A Fifteenth Century Headmaster’s Library

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It is by an odd chance that we know about the library of John Bracebridge, an early fifteenth century headmaster of Lincoln School. It is not that the books themselves have been preserved, for only two are known to exist today. It happens because when, about 1420, he laid down the headmastership, instead of proposing just to vegetate, he went to join in the building up of a recently founded religious house in the south of England, where books were in demand. Bracebridge was by this time middle aged or older, and he was unmarried and in priest’s orders. He heard that there was a vacancy for a priest at a Middlesex house of the order of Brigittine nuns, and thither, it appears, he transported himself and his belongings.

The monastery, founded in 1416 under the patronage of Henry V, was near Wickenham, but in the 1420’s it was in course of being moved to another site a mile or so away, where imposing new premises were going up to form the great Syon monastery of Isleworth, which was to be the official home of the nuns from 1431. They were a Swedish order, and in accordance with their rule the full complement was intended eventually to be sixty nuns assisted by thirteen priests, four deacons, and eight lay brethren. The ex-headmaster became one of their priests and is recorded as such in September 1428, by which time they had gathered forty-one nuns, seven priests, a dean, and six lay brethren. Bracebridge evidently stayed there till he died. We do not know the year of his death but it took place in the springtime, March 27 being kept as his obit. Syon, it seems, welcomed books for its library. Before or at his death Bracebridge’s books passed into the monastery library — indeed they helped to lay its foundations. And the library, constantly growing, lasted till the Dissolution, when it came to grief. Although it was then dispersed, however, an early sixteenth century catalogue of it has happened to survive, which mentions Bracebridge as ‘priest of this monastery’ and indicates exactly which books had originally been his. By examining the catalogue we can get a vivid glimpse of the mental life of the ex-headmaster.

His family must have originated from the village of Bracebridge, which is now part of the City of Lincoln, but was then a mile or so south of the city limits. The headmaster’s early life is a blank, but his family are unlikely to have been poor as his later book collecting seems to imply appreciable means. He may have been an alumnum of the school he was later to head: if so, it could have been under the ferule of Robert Bramley, master in the 1380’s and perhaps earlier, or those who deputised for him in his long absences. It is known that Bracebridge studied at a university, probably Oxford, and became a graduate. By 1390 he is described as being ‘of Lincoln,’ a magister, i.e., an M.A., and a priest. In that year he was appointed head of the grammar school at Boston, where he learned his trade thoroughly, staying at least till 1406. He was then brought back to head the school at Lincoln, being nominated for the post by the cathedral chancellor John Huntman.

Throughout Bracebridge’s lifetime Lincoln School was situated in the parish of St. Rumbold. Its exact site has recently been determined as near the bottom of the hill, on the north side of what is now Monks Road, a short way along from the junction with what is now Lindum Road and Broadgate. The schoolhouse had stood there for eighty years, the site being then being made over to the cathedral chancellor for this purpose in 1327. Bracebridge was to hold the mastership for about fourteen years, and was to have under him a succession of at least two ushers, the names of John Willoughby (till 1410) and then William Chesterfield being recorded in this capacity. He did not have the labour of teaching the cathedral choristers. Up in the Close there was a subordinate or branch school, attended by the choristers and certain other boys, but Bracebridge with the help of the mayor had established early in his reign that the Close school was subordinate; its pupils were technically pupils of his and in token of this they had to descend three times a year and put themselves visibly under his regimen. In any case he knew the choristers well enough, for he served also as a vicar choral at the cathedral, which previous masters had not done, though they wore a vicar’s habit. The scheme of 1327 had provided for a master’s residence adjoining the school. Bracebridge will have lived either there or in Vicars’ Court in the Close.

It may be that his first love was always the church, and his second perhaps the collecting and reading of his books, all of them of course in manuscript. He was appointed a confessor in 1407 and a senior vicar in 1408. The next year he, as headmaster, and the sacrist were recognized by the chapter as senior to all the other vicars, being allowed to walk in procession next to the canons. Whereabouts in the scale of his priorities his labours at the school came it is difficult to say. He had probably been keen at first, and may be imagined on occasion swinging briskly in his vicar’s habit down the Greystone Stairs and Holgate to the schoolhouse. However, in the space of four years the school found a certain flagging of his zeal. Either too much was being expected of him up in the Close, or he chose to linger there for the sake of adult company and minds which could share his theological and bookish interests, or else perhaps with the onset of middle age the more tedium of things in St. Rumbold stole his schoolmasterly diligence. The first reason was the one officially accepted, for in 1410 Bishop Repington complained that he was spending too much time at the cathedral quia vicar choral, at the expense of running the school. The bishop was against allowing any future headmaster to be a vicar simultaneously. However, the trouble was not too serious and Bracebridge did not lose the bishop’s confidence. He kept his vicarship. He did not resign it till August 17, 1420, at which time he doubtless laid down the headmastership as well. For it was about then that he left Lincoln for good.

What can we know of the size and nature of his library? The total number of volumes which passed from him to the monastery is shown by the Syon catalogue to have been 112, of which one or two are suspect attributions as containing material too late in date. This is a very large total. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries twenty to thirty books were counted a good collection, and it has been estimated that Lincoln’s Bishop Grosseste, the great scholar, might have had towards a hundred. A figure around three hundred, attested for a certain Gérard d’Abbeville in 1271, is exceptional. And although by the fifteenth century personal libraries were doubtless growing larger, it is very unlikely that Bracebridge could have
assembled his out of his stipends as headmaster and vicar choral. Either he acquired them, or some of them, by gift or legacy, or else (which is more likely), he had private means, which other Bracebridges, possibly kinsmen of his, are known to have done.\footnote{16}

Of the 112 volumes, 34, or 35 if we count a psalter, were by single, \textit{name} authors. Five of these were by St. Thomas Aquinas and two each by Gilbert of Aixerre, St. Bonaventure, and Robert Holcot. All these were theological. There were also, as we shall see, two volumes by Bracebridge himself. The rest of the 35 volumes were each by a different author. All the remaining 77 volumes contained works by more than one author or work whose authorship the Syon catalogue could not determine (the amount of this anonymous material is surprisingly large).

