full and uniform view, to extend the enquiry to a distant period.

Efforts were made in our English universities for the revival of critical studies, much sooner than is commonly imagined. So early as the year 1439, William Byngham, rector of Saint John Zachary in London, petitioned king Henry the sixth, in favour of his grammar scholars, for whom he had erected a commodious mansion at Cambridge, called God's House, and which he had given to the college of Clare-hall: to the end, that twenty-four youths, under the direction and government of a learned priest, might be there perpetually educated, and be from thence transmitted, in a constant succession, into different parts of England, to those places where grammar schools had fallen into a state of desolation'. In the year 1498, Alcock bishop of Ely founded Jesus College in Cambridge, partly for a certain number of scholars to be educated in grammar'. Yet there is reason to apprehend, that these academical pupils in grammar, with which the art of rhetoric was commonly

' Ubi scholæ grammaticales existunt desolatae." Pat. Hen. vi. ann. reg. xvii. p. 2. membr. 16.

' Rymer, Fœder. xii. 653. We find early establishments of this sort in the colleges of Paris. In the year 1304, queen Jane founded the college of Navarre, at Paris, for thirty theologians, thirty artists, and twenty GRAMMARIANS, who are also called *Enfans escoliers en grammaire*. They are ordered to hear *leçons*, [lessons] *matutinas, et vespas, prout in scholis grammaticilibus consuevit*. Boul. HIST. ACAD. PARIS. vol. iv. p. 74. But the college of AVE MARIA, at Paris, founded in 1339, is for a Master and six boys only, from nine to sixteen years. Boul. *ibid.* p. 261. The society of Merton college, in Oxford, founded in 1272, originally maintained in the university such boys as claimed kindred

to the founder, bishop Walter de Merton, in grammar learning, and all necessaries, sometimes till they were capable of taking a degree. They were placed in Nunhall, adjoining to the college on the east. " Expenf. factæ per Thomam de Herlyngton, pro pueris de genere fundatoris a fest. Epiph. usque ad fest. S. Petri ad vincula, 21 Edw. iii. A. D. 1347." — " *Item*, in filo albo et viridi, et ceteris pertinenciis, ad reparationem vestium tam artificiarum quam GRAMMATICORUM, vid. *Item*, Mag. Joh. Cornubiensi pro salario SCHOLÆ, in tertio quadragesimali, x d. Et hostiario [uther] suo, ii d. ob. *Item*, Mag. Joh. Cornubiensi pro tertio estivali; x d. Et hostiario suo, ii d. ob." A. Wood, MS. Coll. Merton COLLECTAN. [Cod. MSS. Ballard. Bibl. Bodl. 46.]

joined, instead of studying the real models of style, were chiefly trained in systematic manuals of these sciences, filled with unprofitable definitions and unnecessary distinctions: and that in learning the arts of elegance, they acquired the barbarous improprieties of diction which those arts were intended to remove and reform. That the foundations I have mentioned did not produce any lasting beneficial effects, and that the technical phraseology of metaphysics and casuistry still continued to prevail at Cambridge, appears from the following anecdote. In the reign of Henry the seventh, that university was so destitute of skill in latinity, that it was obliged to hire an Italian, one Caius Auberinus, for composing the public orations and epistles, whose fee was at the rate of twenty-pence for an epistle¹. The same person was employed to explain Terence in the public schools². Undoubtedly the same attention to a futile philosophy, to unintelligible elucidations of Scotus and Aquinas, notwithstanding the accessions accruing to science from the establishment of the Humfredian library, had given the same tincture to the ordinary course of studies at Oxford. For, about the year 1468, the university of Oxford complimented Chadworth bishop of Lincoln, for his care and endeavours in restoring grammatical literature, which, as they represent, had long decayed and been forgotten in that seminary³.

¹ MSS. Bibl. C. C. C. Camb. MISCELL. P. p. 194. *Officium magistri Glomeria*. I observe here, that Giles du Vadis, or Ægidius Dewes, successively royal librarian at Westminster, to Henry the seventh and eighth, was a Frenchman. The last king granted him a salary for that office, of ten pounds, in the year 1522. Priv. Sig. 13 Henr. viii. Offic. Pell. He was preceptor in French to Henry eighth, prince Arthur, princess Mary, the kings of France and Scotland, and the marquis of Exeter. Stowe, LONDON, p. 230. Among other things of the sort, he wrote at the com-

mand of Henry, *An Introductory for to lerne to rede, to pronounce, and to speak French truly compiled for the prince's Mary*. Lond. p. Waley, 4to. [See Pref. Palsgrave's LESCLAIRCISSEMENT]. He died in 1535.

² "Quod fecit admodum frigide, ut ea erant tempora." Lib. Matt. Archiep. Parker, MSS. BAKER, MSS. Harl. 7046. f. 125, 6.

