

## Some Books and Book-Owners of Fifteenth-Century St. Albans.

### *A Further Study of the Stoneham Register.*

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NO study of ancient Wills is more interesting or profitable than that which throws light on the reading-matter and general literary taste of our ancestors. Modern text-books of English literature are naturally wont to throw into relief the greater works which for one reason or another have stood the test of time and have continued to commend themselves to later generations. But while these in their original day may have influenced only the privileged few to whom they were addressed, the lesser, more popular books which then appealed directly or indirectly to the masses, are likely to escape us. To complete our knowledge of social development, nevertheless, it is necessary to know not only the best literary efforts of any age, but also what progress the people as a whole were making towards an appreciation of books and the power to read them, what, in short, was helping to shape their minds in that direction.

With some such end in view, then, the modern reader may well turn again to the "Stoneham" Register of fifteenth century Wills proved in the Archdeaconry of St. Alban's, which has already given us some insight into the contemporary life of the district.<sup>1</sup> For, in the first place, the Wills are essentially those of ordinary men and women of the middle and lower classes—merchants, tradesmen, artisans and simple townfolk—with their parish clergy, undistinguished by any great names or dignities<sup>2</sup>. In the second place, the period to which they belong, though almost equally undistinguished by authors of the first rank in English literature, is one of peculiar interest from the point of view just outlined.

<sup>1</sup> cf. my first art. in the *Transactions* of this Society for 1926, pp. 190-206 ("Every-day Life in Medieval St. Alban's").

<sup>2</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

It lies midway between the age of Wycliffe and Chaucer which saw the Revival of the English tongue, and the age of Caxton which ushers in Renaissance and Reformation and the full glory of the Elizabethans. While Sir Thomas More could declare that even in his day only half the population of England was able to read, yet it is clear that the spread of books had been working a silent transformation in the sixty years or so represented by our Wills. "In no period of equal length," writes the late Mr. Kingsford, "can we trace a development of such great importance."<sup>3</sup> And the emergence of this new reading public was above all a middle-class achievement, commensurate with the rapid growth of the towns in which St. Alban's shared.

What then, we may ask, were our forefathers of St. Alban's actually reading in these years of increasing wealth and enlightenment? In their midst, though cut off by monastery walls, there stood, of course, one ancient library of books which during the very period of our Register was destined to enjoy a fresh lease of prosperity and distinction. Five years after the first of the recorded Wills was proved, there was elected in the year 1420, as Abbot of St. Alban's, a famous scholar and churchman who was also an ardent book-lover with a literary reputation of his own, John Whethamstede. In the first period of his rule, he enriched the Abbey with no less than 87 volumes, at a total cost of more than £100, and built a library for the monastic students at Gloucester College in Oxford, of which he had once been Prior.<sup>4</sup> Immediately after re-election as Abbot in January of 1452, he set about constructing the new library at St. Alban's, which he had planned during his first abbacy. It was to be a worthy building complete with new lecterns and shelves, and even stained-glass windows illustrating the subject-matter of the books ranged beneath.<sup>5</sup> However, here was a typical case of bibliophile activity destined but to benefit a privileged class of monastic book-readers alone. The outer world of St. Alban's must have remained unaffected, save per-

<sup>3</sup> (*Engl. Hist. Lit. in the Fifteenth Century*. Oxf., 1913).

<sup>4</sup> cf. *Registr. Joh. Amundesham* (Rolls Series), ii, pp. 256, 268-70, and L. F. R. Williams, *Hist. of the Abbey of St. Alban*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (Williams), p. 212.

haps when abbey sermons delivered *ad populum* were improved from the recent accumulation, or when in days of relaxed discipline here and at Redbourne a stray volume may have found its way into the hands of a secular friend of one of the inmates. The convent library, at all events, was never a public resort, and for the layman most of its treasures lay yet further concealed in an unknown tongue.

Of the literature which parochial clergy and townsfolk of the fifteenth century were likely to be reading we can guess a good deal, it is true, from contemporary manuscripts still left to us in other places, and from those particular works which William Caxton and his followers eventually chose to publish in print. But this fact in no way destroys the value of each fresh study of Wills. For the evidence supplied by the latter may enable us to correct a false impression due to the ravages of neglect or iconoclasm among the actual heirlooms of the past. Taken as a whole, the Register before us might appear somewhat disappointing in its mention of books.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, here and there quaint book-titles do reward the efforts of the student, if he is capable of deciphering their contracted forms and of identifying them from a knowledge of the current medieval literature. Two entries stand out from the others as seeming to indicate at least two book-lovers of St. Alban's—one a layman, the other a priest—who had somehow managed to collect what, for their period and station in life, would be an extensive little private library. Of these collections that of the layman is the most interesting. Therefore we shall consider it first. Layman presumably its owner was, because a son is named as the principal legatee. For the rest, all that we know of him, from this same source, is that he was one Richard Fox, that he made his Will—"sumwhat wyt avysement"—in the year 1454, and that he describes himself here as "of the house of St. Albon, simple servaunt."<sup>7</sup> His "wrecchid and synfull body" was "to be beryed, by lycence of my lorde and the covent, in the west ende of the body of the chyrche, in the gret porche." Fox,

<sup>6</sup> Yet far richer, for example, than the two large printed volumes of Sharpe's *Cal. of Wills proved in the Court of Husting, London (q.v.)*.