Some of the volumes were very mixed in content. The vast majority of the books were in Latin and the total number of authors represented was about 150. Beyond this it is difficult to give statistics. The volumes were of various shapes and sizes. The Syon catalogue divides the contents of each volume into items and often, but not always, gives the folio number at which an item begins. For Bracebridge's books the number of items in a volume ranges from 1 to 18 and the total number is 674. But as the items vary in length from less than one page to a whole volume (four complete works of Aristotle are lumped together as a single item, filling the whole volume in which they occur), and as some of the items were incomplete or only extracts — this must apply to some of the treatises mentioned hereunder — there would be little point in a statistical consideration of the items according to authorship. It is better to regroup the material roughly by subject. The Syon catalogue tried to do this on the basis of volumes but was partly defeated by the heterogeneous nature of the content in some of them. However, it is quite possible to do it on the basis of items.\footnote{17}

Local historians will be averted to know if there were any Lincolnians; historians of education, what he had in the way of schoolbooks and the classics. It will be fairer to Bracebridge to begin with the religious books, which formed the bulk of his collection and were obviously of chief interest to him. Strictly liturgical books one would not expect. Those he had needed to use as a vicar choral would have been the property of the cathedral, where stocktaking would be carried out periodically by the precentor or successor. He did however have a copy of the litany with seven pentitential psalms, and several items of liturgical exposition. He had two expositions of the mass as a whole, one anonymous and one by Remigius of Aixerre; expositions of the Magnificat by St. Bernard and of the psalter, canticles, Athanasian Creed, and Lord's Prayer by St. John of Bridlington; and separate little discourses on 'alleluia', 'amen', and 'hosanna'. He had extracts from, and analyses of, the epistles and gospels for Sundays and saints' days, and could get an overview of the liturgical year from a 'Common Calendar' and a 'Table of the Paschal Cycle.' He also had the psalter above-mentioned. It is described as 'triple, according to the threefold translation,' and must have contained St. Jerome's three different Latin versions of the Psalms, which he made at different times from the Greek and Hebrew.

Theology formed the backbone of his collection and clearly occupied his mind a great deal. Both patristic and later medieval theology were richly represented, and the latter more so than the former. The four great Latin Fathers — Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, and Gregory — were all here. Works of Augustine had a marked predominance, totalling some thirty-five items, which range in length, so far as the folio numberings can be relied on, from one to over a hundred pages. Some of the items are duplicates. Among the lengthiest are the treatise to Paul and Epistulae \textit{On the Perfection of Justice}, the book addressed to the monk \textit{Valentinus On Reproof and Grace}, and three supposititious works, namely, \textit{On the Miracles of Holy Scripture} (in three copies, one perhaps incomplete), \textit{On the Twelve Abuses of Secular Persons} (three copies), and the tract \textit{On Faith}, addressed to Peter (allegedly two copies, but one filling only one folio). Other works included \textit{On Charity} (two copies) and the supposititious \textit{On the Conflict of Virtues and Vices} (three copies). There was an item, perhaps spurious, 'On the Rule of Clergy' and excerpts from the genuine \textit{On the Work of Monks}. There were some of Augustine's letters, including an exchange with St. Cyril. Several volumes contained excerpts or 'flores' — there were some fifty-two pages of excerpts from the \textit{Retractiones} and a twelve page florilegium, the 'flores' being introduced by rubrics. The most striking omissions are the \textit{Confessions} and the \textit{City of God}. The most infatuated item reads, 'On the Conjunction of Five Heresies, viz., the Pagans, the Jews, the Manichees, the Sabellians, and the Asians; On Sermonizing, addressed to Bishops; On Predestination, against Pelagius, and On the Catholic Conjunction of a False Impostor.' The folio numbering shows this imposing sequence of partly genuine, partly spurious works to have occupied no more than two pages. Of St. Ambrose Bracebridge had only excerpts from the \textit{Pastorale}. Of Jerome, \textit{inter alia}, some letters and a short passage 'On the Fifteen Signs which are to Precede the Day of Judgment.' Of Gregory his major holdings were the ten books of \textit{Moralia} and the four of his \textit{Pastorale}. Other Latin Fathers represented in the collection — if we (arbitrarily) allow the patristic period to extend down to 1100 A.D. — included Lactantius (but only in the form of a \textit{tabula}, a kind of contents table, to his \textit{Institutiones}), Fulgentius, Cassiodorus, pseudo Bede (‘On Human Limbs and the Motions of the Spirit’), Peter Damian, and Anselm.

Of the principal Greek Fathers, whom Bracebridge knew in Latin translation, St. Chrysostom is the most in evidence, with such items as \textit{On the Compunction of the Heart} (two copies), \textit{To the Lapsed Theodorus, Concerning his Reparation} (two copies), and the treatise entitled \textit{No one is Injured but by Himself}. There was no Origen, St. Basil was represented only by some excerpts 'On the Praise of the Psalms, etc.' and St. John Damascene principally by his four books called \textit{A Presentation of the Orthodox Faith} (apparently two copies).

A special genre in Latin theology was the cult and explication of 'Sentences'. The most famous 'Sentences', encapsulations of theology, were Peter Lombard's in four books. Bracebridge had the standard prose text of these, a verision of them, and numerous commentaries, including those by St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, Robert Cotton (fl. 1300), and Robert Holcot (d. 1349) on the whole work, plus Giles of Viterbo and Robert Carew (fl. 1325) on parts.

