"TAKE THOU A BOOK INTO THINE HANDS AS SIMON THE JUST TOOK THE
CHILD JESUS INTO HIS ARMS TO CARRY HIM AND KISS HIM. AND WHEN
THOU HAST FINISHED READING, CLOSE THE BOOK AND GIVE THANKS FOR
EVERY WORD OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD; BECAUSE IN THE LORD'S FIELD
THOU HAST FOUND A HIDDEN TREASURE."
THOMAS A KEMPIS: Doctrinale Juvenum

PREFACE

The Author of the Book.
Richard de Bury (1281-1345), so called from being born near Bury St. Edmunds, was the son of Sir Richard Aungerville. He studied at Oxford; and was subsequently chosen to be tutor to Prince Edward of Windsor, afterwards Edward III. His loyalty to the cause of Queen Isabella and the Prince involved him in danger.
On the accession of his pupil he was made successively Cofferer,
Treasurer of the Wardrobe, Archdeacon of Northampton, Prebendary
of Lincoln, Sarum, and Lichfield, Keeper of the Privy Purse,
Ambassador on two occasions to Pope John XXII, who appointed him
a chaplain of the papal chapel, Dean of Wells, and ultimately, at
the end of the year 1333, Bishop of Durham; the King and Queen,
the King of Scots, and all the magnates north of the Trent,
together with a multitude of nobles and many others, were present
at his enthronization. It is noteworthy that during his stay at
Avignon, probably in 1330, he made the acquaintance of Petrarch,
who has left us a brief account of their intercourse. In 1332
Richard visited Cambridge, as one of the King's commissioners, to
inquire into the state of the King's Scholars there, and perhaps
then became a member of the Gild of St. Mary--one of the two
gilds which founded Corpus Christi College.

In 1334 he became High Chancellor of England, and Treasurer in
1336, resigning the former office in 1335, so that he might help
the King in dealing with affairs abroad and in Scotland, and took
a most distinguished part in diplomatic negociations between
England and France. In 1339 he was again in his bishopric.
Thereafter his name occurs often among those appointed to treat
of peace with Philip of France, and with Bruce of Scotland. It
appears that he was not in Parliament in 1344. Wasted by long
sickness--longa infirmitate decoctus--on the 14th of April, 1345,
Richard de Bury died at Auckland, and was buried in Durham
Cathedral.
The Bishop as Booklover.

According to the concluding note, the Philobiblon was completed on the bishop's fifty-eighth birthday, the 24th of January, 1345, so that even though weakened by illness, Richard must have been actively engaged in his literary efforts to the very end of his generous and noble life. His enthusiastic devoted biographer Chambre[1] gives a vivid account of the bishop's bookloving propensities, supplementary to what can be gathered from the Philobiblon itself. Iste summe delectabatur in multitudine librorum; he had more books, as was commonly reported, than all the other English bishops put together. He had a separate library in each of his residences, and wherever he was residing, so many books lay about his bed-chamber, that it was hardly possible to stand or move without treading upon them. All the time he could spare from business was devoted either to religious offices or to his books. Every day while at table he would have a book read to him, unless some special guest were present, and afterwards would engage in discussion on the subject of the reading. The haughty Anthony Bec delighted in the appendages of royalty--to be addressed by nobles kneeling, and to be waited on in his presence-chamber and at his table by Knights bare-headed and standing; but De Bury loved to surround himself with learned scholars. Among these were such men as Thomas Bradwardine, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and author of the De Causa
Dei; Richard Fitzralph, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh, and famous for his hostility to the mendicant orders; Walter Burley, who dedicated to him a translation of the Politics of Aristotle made at his suggestion; John Mauduit, the astronomer; Robert Holkot, author of many books; Richard de Kilvington; Richard Benworth, afterwards Bishop of London; and Walter Seagrave, who became Dean of Chichester."[2]


[2] An unsuccessful attempt has been made to transfer the authorship of the book to Robert Holkot. Various theories have been advanced against Richard's claims. It is noteworthy that his contemporary Adam Murimuth disparages him as "mediocriter literatus, volens tamen magnus clericus reputari," but such disparagement must be taken with the utmost caution. The really difficult fact to be accounted for is the omission on the part of Chambre to mention the book.

The Bishop's Books.
In the Philobiblon, Richard de Bury frankly and clearly describes his means and method of collecting books. Anyhow his object was clearly not selfish. The treatise contains his rules for the library of the new College at Oxford--Durham College (where Trinity College now stands)--which he practically founded, though
his successor, Bishop Hatfield, carried the scheme into effect. It is traditionally reported that Richard's books were sent, in his lifetime or after his death, to the house of the Durham Benedictines at Oxford, and there remained until the dissolution of the College by Henry VIII., when they were dispersed, some going into Duke Humphrey's (the University) library, others to Balliol College, and the remainder passing into the hands of Dr. George Owen, who purchased the site of the dissolved College.[3]

[3] Mr. J. W. Clark puts the matter as follows:--"Durham College, maintained by the Benedictines of Durham, was supplied with books from the mother-house, lists of which have been preserved; and subsequently a library was built there to contain the collection bequeathed in 1345 by Richard de Bury" (The Care of Books, p. 142). Mr. Thomas points out that De Bury's executors sold at least some portion of his books; and, moreover, his biographer says nothing of a library at Oxford. Possibly the scheme was never carried out. In the British Museum (Roy. 13 D. iv. 3) is a large folio MS. of the works of John of Salisbury, which was one of the books bought back from the Bishop's executors.

Unfortunately, the "special catalogue" of his books prepared by Richard has not come down to us; but "from his own book and from the books cited in the works of his friends and housemates, who may reasonably be supposed to have drawn largely from the bishop's collection, it would be possible to restore a hypothetical but not improbable Bibliotheca Ricardi de Bury. The
difficulty would be with that contemporary literature, which they
would think below the dignity of quotation, but which we know the
Bishop collected."

Early Editions of the Philobiblon.
The book was first printed at Cologne in 1473, at Spires in 1483,
and at Paris in 1500. The first English edition appeared in
1598-9, edited by Thomas James, Bodley's first librarian. Other
editions appeared in Germany in 1610, 1614, 1674 and 1703; at
Paris in 1856; at Albany in 1861. The texts were, with the
exception of those issued in 1483 and 1599, based on the 1473
edition; though the French edition and translation of 1856,
prepared by M. Cocheris, claimed to be a critical version, it
left the text untouched, and merely gave the various readings of
the three Paris manuscripts at the foot of the pages; these
readings are moreover badly chosen, and the faults of the version
are further to be referred to the use of the ill-printed 1703
edition as copy.

In 1832 there appeared an anonymous English translation, now
known to have been by J. B. Inglis; it followed the edition of
1473, with all its errors and inaccuracies.

Mr. E. C. Thomas' Text.--The first true text of the Philobiblon,
the result of a careful examination of twenty-eight MSS., and of
the various printed editions, appeared in the year 1888:

For fifteen years the enthusiastic editor—an ideal Bibliophile—had toiled at his labour of love, and his work was on all sides received with the recognition due to his monumental achievement. To the great loss of English learning, he did not long survive the conclusion of his labours. The very limited edition of the work was soon exhausted, and it is by the most generous permission of his father, Mr. John Thomas, of Lower Broughton, Manchester, that the translation—the only trustworthy rendering of Richard de Bury's precious treatise—is now, for the first time, made accessible to the larger book-loving public, and fittingly inaugurates the present series of English classics.

The general Editor desires to express his best thanks to Mr. John Thomas, as also to Messrs. Kegan Paul, for their kindness in allowing him to avail himself of the materials included in the 1888 edition of the work. He has attempted, in the brief Preface and Notes, to condense Mr. Thomas' labours in such a way as would have been acceptable to the lamented scholar, and though he has made bold to explain some few textual difficulties, and to add some few references, he would fain hope that these additions have been made with modest caution—with the reverence due to the
unstinted toil of a Bibliophile after Richard de Bury’s own pattern. Yet once again Richard de Bury’s Philobiblon, edited and translated into English by E. C. Thomas, is presented to new generations of book-lovers:— “LIBRORUM DILECTORIBUS.”

THE PHILOBIBLON NEWLY TRANSLATED

PROLOGUE

I That the treasure of wisdom is chiefly contained in books

II The degree of affection that is properly due to books

III What we are to think of the price in the buying of books

IV The complaint of books against the clergy already promoted

V The complaint of books against the possessioners

VI The complaint of books against the mendicants

VII The complaint of books against wars
VIII Of the numerous opportunities we have had of collecting a store of books

IX How, although we preferred the works of the ancients, we have not condemned the studies of the moderns

X Of the gradual perfecting of books

XI Why we have preferred books of liberal learning to books of law

XII Why we have caused books of grammar to be so diligently prepared

XIII Why we have not wholly neglected the fables of the poets

XIV Who ought to be special lovers of books

XV Of the advantages of the love of books

XVI That it is meritorious to write new books and to renew the old
XVII Of showing due propriety in the custody of books

XVIII Showeth that we have collected so great store of books for the common benefit of scholars and not only for our own pleasure

XIX Of the manner of lending all our books to students

XX An exhortation to scholars to requite us by pious prayers

PROLOGUE

To all the faithful of Christ to whom the tenor of these presents may come, Richard de Bury, by the divine mercy Bishop of Durham, wisheth everlasting salvation in the Lord and to present continually a pious memorial of himself before God, alike in his lifetime and after his death.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? asks the most devout Psalmist, an invincible King and first among the prophets; in which most grateful question he approves himself a willing thank-offerer, a multifarious debtor, and one who wishes for a holier counsellor than himself: agreeing with Aristotle, the chief of philosophers, who shows (in the 3rd and 6th books of his Ethics) that all action depends upon counsel.