<sup>7</sup> MS., fol. 70b.

then, was probably one of the lay-brethren of the Abbey; and we may be further justified in taking his own description of his calling in a literal sense. For there were many such *Conversi*, it appears, who held the position of upper servants in the monastery.<sup>8</sup> The character of one of his books, indeed, as we shall see shortly, would help us to picture him, with his "signet of gold that j have used to were dayly opon my fynger,"<sup>9</sup> as butler, chamberlain or marshal to the lord Abbot or some other dignitary of the establishment. The Will itself is amongst the few in this Register that are written in English. That part which now concerns us, runs as follows:--

"I bequeth to Johan my sone goddes blessing and myn, and my lytell *primer* heled<sup>10</sup> wyt rede leder. Item, I bequeth to my sone vi bounde bokes and a boke that is in quayers<sup>11</sup> xxv, for the more parte wryte redy. Of the vii bokes abovesaid, the on is of *seint Albons lyffe*. The 2 begynneth wyt *seint Edmundys lyffe, the kyng*. The 3 begynneth wyt *Domine ne in furore*. The 4 begynneth wyt *Brute*. The 5 begynneth wyt *Eltrede and Alfrede, kyngges*, and so forth *cronekeles*. 6 begynneth of *the tales of Gower*. And all my quayers that may stonde hym in stede, I wyll that he have hem, and specially a quayer heled wyt rede lether wher in be many contentes, as *the Wayes to Rome* and all *the stacions of Rome* and of *Jerusalem* bothe. Also, I wyll he shall have my longe boke of *Stymeles Consyensye*..... Also ther is a blake quayer, and ther in be many makynge of *divers metes and diverse festes* and mony a gode vers. As of the remeland<sup>12</sup> of my bokes, lette chese whych he wyll have mo; and tho that he leveth let Chicheley have some, and some to my cosyn Robert. Also I bequeth to the pryoras of the pray<sup>13</sup> and to her susters too bokes of *Legenda Aurea*, that one begynneth wyt *Adam and Eve* y-helde wyt rede leder, the secunde is held wyt wyte leder and begynneth wyt *seint Christoffre*....."

In spite of the Latin titles of some, it may be said at the outset that there is no reason why any of the books here mentioned should have been in any language but English. For, in every case where the work concerned had a Latin origin, we know that by this time a vernacular translation had appeared. Fox then, we assume, was not one of those who had inherited gifts from some generous master, which he was himself unable

<sup>8</sup> I owe this suggestion to the kindness of Mr. William Page, F.S.A. The place of burial, as quoted above from the Will, further supports it.

<sup>9</sup> Here bequeathed in his Will to "the archedekyne."

<sup>10</sup> = covered, bound.

<sup>11</sup> =quires; the word is used, apparently, at this period, for any kind of *unbound* book (cf. again, below, "a blake quayer").

<sup>12</sup> *Sic*, for "remanent," remainder.

<sup>13</sup> See here, below, p. 187.

to enjoy. The first book on the list is significantly his own Primer, the prayer-book of the layfolk, a family heirloom. As Mr. Littlehales remarks, "of all books of the Middle Ages it was the most common and the best known."<sup>14</sup> Containing the Hours of the Virgin, the Penitential and gradual Psalms, the Litany, Office for the Dead, and kindred matter, it served the layman at his devotions alike in private chamber and in church,<sup>15</sup> and frequently anticipated the Family Bible of a later age with its added testimony on a fly-leaf to the growth of the family tree.<sup>16</sup> Such, doubtless, was Richard Fox's "lytell primer" in its red-leather binding, a tiny manuscript with little adornment, but a memorial to the piety of English households, at once domestic and divine.

The two next entries, part of a group of seven volumes, may be held to represent the sphere of Biography in this testator's library. From the fact that Lives of St. Alban and St. Edmund are here linked together, we may conclude that they were copies of the two long legendary poems on these Saints, known as "Edmund and Fremund"<sup>17</sup> and "Albon and Amphabel,"<sup>18</sup> composed by the famous John Lydgate, Benedictine monk of Bury, who probably had died only a few years before our testator himself.<sup>19</sup> The Life of St. Edmund, king and martyr of the East Angles, it will be recalled, had been written by the poet at his Abbot's request and dedicated to King Henry VI, shortly after that monarch's visit to the shrine of St. Edmundsbury, at Christmas of the year 1433.<sup>20</sup> Such was its apparent success, that in 1439 the book-loving Abbot Whethamstede of St. Alban's aforementioned commissioned its indefatigable author, now in his decline, to compose a

<sup>14</sup> See espec., Wordsworth & Littlehales, *Old Service-Bks. of the Engl. Church*, pp. 248-254; also Littlehales, *The Prymer*, 2 vols., 1891, and *E.E.T.S.*, Orig. Ser. Nos. 105 & 109.

<sup>15</sup> A fresh example will be found in my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, p. 171. For the Primer as child's lesson-bk., cf. Foster Watson, *Engl. Grammar Schls. to 1660*, cap. ii.; etc.

<sup>16</sup> See illustr., Plate iii, opps. p. 59 in *Wordsworth & Littlehales* (from MS. Sloane 2633).

<sup>17</sup> The nephew of St. Edmund, who as king of Mercia was said to have avenged his uncle's martyrdom, and died himself a martyr.

<sup>18</sup> i.e. the mythical St. Amphibalus, whose supposed bones were discovered in 1178, interred in the Abbey, and subsequently enshrined.

<sup>19</sup> c. 1450 (born c. 1370).

<sup>20</sup> Printed by Carl Horstmann, *Allenglische Leg.*, N.F., No. 20, 1881 Heilbronn.

similar work on the English Proto-martyr. Another long metrical poem was the result, translated upon the same pattern, "out of french and laten into English," from the earlier *Vita Sancti Albani*,<sup>21</sup> a 'clumsy forgery' of the twelfth century by one William of St. Alban's,<sup>22</sup> and the *Vie de seint Auban*,<sup>23</sup> a version in French. Both poems of Lydgate, prolix and uninspired to a degree, exhibit this unskilful admirer of Chaucer at his weakest. To Richard Fox, as to his other contemporaries, they were doubtless pleasing enough. "The fifteenth-century

adored him [Lydgate],—because he combined all its own worst faults!"<sup>24</sup> A century after its composition, "Albon and Amphabel" was to be issued in print by one John Herford at St. Alban's, in the year 1533, at the request of Abbot Robert Catton, the ill-fated friend of Thomas Cromwell.<sup>25</sup>

Before passing on from books of religious Biography to books of History, we have to notice in our Will a further manual of devotion that "begynneth wyt *Domine ne in furore.*" The words reveal some version—probably in English—of the seven Penitential Psalms that



LADY WITH PRIMER:  
"Domine ne in furore....."  
(from a 15th century window,  
All Saints, York).