³ Registr. Univ. Oxon. FF. [EPISTOL. ACAD.] fol. 254. The Epistles in this Register, contain many local anecdotes of the restoration of learning at Oxford.

But

But although these gleams of science long struggled with the scholastic cloud which enveloped our universities, we find the culture of the classics embraced in England much sooner than is supposed. Before the year 1490, many of our countrymen appear to have turned their thoughts to the revival of the study of classics: yet, chiefly in consequence of their communications with Italy, and, as most of them were clergymen, of the encouragements they received from the liberality of the Roman pontiffs*. Millyng, abbot of Westminster, about the year 1480, understood the Greek language: which yet is mentioned as a singular accomplishment, in one, although a prelate, of the monastic profession[†]. Robert Flemmyng studied the Greek and Latin languages under Baptista Guarini at Ferrara; and at his return into England, was preferred to the deanery of Lincoln about the

* Such of our countrymen as wrote in Latin at this period, and were entirely educated at home without any connections with Italy, wrote a style not more classical than that of the monkish latin annalists who flourished two or three centuries before. I will instance only in Ross of Warwick, author of the *HISTORIA REGUM ANGLIÆ*, educated at Oxford, an ecclesiastic, and esteemed an eminent scholar. Nor is the plan of Ross's History, which was finished so late as the year 1483, less barbarous than his latinity; for in writing a chronicle of the kings of England, he begins, according to the constant practice of the monks, with the creation and the first ages of the world, and adopts all their legends and fables. His motives for undertaking this work are exceedingly curious. He is speaking of the method of perpetuating the memories of famous men by statues: "Al-
" so in our churches, tabernacles in stone-
" work, or niches, are wrought for con-
" taining images of this kind. For in-
" stance, in the new work of the college
" of Windsor, [i. e. saint George's chapel,]
" such tabernacles abound, both within
" and without the building. Wherefore,

" being requested, about the latter end of
" the reign of king Edward the fourth, by
" the venerable master Edward Seymor,
" Master of the Works there, and at the
" desire of the said king, to compile a his-
" tory of those kings and princes who have
" founded churches and cities, that the
" images placed in those niches might ap-
" pear to greater advantage, and more ef-
" fectually preserve the names of the per-
" sons represented; at the instance of this
" my brother-student at Oxford, and espe-
" cially at the desire of the said most noble
" monarch, as also to exhilarate the minds
" of his royal successours, I have under-
" taken his work, &c." Edit. Hearne,
Oxon. 1745. p. 120. 8vo.

† Leland, in V. One Adam Eston, edu-
cated at Oxford, a Benedictine monk of
Norwich, and who lived at Rome the
greatest part of his life, is said to have
written many pieces in Hebrew, Greek,
and Latin. He died at Rome, in the year
1397. Tanner, p. 266. Leland mentions
John Bate, a Carmelite, of York, about
the year 1429, as a Greek scholar. Scrip-
tor. *BATVS*.

year

year 1450². During the reign of Edward the fourth, he was at Rome; where he wrote an elegant Latin poem in heroic verse, entitled *LUCUBRATIONS TIBURTINÆ*, which he inscribed to pope Sixtus his singular patron³. It has these three chaste and strong hexameters, in which he describes the person of that illustrious pontiff.

Sane, quisquis in hunc oculos converterit acreis,
In facie vultuque viri sublime videbit
Elucere aliquid, majestatemque verendam.

Leland assures us, that he saw in the libraries of Oxford a Greco-Latin lexicon, compiled by Flemmyng, which has escaped my searches. He left many volumes, beautifully written and richly illuminated, to Lincoln college in Oxford, where he had received his academical education⁴. About the same period, John Gunthorpe, afterwards, among other numerous and eminent promotions, dean of Wells, keeper of the privy seal, and master of King's hall in Cambridge, attended also the philological lectures of Guarini: and for the polished latinity with which he wrote *EPISTLES* and *ORATIONS*, compositions at that time much in use and request, was appointed by king Edward the fourth Latin secretary to queen Anne, in the year 1487⁵. The manuscripts

² Wood, *HIST. UNIV. OXON.* ii. 62. Wharton, *APPEND.* p. 155. Bate, viii. 21.

³ Printed at Ferrara, 1477. 8vo. In two books. He was prothonotary to pope Sixtus. In this poem he mentions Baptista Platina, the librarian at Rome; who, together with most of the Italian scholars, was his familiar friend. See Carbo's funeral Oration on Guarini. I know not whether one John Opicius, our countryman as it seems, and a Latin poet, improved his taste in Italy about this time: but he has left some copies of elegant Latin verses. *MSS. CORRON. VESPAS. B. iv.* One is, *De regis Henrici septimi in Galliam progressu.* It begins, "Bella canant alii Trojæ, prostrataque dicant." Another is, *De ejus-*

dem laudibus sub prætextu rose purpureæ, a dialogue between Mopsus and Melibeus. One of the poems, *On Christmas*, has the date 1497.