And indeed if so wonderful a prophet, having a fore-knowledge of
divine secrets, wished so anxiously to consider how he might
gratefully repay the blessings graciously bestowed, what can we
fitly do, who are but rude thanksgivers and most greedy
receivers, laden with infinite divine benefits? Assuredly we
ought with anxious deliberation and abundant consideration,
having first invoked the Sevenfold Spirit, that it may burn in
our musings as an illuminating fire, fervently to prepare a way
without hinderance, that the bestower of all things may be
cheerfully worshipped in return for the gifts that He has
bestowed, that our neighbour may be relieved of his burden, and
that the guilt contracted by sinners every day may be redeemed by
the atonement of almsgiving.

Forewarned therefore through the admonition of the Psalmist's
devotion by Him who alone prevents and perfects the goodwill of
man, without Whom we have no power even so much as to think, and
Whose gift we doubt not it is, if we have done anything good, we
have diligently inquired and considered in our own heart as well
as with others, what among the good offices of various works of
piety would most please the Almighty, and would be more
beneficial to the Church Militant. And lo! there soon occurred
to our contemplation a host of unhappy, nay, rather of elect
scholars, in whom God the Creator and Nature His handmaid planted
the roots of excellent morals and of famous sciences, but whom
the poverty of their circumstances so oppressed that before the
frown of adverse fortune the seeds of excellence, so fruitful in
the cultivated field of youth, not being watered by the rain that
they require, are forced to wither away. Thus it happens that
"bright virtue lurks buried in obscurity," to use the words of
Boethius, and burning lights are not put under a bushel, but for
want of oil are utterly extinguished. Thus the field, so full of
flower in Spring, has withered up before harvest time; thus wheat
degenerates to tares, and vines into the wild vines, and thus
olives run into the wild olive; the tender stems rot away
altogether, and those who might have grown up into strong pillars
of the Church, being endowed with the capacity of a subtle
intellect, abandon the schools of learning. With poverty only as
their stepmother, they are repelled violently from the nectared
cup of philosophy as soon as they have tasted of it and have
become more fiercely thirsty by the very taste. Though fit for
the liberal arts and disposed to study the sacred writings alone,
being deprived of the aid of their friends, by a kind of apostasy
they return to the mechanical arts solely to gain a livelihood,
to the loss of the Church and the degradation of the whole
clergy. Thus Mother Church conceiving sons is compelled to
miscarry, nay, some misshapen monster is born untimely from her
womb, and for lack of that little with which Nature is contented,
she loses excellent pupils, who might afterwards become champions
and athletes of the faith. Alas, how suddenly the woof is cut,
while the hand of the weaver is beginning his work! Alas, how the
sun is eclipsed in the brightness of the dawn, and the planet in
its course is hurled backwards, and, while it bears the nature
and likeness of a star suddenly drops and becomes a meteor! What
more piteous sight can the pious man behold? What can more
sharply stir the bowels of his pity? What can more easily melt a
heart hard as an anvil into hot tears? On the other hand, let us recall from past experience how much it has profited the whole Christian commonwealth, not indeed to enervate students with the delights of a Sardanapalus or the riches of a Croesus, but rather to support them in their poverty with the frugal means that become the scholar. How many have we seen with our eyes, how many have we read of in books, who, distinguished by no pride of birth, and rejoicing in no rich inheritance, but supported only by the piety of the good, have made their way to apostolic chairs, have most worthily presided over faithful subjects, have bent the necks of the proud and lofty to the ecclesiastical yoke and have extended further the liberties of the Church!

Accordingly, having taken a survey of human necessities in every direction, with a view to bestow our charity upon them, our compassionate inclinations have chosen to bear pious aid to this calamitous class of men, in whom there is nevertheless such hope of advantage to the Church, and to provide for them, not only in respect of things necessary to their support, but much more in respect of the books so useful to their studies. To this end, most acceptable in the sight of God, our attention has long been unweariedly devoted. This ecstatic love has carried us away so powerfully, that we have resigned all thoughts of other earthly things, and have given ourselves up to a passion for acquiring books. That our intent and purpose, therefore, may be known to posterity as well as to our contemporaries, and that we may for ever stop the perverse tongues of gossips as far as we are
concerned, we have published a little treatise written in the
lightest style of the moderns; for it is ridiculous to find a
slight matter treated of in a pompous style. And this treatise
(divided into twenty chapters) will clear the love we have had
for books from the charge of excess, will expound the purpose of
our intense devotion, and will narrate more clearly than light
all the circumstances of our undertaking. And because it
principally treats of the love of books, we have chosen, after
the fashion of the ancient Romans, fondly to name it by a Greek
word, Philobiblon.

CHAPTER I

THAT THE TREASURE OF WISDOM IS CHIEFLY CONTAINED IN BOOKS

The desirable treasure of wisdom and science, which all men
desire by an instinct of nature, infinitely surpasses all the
riches of the world; in respect of which precious stones are
worthless; in comparison with which silver is as clay and pure
gold is as a little sand; at whose splendour the sun and moon are
dark to look upon; compared with whose marvellous sweetness honey
and manna are bitter to the taste. O value of wisdom that fadeth
not away with time, virtue ever flourishing, that cleanseth its
possessor from all venom! O heavenly gift of the divine bounty,
descending from the Father of lights, that thou mayest exalt the
rational soul to the very heavens! Thou art the celestial
nourishment of the intellect, which those who eat shall still
hunger and those who drink shall still thirst, and the gladdening
harmony of the languishing soul which he that hears shall never
be confounded. Thou art the moderator and rule of morals, which
he who follows shall not sin. By thee kings reign and princes
decree justice. By thee, rid of their native rudeness, their
minds and tongues being polished, the thorns of vice being torn
up by the roots, those men attain high places of honour, and
become fathers of their country, and companions of princes, who
without thee would have melted their spears into pruning-hooks
and ploughshares, or would perhaps be feeding swine with the
prodigal.

Where dost thou chiefly lie hidden, O most elect treasure! and
where shall thirsting souls discover thee?

Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most
High, the Light of lights, the Book of Life, has established
thee. There everyone who asks receiveth thee, and everyone who
seeks finds thee, and to everyone that knocketh boldly it is
speedily opened. Therein the cherubim spread out their wings,
that the intellect of the students may ascend and look from pole
to pole, from the east and west, from the north and from the
south. Therein the mighty and incomprehensible God Himself is
apprehensibly contained and worshipped; therein is revealed the
nature of things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal; therein
are discerned the laws by which every state is administered, the
offices of the celestial hierarchy are distinguished, and the
tyrrannies of demons described, such as neither the ideas of Plato
transcend, nor the chair of Crato contained.

In books I find the dead as if they were alive; in books I
foresee things to come; in books warlike affairs are set forth;
from books come forth the laws of peace. All things are
corrupted and decay in time; Saturn ceases not to devour the
children that he generates; all the glory of the world would be
buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the
remedy of books.

Alexander, the conqueror of the earth, Julius, the invader of
Rome and of the world, who, the first in war and arts, assumed
universal empire under his single rule, faithful Fabricius and
stern Cato, would now have been unknown to fame, if the aid of
books had been wanting. Towers have been razed to the ground;
cities have been overthrown; triumphal arches have perished from
decay; nor can either pope or king find any means of more easily
conferring the privilege of perpetuity than by books. The book
that he has made renders its author this service in return, that
so long as the book survives its author remains immortal and
cannot die, as Ptolemy declares in the Prologue to his Almagest:
He is not dead, he says, who has given life to science.

Who therefore will limit by anything of another kind the price of
the infinite treasure of books, from which the scribe who is
instructed bringeth forth things new and old? Truth that
triumphs over all things, which overcomes the king, wine, and
women, which it is reckoned holy to honour before friendship,
which is the way without turning and the life without end, which
holy Boethius considers to be threefold in thought, speech, and
writing, seems to remain more usefully and to fructify to greater
profit in books. For the meaning of the voice perishes with the
sound; truth latent in the mind is wisdom that is hid and
treasure that is not seen; but truth which shines forth in books
desires to manifest itself to every impressionable sense. It
commends itself to the sight when it is read, to the hearing when
it is heard, and moreover in a manner to the touch, when it
suffers itself to be transcribed, bound, corrected, and
preserved. The undisclosed truth of the mind, although it is
the possession of the noble soul, yet because it lacks a
companion, is not certainly known to be delightful, while neither
sight nor hearing takes account of it. Further the truth of the
voice is patent only to the ear and eludes the sight, which
reveals to us more of the qualities of things, and linked with
the subtlest of motions begins and perishes as it were in a
breath. But the written truth of books, not transient but
permanent, plainly offers itself to be observed, and by means of
the pervious spherules of the eyes, passing through the vestibule
of perception and the courts of imagination, enters the chamber
of intellect, taking its place in the couch of memory, where it
engenders the eternal truth of the mind.
Finally we must consider what pleasantness of teaching there is in books, how easy, how secret! How safely we lay bare the poverty of human ignorance to books without feeling any shame!