<sup>21</sup> Or *Acta SS. Albani et Amphibali* (see *Acta SS. Bolland. Jun.*, iv., 149-59)

<sup>22</sup> But see Prof. Claude Jenkins, *The Monastic Chronicler* ....., pp. 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> Ed. R. Atkinson, 1876.

<sup>24</sup> (*Cambr. Hist. of Engl. Lit.*, ii., p. 204.)

<sup>25</sup> Re-ed. by C. Horstmann, Berlin, 1882. For Herford, cf. the *Transactions* of this Society for 1924, p. 78. Abbot Whethamstede is reported to have paid 100 shillings for an illuminated MS. of the original wk. which he had commissioned to be placed in the Abbey before the Saint's altar.

found a place in the ordinary Primer<sup>26</sup> :—

“ *Domine ne in furore tuo.* Lord in thy woodnesse undernime  
nou3t me : ne in thi wraththe blame nat me. Have mercy of me,  
lord, for y am syyk : hele me, Lord ; for all my bones been  
trowbled.....”<sup>27</sup>

What else followed in this volume we are not told. Of greater interest and importance are the two books of English History which Fox next mentions. The *Brute*, or *Chronicle of England*, “ was indeed the most popular and widely diffused history of the times,”<sup>28</sup> a strange medley of earlier myth and later record of true events, superseding the old monastic chronicle in Latin to meet the demands of the new English lay reader and his awakening national consciousness. The earlier part of the *Brute* is a British *Aeneid*, linking the story of the nation with the great traditional characters and exploits of ancient Rome and Greece. The chain of heroes includes the Trojan Brutus, eponymous founder of Britain, King Lear and his daughters, King Arthur and his knights, and other mythical figures less famous in subsequent literature. To this section of the work, which harks back to versions of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gaimar, Wace, Layamon and others, English chroniclers of the two subsequent centuries frequently added continuations of their own. Sometimes like the versifier Robert Mannyng of Brunne they also carry it backwards to the Flood, giving “ all the story of Inglande . . . sen the tyme of sir Noe ; ffro Noe unto Eneas and what betwix tham was, and fro Eneas till Brutus tyme.” The particular version owned by Fox may have been a still later one of the year 1435, attributed to John Maundeville, Rector of Burnham Thorpe in Norfolk.<sup>29</sup>

From History we now travel to Romantic verse with the *Tales of Gower*, the famous “ *Confessio Amantis*,” that is to say, of the one well-known English author who is actually named in our Register. Indeed, so familiar

<sup>26</sup> i.e. Psalms vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx. and cxliii.

<sup>27</sup> The opening of Ps. vi. (vv. 1-2), from The Prymer of MS. St. John's Coll., Cambr., edit. Littlehales, vol. i., p. 52.

<sup>28</sup> (C. L. Kingsford, *Engl. Hist. Lit. in the 15th Cent.*, cap. v.).

<sup>29</sup> See also a 15th cent. version edited by Dr. F. W. D. Brie, in *E.E.T.S.*, O.S. Nos. 131 & 136 (*The Brut, or the Chron. of Engld.*), and a learned discussion of the whole subject in the late Mr. C. L. Kingsford's vol., cap. v., as above.

is he to us as the friend and contemporary of Chaucer, and so accessible his English poem,—“which book treteth how he was confessyd to Genyus, preest of Venus, upon the causes of love in his fyve wyttes and seven dedely synnes,”<sup>30</sup>—with its string of classical stories and moral instruction, that nothing more need be said of either of them.<sup>31</sup> Caxton, whose printed edition of the work in 1483 is itself a tribute to its popularity in the century of our testator, himself hints in his Prologue that it was “the dyvers hystories and fables comprysed therin,”—in short, the tales—that constituted its chief attraction.

Of all his books “in quires,” that which Fox most desires his son to retain is one which may be placed under the heading of Foreign Travel. In days when almost every type of literature such as we are discussing—Biography, History, Fiction, even Natural Science and Grammar—still echoed the sentiments of the churchmen, the popular craving to tour abroad and see the wonders of other lands had found its outlet in the religious duty of pilgrimages. English homilists themselves complain of those who now go to the Holy Land “out of a certain curiosity or spirit of amusement,”<sup>32</sup> or as another puts it—“rather to se faire cuntreys than for ony swete devocioun in her soule to God.”<sup>33</sup> The generation, therefore, that revelled in Lydgate, Gower and Bartholomew (Anglicus) revelled also in such handbooks of pious adventure as the so-called “Travels of Sir John Maundeville.” Manuscripts of this work are said to be more numerous than those of any other that survive from the fifteenth-century, save only the Scriptures. Fox does not refer to the fictitious knight of St. Alban’s by name in his Will. But his “Stations of Jerusalem” may well have been taken from Chapters vii. and viii. of that strange compilation, or the older pilgrimage-books on which it was really based.<sup>34</sup> “*The Stasions of Rome*,” that he mentions, on the other

<sup>30</sup> (From Caxton’s Prolog. to his edit., 1483.)

<sup>31</sup> Modern editns. by Henry Morley (1889), G. C. Macaulay, etc.

<sup>32</sup> John Bromyard, *Summa Predicantium*, s.v. *Bellum*.

<sup>33</sup> Anon., MS., Add. 24202, fol. 27b.