⁴ Lel. *ibid.*

⁵ Pat. 7. Edw. iv. m. 2. Five of his *ORATIONS* before illustrious personages are extant, *MSS. Bodl. NE. F. ii. 20.* In the same manuscript are his *ANNOTATIONES QUÆDAM CRITICÆ IN VERBA QUÆDAM APUD POSTAS CITATA.* He gave many books, collected in Italy, to Jesus college at Cambridge. *Lel. COLL. iii. 13.* He was ambassador to the king of Castile, in 1466, and 1470. Rymer, *Fœd. xi. 572. 653.* Bale mentions his *Diversi generis CARMINA.* viii. 42. And a book on Rhetoric. collected

collected in Italy, which he gave to both the universities of England, were of much more real value, than the sumptuous silver image of the virgin Mary, weighing one hundred and forty-three ounces, which he presented to his cathedral of Wells^d. William Gray imbibed under the same preceptors a knowledge of the best Greek and Roman writers: and in the year 1454, was advanced by pope Nicholas the fifth, equally a judge and a protector of scholars, to the bishoprick of Ely^e. This prelate employed at Venice and Florence many scribes and illuminators^f, in preparing copies of the classics and other useful books, which he gave to the library of Baliol college in Oxford^g, at that time esteemed the best in the university. John Phrea, or Free, an ecclesiastic of Bristol, receiving information from the Italian merchants who trafficked at Bristol, that multitudes of strangers were constantly crowding to the capitals of Italy for instruction in the learned languages, passed over to Ferrara; where he became a fellow-student with the prelate last mentioned, by whose patronage and assistance his studies were supported^h. He translated Diodorus Siculus, and many pieces of Xenophon, into Latinⁱ. On account of the former work, he was nominated bishop of Bath and Wells by pope Paul the second,

^d Registr. Eccles. Wellens.

^e Wharton, ANGL. SACR. i. 672.

^f One of those was Antoninus Marius. In Baliol college library, one of bishop Gray's manuscripts has this entry. "Antonius Marii filius Florentinus civis transcripsi ab originalibus exemplaribus, 2 Jul. 1448. &c." MSS. lxviii. [Apud MSS. Langb. BAL. p. 81.] See Leland, COLL. iii. p. 21.

^g Leland, COLL. ut supr. p. 61.

^h Among Phrea's EPISTLES in Baliol library, one is PRECEPTORI SUO GUARINO, whose epistles are full of encomiums on Phreas, MSS. Bal. Coll. Oxon. G. 9. See ten of his epistles, five of which are written from Italy to bishop Gray, MSS. Bibl. Bodl. NE. F. ii. 20. In one

of these he complains, that the bishop's remittances of money had failed, and that he was obliged to pawn his books and clothes to Jews at Ferrara.

ⁱ He also translated into latin Synesius's PANEGYRIC ON BALDNESS. Printed, Basil. 1521. 8vo. [Whence Abraham Fleming made his English translation, London, 1579.] Leland mentions some flowing latin heroics, which he addressed to his patron Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, in which Bacchus expostulates with a goat gnawing a vine. COLL. iii. 13. And SCRIPTOR. PHREAS. HIS COSMOGRAPHIA MUNDI is a collection from Pliny. Leland, COLL. iii. p. 58. See MSS. Br. Twyne, 3. pag. 285.

but

but died before consecration in the year 1464^k. His Latin Epistles, five of which are addressed to his patron the bishop of Ely, discover an uncommon terseness and facility of expression. It was no inconsiderable testimony of Phrea's taste, that he was requested by some of his elegant Italian friends, to compose a new epitaph in Latin elegiacs for Petrarch's tomb: the original inscription in monkish rhymes, not agreeing with the new and improved ideas of Latin versification^l. William Sellynge, a fellow of All Souls college in Oxford, disgusted with the barren and contracted circle of philosophy taught by the irrefragable professors of that ample seminary, acquired a familiarity with the most excellent antient authors, and cultivated the conversation of Politian at Bononia^m, to whom he introduced the learned Linacrerⁿ. About the year 1460, he returned into England; and being elected prior of Christ-Church at Canterbury, enriched the library of that fraternity with an inestimable collection of Greek and Roman manuscripts, which he had amassed in Italy^o. It has been said, that among these books, which were all soon afterwards accidentally consumed by fire, there was a complete copy of Cicero's Platonic system of politics DE REPUBLICA^p. King Henry the seventh sent Sellynge in

^k See Leland, COLL. iii. 58. Wood, HIST. UNIV. OXON. ii. 76.

^l See Leland, COLL. iii. 13. 63. Leland says that he had the new epitaph, *Novum ac elegans*. SCRIPTOR. Phreas. "Tuscia me genuit, &c."

^m Leland, CELLINGUS.

ⁿ Id. ITIN. vi. f. 5.