They are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money. If you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and inquire of them they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not laugh at you if you are ignorant. O books, who alone are liberal and free, who give to all who ask of you and enfranchise all who serve you faithfully! By how many thousand types are ye commended to learned men in the Scriptures given us by inspiration of God! For ye are the minds of profoundest wisdom, to which the wise man sends his son that he may dig out treasures: Prov. ii. Ye are the wells of living waters, which father Abraham first digged, Isaac digged again, and which the Philistines strive to fill up: Gen. xxvi. Ye are indeed the most delightful ears of corn, full of grain, to be rubbed only by apostolic hands, that the sweetest food may be produced for hungry souls: Matt. xii. Ye are the golden pots in which manna is stored, and rocks flowing with honey, nay, combs of honey, most plenteous udders of the milk of life, garners ever full; ye are the tree of life and the fourfold river of Paradise, by which the human mind is nourished, and the thirsty intellect is watered and refreshed. Ye are the ark of Noah and the ladder of Jacob, and the troughs by which the young of those who look therein are coloured; ye are the stones of testimony and the pitchers holding the lamps of Gideon, the scrip of David, from which the smoothest
stones are taken for the slaying of Goliath. Ye are the golden vessels of the temple, the arms of the soldiers of the Church with which to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, fruitful olives, vines of Engadi, fig-trees that are never barren, burning lamps always to be held in readiness--and all the noblest comparisons of Scripture may be applied to books, if we choose to speak in figures.

CHAPTER II

THE DEGREE OF AFFECTION THAT IS PROPERLY DUE TO BOOKS

Since the degree of affection a thing deserves depends upon the degree of its value, and the previous chapter shows that the value of books is unspeakable, it is quite clear to the reader what is the probable conclusion from this. I say probable, for in moral science we do not insist upon demonstration, remembering that the educated man seeks such degree of certainty as he perceives the subject-matter will bear, as Aristotle testifies in the first book of his Ethics. For Tully does not appeal to Euclid, nor does Euclid rely upon Tully. This at all events we endeavour to prove, whether by logic or rhetoric, that all riches and all delights whatsoever yield place to books in the spiritual mind, wherein the Spirit which is charity ordereth charity. Now in the first place, because wisdom is contained in books more than all mortals understand, and wisdom thinks lightly of riches,
as the foregoing chapter declares. Furthermore, Aristotle, in his Problems, determines the question, why the ancients proposed prizes to the stronger in gymnastic and corporeal contests, but never awarded any prize for wisdom. This question he solves as follows: In gymnastic exercises the prize is better and more desirable than that for which it is bestowed; but it is certain that nothing is better than wisdom: wherefore no prize could be assigned for wisdom. And therefore neither riches nor delights are more excellent than wisdom. Again, only the fool will deny that friendship is to be preferred to riches, since the wisest of men testifies this; but the chief of philosophers honours truth before friendship, and the truthful Zorobabel prefers it to all things. Riches, then, are less than truth. Now truth is chiefly maintained and contained in holy books--nay, they are written truth itself, since by books we do not now mean the materials of which they are made. Wherefore riches are less than books, especially as the most precious of all riches are friends, as Boethius testifies in the second book of his Consolation; to whom the truth of books according to Aristotle is to be preferred. Moreover, since we know that riches first and chiefly appertain to the support of the body only, while the virtue of books is the perfection of reason, which is properly speaking the happiness of man, it appears that books to the man who uses his reason are dearer than riches. Furthermore, that by which the faith is more easily defended, more widely spread, more clearly preached, ought to be more desirable to the faithful. But this is the truth written in books, which our Saviour plainly showed, when he was about to contend stoutly against the Tempter, girding himself
with the shield of truth and indeed of written truth, declaring
"it is written" of what he was about to utter with his voice.

And, again, no one doubts that happiness is to be preferred to riches. But happiness consists in the operation of the noblest and diviner of the faculties that we possess—when the whole mind is occupied in contemplating the truth of wisdom, which is the most delectable of all our virtuous activities, as the prince of philosophers declares in the tenth book of the Ethics, on which account it is that philosophy is held to have wondrous pleasures in respect of purity and solidity, as he goes on to say. But the contemplation of truth is never more perfect than in books, where the act of imagination perpetuated by books does not suffer the operation of the intellect upon the truths that it has seen to suffer interruption. Wherefore books appear to be the most immediate instruments of speculative delight, and therefore Aristotle, the sun of philosophic truth, in considering the principles of choice, teaches that in itself to philosophize is more desirable than to be rich, although in certain cases, as where for instance one is in need of necessaries, it may be more desirable to be rich than to philosophize.

Moreover, since books are the aptest teachers, as the previous chapter assumes, it is fitting to bestow on them the honour and the affection that we owe to our teachers. In fine, since all men naturally desire to know, and since by means of books we can attain the knowledge of the ancients, which is to be desired
beyond all riches, what man living according to nature would not feel the desire of books? And although we know that swine trample pearls under foot, the wise man will not therefore be deterred from gathering the pearls that lie before him. A library of wisdom, then, is more precious than all wealth, and all things that are desirable cannot be compared to it. Whoever therefore claims to be zealous of truth, of happiness, of wisdom or knowledge, aye, even of the faith, must needs become a lover of books.

CHAPTER III

WHAT WE ARE TO THINK OF THE PRICE IN THE BUYING OF BOOKS

From what has been said we draw this corollary welcome to us, but (as we believe) acceptable to few: namely, that no dearness of price ought to hinder a man from the buying of books, if he has the money that is demanded for them, unless it be to withstand the malice of the seller or to await a more favourable opportunity of buying. For if it is wisdom only that makes the price of books, which is an infinite treasure to mankind, and if the value of books is unspeakable, as the premises show, how shall the bargain be shown to be dear where an infinite good is being bought? Wherefore, that books are to be gladly bought and unwillingly sold, Solomon, the sun of men, exhorts us in the Proverbs: Buy the truth, he says, and sell not wisdom. But what
we are trying to show by rhetoric or logic, let us prove by
examples from history. The arch-philosopher Aristotle, whom
Averroes regards as the law of Nature, bought a few books of
Speusippus straightway after his death for 72,000 sesterces.
Plato, before him in time, but after him in learning, bought the
book of Philolaus the Pythagorean, from which he is said to have
taken the Timaeus, for 10,000 denaries, as Aulus Gellius relates
in the Noctes Atticae. Now Aulus Gellius relates this that the
foolish may consider how wise men despise money in comparison
with books. And on the other hand, that we may know that folly
and pride go together, let us here relate the folly of Tarquin
the Proud in despising books, as also related by Aulus Gellius.
An old woman, utterly unknown, is said to have come to Tarquin
the Proud, the seventh king of Rome, offering to sell nine books,
in which (as she declared) sacred oracles were contained, but she
asked an immense sum for them, insomuch that the king said she
was mad. In anger she flung three books into the fire, and still
asked the same sum for the rest. When the king refused it, again
she flung three others into the fire and still asked the same
price for the three that were left. At last, astonished beyond
measure, Tarquin was glad to pay for three books the same price
for which he might have bought nine. The old woman straightway
disappeared, and was never seen before or after. These were the
Sibylline books, which the Romans consulted as a divine oracle by
some one of the Quindecemvirs, and this is believed to have been
the origin of the Quindecemvirate. What did this Sibyl teach the
proud king by this bold deed, except that the vessels of wisdom,
holy books, exceed all human estimation; and, as Gregory says of
the kingdom of Heaven: They are worth all that thou hast?

CHAPTER IV

THE COMPLAINT OF BOOKS AGAINST THE CLERGY ALREADY PROMOTED

A generation of vipers destroying their own parent and base offspring of the ungrateful cuckoo, who when he has grown strong slays his nurse, the giver of his strength, are degenerate clerks with regard to books. Bring it again to mind and consider faithfully what ye receive through books, and ye will find that books are as it were the creators of your distinction, without which other favourers would have been wanting.

In sooth, while still untrained and helpless ye crept up to us, ye spake as children, ye thought as children, ye cried as children and begged to be made partakers of our milk. But we being straightway moved by your tears gave you the breast of grammar to suck, which ye plied continually with teeth and tongue, until ye lost your native barbarousness and learned to speak with our tongues the mighty things of God. And next we clad you with the goodly garments of philosophy, rhetoric and dialectic, of which we had and have a store, while ye were naked as a tablet to be painted on. For all the household of philosophy are clothed with garments, that the nakedness and rawness of the intellect may be covered. After this, providing
you with the fourfold wings of the quadrivials that ye might be
winged like the seraphs and so mount above the cherubim, we sent
you to a friend at whose door, if only ye importunately knocked,
ye might borrow the three loaves of the Knowledge of the Trinity,
in which consists the final felicity of every sojourner below.
Nay, if ye deny that ye had these privileges, we boldly declare
that ye either lost them by your carelessness, or that through
your sloth ye spurned them when offered to you. If these things
seem but a light matter to you, we will add yet greater things.
Ye are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy race, ye are a
peculiar people chosen into the lot of God, ye are priests and
ministers of God, nay, ye are called the very Church of God, as
though the laity were not to be called churchmen. Ye, being
preferred to the laity, sing psalms and hymns in the chancel,
and, serving the altar and living by the altar, make the true
body of Christ, wherein God Himself has honoured you not only
above the laity, but even a little higher than the angels. For
to whom of His angels has He said at any time: Thou art a priest
for ever after the order of Melchisedech? Ye dispense the
patrimony of the crucified one to the poor, wherein it is
required of stewards that a man be found faithful. Ye are
shepherds of the Lord's flock, as well in example of life as in
the word of doctrine, which is bound to repay you with milk and
wool.