<sup>34</sup> cf. *Camb. Hist. of Engl. Lit.*, ii., p. 80. See also *Early Travels in Palestine*, ed. T. Wright (Bohn), 1848. MS. Harl. 2333 is a 15th cent. MS. of such *Peregrinations*.



hand, forms the subject of a vernacular tract of which specimens of the period have been left to us both in prose and verse.<sup>35</sup> In it the churches of the Eternal City are described for the benefit of the pilgrim, with special reference to their sacred relics and marvels and the precise number of years of Pardon to be won by a visit to each. From its pages, then, Richard and John Fox with their St. Alban's acquaintances would read of the Twenty-nine Steps at St. Peter's, subsequently so momentous in the life of Martin Luther,<sup>36</sup> of the Vernicle, of Christ's foreskin and swaddling clothes, some boards and hay from the Nativity manger, the table-cloth of the Last Supper, portions of the miraculous Loaves and Fishes, Aaron's rod and the Tables of the Law, with many other priceless treasures to be seen in the City,—not to mention such saintly relics as part of the brain of St. Thomas à Becket or the arm of St. Christopher that bore the infant Saviour across the floods. As for the benefits of a personal visit, if time and money allowed:—

“ In Rome is muche pardoun more  
Then I have told here bifore,  
Or telle schulde with al my miht,  
Thouh I weore her bothe day and niht.”<sup>37</sup>

The next item on the list is *Stimulus Conscientiæ* or “The Prick of Conscience,” a well-known metrical treatise formerly attributed to the Yorkshire hermit Richard Rolle.<sup>38</sup> This work, inspired to some extent by the “Somme le Roi” of the Dominican friar Lorens, exerted a greater influence over the English pulpit of the fifteenth century than probably any other of the very numerous religious manuals of the kind then current. Its morbid themes are a mirror at once of the contemporary religious thought and of the contemporary art: the vanity and wretchedness of human life and the world in general,

<sup>35</sup> *E.E.T.S.*, O.S., No. 25, ed. F. J. Furnivall. (See also *E.E.T.S.*, O.S., No. 117, pp. 609-11.)

<sup>36</sup> The *Santa Scala*, for each step of which climbed or descended, we read here, 7 years Pardon was obtainable, “as ofte as thou gost up or down.”

<sup>37</sup> The total already specified in the work amounts to many thousands of years!

<sup>38</sup> See here references given in my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, p. 289, and Miss H. E. Allen's more recent *Writings ascribed to Rich. Rolle, Hermit of Hampole.....*, Oxford, 1928.

the terrors of death, purgatory, Judgement and hell, relieved only by an equally naïve concluding section on the bliss of heaven.<sup>39</sup> We must pass on, however, to the contents of a certain "black quire" following, which may possibly throw light on the occupation of its owner. The description of its subject-matter, at all events,— "the makynge of divers metes and diverse festes"— indicates some variety of cookery-book, several specimens of which are still left to us from Fox's own day, full of quaint recipes for the potages, "mortrewys," "blamangers" and other favourite medieval dishes that Chaucer's cook could make so well.<sup>40</sup> The phrase "diverse festes" suggests perhaps something on a wider scale like the "Boke of Kervynge,"<sup>41</sup> which tells of "feestes and servyce" appropriate for each season of the year, with details of dinner courses, rules for the arrangement of the table, for carving and suchlike. A "Boke of Nurture" compiled in verse by one John Russell, formerly Usher and Marshal to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, gives instruction of this kind, along with the full duties of a butler, panter, chamberlain and carver, to an imaginary youth who wants to go into service but knows nothing of the craft.<sup>42</sup> Now if Richard Fox of St. Alban's had been an upper servant to the Lord Abbot as was suggested, it is easy to see why he should have come by such a book. Indeed we might be tempted even further to picture him as an acquaintance of this particular author. For John Russell's own master, the great Duke of Gloucester, himself English Maecenas, patron of humanists and collector of books, was an intimate friend of our book-loving Abbot Whet- hamstede, and doubtless a frequent guest at the great monastery where he was eventually to be buried, seven years before the death of Fox. Russell's manual, like the "Prick of Conscience," is only a revised version of earlier tracts on the subject. An entry upon the page of a manuscript copy of his work indicates, strangely

<sup>39</sup> Edit. Rich. Morris, *Philog. Soc.* (Berlin), 1863. A 15th cent. window in All Saints' Ch., York, illustrates the 15 Signs of the Doom from this work.

<sup>40</sup> See *Two Fifteenth-cent. Cookery-Bks.*, ed. T. Austin, *E.E.T.S.*, O.S., No. 91; also *Liber Cure Cocorum*, ed. R. Morris, *Philog. Soc.*, 1863.

<sup>41</sup> In *E. Engl. Meals & Manners.....*, ed. Furnivall, *E.E.T.S.*, O.S., No. 32 (from edit. Wynkyn de Worde, 1513).

<sup>42</sup> Printed in the above vol., from a MS. c. 1440-50, a version of an earlier wk., c. 1430.

enough, that at one time it had been used by a monastic servant of "my lorde, my master of Lilleshulle, abbot."<sup>43</sup> Here the new subject of discourse is "the Office of Ussher and Marshalle":—

"The office of a connyng uschere or marshalle without fable  
Must know alle estates of the church goodly and greable,  
And the excellent estate of a kynge with his blode honorable.  
Hit is a notable nurture, connyng, curyouse and commendable.

Lo, son, y have shewid the aftur my symple wytte,  
Every state aftir theire degre to thy knowleche y shalle commytte,  
And how they shalle be served y shalle shew the zett,  
In what place aftur theree dignyte how they owght to sytte.

Therefore whensoever youre sovereyn a feest make shalle,  
Demeene what estates shalle sitte in the hall.

Thus shalle ye to any state do wronge ne preiudice,  
To sette every persone accordyng with-owten mys....."

Thus may our book-loving Richard himself have waited upon the distinguished "straungers"<sup>44</sup> that flocked to Abbot Whethamstede's guest-table, a quaint reflection of his master. Little did they imagine, perhaps, that the respectful old man who "sett them at the table" was dreaming of the precious volumes whose names still greet us in his Will, the solace of his leisure and the pride of his old age. When the Book of Diverse Meats and Feasts had passed at length to his son, we can well believe that more than one portly merchant of the town of St. Alban's found good use for that model "fest for a franklen"<sup>45</sup> that graced its pages:—

"A franklen may make a feste improberabille:<sup>46</sup>  
Brawne with mustard is concordable  
Bakon served with peson,<sup>47</sup>  
Beef or moton stewed servysable,  
Boyled chykon or capon agreable,  
Convenyent for the seson;

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185 (MS. Harl. 4011 versn.). Lilleshall Priory, formerly a house of Austin Canons, now in ruins, is in Shropshire.