Among other later medieval theology, i.e., that written between 1100 A.D. and Bracebridge's own time, pride of place goes to St. Bernard of Clairvaux and St. Thomas Aquinas. Of St. Bernard there are meditations, letters, a seemingly massive florilegium, and \textit{On the Twelve Degrees of Humility} and \textit{the Twelve Degrees of Pride}, occupying (approximately) twenty-four pages or twelve folios. St. Thomas is chiefly represented by his four books \textit{On the Truth of the Catholic Faith, against the Gentiles}, in which the rubricated headings were separately written out for each book to serve as tables of contents, and most of the famous \textit{Summa Theologiae}. Of this Bracebridge had the First Part, treating of God considered in Himself and as the
principle of creation, the first half of the Second Part, 
treating of God as the end of man, and the second half of 
the Second Part, treating of man's return to God. The 
Third Part, dealing with Christ as the way of man to God, 
Bracebridge seems not to have owned. Apart from these 
two giants he possessed items by a large number of later 
medieval theologians such as Hugh of St. Victor (a 
treatment of the Lord's Prayer and On the Pledgment of 
the Soul), Peter of Blois (letters), and William of Ockham 
(including his treatise called Cur Deus homo). These were 
all continental (Frenchmen), but English theologians, too, 
were there in force, ranging from Ailred of Rievaulx 
(“Meditation, aubrieta”), through Alexander of Hales (a 
whole volume, apparently), Robert Holcot, and Richard 
Roll of Hampole. Among the latest is John Wycliffe, 
whose death in 1384 Bracebridge very likely remembered —
he would be a youth at the time. The Wycliffe items are 
given in the catalogue as “Sentences from Letters to the 
Lord Pope and Others” and an “Injection (objection, 
probably) against a Certain Doctor, Concerning 
Non-payment of Tribute to the Roman Pontiff.” John 
Huntman, the chancellor who appointed Bracebridge, had 
in his earlier days been accused of espousing Wycliffe’s 
options,” and although it would be rash to assume that 
Bracebridge himself had any particular sympathy for 
Wycliffe, his possessing these items suggests an enquiring 
and not illiberal mind. But of this we have far ampler 
evidence in the breadth of his library as a whole, especially 
its non-theological parts.

Besides independent works of theology, a sizeable 
part of Bracebridge’s library was taken up with biblical 
commentaries, of which it is impossible to give more than 
an inkling here. He had a good deal of the standard 
medieval commentary known as the Common Gloss. It 
was composed by various hands, notably Anselm of Laon 
and Gilbert of Auxerre, a twelfth century bishop of 
London. Bracebridge’s biggest luck here was Gilbert’s 
gloss on the Pentateuch. Items of a general nature included 
Alexander Neckham, ‘On the Meanings of Certain 
Expressions drawn from All the Books of the Bible’, a set of 
onymous “Verses on how to find Material in Scripture 
pro the Seven Virtues and contra the Seven Vices”, and 
’Allegories of Peter Comestor on Some Books of Holy 
Scripture, but the beginning is lacking’ Old Testament 
commentaries included Augustine on Genesis, Isidore on 
the Psalms, Gregory on Ezekiel, Jerome on several of 
the prophets, and Peter of Blois on Job (three copies). New 
Testament commentaries included Chrysostom on 
Matthew (incomplete), Clement of Alexandria on the four 
gospels, and Bereguar of Tours, Henry Cotesay, and 
Nicholas Gorham severally on the Apocalypse.

An ordinary vicar choral did not have to do much in 
the way of preaching, but Bracebridge was exceptional. On 
2 November, 1409 Bishop Repington, who was at Sleaford 
at the time, issued a licence to a magister John Bracebridge 
to preach in the diocese of Lincoln during the bishop’s 
pleasure.” There seems no good reason to doubt that this 
was the headmaster, and the licence is a sign of the bishop’s 
general confidence in him. He owned several tracts on 
the art of preaching, including one by Alan of Pontefract, 
and an impressive array of sermons by others, both 
patristic and later writers. He had sermons for every 
occasion. He had sermons on various books of the Bible 
(including a set of 47 on the Song of Songs by Gilbert of 
Auxerre), sermons on the devotion of psalms and hymns, 
on the Lord’s Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, and the 
Apostles’ Creed; sermons on the epistles and gospels for 
Sundays and saints’ days, on the great festivals, Advent, 
the Easter Season, and the three masses of Christmas Day. 
He had sermons on the Blessed Mary, the apostles, 
 martyrs, confessors, and virgins, sermons on the saints and 
in praise of St. Paul. He had a large set of sermons 
attributed to St. Augustine and addressed “To the Brethren 
in the Desert” (2 copies). He had sermons also on the 
conflict of virtues and vices, on cupidity, and the 
impudicity of women; on the contempt of this world, 
the benefit of tribulation, on fear, patience, confession, 
and the pains of hell. One of the volumes containing the 
sermons “To the Brethren in the Desert” has survived. 
It also included, among other material, a preacher’s guide 
called ‘Biblical Concordances’, that is, a large collection 
of biblical references gathered under topical headings such 
as ‘On Fasting’, ‘On Temptation’, and ‘On Heretics’. It is 
now Ms. B. 15.2 in the library of Trinity College, 
Cambridge. It is a folio on vellum, the handwriting 
contemporary with Bracebridge himself. When it was in 
the Saxon library it had a leaf of parchment giving the 
contents and Bracebridge’s name, nailed upon the outer 
board under a lamina of horn. This leaf is now pasted 
inside.