Who are the givers of all these things, O clerks? Is it not
books? Do ye remember therefore, we pray, how many and how great
liberties and privileges are bestowed upon the clergy through us?
In truth, taught by us who are the vessels of wisdom and
intellect, ye ascend the teacher's chair and are called of men
Rabbi. By us ye become marvellous in the eyes of the laity, like
great lights in the world, and possess the dignities of the
Church according to your various stations. By us, while ye still
lack the first down upon your cheeks, ye are established in your
early years and bear the tonsure on your heads, while the dread
sentence of the Church is heard: Touch not mine anointed and do
my prophets no harm, and he who has rashly touched them let him
forthwith by his own blow be smitten violently with the wound of
an anathema. At length yielding your lives to wickedness,
reaching the two paths of Pythagoras, ye choose the left branch,
and going backward ye let go the lot of God which ye had first
assumed, becoming companions of thieves. And thus ever going
from bad to worse, dyed with theft and murder and manifold
impurities, your fame and conscience stained by sins, at the
bidding of justice ye are confined in manacles and fetters, and
are kept to be punished by a most shameful death. Then your
friend is put far away, nor is there any to mourn your lot.
Peter swears that he knows not the man: the people cry to the
judge: Crucify, crucify Him! If thou let this man go, thou act
not Caesar's friend. Now all refuge has perished, for ye must
stand before the judgment-seat, and there is no appeal, but only
hanging is in store for you. While the wretched man's heart is
thus filled with woe and only the sorrowing Muses bedew their
cheeks with tears, in his strait is heard on every side the
wailing appeal to us, and to avoid the danger of impending death
he shows the slight sign of the ancient tonsure which we bestowed
upon him, begging that we may be called to his aid and bear
witness to the privilege bestowed upon him. Then straightway
touched with pity we run to meet the prodigal son and snatch the
fugitive slave from the gates of death. The book he has not
forgotten is handed to him to be read, and while with lips
stammering with fear he reads a few words, the power of the judge
is loosed, the accuser is withdrawn, and death is put to flight.
O marvellous virtue of an empiric verse! O saving antidote of
dreadful ruin! O precious reading of the psalter, which for this
alone deserves to be called the book of life! Let the laity
undergo the judgment of the secular arm, that either sewn up in
sacks they may be carried out to Neptune, or planted in the earth
may fructify for Pluto, or may be offered amid the flames as a
fattened holocaust to Vulcan, or at least may be hung up as a
victim to Juno: while our nursling at a single reading of the
book of life is handed over to the custody of the Bishop, and
rigour is changed to favour, and the forum being transferred from
the laity, death is routed by the clerk who is the nursling of
books.

But now let us speak of the clerks who are vessels of virtue.
Which of you about to preach ascends the pulpit or the rostrum
without in some way consulting us? Which of you enters the
schools to teach or to dispute without relying upon our support?
First of all, it behoves you to eat the book with Ezechiel, that
the belly of your memory may be sweetened within, and thus as
with the panther refreshed, to whose breath all beasts and cattle
long to approach, the sweet savour of the spices it has eaten may
shed a perfume without. Thus our nature secretly working in our
own, listeners hasten up gladly, as the load-stone draws the iron
nothing loth. What an infinite host of books lie at Paris or
Athens, and at the same time resound in Britain and in Rome! In
truth, while resting they yet move, and while retaining their own
places they are carried about every way to the minds of
listeners. Finally, by the knowledge of literature, we establish
Priests, Bishops, Cardinals, and the Pope, that all things in the
ecclesiastical hierarchy may be fitly disposed. For it is from
books that everything of good that befalls the clerical condition
takes its origin. But let this suffice: for it pains us to
recall what we have bestowed upon the degenerate clergy, because
whatever gifts are distributed to the ungrateful seem to be lost
rather than bestowed.

Let us next dwell a little on the recital of the wrongs with
which they requite us, the contempts and cruelties of which we
cannot recite an example in each kind, nay, scarcely the main
classes of the several wrongs. In the first place, we are
expelled by force and arms from the homes of the clergy, which
are ours by hereditary right, who were used to have cells of
quietness in the inner chamber, but, alas! in these unhappy times
we are altogether exiled, suffering poverty without the gates.
For our places are seized now by dogs, now by hawks, now by that
biped beast whose cohabitation with the clergy was forbidden of
old, from which we have always taught our nurslings to flee more
than from the asp and the cockatrice; wherefore she, always
jealous of the love of us, and never to be appeased, at length
seeing us in some corner protected only by the web of some dead
spider, with a frown abuses and reviles us with bitter words,
declaring us alone of all the furniture in the house to be
unnecessary, and complaining that we are useless for any
household purpose, and advises that we should speedily be
converted into rich caps, sendal and silk and twice-dyed purple,
robes and furs, wool and linen: and, indeed, not without reason,
if she could see our inmost hearts, if she had listened to our
secret counsels, if she had read the book of Theophrastus or
Valerius, or only heard the twenty-fifth chapter of
Ecclesiasticus with understanding ears.

And hence it is that we have to mourn for the homes of which we
have been unjustly robbed; and as to our coverings, not that they
have not been given to us, but that the coverings anciently given
to us have been torn by violent hands, insomuch that our soul is
bowed down to the dust, our belly cleaveth unto the earth. We
suffer from various diseases, enduring pains in our backs and
sides; we lie with our limbs unstrung by palsy, and there is no
man who layeth it to heart, and no man who provides a mollifying
plaster. Our native whiteness that was clear with light has
turned to dun and yellow, so that no leech who should see us
would doubt that we are diseased with jaundice. Some of us are
suffering from gout, as our twisted extremities plainly show.
The smoke and dust by which we are continuously plagued have
dulled the keenness of our visual rays, and are now infecting our
bleared eyes with ophthalmia. Within we are devoured by the
fierce gripings of our entrails, which hungry worms cease not to
gnaw, and we undergo the corruption of the two Lazaruses, nor is
there anyone to anoint us with balm of cedar, nor to cry to us
who have been four days dead and already stink, Lazarus come
forth! No healing drug is bound around our cruel wounds, which
are so atrociously inflicted upon the innocent, and there is none
to put a plaster upon our ulcers; but ragged and shivering we are
flung away into dark corners, or in tears take our place with
holy Job upon his dunghill, or--too horrible to relate--are
buried in the depths of the common sewers. The cushion is
withdrawn that should support our evangelical sides, which ought
to have the first claim upon the incomes of the clergy, and the
common necessaries of life thus be for ever provided for us, who
are entrusted to their charge.

Again, we complain of another sort of injury which is too often
unjustly inflicted upon our persons. We are sold for bondmen and
bondwomen, and lie as hostages in taverns with no one to redeem
us. We fall a prey to the cruel shambles, where we see sheep and
cattle slaughtered not without pious tears, and where we die a
thousand times from such terrors as might frighten even the
brave. We are handed over to Jews, Saracens, heretics and
infidels, whose poison we always dread above everything, and by
whom it is well known that some of our parents have been infected
with pestiferous venom. In sooth, we who should be treated as masters in the sciences, and bear rule over the mechanics who should be subject to us, are instead handed over to the government of subordinates, as though some supremely noble monarch should be trodden under foot by rustic heels. Any seamster or cobbler or tailor or artificer of any trade keeps us shut up in prison for the luxurious and wanton pleasures of the clergy.

Now we would pursue a new kind of injury by which we suffer alike in person and in fame, the dearest thing we have. Our purity of race is diminished every day, while new authors’ names are imposed upon us by worthless compilers, translators, and transformers, and losing our ancient nobility, while we are reborn in successive generations, we become wholly degenerate; and thus against our will the name of some wretched stepfather is affixed to us, and the sons are robbed of the names of their true fathers. The verses of Virgil, while he was yet living, were claimed by an impostor; and a certain Fidentinus mendaciously usurped the works of Martial, whom Martial thus deservedly rebuked:

"The book you read is, Fidentinus! mine,
Though read so badly, 't well may pass for thine!"

What marvel, then, if when our authors are dead clerical apes use
us to make broad their phylacteries, since even while they are alive they try to seize us as soon as we are published? Ah! how often ye pretend that we who are ancient are but lately born, and try to pass us off as sons who are really fathers, calling us who have made you clerks the production of your studies. Indeed, we derived our origin from Athens, though we are now supposed to be from Rome; for Carmentis was always the pilferer of Cadmus, and we who were but lately born in England, will to-morrow be born again in Paris; and thence being carried to Bologna, will obtain an Italian origin, based upon no affinity of blood. Alas! how ye commit us to treacherous copyists to be written, how corruptly ye read us and kill us by medication, while ye supposed ye were correcting us with pious zeal. Oftentimes we have to endure barbarous interpreters, and those who are ignorant of foreign idioms presume to translate us from one language into another; and thus all propriety of speech is lost and our sense is shamefully mutilated contrary to the meaning of the author!

Truly noble would have been the condition of books if it had not been for the presumption of the tower of Babel, if but one kind of speech had been transmitted by the whole human race.

We will add the last clause of our long lament, though far too short for the materials that we have. For in us the natural use is changed to that which is against nature, while we who are the light of faithful souls everywhere fall a prey to painters knowing nought of letters, and are entrusted to goldsmiths to become, as though we were not sacred vessels of wisdom,
repositories of gold-leaf. We fall undeservedly into the power
of laymen, which is more bitter to us than any death, since they
have sold our people for nought, and our enemies themselves are
our judges.

It is clear from what we have said what infinite invectives we
could hurl against the clergy, if we did not think of our own
reputation. For the soldier whose campaigns are over venerates
his shield and arms, and grateful Corydon shows regard for his
decaying team, harrow, flail and mattock, and every manual
artificer for the instruments of his craft; it is only the
ungrateful cleric who despises and neglects those things which
have ever been the foundation of his honours.