<sup>44</sup> cf. the lines of the above wk.—

"More over take hede he must to aliene commers, straungeres,  
And to straungers of this land resident dwelleres,  
And exalte them to honoure if the be of honest maneres.

In a manerable mershalle the connyng is most commendable  
To have a fore sight to straungers to sett them at the table.

For if they have gentille chere and gydyng manerable,

The mershalle doth his sovereyn honoure, and he the more lawdable."

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1. (This work carefully points out (p. 189) the equal status of merchant and franklin, who are to sit together at the same table.)

<sup>46</sup> =very proper.

<sup>47</sup> =peas.

Rostyd goose and pygge fulle profitable,  
Capon, bakemete, or custade costable,<sup>48</sup>  
When eggis and crayme be geson.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore stuffe of household is behoveable,  
Mortrowes<sup>50</sup> or jusselle<sup>51</sup> ar delectable  
For the second course by reson.

Than veel, lambe, kyd or cony,  
Chykon or pigeon rosted tendurly,  
Bakemetes or dowcettes<sup>52</sup> with alle.

Then followynge frytowrs and a leche lovely;<sup>53</sup>  
Such servyse in sesoun is fulle semely  
To serve with bothe chambur and halle.

Then appuls and peris with spices delicately  
Aftur the terme of the yere fulle deynteithly,  
With bred and chese to calle.

Spised cakes and wafurs worthily,  
Withe bragot<sup>54</sup> and methe,<sup>55</sup> thus men may meryly  
Plese welle bothe gret and smalle."

A final item of the Will remains to be noted. To the prioress and sisters of the local nunnery of St. Mary de Pré is bequeathed a copy of the immortal "Golden Legend" of Jacobus de Voragine,<sup>56</sup> in two volumes. It was a highly suitable gift. Alike at morning assembly in Chapter, at meal-time in the refectory or for private study in the cell, this marvellous collection of stories of the saints, both male and female, offered an unrivalled world of pious romance and adventure to the cloisterer as to the layman without. Much that it contains is grotesque. But "with what satisfaction, however," as Ten Brink remarks,<sup>57</sup> "must they have heard legends like that of St. Christopher,<sup>58</sup> from whose finest features, stamped with its sign manual, the Teutonic

<sup>48</sup> =costly *custard*, or open pie of meat or fruit, with milk, eggs and spice added. (cf. *Two 15th cent. Cookery-Bks.*, p. 74; etc.)

<sup>49</sup> =scarce (*not* "plentiful," as the Editor states here). The sense seems to require a "*not*" before the word.

<sup>50</sup> For the making of this dish, see *Two 15th cent. Cookery-Bks.* (as above), pp. 14, 90, 114, etc.

<sup>51</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 16 and 95, etc.

<sup>52</sup> =a small custard or pasty (sweet). See *Ibid.*, p. 55, etc.

<sup>53</sup> A dish of sliced meat, eggs, or fruit, etc., set in jelly. cf. *Ibid.*, p. 75: (*lovely*, I think may be a popular corruption of *Lombardy*.)

<sup>54</sup> =a popular drink, apparently of ale, honey and spices.

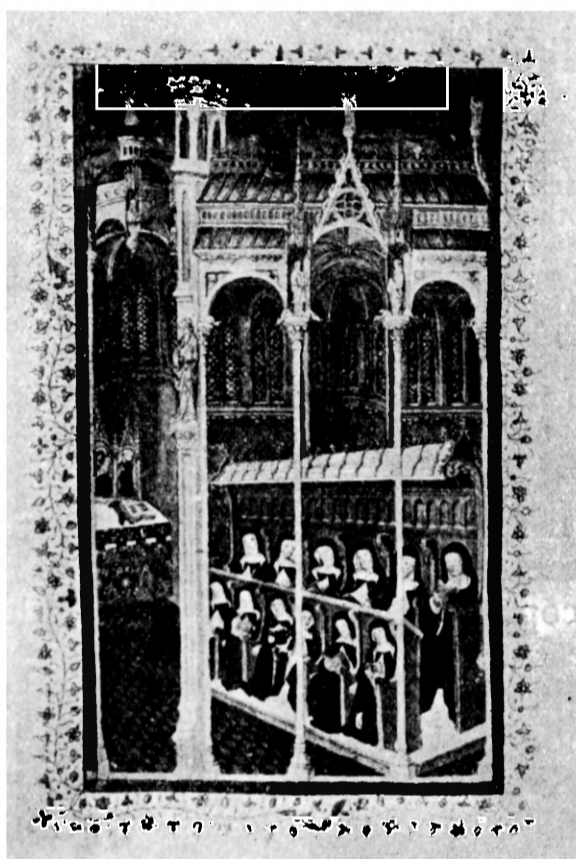
<sup>55</sup> =mead, the famous old Engl. drink made by fermenting a mixture of honey and water.

<sup>56</sup> Or Giacomo di Voraggio, lived c. 1230-1298: see further here, below, p. 193.

<sup>57</sup> *E. Engl. Lit.*, i., p. 270.

<sup>58</sup> cf. the mention of this *Life* in the Will (above, p. 179).

spirit seems to radiate!" Editions poured from the presses in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>59</sup> It was the object of Caxton's most laborious and most important effort, and the inspiration of many a preacher.



NUNS IN CHOIR WITH SERVICE-BOOKS.  
(15th Cent. MS., Cotton. Dom. A. xvii.,  
fol. 177b.)