His holdings on canon law were modest. He did not have 
the actual text of Gratian’s huge Decreta but had an 
anonymous ‘directorium’ of it filling a volume in itself, a 
‘Summa de Decretis’ filling another volume, and a ‘Table 
or Repertorium of the Decretals’ according to the Rubrics or 
Chapters’. He had another ‘Summa on the Rubrics of the 
Decretals’ by Geoffrey de Trano, an item by Bernard of 
Compostella called ‘Breviary or Pearl for Locating all 
Matters of the Canon Law’, and parts of the commentary 
on Gratian by Bartholomaeus Brixienis.

It is now time to consider what he possessed by way of 
Lincolniana and by way of schoolbooks and the classics. 
He had of course no books about his native city as such 
(what was there to have?) but he had a number of treatises 
by men with strong Lincoln connections. He had about 
ten Grosseteste items, and they were not limited to the 
more popular kind such as the Dicta Lincolniensis 147 (two 
copies), extracts from the letters, and the famous so-called 
‘Sermon against the Provision of Benefices’ delivered in 
1250 to Pope Innocent IV and his cardinals. There were 
the spurious On the Moral Eye (two copies, apparently), a 
philosophical work demonstrating ‘that God is the Prime 
Form of All Things’ (this was doubtless his De Forma 
Prima Omnium), and his treatments of such more purely 
scientific subjects as ‘Air Pressure, the Rainbow, the 
Mirror and Perpetual Motion’. These last obviously 
include the De Impressionibus Aeris and De Iride. An older 
contemporary of Grosseteste was the Lincoln chancellor 
and renowned teacher of mathematics de Montibus. When he died in 1213 some lines of condolence had been addressed 

Pillar or pier of Lindsey, Lindum town, 
blessed with a generous folk, rich in all good, 
lived your great teacher yet, what high renown 
were yours, being schooled in everything you should . . .

He had gone on to describe William as a ‘bulwark of slight 
believers’ who ‘could undim each Bible page’. Of this 
famous chancellor Bracebridge owned (besides two 
disputable items) the Tropes, the Proverbs, and the famous 
Númerale in which he discussed theologically significant 
groupings of things from unity to the number twelve. 

It was in this work, by the way, that the learned chancellor, 
stretching theology a bit and relaxing his quotidian 
seriousness, remarked à propos of the heading “That there 
are three blights on a man’s contentment in his home — 
smoke, damp, and a railing wife. The chancery (not 
in the present building) may have been damp and smoky, 
but the last item he presumably knew only by hearsay. By 
a subsequent Lincoln chancellor, William Fitzralph, later
Plate I A page of one of John Bracebridge's books, showing the end of the 'Biblical Concordances', sets of Bible references arranged under topical headings. Near the top left is the heading 'On the Multiple Signs of the End of the World', the twelve signs are ringed (or rather squared) and include 'Change', 'Confusion', and 'Darkening'. Now MS. B.15.2 in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. By courtesy of the Master and Fellows.
Archbishop of Armagh, Bracebridge had a tract 'On the Mendicancy and Privileges of Friars'. And an item 'On Decretals, etc.' by one John Dalton was probably by the Lincoln chancellor of that name in 1410-11, a licentiate in canon law and successor to the chancellor who had nominated Bracebridge to the headship of Lincoln School.

As to schoolbooks, Bracebridge had a good set of Latin grammars, beginning with a plain text of the Ars minor of Donatus on the eight parts of speech, the thousand year old elementary grammar which had long been standard over the whole western world. But already before Bracebridge's time it was becoming hard for boys to learn their rudiments with Latin (or Latin plus French) as the language of instruction, and in the fourteenth century the Oxford master known as John Cornwall had introduced a certain amount of English to the schoolroom, publishing in 1346 his Speculum Grammaticale, based on Donatus but adding explanations, especially of verb forms, in English.

Bracebridge had this book, for there can be no doubt that an entry which reads 'Speculum grammaticæ (sic) super Donatum... secundum I. Bryan de Cornubia' refers to it. There is an interesting sidelight on Donatus as a primer. Whatever version they used, boys were supposed to be well through it by their mid or later teens, the age at which Lincoln choristers and older boys became eligible to be 'poor clerks' and do advanced work in the school. The choristers, as we saw, attended the Close school, but the poor clerks probably got their instruction directly under Bracebridge in St. Rumbold. In 1415 a Lincolnian called John Sleaford, who was a poor clerk, died. Adolescent deaths were much commoner then than now, and all the headmaster's books of Arabic medicine did not avail to save him. The dean, who happened to be away at Mansfield Woodhouse, wrote to the chapter nominating a certain Richard Iretton to succeed Sleaford as poor clerk and keeper of St. Nicholas' altar. Iretton, however, who came and appeared before the chapter, was so small, boyish looking, and backward in his learning, that they were given pause. 'He was, as he admitted, still having lessons in Donatus in school'. To compound this he also, depending on the support of the dean, a high-handed and imperious man, declined to undergo an examination. So the chapter postponed his admission pending maturer deliberation. But the sequel does not appear; probably the matter was dropped, but if Iretton was accepted he must be imagined as coming directly or indirectly under Bracebridge's wing and having his Donatus lessons duly stiffened up.