CHAPTER V

THE COMPLAINT OF BOOKS AGAINST THE POSSESSIONERS

The venerable devotion of the religious orders is wont to be
solicitous in the care of books and to delight in their society,
as if they were the only riches. For some used to write them
with their own hands between the hours of prayer, and gave to the
making of books such intervals as they could secure and the times
appointed for the recreation of the body. By whose labours there
are resplendent to-day in most monasteries these sacred
treasuries full of cherubic letters, for giving the knowledge of
salvation to the student and a delectable light to the paths of
the laity. O manual toil, happier than any agricultural task! O
devout solicitude, where neither Martha nor Mary deserves to be
rebuked! O joyful house, in which the fruitful Leah does not
envy the beauteous Rachel, but action and contemplation share
each other's joys! O happy charge, destined to benefit endless
generations of posterity, with which no planting of trees, no
sowing of seeds, no pastoral delight in herds, no building of
fortified camps can be compared! Wherefore the memory of those
fathers should be immortal, who delighted only in the treasures
of wisdom, who most laboriously provided shining lamps against
future darkness, and against hunger of hearing the Word of God,
most carefully prepared, not bread baked in the ashes, nor of
barley, nor musty, but unleavened loaves made of the finest wheat
of divine wisdom, with which hungry souls might be joyfully fed

These men were the stoutest champions of the Christian army, who
defended our weakness by their most valiant arms; they were in
their time the most cunning takers of foxes, who have left us
their nets, that we might catch the young foxes, who cease not to
devour the growing vines. Of a truth, noble fathers, worthy of
perpetual benediction, ye would have been deservedly happy, if ye
had been allowed to beget offspring like yourselves, and to leave
no degenerate or doubtful progeny for the benefit of future
times.

But, painful to relate, now slothful Thersites handles the arms
of Achilles and the choice trappings of war-horses are spread
upon lazy asses, winking owls lord it in the eagle's nest, and the cowardly kite sits upon the perch of the hawk.

Liber Bacchus is ever loved,
And is into their bellies shoved,
By day and by night;
Liber Codex is neglected,
And with scornful hand rejected
Far out of their sight.

And as if the simple monastic folk of modern times were deceived by a confusion of names, while Liber Pater is preferred to Liber Patrum, the study of the monks nowadays is in the emptying of cups and not the emending of books; to which they do not hesitate to add the wanton music of Timotheus, jealous of chastity, and thus the song of the merry-maker and not the chant of the mourner is become the office of the monks. Flocks and fleeces, crops and granaries, leeks and potherbs, drink and goblets, are nowadays the reading and study of the monks, except a few elect ones, in whom lingers not the image but some slight vestige of the fathers that preceded them. And again, no materials at all are furnished us to commend the canons regular for their care or study of us, who though they bear their name of honour from their twofold rule, yet have neglected the notable clause of Augustine's rule, in which we are commended to his clergy in these words: Let books be asked for each day at a given hour; he who asks for them after the hour is not to receive them. Scarcely anyone observes
this devout rule of study after saying the prayers of the Church, 
but to care for the things of this world and to look at the 
plough that has been left is reckoned the highest wisdom. They 
take up bow and quiver, embrace arms and shield, devote the 
tribute of alms to dogs and not to the poor, become the slaves of 
dice and draughts, and of all such things as we are wont to 
forbid even to the secular clergy, so that we need not marvel if 
they disdain to look upon us, whom they see so much opposed to 
their mode of life.

Come then, reverend fathers, deign to recall your fathers and 
devote yourselves more faithfully to the study of holy books, 
without which all religion will stagger, without which the virtue 
of devotion will dry up like a sherd, and without which ye can 
afford no light to the world.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMPLAINT OF BOOKS AGAINST THE MENDICANTS

Poor in spirit, but most rich in faith, off-scourings of the 
world and salt of the earth, despisers of the world and fishers 
of men, how happy are ye, if suffering penury for Christ ye know 
how to possess your souls in patience! For it is not want the 
avenger of iniquity, nor the adverse fortune of your parents, nor 
vviolent necessity that has thus oppressed you with beggary, but a
devout will and Christ-like election, by which ye have chosen
that life as the best, which God Almighty made man as well by
word as by example declared to be the best. In truth, ye are the
latest offspring of the ever-fruitful Church, of late divinely
substituted for the Fathers and the Prophets, that your sound may
go forth into all the earth, and that instructed by our healthful
doctrines ye may preach before all kings and nations the
invincible faith of Christ. Moreover, that the faith of the
Fathers is chiefly enshrined in books the second chapter has
sufficiently shown, from which it is clearer than light that ye
ought to be zealous lovers of books above all other Christians.
Ye are commanded to sow upon all waters, because the Most High is
no respecter of persons, nor does the Most Holy desire the death
of sinners, who offered Himself to die for them, but desires to
heal the contrite in heart, to raise the fallen, and to correct
the perverse in the spirit of lenity. For which most salutary
purpose our kindly Mother Church has planted you freely, and
having planted has watered you with favours, and having watered
you has established you with privileges, that ye may be
coworkers with pastors and curates in procuring the salvation of
faithful souls. Wherefore, that the order of Preachers was
principally instituted for the study of the Holy Scriptures and
the salvation of their neighbours, is declared by their
constitutions, so that not only from the rule of Bishop
Augustine, which directs books to be asked for every day, but as
soon as they have read the prologue of the said constitutions
they may know from the very title of the same that they are
pledged to the love of books.
But alas! a threefold care of superfluities, viz., of the stomach, of dress, and of houses, has seduced these men and others following their example from the paternal care of books, and from their study. For, forgetting the providence of the Saviour (who is declared by the Psalmist to think upon the poor and needy), they are occupied with the wants of the perishing body, that their feasts may be splendid and their garments luxurious, against the rule, and the fabrics of their buildings, like the battlements of castles, carried to a height incompatible with poverty. Because of these three things, we books, who have ever procured their advancement and have granted them to sit among the powerful and noble, are put far from their heart's affection and are reckoned as superfluities; except that they rely upon some treatises of small value, from which they derive strange heresies and apocryphal imbecilities, not for the refreshment of souls, but rather for tickling the ears of the listeners. The Holy Scripture is not expounded, but is neglected and treated as though it were commonplace and known to all, though very few have touched its hem, and though its depth is such, as Holy Augustine declares, that it cannot be understood by the human intellect, however long it may toil with the utmost intensity of study. From this he who devotes himself to it assiduously, if only He will vouchsafe to open the door who has established the spirit of piety, may unfold a thousand lessons of moral teaching, which will flourish with the freshest novelty and will cherish the intelligence of the listeners with the most
delightful savours. Wherefore the first professors of evangelical poverty, after some slight homage paid to secular science, collecting all their force of intellect, devoted themselves to labours upon the sacred scripture, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord. And whatever they could steal from their famishing belly, or intercept from their half-covered body, they thought it the highest gain to spend in buying or correcting books. Whose worldly contemporaries observing their devotion and study bestowed upon them for the edification of the whole Church the books which they had collected at great expense in the various parts of the world.

In truth, in these days as ye are engaged with all diligence in pursuit of gain, it may be reasonably believed, if we speak according to human notions, that God thinks less upon those whom He perceives to distrust His promises, putting their hope in human providence, not considering the raven, nor the lilies, whom the Most High feeds and arrays. Ye do not think upon Daniel and the bearer of the mess of boiled pottage, nor recollect Elijah who was delivered from hunger once in the desert by angels, again in the torrent by ravens, and again in Sarepta by the widow, through the divine bounty, which gives to all flesh their meat in due season. Ye descend (as we fear) by a wretched anticlimax, distrust of the divine goodness producing reliance upon your own prudence, and reliance upon your own prudence begetting anxiety about worldly things, and excessive anxiety about worldly things taking away the love as well as the study of books; and thus
poverty in these days is abused to the injury of the Word of God, which ye have chosen only for profit's sake.

With summer fruit, as the people gossip, ye attract boys to religion, whom when they have taken the vows ye do not instruct by fear and force, as their age requires, but allow them to devote themselves to begging expeditions, and suffer them to spend the time, in which they might be learning, in procuring the favour of friends, to the annoyance of their parents, the danger of the boys, and the detriment of the order. And thus no doubt it happens that those who were not compelled to learn as unwilling boys, when they grow up presume to teach though utterly unworthy and unlearned, and a small error in the beginning becomes a very great one in the end. For there grows up among your promiscuous flock of laity a pestilent multitude of creatures, who nevertheless the more shamelessly force themselves into the office of preaching, the less they understand what they are saying, to the contempt of the Divine Word and the injury of souls. In truth, against the law ye plough with an ox and an ass together, in committing the cultivation of the Lord's field to learned and unlearned. Side by side, it is written, the oxen were ploughing and the asses feeding beside them: since it is the duty of the discreet to preach, but of the simple to feed themselves in silence by the hearing of sacred eloquence. How many stones ye fling upon the heap of Mercury nowadays! How many marriages ye procure for the eunuchs of wisdom! How many blind watchmen ye bid go round about the walls of the Church!
O idle fishermen, using only the nets of others, which when torn it is all ye can do to clumsily repair, but can net no new ones of your own! ye enter on the labours of others, ye repeat the lessons of others, ye mouth with theatric effort the superficially repeated wisdom of others. As the silly parrot imitates the words that he has heard, so such men are mere reciters of all, but authors of nothing, imitating Balaam's ass, which, though senseless of itself, yet became eloquent of speech and the teacher of its master though a prophet. Recover yourselves, O poor in Christ, and studiously regard us books, without which ye can never be properly shod in the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

Paul the Apostle, preacher of the truth and excellent teacher of the nations, for all his gear bade three things to be brought to him by Timothy, his cloak, books and parchments, affording an example to ecclesiastics that they should wear dress in moderation, and should have books for aid in study, and parchments, which the Apostle especially esteems, for writing: AND ESPECIALLY, he says, the parchments. And truly that clerk is crippled and maimed to his disablement in many ways, who is entirely ignorant of the art of writing. He beats the air with words and edifies only those who are present, but does nothing for the absent and for posterity. The man bore a writer's ink-horn upon his loins, who set a mark Tau upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry, Ezechiel ix.; teaching in a figure
that if any lack skill in writing, he shall not undertake the

task of preaching repentance.