(or Grail)<sup>61</sup> in the church at Redbourne,<sup>62</sup> or a gift "to the chyrche of seint Michell in Kynggesbury" of "i saltsaler of sylver toward a masseboke, myn housbonddes soules and myn to be rememberd in and prayed for."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> In England alone, Caxton 1483 & 1488, Wynkyn de Worde 1493, 1498, 1512, 1527, Julian Notary 1503. Modern editions by F. S. Ellis 1892, 1900, and other modern abridgements. The handiest popular editn. is that in the *Temple Classics*. For a full discussion of its literary relations, see Pierce Butler, *Leg. Aur.*, Baltimore, 1899.

<sup>60</sup> MS., fol. 117 (*dum vixit de Watford*).

<sup>61</sup> See *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, as before, pp. 203-6.

<sup>62</sup> MS., fol. 124 (Will of Henry Martyn of Redburne, 1469). Graduals are frequently mentioned in other collections of Wills, as bequests. (cf. Sharpe, *Cal of Wills*, as above, ii., 138 (1370), 168 (1374), 521 (1452), etc.)

<sup>63</sup> MS., fol. 79 (Will of Alice atte Welle, 1454). cf. the typical inscription given in *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, p. 195.

So much, then for the library of a "simple servaunt" of the House of St. Alban. With the exception of one John Lyndeby, who in 1467 "bequeathed two psalters to the said parish church of Watford,"<sup>60</sup> the present writer has detected no further legacies of books in the lay Wills of this Register. Where books are mentioned, the entry merely concerns solicitude for the needs of divine service in the churches, such as the provision of "one sheep for the repair of a Gradual

Clerical Wills, as previously hinted, provide us with some typical examples of the literature which served the needs of the contemporary priesthood and helped to amplify their scanty knowledge. Of these the most extensive is a testament of one Roger Celle, a chaplain buried at St. Peter's in St. Alban's in the year 1446, who wisely parcels out his library amongst five fellow clergy and a layman, presumably his personal friends.<sup>64</sup> To sir Benedict Edrych, *custos* of the chapel of St. Andrew in the town, an ever-recurring name in the pages of our Register,<sup>65</sup> he bequeaths "a book called *Magister Historiarum*." This is the celebrated "Historia Scholastica" of Peter Comestor, the insatiable "Devourer" of books and Chancellor of Paris, who died in the year 1178. The "Historia Scholastica" is a sacred history in twenty sections, from the Creation of the World to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, incorporating most of the books of the Bible along with much of the current universal learning of the day.<sup>66</sup> Numerous manuscripts still to be found in university and cathedral libraries attest its popularity with the ordinary medieval student, for whom it was intended. Strangely enough, one of the earliest records of its introduction into our own country is associated with St. Alban's Abbey. For, a passage in the "Gesta Abbatum"<sup>67</sup> relates—"in such a manner as would lead us to suppose that no copy had existed there before"<sup>68</sup>—how, during the rule of John de Cella early in the thirteenth century, Raymund the Prior caused a "most elegant" manuscript of this work to be transcribed for the convent library.<sup>69</sup> To Sir William Tylar, a fellow chaplain, Roger Celle leaves "a book of Sunday Sermons on the Gospels and Epistles throughout the year"<sup>70</sup> with the so-called *Meditations of St. Bernard*<sup>71</sup> at the end of it. Another priest, Sir John Bekman, is to receive "a book called *Speculum*

<sup>64</sup> MS., fol. 48 (*Herts. Geneal.*, iii., pp. 234-5: Brigg's abstract here, however, is full of errors in respect of the book-titles).

<sup>65</sup> See my art. above-mentioned, in *Transactions*, 1926, p. 195.

<sup>66</sup> Printed in Migne, *Patrologia Lat.*, cxcviii., 1053-1844.

<sup>67</sup> (Rolls Series), i., 242.

<sup>68</sup> Sir T. D. Hardy, *Descr. Cat. Brit. Hist.* (Rolls S.) iii., p. 320.

<sup>69</sup> Believed to be Brit. Mus. MS. Roy. 4.D.vii. (cf. Claude Jenkins, *The Monast. Chron.*, p. 39).

<sup>70</sup> cf. my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, pp. 234-5, etc.

<sup>71</sup> MSS. are common (cf. at Worc., MSS. F.75, F.117, & Q.273; etc.).



of Chester and author of the "Polichronicon," whom tradition makes further responsible for the yet more famous Chester Miracle Plays. Although interesting for its side-lights on medieval life and thought<sup>73</sup> and its explicit allusions to English affairs, it has made no appearance as yet in modern print. Our chaplain's next bequest is a copy of the *Remediarium Conversorum*, and another volume of sermons beginning—*Dicite filie Syon*<sup>74</sup> . . . The former is a collection of excerpts from Gregory's *Moralia* made by Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of London from about the year 1192 to 1204, in two parts, each containing six books.<sup>75</sup> Its Prologue opens in the form of a letter addressed "to the Reverend Father Richard, Bishop of the Church of London,"<sup>76</sup> "from his Peter, Archdeacon of the same Church," and goes on to say how the author, scanning the writings of the Holy Fathers for a remedy for his infirmity, had at length come to anchor in the Moral Books of the blessed Gregory, by reading which his soul had been refreshed.<sup>77</sup> More attractive to the modern reader, however, than any of these ponderous "common-place books" are two noteworthy treatises which figure in the testator's little legacy to one sir Robert Redley. The latter is to have two books, one the owner's Breviary ("*unum portiforium meum*"),<sup>78</sup> the other "containing within itself *Horologium Divine Sapientie, Stimulus Amoris*, and several other most useful tracts." The tracts here named represent two famous literary products of the Mystical Revival of the fourteenth century which were frequently studied by pious Englishmen of Roger Celle's own day.<sup>79</sup> Side by side, in their very origin they serve to remind

<sup>73</sup> cf. cap.—"de ludificationibus demonum," "de sortilegiis aliisque superstitionibus," etc.

<sup>74</sup> A frequent *Incip.* for sermon collections (being the opening words of a favourite Advent theme, Isa. lxii., 11: "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold thy salvation cometh'"): cf. John Felton's collection (A.D. 1431), MS. Roy. 8.B.xii.: MSS. 8.D.x., 8.F.iv., 8.A.x., etc.