^o Wood, HIST. UNIV. OXON. ii. 177. In a monastic ORITARY, cited by Wharton, he is said to be, "Latina quoque et GRÆCA lingua apprime institutus." It is added, that he adorned the library over the prior's chapel with exquisite sculptures, and furnished it with books, and that he glazed the south side of the cloysters of his monastery, for the use of his studious brethren, placing on the walls new TEXTS, or in-

scriptions, called CAROLI, or carols. ANGL. SACR. i. p. 145. seq.

^p This is asserted on the authority of Leland. SCRIPTOR. ut supr. [See supr. p. 218.] Cardinal Pole expended two thousand crowns in searching for Tully's Six Books DE REPUBLICA in Poland, but without success. EPISTOL. Afchami ad Sturm. dat. 14 Sept. 1555. lib. i. p. 99. And Sturmius, in a letter to Afcham [dat. 30 Jan. 1552.] says, that a person in his neighbourhood had flattered him with a promise of this inestimable treasure. Barthius reports, that they were in the monastery of Fulda, on vellum, but destroyed by the soldiers in a pillage of that convent. Christiani Feustell. MISCELLAN. p. 47. Compare Mabillon. MUS. ITALIC. tom. i. p. 79.

the quality of an envoy to the king of France: before whom he spoke a most elegant Latin oration^p. It is mentioned on his monument, now remaining in Canterbury cathedral, that he understood Greek.

Doctor theologus Selling, *GRÆCA atque Latina*
Lingua perdoctus.— — —

This is an uncommon topic of praise in an abbot's epitaph. William Grocyn, a fellow of New college at Oxford, pursued the same path about the year 1488: and having perfected his knowledge of the Greek tongue, with which he had been before tinctured, at Florence under Demetrius Chalcondylas and Politian, and at Rome under Hermolaus Barbarus, became the first voluntary lecturer of that language at Oxford, before the year 1490^q. Yet Polydore Virgil, perhaps only from a natural partiality to his county, affirms, that Cornelius Vitellus, an Italian of noble birth, and of the most accomplished learning, was the first who taught the Greek and Roman classics at Oxford^r. Nor must I forget to mention John Tiptoft, the unfortunate earl of Worcester; who, in the reign of Henry the sixth, rivalled the most learned ecclesiastics of his age, in the diligence and felicity with which he prosecuted the politer studies. At Padua, his singular skill in refined Latinity endeared him to

i. p. 79. Isaac Bullart relates, that in the year 1576, during the siege of Moscow, some noble Polish officers, accompanied by one Voinuskius, a man profoundly skilled in the learned languages, made an excursion into the interior parts of Muscovy; where they found, among other valuable monuments of ancient literature, Tully's *REPUBLIC*, written in golden letters. *ACAD. ART. Scient.* tom. p. 87. It is to be wished, that the same good fortune which discovers this work of Cicero, will also restore the remainder of Ovid's *FASTI*, the lost Decads

of Livy, the *ANTICATONES* of Cæsar, and an entire copy of Petronius.

^p From his *EPITAPH*.

^q Wood, *HIST. UNIV. OXON.* i. 246. See Fiddes's *WOLSEY*, p. 201.

^r *ANGL. HISTOR.* lib. xxvi. p. 610. 30. edit. Basil. 1534. fol. But he seems to have only been schoolmaster of Magdalen or New-college. See Nic. Harpsfield, *HIST. ECCLES.* p. 651. who says, that this Vitellius spoke his *first oration* at New-college. "*Qui primam suam orationem in collegio Wiccamenſi habuit.*"

pope Pius the second, and to the most capital ornaments of the Italian school'. His Latin Letters still remain, and abundantly prove his abilities and connections'. He translated Cicero's dialogue on FRIENDSHIP into English*. He was the common patron of all his ingenious countrymen, who about this period were making rapid advances in a more rational and ample plan of study; and, among other instances of his unwearied liberality to true literature, he prepared a present of chosen manuscript books, valued at five hundred marcs, for the encrease of the Humphredian library at Oxford, then recently instituted*. These books appear to have been purchased in Italy; at that time the grand and general mart of antient authors, especially the Greek classics*. For the Turkish emperors, now seated at

* See Ware, SCRIPT. HIBERN. ii. 133. Camd. BRIT. p. 436. And the Funeral Oration of Ludovico Carbo, on Guarini.

† In this correspondence, four letters are written by the earl, viz. To Laurence More, John Fre or Phrea, William Attecliff, and *Magister* Vincent. To the earl are letters of Galeotus Martius, Baptista Guarini, and other *anonymous* friends. MSS. Eccles. Cathedr. Lincoln.