Finally, in conclusion of the present chapter, books implore of
you: make your young men who though ignorant are apt of

intellect apply themselves to study, furnishing them with

necessaries, that ye may teach them not only goodness but
discipline and science, may terrify them by blows, charm them by
blandishments, mollify them by gifts, and urge them on by painful

rigour, so that they may become at once Socratics in morals and
Peripatetics in learning. Yesterday, as it were at the eleventh

hour, the prudent householder introduced you into his vineyard.

Repent of idleness before it is too late: would that with the
cunning steward ye might be ashamed of begging so shamelessly;
for then no doubt ye would devote yourselves more assiduously to
us books and to study.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMPLAINT OF BOOKS AGAINST WARS

Almighty Author and Lover of peace, scatter the nations that
delight in war, which is above all plagues injurious to books.

For wars being without the control of reason make a wild assault
on everything they come across, and, lacking the check of reason
they push on without discretion or distinction to destroy the
vessels of reason. Then the wise Apollo becomes the Python's prey, and Phronesis, the pious mother, becomes subject to the power of Phrenzy. Then winged Pegasus is shut up in the stall of Corydon, and eloquent Mercury is strangled. Then wise Pallas is struck down by the dagger of error, and the charming Pierides are smitten by the truculent tyranny of madness. O cruel spectacle! where you may see the Phoebus of philosophers, the all-wise Aristotle, whom God Himself made master of the master of the world, enchained by wicked hands and borne in shameful irons on the shoulders of gladiators from his sacred home. There you may see him who was worthy to be lawgiver to the lawgiver of the world and to hold empire over its emperor, made the slave of vile buffoons by the most unrighteous laws of war. O most wicked power of darkness, which does not fear to undo the approved divinity of Plato, who alone was worthy to submit to the view of the Creator, before he assuaged the strife of warring chaos, and before form had put on its garb of matter, the ideal types, in order to demonstrate the archetypal universe to its author, so that the world of sense might be modelled after the supernal pattern. O tearful sight! where the moral Socrates, whose acts were virtue and whose discourse was science, who deduced political justice from the principles of nature, is seen enslaved to some rascal robber. We bemoan Pythagoras, the parent of harmony, as, brutally scourged by the harrying furies of war, he utters not a song but the wailings of a dove. We mourn, too, for Zeno, who lest he should betray his secret bit off his tongue and fearlessly spat it out at the tyrant, and now, alas! is brayed and crushed to death in a mortar by Diomedon.
In sooth we cannot mourn with the grief that they deserve all the
various books that have perished by the fate of war in various
parts of the world. Yet we must tearfully recount the dreadful
ruin which was caused in Egypt by the auxiliaries in the
Alexandrian war, when seven hundred thousand volumes were
consumed by fire. These volumes had been collected by the royal
Ptolemies through long periods of time, as Aulus Gellius relates.
What an Atlantean progeny must be supposed to have then perished:
including the motions of the spheres, all the conjunctions of the
planets, the nature of the galaxy, and the prognostic generations
of comets, and all that exists in the heavens or in the ether!
Who would not shudder at such a hapless holocaust, where ink is
offered up instead of blood, where the glowing ashes of crackling
parchment were encarnadined with blood, where the devouring
flames consumed so many thousands of innocents in whose mouth was
no guile, where the unsparing fire turned into stinking ashes so
many shrines of eternal truth! A lesser crime than this is the
sacrifice of Jephthah or Agamemnon, where a pious daughter is
slain by a father's sword. How many labours of the famous
Hercules shall we suppose then perished, who because of his
knowledge of astronomy is said to have sustained the heaven on
his unyielding neck, when Hercules was now for the second time
cast into the flames. The secrets of the heavens, which Jonithus
learnt not from man or through man but received by divine
inspiration; what his brother Zoroaster, the servant of unclean
spirits, taught the Bactrians; what holy Enoch, the prefect of
Paradise, prophesied before he was taken from the world, and finally, what the first Adam taught his children of the things to come, which he had seen when caught up in an ecstasy in the book of eternity, are believed to have perished in those horrid flames. The religion of the Egyptians, which the book of the Perfect Word so commends; the excellent polity of the older Athens, which preceded by nine thousand years the Athens of Greece; the charms of the Chaldaeans; the observations of the Arabs and Indians; the ceremonies of the Jews; the architecture of the Babylonians; the agriculture of Noah the magic arts of Moses; the geometry of Joshua; the enigmas of Samson; the problems of Solomon from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop; the antidotes of Aesculapius; the grammar of Cadmus; the poems of Parnassus; the oracles of Apollo; the argonautics of Jason; the stratagems of Palamedes, and infinite other secrets of science are believed to have perished at the time of this conflagration.

Nay, Aristotle would not have missed the quadrature of the circle, if only baleful conflicts had spared the books of the ancients, who knew all the methods of nature. He would not have left the problem of the eternity of the world an open question, nor, as is credibly conceived, would he have had any doubts of the plurality of human intellects and of their eternity, if the perfect sciences of the ancients had not been exposed to the calamities of hateful wars. For by wars we are scattered into foreign lands, are mutilated, wounded, and shamefully disfigured, are buried under the earth and overwhelmed in the sea, are
devoured by the flames and destroyed by every kind of death. How much of our blood was shed by warlike Scipio, when he was eagerly compassing the overthrow of Carthage, the opponent and rival of the Roman empire! How many thousands of thousands of us did the ten years' war of Troy dismiss from the light of day! How many were driven by Anthony, after the murder of Tully, to seek hiding places in foreign provinces! How many of us were scattered by Theodoric, while Boethius was in exile, into the different quarters of the world, like sheep whose shepherd has been struck down! How many, when Seneca fell a victim to the cruelty of Nero, and willing yet unwilling passed the gates of death, took leave of him and retired in tears, not even knowing in what quarter to seek for shelter!

Happy was that translation of books which Xerxes is said to have made to Persia from Athens, and which Seleucus brought back again from Persia to Athens. O glad and joyful return! O wondrous joy, which you might then see in Athens, when the mother went in triumph to meet her progeny, and again showed the chambers in which they had been nursed to her now aging children! Their old homes were restored to their former inmates, and forthwith boards of cedar with shelves and beams of gopher wood are most skilfully planed; inscriptions of gold and ivory are designed for the several compartments, to which the volumes themselves are reverently brought and pleasantly arranged, so that no one hinders the entrance of another or injures its brother by excessive crowding.
But in truth infinite are the losses which have been inflicted
upon the race of books by wars and tumults. And as it is by no
means possible to enumerate and survey infinity, we will here
finally set up the Gades of our complaint, and turn again to the
prayers with which we began, humbly imploring that the Ruler of
Olympus and the Most High Governor of all the world will
establish peace and dispel wars and make our days tranquil under
His protection.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES WE HAVE HAD OF COLLECTING A STORE
OF BOOKS

Since to everything there is a season and an opportunity, as the
wise Ecclesiastes witnesseth, let us now proceed to relate the
manifold opportunities through which we have been assisted by the
divine goodness in the acquisition of books.

Although from our youth upwards we had always delighted in
holding social commune with learned men and lovers of books, yet
when we prospered in the world and made acquaintance with the
King's majesty and were received into his household, we obtained
ample facilities for visiting everywhere as we would, and of
hunting as it were certain most choice preserves, libraries private as well as public, and of the regular as well as of the secular clergy. And indeed while we filled various offices to the victorious Prince and splendidly triumphant King of England, Edward the Third from the Conquest--whose reign may the Almighty long and peacefully continue--first those about his court, but then those concerning the public affairs of his kingdom, namely the offices of Chancellor and Treasurer, there was afforded to us, in consideration of the royal favour, easy access for the purpose of freely searching the retreats of books. In fact, the fame of our love of them had been soon winged abroad everywhere, and we were reported to burn with such desire for books, and especially old ones, that it was more easy for any man to gain our favour by means of books than of money. Wherefore, since supported by the goodness of the aforesaid prince of worthy memory, we were able to requite a man well or ill, to benefit or injure mightily great as well as small, there flowed in, instead of presents and guerdons, and instead of gifts and jewels, soiled tracts and battered codices, gladsome alike to our eye and heart. Then the aumbries of the most famous monasteries were thrown open, cases were unlocked and caskets were undone, and volumes that had slumbered through long ages in their tombs wake up and are astonished, and those that had lain hidden in dark places are bathed in the ray of unwonted light. These long lifeless books, once most dainty, but now become corrupt and loathsome, covered with litters of mice and pierced with the gnawings of the worms, and who were once clothed in purple and fine linen, now lying in sackcloth and ashes, given up to oblivion, seemed to have become
habitations of the moth. Natheless among these, seizing the opportunity, we would sit down with more delight than a fastidious physician among his stores of gums and spices, and there we found the object and the stimulus of our affections.

Thus the sacred vessels of learning came into our control and stewardship; some by gift, others by purchase, and some lent to us for a season.

No wonder that when people saw that we were contented with gifts of this kind, they were anxious of their own accord to minister to our needs with those things that they were more willing to dispense with than the things they secured by ministering to our service. And in good will we strove so to forward their affairs that gain accrued to them, while justice suffered no disparagement. Indeed, if we had loved gold and silver goblets, high-bred horses, or no small sums of money, we might in those days have furnished forth a rich treasury. But in truth we wanted manuscripts not moneyscripts; we loved codices more than florins, and preferred slender pamphlets to pampered palfreys.