<sup>75</sup> Not printed in the Giles edit. of his works. A MS. copy formerly belonging to the Felixstowe cell of Rochester Priory is MS. Roy. 7.A.vii. (c. 1200), q.v.

<sup>76</sup> i.e. Rich. Fitzneale, Bp. of London 1189-1198.

<sup>77</sup> "Ad remedium ergo infirmitatis mee sanctorum patrum scripta percurrens, tandem in beati Gregorii libris moralibus anchoram defixi....." Bk. i. opens—"de suggestionibus diaboli."

<sup>78</sup> cf. *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, pp. 69-100; and further here, below, p. 194.

<sup>79</sup> For 15th cent. English MSS. and translations of Suso's *Horologium*, see in my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, p. 286, n. 2.



us again that that far-reaching Movement knew no limits of nationality. The first, "The Horologe of the Divine Wisdom," was written by the Dominican mystic, Henry Suso, born at Constance about the year 1295, later the pupil of Eckhart at Cologne and a poet-preacher of subsequent renown in Germany. His *Horologium*,<sup>80</sup> which emphasizes the more practical side of his mysticism—the knowledge of how to live the spiritual life and how to die, how to receive Christ in the Sacraments, the blessings imparted by the Divine Knowledge—is a Latin expansion of the author's earlier "Little Book of Eternal Wisdom" in the vernacular, which has been called "the finest fruit of German mysticism." *Stimulus Amoris*, better known as *Incendium Amoris*,<sup>81</sup> on the other hand is, of course, an English masterpiece of the kind, by Richard Rolle of Hampole, of which nothing further need be said here, save that those unfamiliar with it can easily follow in the steps of their ancestors of the fifteenth century and read it for themselves in an English translation.<sup>82</sup> So much for the Mystics. From *Stimulus Amoris* we may proceed, in Roger Celle's book-list, to a further copy of the *Stimulus Conscientie*<sup>83</sup>—"in English" (*de Anglico*), therefore suitably left to a layman, and end with mention of "a bound book of Exequies of the Dead, called *Placebo et Dirige*."<sup>84</sup>

A word or two must now suffice for the remaining clerical Wills of the Register which give further mention of reading matter. To the list of theological treatises and aids for the preacher we may add a volume of Lenten sermons, sometimes known as "the Golden Quadragesimal,"<sup>85</sup> by the author of "the Golden

<sup>80</sup> Mod. edit., Stranger, Cologne, 1861; Engl. trans., R. Raby, Lond., 1868. Bk. i. begins thus—"Materia primi hujus libri est Christi Passio pretiosissima, quae de se ad amorem fervidum multa est motiva; et qualiter verus Sapientiae discipulus in suis actibus se eidem debeat conformare" (ed. 1492).

<sup>81</sup> The form *Melodia Amoris* is also found (cf. MS., C.C.C., Oxf. 193).

<sup>82</sup> Made in 1435 by Rich. Misyn, Carmelite Prior of Lincoln, from Rolle's Latin, "instanciis domine Margarete Heslyngton, recluse": edit. Rev. R. Harvey (*Fire of Love*.....), *E.E.T.S.*, O.S. No. 106 (1896): edit. in *modern English*, F. M. M. Comper, London, 1914 (from MSS. Corp. Chr. Coll., Oxf. 236, and B.M. Add. 37790). A modern edit. of the Lat. text is by Miss M. Deanesly, Manchester, 1915.

<sup>83</sup> cf. here, above, p. 184.

<sup>84</sup> See *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, pp. 85, 218 & 251.

<sup>85</sup> "I portiforium Januensem de opere quadragesimali." "*Portiforium*" is here used simply in the sense of "volume." (cf. *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, p. 69.) This partic. work provides 2 Sermons for each day of Lent. There are several early printed editions, e.g. Venice, 1497, etc. On *quadragesimalia* and Lenten preaching generally, see my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, p. 147.

Legend" previously alluded to, the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine, sometime Archbishop of Genoa, and "a book called *Dieta Salutis*," which has been attributed to both Bonaventura and Holcot, but is more probably the work of one William de Lanicia, a Franciscan in Aquitaine.<sup>86</sup> They appear together in the Will of John Trylle, vicar of St. Stephen's and Master of the Hospital of St. Julian in St. Alban's, who died in the year 1449.<sup>87</sup> In addition, Richard Lupussede of Barnet, a chaplain,<sup>88</sup> owns a copy of John Watton's *Speculum Christiani*, along with *Placebo et Dirige*, the former another manual for preachers greatly in demand in the fifteenth century, dilating upon Creed, Commandments, Vices and Virtues with remedies for the former, the duties of the priesthood, and relevant matter.<sup>89</sup> Finally, another chaplain, one Thomas Goodleefe, buried at Sopwell in 1445,<sup>90</sup> bequeaths "a book which is called *Raymund*," that is to say, the well-known "*Summa Penitentiae*" of Raymund of Peñaforte,<sup>91</sup> to whose elaborate analysis of vices and irregularities in Church and State not a few subsequent English writers of such treatises declare themselves indebted.<sup>92</sup>

Before concluding, we may well note a little group of medieval school-books—"i donett,<sup>93</sup> i informacioun, i

<sup>86</sup> cf. MSS. Roy. 5.F.xiv., 7.D.xxii.; Harl. 103, 2379; Worc. Cath. Libr. Q.14; etc. Printed in Peltier's edit. of Bonaventura's wks., viii., p. 248 (1866). Concerning authorship, see *Ibid.*, p. v.: A. G. Little, *Initia Op. Lat.*, p. 104, and *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xxvi., p. 552.

<sup>87</sup> MS., fol. 59. (Brigg, *Herts Geneal.*, iii., p. 278, makes nonsense of the latter book-entry by omitting "*Dieta*.") See also my art. in *Trans.* for 1926, as above, p. 198.

<sup>88</sup> MS., fol. 42. (Brigg, *Ibid.*, iii., p. 138.)