‡ Printed by Caxton, 1481. fol. Leland thinks, that the version of Tully *de Senectute*, printed also by Caxton, was made by this earl. But this translation was made by William of Wycestre, or William Botoner, an eminent physician and antiquary, from the French of Lawrence Premierfait, and presented by the translator to bishop Waynflete, Aug. 20, 1473. See MSS. Harl. 4329. 2. 3. Typtoft also translated into English two elegant Latin ORATIONS of Banatusius Magnomontanus, supposed to be spoken by C. Scipio and C. Flaminius, who were rivals in the courtship of Lucretia. This version was printed by Caxton, with Tully's two DIALOGUES abovementioned. He has left other pieces.

§ EPIST. Acad. Oxon. 259. Registr. FF. f. 121. I suspect, that on the earl's

execution, in 1470, they were never received by the university. Wood, ANTIQ. Un. Oxon. ii. 50. Who adds, that the earl meditated a benefaction of the same kind to Cambridge.

* As the Greek language became fashionable in the course of erudition, we find the petty scholars affecting to understand Greek. This appears from the following passage in Barclay's SHIP OF FOOL'S, written, as we have seen, about the end of the fifteenth century :

Another boasteth himself that hath bene
In Greece at scholes, and many other
lande ;
But if that he were apposed * well, I wene
The Greekes letters he scant doth understand.

Edit. 1570. ut supr. fol. 185. a. With regard to what is here suggested, of our countrymen resorting to Greece for instruction, Rhenanus acquaints us, that Lily, the famous grammarian, was not only intimately acquainted with the whole circle of Greek authors, but with the domestic life and familiar conversation of the Greeks, he having lived some time in the island of Rhodes. PRÆFAT. ad T. Mori EPIGRAM.

* Examined.

edit.

Constantinople, particularly Bajazet the second, freely imparted these treasures to the Italian emissaries, who availing themselves of the fashionable enthusiasm, traded in the cities of Greece for the purpose of purchasing books, which they

edit. Basil. 1520. 4to. He staid at Rhodes five years. This was about the year 1500. I have before mentioned a Translation of Vegetius's *TACTICS*, written at Rhodes, in the year 1459, by John Newton, evidently one of our countrymen, who perhaps studied Greek there. MSS. LAUD. Bibl. Bodl. Oxon. K. 53. It must however be remembered, that the passion for visiting the holy places at Jerusalem did not cease among us till late in the reign of Henry the eighth. See *The pilgrimage of Syr Richard Torkyngton, parson of Mullerton in Norfolk, to Jerusalem*, An. 1517. Catal. MSS. vol. 2. 182. vol. 2. William Wey, fellow of Eton college, celebrated maist *cantu organico*, at Jerusalem, in the year 1472. MSS. James, Bibl. Bodl. vi. 153. See his *ITINERARIES*, MSS. Bibl. Bodl. NE. F. 2. 12. In which are also some of his English rhymes on *The Way to Hierusalem*. He went twice thither.

Barclay, in the same stanza, like a plain ecclesiastic, censures the prevailing practice of going abroad for instruction; which, for a time at least, certainly proved of no small detriment to our English schools and universities.

But thou, vayne boaster, if thou wilt take
in hand

To study *cunning, and ydelnes despise,
Th'royalme of England might for thee
suffice:—

In England is sufficient discipline,
And noble men endowed with science, &c.

And in another place, *ibid.* fol. 54. a.

One runneth to Almayne, another into
Fraunce,

To Paris, † Padway, Lombardy, or Spayne;
Another to † Bonony, Rome, or Orleance,
To Cayns, to § Tholous, Athens, or † Co-
layne:

And at the last returneth home agayne,
More ignorant. — —

* Knowledge. † Padua. † Bononia. § Caen and Tholouse. † Cologne in Germany.
I i i z professorship.

Yet this practice was encouraged by some of our bishops, who had received their education in English universities. Pace, one of our learned countrymen, a friend of Erasmus, was placed for education in grammar and music in the family of Thomas Langton, bishop of Winchester; who kept a domestic school within the precincts of his palace, for training boys in these sciences. "Humaniores literas (says my author) tantu estimabat, ut domestica schola pueros ac juvenes ibi erudire dos curavit, &c." The bishop, who took the greatest pleasure in examining his scholars every evening, observing that young Pace was an extraordinary proficient in music, thought him capable of better things; and sent him, while yet a boy, to the university of Padua. He afterwards studied at Bononia: for the same bishop, by Will; bequeaths to his scholar, Richard Pace, studying at Bononia, an exhibition of ten pounds annually for seven years. See Pace's *TRACTATUS de fructu qui ex doctrina percipitur*, edit. Basil, 1517. 4to. p. 27. 28. In which the author calls himself bishop Langton's *a manu minister*. See also Langton's Will, Cur. Prærog. Cant. Registr. MOONE. qu. 10. Bishop Langton had been provost of queen's college at Oxford, and died in 1501. At Padua Pace was instructed by Cuthbert Tunstall, afterwards bishop of Durham, and the giver of many valuable Greek books to the university of Cambridge; and by Hugh Latimer. *TRACTAT.* ut supr. p. 6. 99. 103. Leland, *COLL.* iii. 14.