Besides all this, we were frequently made ambassador of this most illustrious Prince of everlasting memory, and were sent on the most various affairs of state, now to the Holy See, now to the Court of France, and again to various powers of the world, on tedious embassies and in times of danger, always carrying with us, however, that love of books which many waters could not quench. For this like a delicious draught sweetened the
bitterness of our journeyings and after the perplexing
intricacies and troublesome difficulties of causes, and the all
but inextricable labyrinths of public affairs afforded us a
little breathing space to enjoy a balmier atmosphere.

O Holy God of gods in Sion, what a mighty stream of pleasure made
glad our hearts whenever we had leisure to visit Paris, the
Paradise of the world, and to linger there; where the days seemed
ever few for the greatness of our love! There are delightful
libraries, more aromatic than stores of spicery; there are
luxuriant parks of all manner of volumes; there are Academic
meads shaken by the tramp of scholars; there are lounges of
Athens; walks of the Peripatetics; peaks of Parnassus; and
porches of the Stoics. There is seen the surveyor of all arts
and sciences Aristotle, to whom belongs all that is most
excellent in doctrine, so far as relates to this passing
sublunary world; there Ptolemy measures epicycles and eccentric
apogees and the nodes of the planets by figures and numbers;
there Paul reveals the mysteries; there his neighbour Dionysius
arranges and distinguishes the hierarchies; there the virgin
Carmentis reproduces in Latin characters all that Cadmus
collected in Phoenician letters; there indeed opening our
treasuries and unfastening our purse-strings we scattered money
with joyous heart and purchased inestimable books with mud and
sand. It is naught, it is naught, saith every buyer. But in
vain; for behold how good and how pleasant it is to gather
together the arms of the clerical warfare, that we may have the
means to crush the attacks of heretics, if they arise.

Further, we are aware that we obtained most excellent opportunities of collecting in the following way. From our early years we attached to our society with the most exquisite solicitude and discarding all partiality all such masters and scholars and professors in the several faculties as had become most distinguished by their subtlety of mind and the fame of their learning. Deriving consolation from their sympathetic conversation, we were delightfully entertained, now by demonstrative chains of reasoning, now by the recital of physical processes and the treatises of the doctors of the Church, now by stimulating discourses on the allegorical meanings of things, as by a rich and well-varied intellectual feast. Such men we chose as comrades in our years of learning, as companions in our chamber, as associates on our journeys, as guests at our table, and, in short, as helpmates in all the vicissitudes of life. But as no happiness is permitted to endure for long, we were sometimes deprived of the bodily companionship of some of these shining lights, when justice looking down from heaven, the ecclesiastical preferments and dignities that they deserved fell to their portion. And thus it happened, as was only right, that in attending to their own cures they were obliged to absent themselves from attendance upon us.

We will add yet another very convenient way by which a great multitude of books old as well as new came into our hands. For
we never regarded with disdain or disgust the poverty of the mendicant orders, adopted for the sake of Christ; but in all parts of the world took them into the kindly arms of our compassion, allured them by the most friendly familiarity into devotion to ourselves, and having so allured them cherished them with munificent liberality of beneficence for the sake of God, becoming benefactors of all of them in general in such wise that we seemed none the less to have adopted certain individuals with a special fatherly affection. To these men we were as a refuge in every case of need, and never refused to them the shelter of our favour, wherefore we deserved to find them most special furtherers of our wishes and promoters thereof in act and deed, who compassing land and sea, traversing the circuit of the world, and ransacking the universities and high schools of various provinces, were zealous in comba}ting for our desires, in the sure and certain hope of reward. What leveret could escape amidst so many keen-sighted hunters? What little fish could evade in turn their hooks and nets and snares? From the body of the Sacred Law down to the booklet containing the fallacies of yesterday, nothing could escape these searchers. Was some devout discourse uttered at the fountain-head of Christian faith, the holy Roman Curia, or was some strange question ventilated with novel arguments; did the solidity of Paris, which is now more zealous in the study of antiquity than in the subtle investigation of truth, did English subtlety, which illumined by the lights of former times is always sending forth fresh rays of truth, produce anything to the advancement of science or the declaration of the faith, this was instantly poured still fresh
into our ears, ungarbled by any babbler, unmutilated by any
trifler, but passing straight from the purest of wine-presses
into the vats of our memory to be clarified.

But whenever it happened that we turned aside to the cities and
places where the mendicants we have mentioned had their convents,
we did not disdain to visit their libraries and any other
repositories of books; nay, there we found heaped up amid the
utmost poverty the utmost riches of wisdom. We discovered in
their fardels and baskets not only crumbs falling from the
masters' table for the dogs, but the shewbread without leaven and
the bread of angels having in it all that is delicious; and
indeed the garners of Joseph full of corn, and all the spoil of
the Egyptians, and the very precious gifts which Queen Sheba
brought to Solomon.

These men are as ants ever preparing their meat in the summer,
and ingenious bees continually fabricating cells of honey. They
are successors of Bezaleel in devising all manner of workmanship
in silver and gold and precious stones for decorating the temple
of the Church. They are cunning embroiderers, who fashion the
breastplate and ephod of the high priest and all the various
vestments of the priests. They fashion the curtains of linen and
hair and coverings of ram's skins dyed red with which to adorn
the tabernacle of the Church militant. They are husbandmen that
sow, oxen treading out corn, sounding trumpets, shining Pleiades
and stars remaining in their courses, which cease not to fight
against Sisera. And to pay due regard to truth, without
prejudice to the judgment of any, although they lately at the
eleventh hour have entered the lord's vineyard, as the books that
are so fond of us eagerly declared in our sixth chapter, they
have added more in this brief hour to the stock of the sacred
books than all the other vine-dressers; following in the
footsteps of Paul, the last to be called but the first in
preaching, who spread the gospel of Christ more widely than all
others. Of these men, when we were raised to the episcopate we
had several of both orders, viz., the Preachers and Minors, as
personal attendants and companions at our board, men
distinguished no less in letters than in morals, who devoted
themselves with unwearied zeal to the correction, exposition,
tabulation, and compilation of various volumes. But although we
have acquired a very numerous store of ancient as well as modern
works by the manifold intermediation of the religious, yet we
must laud the Preachers with special praise, in that we have
found them above all the religious most freely communicative of
their stores without jealousy, and proved them to be imbued with
an almost Divine liberality, not greedy but fitting possessors of
luminous wisdom.

Besides all the opportunities mentioned above, we secured the
acquaintance of stationers and booksellers, not only within our
own country, but of those spread over the realms of France,
Germany, and Italy, money flying forth in abundance to anticipate
their demands; nor were they hindered by any distance or by the
fury of the seas, or by the lack of means for their expenses, 
from sending or bringing to us the books that we required. For 
they well knew that their expectations of our bounty would not be 
defrauded, but that ample repayment with usury was to be found 
with us.

Nor, finally, did our good fellowship, which aimed to captivate 
the affection of all, overlook the rectors of schools and the 
instructors of rude boys. But rather, when we had an 
opportunity, we entered their little plots and gardens and 
gathered sweet-smelling flowers from the surface and dug up their 
roots, obsolete indeed, but still useful to the student, which 
might, when their rank barbarism was digested heal the pectoral 
arteries with the gift of eloquence. Amongst the mass of these 
things we found some greatly meriting to be restored, which when 
skilfully cleansed and freed from the disfiguring rust of age, 
deserved to be renovated into comeliness of aspect. And applying 
in full measure the necessary means, as a type of the 
resurrection to come, we resuscitated them and restored them 
again to new life and health.

Moreover, we had always in our different manors no small 
multitude of copyists and scribes, of binders, correctors, 
illuminators, and generally of all who could usefully labour in 
the service of books. Finally, all of both sexes and of every 
rank or position who had any kind of association with books, 
could most easily open by their knocking the door of our heart,
and find a fit resting-place in our affection and favour. In so much did we receive those who brought books, that the multitude of those who had preceded them did not lessen the welcome of the after-comers, nor were the favours we had awarded yesterday prejudicial to those of to-day. Wherefore, ever using all the persons we have named as a kind of magnets to attract books, we had the desired accession of the vessels of science and a multitudinous flight of the finest volumes.

And this is what we undertook to narrate in the present chapter.

CHAPTER IX

HOW, ALTHOUGH WE PREFERRED THE WORKS OF THE ANCIENTS, WE HAVE NOT CONDEMNED THE STUDIES OF THE MODERNS

Although the novelties of the moderns were never disagreeable to our desires, who have always cherished with grateful affection those who devote themselves to study and who add anything either ingenious or useful to the opinions of our forefathers, yet we have always desired with more undoubting avidity to investigate the well-tested labours of the ancients. For whether they had by nature a greater vigour of mental sagacity, or whether they perhaps indulged in closer application to study, or whether they were assisted in their progress by both these things, one thing we are perfectly clear about, that their successors are barely
capable of discussing the discoveries of their forerunners, and of acquiring those things as pupils which the ancients dug out by difficult efforts of discovery. For as we read that the men of old were of a more excellent degree of bodily development than modern times are found to produce, it is by no means absurd to suppose that most of the ancients were distinguished by brighter faculties, seeing that in the labours they accomplished of both kinds they are inimitable by posterity. And so Phocas writes in the prologue to his Grammar:

Since all things have been said by men of sense
The only novelty is--to condense.

But in truth, if we speak of fervour of learning and diligence in study, they gave up all their lives to philosophy; while nowadays our contemporaries carelessly spend a few years of hot youth, alternating with the excesses of vice, and when the passions have been calmed, and they have attained the capacity of discerning truth so difficult to discover, they soon become involved in worldly affairs and retire, bidding farewell to the schools of philosophy. They offer the fuming must of their youthful intellect to the difficulties of philosophy, and bestow the clearer wine upon the money-making business of life. Further, as Ovid in the first book of the De Vetula justly complains:

The hearts of all men after gold aspire;
Few study to be wise, more to acquire:

Thus, Science! all thy virgin charms are sold,

Whose chaste embraces should disdain their gold,

Who seek not thee thyself, but pelf through thee,

Longing for riches, not philosophy.