Among other aids to grammar and the like, Bracebridge had the 'first part of the Pedagogic compiled by Ralph Higden,' the fourteenth century Benedictine monk of Chester, Papias (eleventh century) on orthography, and an anonymous 'Short Summary of Orthography, Versified'. He had Nicholas of Bredekendeon on deponent verbs, Huguito de Pisa on doubtful accent, Adam Nutzard's 'Neutrale' and Peter Helias' 'Absoluta' (I suppose these to be grammatical), and Bede and an obscure Serlo Fontanus on metrics. For advanced grammar the standard counterpart to Donatus was the sixth century work of Priscian. Bracebridge had a text of Priscian In Majore (i.e., the first sixteen books) and of the remaining two books he had the thirteenth century exposition by Archbishop Kilwardby. He also had the Summa Grammaticalis by Kilwardby's contemporary Roger Bacon. By way of dictionaries he had the well known Elementarium of Papias (this and his other Papias item filled a whole volume), an anonymous 'Magnus Equivocus' — probably a work on homonyms — which was alphabetically arranged and in verse, and Alexander of Hale's versified glossary of the Greek and Hebrew terms

...found in the Latin scriptures. The best existing dictionary was probably the Catholicon of the Dominican John Balbi of Genoa, called lamensis, finished about 1286. This was a real vade mecum, but Bracebridge had only the first section of it, treating the traditional four parts of grammar, namely, orthography, prosody, accidence, and syntax. He must have mulled this over a good deal and resolved that, excellent as it was, on the basis of his experience at Boston and Lincoln he could do still better. For his pièce de résistance was a Catholicon of his own composing. It occupied two complete volumes and treated the same four parts of grammar, but whether it also embodied a dictionary does not appear. 23

Grammar was done to the accompaniment of junior level Latin reading. For this Bracebridge had three books — Cato, Aesop, and Theodulus. His Aesop was in versified form and contained sixty fables. The Eclogue of Theodulus is a poem in quatrains and is amoebic, that is, the quatrains are spoken alternately by an Athenian shepherd and a beautiful young Jewess, each competitively extolling what we should call the mythology or legendary history of his or her own race. Victory of course goes to the Jewess: her very name, Alitha, means 'truth', and she is bound to prevail over the 'vain fables of the gentiles'. Before boys graduated to these works, however, they had to be drilled in their Catos. Bracebridge had both the 'little' and the 'great' Cato. They were the most elementary of reading books, and the idea of them was that while cracking their teeth on syntax the boys should also digest improving thoughts: love your parents; be tidy; yield to your senior; study literature; remember what you read; shun dice. Most of the precepts were in verse:

Learning's a sweet fruit from a bitter root.

What you don't know, this boldly seek to learn:
knowing wins praise, work-shyness blame will earn.

Or, for those who fancied something pithier:
When Johnny gets a beating, you
do well to learn his lesson too.

For a boy chafing at the generation gap:
At school the master tans your hide:
your angry father does but chide
bide him, as you the other bide.

And, looking ahead:
Much has it been your lot to learn in school:
so learn that LIFE, too, teaches many a rule.

They valued their Cato in Lincoln. When, a century later, the shrine of St. Hugh's head was gone over and the assemblage of votive gifts and thankofferings — 'relics, jewels, and other stuff' — was inventoried, it was found that one grateful learner had popped his copy of Cato among the rest. 24

Above grammar and these propaedeutics came serious composition — rhetoric and epistle making. This called for store of phrases and sentiments. Bracebridge had the pseudo Senecan De Copia Verborum and two sets of proverbs, one taken from Seneca and one by the William de Montibus mentioned above. He had two items attributed to Cassiodorus, one called simply 'Scintillae' and the other a set of epistolary formulae. He had the work of Bede On Figures and Tropes, followed by an 'interpretation' of each item. He also possessed Aristotle's Rhetoric, complete though in Latin translation; this, however, would not be used in the school, it would rather link up with his university days.

When we turn to look at the classics in general, the field is rather thin. He had several works of Aristotle (to be
mentioned later), a substantial part of Seneca’s *Moral Essays*, Boethius, *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, and two of the same writer’s tractates, all of which he would mentally class as philosophy and theology. He had no classical Latin poetry, though one of his texts claimed to be by Ovid and another by Martial. The pseudo Martial item was an epistle ‘On Not Taking a Wife’ — a standard rhetorical exercise theme — and the pseudo Ovid was the long hexameter poem called *On the Old Crane*, probably composed in France in the thirteenth century. It tells how an old crane substitutes herself for the beautiful young woman with whom ‘Ovid’ had an assignation. The real object of his passion becomes available twenty years later,
when her husband dies, but by this time she too is virtually a crone. In disillusionment he abandons his hitherto frivolous course of life in favour of serious study. He embraces a curriculum of mathematics, music, and philosophy, seeks the consolations of religion, and towards the end predicts the Virgin Birth of Christ and adopts Christian belief. Many believed this poem to be genuine Ovid. Whether Braceybridge did so or not, he probably grouped both it and the 'Martial' item under some vaguemental heading such as 'moral philosophy' rather than 'poetry' or 'classics'. The pseudo Ovid might of course be categorised as 'romance' and in that case we could place it with a few other items of medieval Latin poetry in the collection. The longest was the Sicilian poet Guido delle Colonne's work *On the Fall of Troy*, which filled eighty-four folios. Braceybridge also had a much shorter 'historia' and 'planctus' on the same subject by Hugo de Monte Acuto and a similar piece 'On the Travails of Aeneas'. These are the nearest he comes to Virgil, and they are very unlikely to have been used in the school.