<sup>89</sup> See *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, pp. 4, 291, etc. Early printed editns. will be found in the B.M., e.g. 1480 (?), 1505. Cf. here, further, the little 15th cent. St. Alban's MS., a tract on the Commandments, described in my art. in the *Trans.* for 1924 (pp. 43-59).

<sup>90</sup> MS., fol. 44 (Brigg, *Ibid.*, iii., p. 140). See further art., *Trans.*, 1926, p. 105.

<sup>91</sup> Lived 1175-1275. Bk. i. of the *Summa* discusses espec. the irregularities of clergy, pagans, heretics, etc.; oaths, lying, witchcraft; and eccles. privileges such as tithes, immunity, etc. Bk. ii. concerns civil vices, from homicide and tournaments to brigandage, usury and gambling. Bk. iii. concerns ordinands, and the requisites and discipline of the priesthood. Bk. iv. discusses Marriage. Raymund was also author of a *Summa Casuum* on the Canon Law.

<sup>92</sup> cf. the author of the *Regimen Animarum* (as quoted in my *Preaching in Med. Engld.*, p. 297); also the author of our *Stimulus Conscientiae* aforementioned, ll. 3946-7:—

"And Raymund spekes of the same

In a boke that es called his name." (ed. Morris.)

<sup>93</sup> The *Ars Minor* of Donatus, an elementary grammar-bk. cf. A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Medieval Engld.*, p. 62; etc. Caxton issued a printed edit., c. 1487; a modern edit. (Lat. & Engl.) by W. J. Chase, Madison, 1926.

*Catoun*,<sup>94</sup> et i *Dominus*? [*Terra*?] *que pars*”<sup>95</sup>—left by Geoffrey Waryn (alias Webbe), vicar of Ridge, to his servant,<sup>96</sup> which suggest that their original owner may have been one, like a certain Thomas Aps mentioned in our Wills,—“ who teaches the boys.”<sup>97</sup> Doubtless they could tell us a vivid enough tale of youthful tears and smartings that they had caused in a Hertfordshire village, five hundred years ago, over the terrors of the medieval *Ars Grammatica*, and “ the byrchyn twyggis ” :

“ I wold my master were an hare  
And all his bokis howndis were,  
And I myself a joly huntere :  
To blowe my horn I wold not spare !  
ffor if he were dede I wold not care.  
What vaylith me thowgh I say nay? ”<sup>98</sup>

For the rest, a few typical Service Books here and there complete the list. Geoffrey Waryn aforesaid leaves also to the church of Ridge where he ministered an unbound *Troper*,<sup>99</sup> to be inserted in the Mass-book of *Rygge*, and there to remain.” As for John Pykeryng of St. Alban’s, chaplain, his Breviary is to serve a less disinterested purpose : “ I desire that my *portifory*, as yet incomplete, be revised with proper ending and sold, and the money faithfully spent for the salvation of my soul.”<sup>100</sup>

Looking back over the little catalogue of books which our survey has thus disclosed, even the most conservative of book-lovers would probably be inclined to condemn

<sup>94</sup> i.e. the Moral Distichs of Dionysius Cato (so-called). 15th cent. Engl. verse translations will be found in *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, Pt. ii., E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 117, pp. 553-609. (See espec. p. 553, n. 1, for further MSS. and versions.) Caxton printed an Engl. metrical version by Benedict Burgh, Preb. of St. Paul’s, in 1477 (again, in 1481). In his *Prol.* (“ of the book called *Caton* ”), he says : “ In my Jugement it is the beste book for to be taughte to yonge children in schole.” Another copy of the *Disticha* (Bk .i. of the *Magnus Cato*) is indicated in Goodleefe’s Will, mentioned above, by the *Incip.* quoted—“ *Si deus est animus* ” (cf. E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 117, p. 562, and Bährens, *Poetae Lat. Min.*, Leipsig, iii., p. 205). With it is—“ i book which is called *Cartlat*,” which I cannot yet identify.

<sup>95</sup> This I take to be the work quoted from MS. Cotton. Dom. I, fol. 55b, in Leach, *The Schls. of Med. Engld.*, p. 95 (fac-simile)—as “ a little book on the art of grammar which begins thus—‘ The earth which part ’.....”—along with *Donatus* and *Cato*, etc.

<sup>96</sup> MS., fol. 79b. (1455).

<sup>97</sup> Brigg, *Herts Geneal.*, iii., p. 239.

<sup>98</sup> E. E. Meals and Manners, E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 32, p. 403.

<sup>99</sup> See *Wordsworth & Littlehales*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>100</sup> MS., fol. 122 (1468). Further mention of a *portiforium* occurs in the Will of a vicar of Watford who leaves the vol. to his church (Brigg, *H. G.*, iii., p. 67).

it as "stuffy," if no worse. Yet, viewed in its right perspective, this drab reading-matter of the fifteenth century is in some measure already prophetic of the greater literature to come. We may indeed miss here, as in Caxton, signs of the dawning Renaissance. But the very preponderance of theological writings and theological treatment is itself indication that the minds of the people were being focussed upon religion from the first years of popular reading. Hence the great ferment that ensued, giving rise eventually to Protestantism and the sects. The little tracts in English bred a lay independence of thought as well as a homely piety to which Reformer and Puritan appealed not in vain. We have caught glimpses, too, of a certain naïve curiosity which blossoms forth into distant sea-voyages in the coming Age of Discovery, and of a perennial love of stories which leads at length to the Novel. Finally, in a literature that foreshadows the industry of a Hall and a Holinshed "are found the germs of that opinion which in the hands of Elizabethan historians and dramatists made Henry V the national hero and the struggle of Lancaster and York the theme of a national cycle of tragedies."<sup>101</sup> In all this, it is at least interesting to know that our ancestors of St. Alban's played their modest part.

<sup>101</sup> (C. L. Kingsford, *Engl. Hist. Lit.*, as before, p. 129.)



SCHOOL-BOOKS AND BIRCH-TWIGS, c. 1440.  
(From a Misericord in Sherborne Abbey).