We find also archbishop Wareham, before the year 1520, educating at his own expence, for the space of twelve years, Richard Croke, one of the first restorers of the Greek language in England, at the universities of Paris, Louvain, and Leipsic: from which returning a most accomplished scholar, he succeeded Erasmus in the Greek

fold in Italy: and it was chiefly by means of this literary traffic, that Cosmo and Laurence of Medici, and their munificent successors the dukes of Florence, composed the famous Florentine library⁷.

It is obvious to remark the popularity which must have accrued to these politer studies, while they thus paved the way to the most opulent and honourable promotions in the church: and the authority and estimation with which they must have been surrounded, in being thus cultivated by the most venerable ecclesiastics. It is indeed true, that the dignified clergy of the early and darker ages were learned beyond the level of the people⁸. Peter de Blois, successively

professorship at Cambridge. Croke dedicated to archbishop Wareham his *INTRODUCTIONS IN RUDIMENTA GRÆCA*, printed in the shop of Eucharius Cervicornius, at Cologne, 1520.

With regard to what has been here said concerning the practice of educating boys in the families of our bishops, it appears that Groshead, bishop of Lincoln in the thirteenth century, educated in this manner most of the nobility in the kingdom, who were placed there in the character of pages: "Filiis Nobilium procerum regni, quos secum habuit DOMICELLOS." Joh. de Athona. in *CONSTIT. OTTOBON.* Tit. 23. in *Voc. BARONES.* Cardinal Wolsey, archbishop of York, educated in his house many of the young nobility. Fiddes's *WOLSEY*, p. 100. See what is said above of the quality of pope Leo's *CUBICULARII*, p. 411. Fiddes cites a record remaining in the family of the earl of Arundel, written in 1620, which contains instructions how the younger son of the writer, the earl of Arundel, should behave himself in the family of the bishop of Norwich, whither he is sent for education as page: and in which his lordship observes, that his grandfather the duke of Norfolk, and his uncle the earl of Northampton, were both bred as *pages with bishops*. Fiddes, *ibid.* *RECORDS.* No. 6. c. 4. pag. 19. Sir Thomas More was educated as a page with cardinal Moreton, archbishop of Canterbury, about 1490,

who was so struck with his genius, that he would often say at dinner, *This child here waiting at table is so very ingenious, that he will one day prove an extraordinary man.* Mori *UTOPIA*, cited by Stapleton, p. 157. 138. And Roper's *MORE*, p. 27. edit. ut *supr.*

⁷ Many of them were sent into Italy by Laurence of Medicis, particularly John Lascaris. Varillas says, that Bajazet the second understood Averroes's commentaries on Aristotle. *ANECDOT. de Florence*, p. 183. P. Jovii *ELOG.* c. xxxi. p. 74. Lascaris also made a voyage into Greece by command of Leo the tenth; and brought with him some Greek boys, who were to be educated in the college which that pope had founded on mount Quirinal, and who were intended to propagate the genuine and native pronunciation of the Greek tongue. Jov. ut *supr.* c. xxxi.

⁸ The inferior clergy were in the mean time extremely ignorant. About the year 1300, pope Boniface the eighth published an edict, ordering the incumbents of ecclesiastic benefices to quit their cures for a certain time, and to study at the universities. [See his ten *CONSTITUTIONES*, in the *BULLARIUM MAGNUM* of Laertius Cherubinus, tom. i. p. 108. seq. Where are his *Erectiones studiorum generalium in civitate Firmana, Roma, et Avinionense*, A. D. 1303.] Accordingly our episcopal registers are full of licences granted for this purpose. The

rector

archdeacon of Bath and London, about the year 1160, acquaints us, that the palace of Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, was perpetually filled with bishops highly accomplished in literature: who passed their time there, in reading, disputing, and deciding important questions of the state. He adds, that these prelates, although men of the world, were

rector of Bedhampton, Hants, being an acolyte, is permitted to study for seven years from the time of his institution, *in literarum scientia*, on condition that within one year he is made a subdeacon, and after seven years a deacon and priest. Mar. 5. 1302. Registr. PONTISSAR. Winton. fol. 38. Another rector is allowed to study for seven years, *in loco quem eligit et ubi viget studium generale*, 16 kal. Octobr. 1303. *ibid.* fol. 40. Another receives the same privilege, to study at Oxford, Orleans, or Paris, A. D. 1304. *ibid.* fol. 42. Another, being desirous of study, and able to make a proficiency, is licenced to study in *aliquo studio transmarino*, A. D. 1291. *ibid.* fol. 84. This, however, was three years before Boniface became pope. Another is to study *per terminum constitutionis novelle*, A. D. 1302. *ibid.* fol. 37. b. But these dispensations, the necessity of which proves the illiteracy of the priests, were most commonly procured for pretences of absence or neglect. Or, if in consequence of such dispensations, they went to any university, they seem to have mispent their time there in riot and idleness, and to have returned more ignorant than before. A grievance to which Gower alludes in the *VOX CLAMANTIS*, a poem which presents some curious pictures of the manners of the clergy, both secular and monastic. cap. xvii lib. 3. MSS. Coll. Omn. Anim. Oxon. xxix. *Hic loquitur de Rectoribus illis, qui sub episcopo licentiatu fingunt se ire scolas, ut sub nomine virtutis vitia corporalia frequentent.*