For history and geography he had, to begin with, many short anonymous tracts such as 'Notabilia among the Deeds of Alexander the Great', a 'Recapitulation of the Holy Land and a Description thereof', the same for the City of Rome, 'the Names and Dates of the Christian Kings of England', a 'Genealogy' of the same, and a mysterious 'Prophecy of a Certain Spirit in the Time of King John'. Among named authors he had a certain Guillerinus of Tripoli, 'On the Condition of the Saracens, their False Prophet Mahomet, the People, their Law, and their Religion', while, coming nearer home, he had a poetical work 'In Praise of Archbishop Thurstan together with Other Matters relating to the Church of York'. History of course shades off into biography and hagiography. He had several anonymous lives of saints (the Virgin Mary, Jerome, Augustine, Symeon Styliles, the *Itinerarium of the Acts of St. Peter* by pseudo Clement, and the *Vita Ihesu* by Ludolf of Saxony. His prize possession in the historical field, however, was no doubt his volume containing most of the historical work of Gervase of Tilbury (fl. 1211) called *Otia Imperialia*, with a continuation to 1266; the *Chronicae* of Martinus Polonus, including the story of Pope Joan; and a poetical work, *La Petite Philosophie* (on which see below). This book has survived and is now Ms. I. 11 in the library of St. John's College, Cambridge. It is a folio on vellum, in several English hands of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is still in the binding in which Braceybridge knew it, rough white skin over wooden boards, and the back cover still has affixed to it the parchment slip, under a horn lamina, made by the Syon librarian showing the name of Braceybridge as donor.

Philosophy and natural science were not neglected. In logic he had some short anonymous tracts on terms, propositions, and consequences, including a 'Brief Summary of Sophistry according to the Use of Oxford'. Named writers on logic are Richard Billingham and a certain E. Upton. On a broader front he had Aristotle's *Ethics, Politics, and Magna Moralia* complete (all in the same volume as the *Rhetoric*); also the *Metaphysics* with Averroes' commentary, and the same commentator for *On the Heavens* and for the pseudo Aristotelian *On the Cosmos*. All of these would be in Latin translation. Among Roman thinkers his copies of Seneca and Boethius have already been mentioned. Medieval philosophy, apart from St. Thomas Aquinas, was represented by, inter alia, Albertus Magnus 'On Causes and the Procession of the Universe from the First Cause', and the *Quodlibeta of the Doctor Subtilis [= Duns Scotus] corrected by Magister I. Sharpe de Almainna, viz. 21 Questions'. In science the work of Grosseteste on air pressure, the rainbow, the mirror, and perpetual motion has already been referred to; he also had pseudo Grosseteste's *On Poisons* and a bestiary of Hugh of St. Victor. For astronomy he had a tractate 'On the Sphere' and for astrology a 'General Epistle of John of Toulon and the Masters of Toulon University on the Horrid Prognostications of all the Planets for the Year 1329'. Rounding off his holdings in this general field were a philoposophical florilegium by Pietro Alfonsi and the poem called *La Petite Philosophie*. This last is a description of the world in terms of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air.

Not the least enterprising part of Braceybridge's library was his medical collection. He had Latin translations of representative works by the great Greek and Arabic doctors, by members of the school of Salerno, and others. Of Hippocrates he had the *Prognostics* (two copies), which includes advice on how to operate on the uvula; the *Regimen in Acute Diseases* (two copies, one with Galen's commentary), where he could read a splendid passage on the virtues of barley gruel; part of the *Epidemics*, which records the interesting case of Crito and his big toe; and of course the *Aphorisms* (two copies, again one with Galen's commentary). The *Aphorisms* was the most famous of all medical texts, and in it he could read of how 'Life is short, the Art long', of the dangers of tetanus, of complexion in pregnancy as an indicator of the sex of a baby, of how sneezing will cure hiccups, of the connection between varicose veins and madness, and of the diminished incidence of baldness among cunums. Of Galen, besides the commentaries mentioned, he had two copies of the *Tegni* (technē, art), one incomplete, and an additional classical item was 'On the Power of Herbs, alphabetically arranged', ascribed to, or based on, Dioscorides.

Among the Arabic physicians, probably the earliest to be represented is Hebe-mesue (Yuhann ibn Masawah, but equated or confused by some with Janus Damascenus?), who lived circa 777-857 A.D. Braceybridge had *inter alia* his *Aphorisms* and an item called 'Of Medicines and their Signification'. He also had a medical 'Summa' which claimed to be 'Grabardin' but is in reality by Hebe-mesue, 'Grabardin' being a misunderstanding of an Arabic term meaning a medical formulary. He had three copies of the *Introduction to Medicine* (Ysagoge) by the ninth century Johannicius (Hunain ibn Ishak), and a urological treatise by Isaac Judaeus (Ishak ibn Sulaiman Ab Isra'il), who lived a little later, as well as 'Questions' on the same writer's 'Book of Fevers' by Hugh of Evesham. Of the early eleventh century Avicenna (a serviceable Latinization of a very long Arabic name) he had the treatise *On the Powers of the Monkey*, and the twelfth century Averroes (Ibn Rushd) one on antidotes to animal bites. Among members of the school of Salerno he had two copies of the *Book of Antidotes* by Nicholao (c. 1100-1150) and some remarks on it by John of St. Amand. He owned a large alphabetically arranged guide to medicine by Johannes Plathearius (twelfth century), the *Aphorisms* of Urso of Salerno (c. 1200), and works by Bernard de Gordon and Gilbert the Englishman. He also had many short anonymous items such as a tract on phlebotomy, an inquiry into tertian fever, and a treatise on medical weights and measures, as well as several medical glossaries.

Braceybridge's library, as we have seen, was overwhelmingly in Latin, in which language he must have been able to think, at least passively. The Syon catalogue takes it for granted that books are in Latin and that works by Greek or Arabic authors are in Latin translation. It specifies only the exceptions to this rule — books involving the use of a vernacular, English or French. For the benefit of his pupils the headmaster had, as we have seen, a Cato
glossed in English and a copy of John Cornwall’s grammar, which probably included English. Perhaps for a similar instructional purpose he had in English two tracts (or two copies of a tract) on the Ten Commandments and one on the Seven Deadly Sins. He also had, partly in English, a glossary containing ‘physical terms’, and — a clearer rustling of the national spirit — his extracts from Wycliffe’s letters to the Pope and others were in English as well as Latin. He had only the account of the Holy Land and the poem La Petite Philosophie, in French. The latter began, ‘Les sages ki ladis estaient’, ‘The sages who lived yesteryear’. At least one of his books was illustrated, the bestiary of Hugh of St. Victor, having paintings of some of
the animals; his treatise on medical weights and measures is also described as 'cum figuris expressis', which will imply pictures or at least diagrams.

Bracebridge was to his finger tips a man of books, and this is further borne out by a recently discovered fact about him in the archives of New College, Oxford. College accounts show that in 1409-10 two of the fellows had to ride to Lincoln to discuss with the dean some books that were to be made over to the college. The books are not specified, but it transpires that, the following year, 1410-11, someone had to be found who could be entrusted with the responsibility of conveying from Lincoln to New College a manuscript of the voluminous Corpus Juris Civilis. Choice fell on a master John Brasbyriggy (a common spelling at that time for Bracebridge). This is obviously the headmaster. No one more suitable could have been found. He conveyed the manuscript safely and the college paid him one mark (thirteen shillings and four pence) in recompense for his trouble.  

What, finally, of Bracebridge's mind and outlook? First, he had no Greek textbooks and clearly did not teach the language at Lincoln School — but this was to be expected, since Greek did not come into education until the Renaissance. It seems clear also that the mental categories under which he collected his books scarcely included 'classics' or 'poetry' as such. So far as the Syon catalogue shows he had no Plautus or Terence, no Cicero, Virgil, Horace, or genuine Ovid, and no translations of the dramatic or literary masterpieces of ancient Greece. His Aristotle and his Seneca and Boethius items were acquired as philosophy, not classics, and his Hippocrates, etc., as medicine. His medieval poems on Troy and Aeneas, which are the nearest he comes to Virgil, give him a category that we might call romance, but the majority of his verse items are didactic and utilitarian, the metre being simply a help to memorisation. For a fellow countryman and part contemporary of Chaucer his romantic or poetic instincts were not strong: he was in the main a man of prose, of functional rather than literary prose at that: but when all allowance is made for these limitations, he must have been, for his time, an able and enlightened headmaster. His collection of schoolbooks is praiseworthy for its breadth and balance, and he had a range of other interests remarkable in a late medieval pedagogue. He was not only a serious student of the Bible, the fathers, and the scholastics, but kept open a large window on history and geography and another on science, plus a rather unexpected window on medicine. He is also marked by a belief, not ubiquitous in schoolmasters, in being able, whether in education, theology, philosophy, or medicine, to go to the top, to refer directly to the fountainhead.

Lincoln School was to stay in the building in St. Rumbold, where Bracebridge taught, for many long years after his time. But no trace remains of it today, and it was already going out of use in the sixteenth century. One of its latest appearances in history is in 1539, when it was being partly adapted as a store for mystery play and pageant properties, including a large Noah's Ark. For a council minute of 12 November that year records: 'Also yt ys agryede in this comen councell that ther schalbe a large door mayde at the lade Scowele howys that the pagents may be set (sent) in and evry pagent to pay yerely iiijd and noy schyppe xijd.' Thirty or forty years later the school was to be resettle at the other end of Broadgate in Greysriars, which was to remain its home for three centuries. Its present site is on Wragby Road, where since 1974 it has been enlarged, restructured, and renamed the Lincoln Christ's Hospital School. Yet there are still strong links with the past. It was a cathedral chancellor who nominated John Bracebridge for his job in 1406, and the cathedral chancellor remains an ex officio governor of the school today.

FOOTNOTES
3 Recorded in the Syon Marliogium, British Library, Add. Ms. 22, 285, f. 32; ex info. the present Abbess of Syon, which is now at South Brent, Devon.
4 Now Ms. 141 in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; it has been edited and published by Bateson, op. cit.
8 Leach, op. cit., p. 425.
10 L.A.O. D. & C. A. 1/30/31, 47v.; Leach, op. cit., p. 427 concurs, though it is just possible that they may have been usherers of the Lower School.
13 L.A.O. D. & C. A. 1/301, 100r.
14 A preliminary estimate was made by N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages, London, 1973, p. 126. The figures there given, however, are not in need of revision.
16 For the armigerous and partly titled family of Bracebridge which came to be associated with Kingsbary in Warwickshire see the genealogy in Sir William Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, London, 1666, p. 760; their origin from Bracebridge near Lincoln is referred to on p. 761. See further, in the Victoria County Histories, A History of the County of Warwick, R. B. Pugh (ed.), Index to Volumes I-IV, London, 1955, p. 17, s.v. 'Bracebridge'.
17 Wherever the Syon catalogue gives what I recognize as the title of a separate, known work, it will be italicised. Other items will be quoted as they stand. Both classes, however, will as far as possible be rendered in English instead of Latin.
19 Archer, op. cit., p. 167.
22 L.A.O. D. & C. A. 1/2/301, 43v. The altar referred to may be that of St. Michael, not St. Nicholas; the handwriting is difficult to make out.
23 Readers of the 'Brasbridge' entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, 6, Leslie Stephen (ed.), London, 1886, p. 231, may be led to suppose that this Catholicon survives to this day in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. The Acting Librarian Mr. N. E. Wilkins informs me, however, that this is not so; the headmaster's magnum opus must be accounted lost.
26 I am indebted to Mr. A. G. Lee for information about this item. For a description see M. R. James, A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts of St. John's College, Cambridge, Cambridge, 1913, pp. 249-252.
27 See the British Museum Library General Catalogue of Printed Books, 262, London, 1966, cols. 671-8, the entry on 'Yuhanna ibn Maswali'.
Book Reviews

BEFORE THE WELFARE STATE Social
Administration in early industrial Britain by Ursula R.
Henriques, 294pp., Longman, 1979, £4.50; THE
PEOPLE'S HEALTH 1830-1910 by F. B. Smith, 436pp.,
Croom Helm, 1979, £14.95; ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLING AND THE WORKING CLASSES
1860-1918 by J. S. Hurt, x + 24pp., Routledge and Kegan
Paul, 1979, £6.95.