Et sic Ars nostrum Curatum reddit inertem,
De longo studio fert nihil inde domum:
Stultus ibi venit, sed stultior inde redibit, &c.

By *Ars* we are here to understand the scholastic sciences, and by *Curatus* the be-

beneficed priest. But the most extraordinary anecdote of incompetency which I have seen, occurs so late as the year 1448. A rector is instituted by Waynflete bishop of Winchester, on the presentation of Merton priory in Surrey, to the parish of Sherfield in Hampshire. But previously he takes an oath before the bishop, that on account of his insufficiency in letters, and default of knowledge in the superintendence of souls, he will learn Latin for the two following years; and at the end of the first year he will submit himself to be examined by the bishop, concerning his progress in grammar; and that, if on a second examination he should be found deficient, he will resign the benefice. Registr. WAYNFLETE. Winton. fol. 7. In the Statutes of New College at Oxford, given in the year 1386, one of the ten chaplains is ordered to learn grammar, and to be able to *write*; in order that he may be qualified for the arduous task of assisting the treasurers of the society in transcribing their Latin evidences. STATUT. Coll. Nov. RUBRIC. 58. In the statutes of Bradgate college in Kent, given in 1398, it is required that the governor of the house, who is to be a priest, should read well, construe Latin well, and sing well, *sciat bene legere, bene construere, et bene cantare*. Dugd. MONAST. tom. iii. Eccles. Collegiat. p. 118. col. 2. At an episcopal visitation of saint Swithin's priory at Winchester, an ample society of Benedictines, bishop William of Wykeham orders the monastery to provide an *INFORMATOR*, or Latin preceptor, to teach the priests, who performed the service in the church without knowing what they were uttering and could not attend to the common stops, to read grammatically, Feb. 8. 1386. MSS. Harl. 328. These, indeed, were not secular priests: the instance, however,

a society of scholars: yet very different from those who frequented the universities, in which nothing was taught but words and syllables, unprofitable subtleties, elementary speculations, and trifling distinctions^a. De Blois was himself eminently learned, and one of the most distinguished ornaments of Becket's attendants. He tells us, that in his youth, when he learned the *ARS VERSIFICATORIA*, that is, philological literature, he was habituated to an urbanity of style and expression: and that he was instituted, not in idle fables and legendary tales, but in Livy, Quintus Curtius, Suetonius, Josephus, Trogus Pompeius, Tacitus, and other classical historians^b. At the same time he censures with a just indignation, the absurdity of training boys in the frivolous intricacies of logic and geometry, and other parts of the scholastic philosophy; which, to use his own emphatical words, "*Nec domi, nec militiae, nec in foro, nec in claustro, nec in ecclesia, nec in curia, nec alicubi profunt alicui*." The

however, illustrates what is here thrown together.

Wicliffe says, that the beneficed priests of his age "kunnen [know] not the ten commandments, ne read their sauter, ne understand a verse of it." *LIFE OF WICLIFFE*, p. 38. Nor were even the bishops of the fourteenth century always very eminently qualified in literature of either sort. In the year 1387, the bishop of Worcester informed his clergy, that the Lollards, a sect of reformers whose doctrines, a few fanatical extravagancies excepted, coincided in many respects with the present rational principles of protestantism, were *followers of MAHOMET*. WILKINS, *CONCILIUM*, tom. iii. p. 202. [See *supr.* p. 190. in the *NOTES*.]

But at this time the most shameful grossness of manners, partly owing to their celibacy, prevailed among the clergy. In the statutes of the college of saint Mary Ottery in Devonshire, dated 1337, and given by the founder bishop Grandison, the following injunction occurs. "Item statuitur, quod nullus Canonicus, Vicarius, vel Secundarius, pueros choristas [collegii] secum pernoscere, aut in lectulo cum

ipsis dormire, faciat seu permittat." Cap. 50. MS. apud Archiv. Wulves. Winton. And what shall we think of the religious manners and practices of an age, when the following precautions were thought necessary, in a respectable collegiate church, consisting of a dean and six secular canons, amply endowed? "Statutum est, quod si quis convictus fuerit de peccato Sodomitico, vel arte magica, &c." From the statutes of Stoke-Clare college, in Suffolk, given by the dean Thomas Barnesley, in the year 1422. *Dugd. MONAST.* ut *supr.* p. 169. col. 1.