The Victorians, like their predecessors and successors,
were obliged to take seriously the question of public health.
They debated at length the minimum standards in housing,
medicine, social care and education that society could
tolerate, while the 'poor', those living at or below the
minimum standard, held their own views on what they
were prepared to put up with. For a wealthy and not totally
uncivilised society, Victorian Britain was remarkable for
its low standard of public health and welfare, and
remarkable too for the low expectations of those who
suffered most.

There were various reasons for this. A rapid growth in
population led to overcrowding, to the expansion of new
towns with inadequate local government machinery, and
to an inevitable cheapening of human life—especially the
lives of babies and young children. The early Victorians
were ill-equipped to cope with this rising tide of misery.
The paternalists were used to operating in the context of
small and stable communities. The moralists told the poor
that it was their own fault; and the Malthusians added that
there were too many of them anyhow. The doctors and
administrators were profoundly ignorant of such
fundamental matters as how diseases were transmitted and
how unemployment was created. Above all, the small
ratepayers, those who had to foot the bill for the main
don/icangement and clearance schemes, were the least
enlightened and most pig-headed section of the community.
Having raised themselves above the minimum standard,
they did not see why they should subsidise their
feckless neighbours.

In these circumstances the reformers, the pressure
groups, the legislators and the administrators made
understandably slow progress. Ursula Henriques, in
Before the Welfare State, tells the story mainly from their
point of view. She covers a great deal of ground, and brings
together the results of much recent research. Looking at
the subject from the centre, however, she tends to stress the
difficulty of getting local administrators such as boards of
guardians to follow a uniform policy. The guardians, on
the other hand, must often have lamented and resented the
strict limitations on their freedom of action.

F. B. Smith, in The People's Health, adopts a different
approach, and the result is an important and substantial
book. He describes Victorian diseases and their treatment
not from the point of view of the doctors and social
planners but from that of the victims. Making excellent use
of the medical literature of the period, he brings out the
main causes of bad health and mortality in each phase of
life, from birth and infancy to old age. This scheme is
something of a straight jacket, but a wide range of topics is
covered—the survival of traditional remedies, the progress
of medical research, fashions in treatment, and the social
as well as age distribution of disease. He dwells on the total
inadequacy of contemporary medical practice, and the
fact that early and partial attempts to improve the
environment often merely made things worse a few streets
away. Only around the turn of the century did infant
mortality significantly decline, as real advances were made
in food, hygiene and housing.

Inevitably Professor Smith tells us more about urban
than about rural slums, and public health in the Victorian
countryside requires further exploration. It will not be as
easy as Professor Smith appears to think. To judge from
Lincolnshire, the survival of poor law union, sanitary
authority, hospital, general practice and sick club records
is, to say the most, patchy.

One aspect of Professor Smith's subject is treated at
much greater length by J. S. Hurt, in his study of
working-class schooling between 1860 and 1918. His
principal theme is the impact of the Education Act of
1870, intended to civilise the roughy urchins whom the
voluntary system had largely failed to reach. The parents
of the urchins were not altogether pleased. Schools were
hotbeds of infectious diseases (second only to hospitals),
and the loss of children's earnings could have a disastrous
effect on a family on the poverty line. Mr. Hurt shows how
education was closely linked with matters of public health
and social class. But it has to be remembered that in 1870,
and more particularly outside the large towns, attitudes to
education were still governed more by sectarian than by
class consciousness. Mr. Hurt's focus could provide the
unwary with a distorted picture.

R. J. OLENEY LONDON

THE EAST COAST FLOODS by Dorothy Summers,
176pp., illus., David and Charles, 1978, £5.50.

The coastal floods of 31 January—1 February 1953 have
been the subject of specialist articles, and Hilda Grieve,
The Great Tide: The story of the 1953 flood disaster in
Essex (Essex County Council, 1959), has provided an
excellent account of their effect on one county. The present
work, however, seems to be the first comprehensive
account for the general reader, and as such it is to be
welcomed, especially as it draws on the files of water
authorities and other sources not readily accessible.

After a discussion (not always well informed) of the
historical background, the author describes the 'agents of
disaster', i.e. winds and tides, and the character of the sea
defences on the eve of the disaster. She then deals with the
floods and their aftermath, adding a chapter on 'London on
the brink' and the Thames Barrier proposals. Finally
she reviews the state of the defences when the next (though
less severe) major flood occurred in January 1976. She
reminds us that the 1953 disaster was no 'rare catastrophe',
but only one in a long series of breaches and floods due
to storm or tidal surges on the east coast of England.
Although many lessons were learnt from it, leading to
improvements in the design of new defences, there is no
room for complacency about the future. Meteorological
and tidal conditions may combine 'any winter' to produce
'a great surge tide more disastrous than any of its
predecessors.'

The author gives almost no references within the text to
the sources used, so that doubtful statements cannot be
checked. What is the authority for stating that in 245 A.D.
many thousands of acres in Lincolnshire were flooded by
the sea, never to be recovered', or that 'damaging floods
occurred in the Humber about A.D. 530'? There is a good
selection of photographs and five maps, but it is irritating
to have no list of them.

A. E. B. OWEN CAMBRIDGE