From these horrid pictures let us turn our eyes, and learn to set a just value on that pure religion, and those improved habits of life and manners, which we at present enjoy.

^a *Epist. Petr. Blesens. vi. fol. 3. a. OPERA.* edit. Paris. 1519. fol.

^b *Epist. cii. fol. 49. b.*

^c *Ibid.* That is, "Which are of no real use or service, at home, in the camp, at the bar, in the cloyster, in the court, in the church, or indeed in any place or situation whatsoever."

The

Latin Epistles of De Blois, from which these anecdotes are taken, are full of good sense, observations on life, elegant turns, and ingenious allusions to the classics. He tells Jocelyne, bishop of Salisbury, that he had long wished to see the bishop's two nephews, according to promise: but that he feared he expected them as the Britons expected king Arthur, or the Jews the Messiah^d. He describes, with a liveliness by no means belonging to the archdeacons of the twelfth century, the difficulties, disappointments, and inconveniencies, of paying attendance at court^e. In the course of his correspondence, he quotes Quintilian, Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Seneca, Virgil, Quintus Curtius, Ovid, Statius, Suetonius, Juvenal, and Horace, more frequently and familiarly than the fathers^f. Horace seems his favorite. In one of the letters, he quotes a passage concerning Pompey the Great, from the Roman History of Sallust, in six books, now lost, and which appears at present only in part among the fragments of that valuable historian^g. In the *NUGÆ CURIALIUM* of MAPES, or some other manuscript Latin tract written by one of the scholars of the twelfth century, I remember to have seen a curious and striking anecdote, which in a

^d EPIST. li. fol. 24. a.

^e "Ut ad ministeriales curiæ redeam, apud forinsecos janitores biduanam forte gratiam aliquis multiplici obsequio merebitur.—Régem dormire, aut ægrotare, aut esse in consiliis, mentientur.—Ostiariorum camera confundat altissimus! Si nihil dederis ostiario actum est. Si nihil attuleris ibis, Homere, foras. Post primum Cerberum, tibi superest alius horribilior Cerbero, Briareo terribilior, nequior Pygmalione, crudelior Minotauro. Quantaunque tibi mortis necessitas, aut discrimen exheredationis incubat, non intrabis ad regem." EPIST. xiv. fol. 8. b.

^f Latin and French, the vernacular excepted, were the only languages now known. Foliot bishop of London, cotemporary with De Blois and Becket, was

esteemed, both in secular and sacred literature, the most consummate prelate of his time. Becket, EPISTOL. lib. iii. 5. Walter Mapes, their cotemporary, giving Foliot the same character, says he was *TRIUM peritissimus linguarum Latina, Gallica, Anglica, et lucidissime disertus in singulis.* Apud. MSS. JAMES, xiv. p. 86. Bibl. Bodl. [EX NUGIS CURIAL.]

^g "De magno Pompeio refert Sallustius, quod cum alacribus saltu, cum velocibus cursu, cum validis veste certabat, &c." EPIST. xciv. fol. 45. a. Part of this passage is cited by Vegetius, a favorite author of the age of Peter de Blois, DE RE MILIT. lib. i. c. ix. It is exhibited by the modern editors of Sallust, as it stands in Vegetius.

short

short compass shews Becket's private ideas concerning the bigottries and superstitious absurdities of his religion. The writer gives an account of a dinner in Becket's palace; at which was present, among many other prelates, a Cistercian abbot. This abbot engrossed almost the whole conversation, in relating the miracles performed by Robert, the founder of his order. Becket heard him for some time with a patient contempt; and at length could not help breaking out with no small degree of indignation, *And these are your miracles!*

We must however view the liberal ideas of these enlightened dignitaries of the twelfth century under some restrictions. It must be acknowledged, that their literature was clogged with pedantry, and depressed by the narrow notions of the times. Their writings shew, that they knew not how to imitate the beauties of the antient classics. Exulting in an exclusive privilege, they certainly did not see the solid and popular use of these studies: at least they did not chuse, or would not venture, to communicate them to the people, who on the other hand were not prepared to receive them. Any attempts of that kind, for want of assistances which did not then exist, must have been premature; and these lights were too feeble to dissipate the universal darkness. The writers who first appeared after Rome was ravaged by the Goths, such as Boethius, Prudentius, Orosius, Fortunatus, and Sedulius, and who naturally, from that circumstance, and because they were Christians, came into vogue at that period, still continued in the hands of common readers, and superseded the great originals. In the early ages of Christianity a strange opinion prevailed, in conformity to which Arnobius composed his celebrated book against the gentile superstitions, that pagan authors were calculated to corrupt the pure theology of the gospel. The prejudice however remained, when even the suspicions of the danger were removed. But I return to the progress of modern letters in the fifteenth century.

S E C T.