And further on:

Thus Philosophy is seen

Exiled, and Philopecuny is queen,

which is known to be the most violent poison of learning.

How the ancients indeed regarded life as the only limit of study,
is shown by Valerius, in his book addressed to Tiberius, by many examples. Carneades, he says, was a laborious and lifelong soldier of wisdom: after he had lived ninety years, the same day put an end to his life and his philosophizing. Isocrates in his ninety-fourth year wrote a most noble work. Sophocles did the same when nearly a hundred years old. Simonides wrote poems in his eightieth year. Aulus Gellius did not desire to live longer than he should be able to write, as he says himself in the prologue to the Noctes Atticae.

The fervour of study which possessed Euclid the Socratic, Taurus
the philosopher used to relate to incite young men to study, as
Gellius tells in the book we have mentioned. For the Athenians,
hating the people of Megara, decreed that if any of the
Megarensians entered Athens, he should be put to death. Then
Euclid, who was a Megarensian, and had attended the lectures of
Socrates before this decree, disguising himself in a woman's
dress, used to go from Megara to Athens by night to hear
Socrates, a distance of twenty miles and back. Imprudent and
excessive was the fervour of Archimedes, a lover of geometry, who
would not declare his name, nor lift his head from the diagram he
had drawn, by which he might have prolonged his life, but
thinking more of study than of life dyed with his life-blood the
figure he was studying.

There are very many such examples of our proposition, but the
brevity we aim at does not allow us to recall them. But, painful
to relate, the clerks who are famous in these days pursue a very
different course. Afflicted with ambition in their tender years,
and slightly fastening to their untried arms the Icarian wings of
presumption, they prematurely snatch the master's cap; and mere
boys become unworthy professors of the several faculties, through
which they do not make their way step by step, but like goats
ascend by leaps and bounds; and, having slightly tasted of the
mighty stream, they think that they have drunk it dry, though
their throats are hardly moistened. And because they are not
grounded in the first rudiments at the fitting time, they build a
tottering edifice on an unstable foundation, and now that they
have grown up, they are ashamed to learn what they ought to have
learned while young, and thus they are compelled to suffer for
ever for too hastily jumping at dignities they have not deserved.
For these and the like reasons the tyros in the schools do not
attain to the solid learning of the ancients in a few short hours
of study, although they may enjoy distinctions, may be accorded
titles, be authorized by official robes, and solemnly installed
in the chairs of the elders. Just snatched from the cradle and
hastily weaned, they mouth the rules of Priscian and Donatus;
while still beardless boys they gabble with childish stammering
the Categorics and Peri Hermeneias, in the writing of which the
great Aristotle is said to have dipped his pen in his heart's
blood. Passing through these faculties with baneful haste and a
harmful diploma, they lay violent hands upon Moses, and
sprinkling about their faces dark waters and thick clouds of the
skies, they offer their heads, unhonoured by the snows of age,
for the mitre of the pontificate. This pest is greatly
encouraged, and they are helped to attain this fantastic
clericate with such nimble steps, by Papal provisions obtained by
insidious prayers, and also by the prayers, which may not be
rejected, of cardinals and great men, by the cupidity of friends
and relatives, who, building up Sion in blood, secure
ecclesiastical dignities for their nephews and pupils, before
they are seasoned by the course of nature or ripeness of
learning.

Alas! by the same disease which we are deploiting, we see that the
Palladium of Paris has been carried off in these sad times of ours, wherein the zeal of that noble university, whose rays once shed light into every corner of the world, has grown lukewarm, nay, is all but frozen. There the pen of every scribe is now at rest, generations of books no longer succeed each other, and there is none who begins to take place as a new author. They wrap up their doctrines in unskilled discourse, and are losing all propriety of logic, except that our English subtleties, which they denounce in public, are the subject of their furtive vigils.

Admirable Minerva seems to bend her course to all the nations of the earth, and reacheth from end to end mightily, that she may reveal herself to all mankind. We see that she has already visited the Indians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and Greeks, the Arabs and the Romans. Now she has passed by Paris, and now has happily come to Britain, the most noble of islands, nay, rather a microcosm in itself, that she may show herself a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians. At which wondrous sight it is conceived by most men, that as philosophy is now lukewarm in France, so her soldiery are unmanned and languishing.

CHAPTER X

OF THE GRADUAL PERFECTING OF BOOKS

While assiduously seeking out the wisdom of the men of old,
according to the counsel of the Wise Man (Eccles. xxxix.): The wise man, he says, will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, we have not thought fit to be misled into the opinion that the first founders of the arts have purged away all crudeness, knowing that the discoveries of each of the faithful, when weighed in a faithful balance, makes a tiny portion of science, but that by the anxious investigations of a multitude of scholars, each as it were contributing his share, the mighty bodies of the sciences have grown by successive augmentations to the immense bulk that we now behold. For the disciples, continually melting down the doctrines of their masters, and passing them again through the furnace, drove off the dross that had been previously overlooked, until there came out refined gold tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times to perfection, and stained by no admixture of error or doubt.

For not even Aristotle, although a man of gigantic intellect, in whom it pleased Nature to try how much of reason she could bestow upon mortality, and whom the Most High made only a little lower than the angels, sucked from his own fingers those wonderful volumes which the whole world can hardly contain. But, on the contrary, with lynx-eyed penetration he had seen through the sacred books of the Hebrews, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Chaldaeans, the Persians and the Medes, all of which learned Greece had transferred into her treasuries. Whose true sayings he received, but smoothed away their crudities, pruned their superfluities, supplied their deficiencies, and removed their
errors. And he held that we should give thanks not only to those who teach rightly, but even to those who err, as affording the way of more easily investigating truth, as he plainly declares in the second book of his Metaphysics. Thus many learned lawyers contributed to the Pandects, many physicians to the Tegni, and it was by this means that Avicenna edited his Canon, and Pliny his great work on Natural History, and Ptolemy the Almagest.

For as in the writers of annals it is not difficult to see that the later writer always presupposes the earlier, without whom he could by no means relate the former times, so too we are to think of the authors of the sciences. For no man by himself has brought forth any science, since between the earliest students and those of the latter time we find intermediaries, ancient if they be compared with our own age, but modern if we think of the foundations of learning, and these men we consider the most learned. What would Virgil, the chief poet among the Latins, have achieved, if he had not despoiled Theocritus, Lucretius, and Homer, and had not ploughed with their heifer? What, unless again and again he had read somewhat of Parthenius and Pindar, whose eloquence he could by no means imitate? What could Sallust, Tully, Boethius, Macrobius, Lactantius, Martianus, and in short the whole troop of Latin writers have done, if they had not seen the productions of Athens or the volumes of the Greeks? Certes, little would Jerome, master of three languages, Ambrosius, Augustine, though he confesses that he hated Greek, or even Gregory, who is said to have been wholly ignorant of it,
have contributed to the doctrine of the Church, if more learned
Greece had not furnished them from its stores. As Rome, watered
by the streams of Greece, had earlier brought forth philosophers
in the image of the Greeks, in like fashion afterwards it
produced doctors of the orthodox faith. The creeds we chant are
the sweat of Grecian brows, promulgated by their Councils, and
established by the martyrdom of many.

Yet their natural slowness, as it happens, turns to the glory of
the Latins, since as they were less learned in their studies, so
they were less perverse in their errors. In truth, the Arian
heresy had all but eclipsed the whole Church; the Nestorian
wickedness presumed to rave with blasphemous rage against the
Virgin, for it would have robbed the Queen of Heaven, not in open
fight but in disputation, of her name and character as Mother of
God, unless the invincible champion Cyril, ready to do single
battle, with the help of the Council of Ephesus, had in vehemence
of spirit utterly extinguished it. Innumerable are the forms as
well as the authors of Greek heresies; for as they were the
original cultivators of our holy faith, so too they were the
first sowers of tares, as is shown by veracious history. And
thus they went on from bad to worse, because in endeavouring to
part the seamless vesture of the Lord, they totally destroyed
primitive simplicity of doctrine, and blinded by the darkness of
novelty would fall into the bottomless pit, unless He provide for
them in His inscrutable prerogative, whose wisdom is past
reckoning.
Let this suffice; for here we reach the limit of our power of judgment. One thing, however, we conclude from the premises, that the ignorance of the Greek tongue is now a great hindrance to the study of the Latin writers, since without it the doctrines of the ancient authors, whether Christian or Gentile, cannot be understood. And we must come to a like judgment as to Arabic in numerous astronomical treatises, and as to Hebrew as regards the text of the Holy Bible, which deficiencies, indeed, Clement V. provides for, if only the bishops would faithfully observe what they so lightly decree. Wherefore we have taken care to provide a Greek as well as a Hebrew grammar for our scholars, with certain other aids, by the help of which studious readers may greatly inform themselves in the writing, reading, and understanding of the said tongues, although only the hearing of them can teach correctness of idiom.

CHAPTER XI

WHY WE HAVE PREFERRED BOOKS OF LIBERAL LEARNING TO BOOKS OF LAW

That lucrative practice of positive law, designed for the dispensation of earthly things, the more useful it is found by the children of this world, so much the less does it aid the children of light in comprehending the mysteries of holy writ and the secret sacraments of the faith, seeing that it disposes us
peculiarly to the friendship of the world, by which man, as S. James testifies, is made the enemy of God. Law indeed encourages rather than extinguishes the contentions of mankind, which are the result of unbounded greed, by complicated laws, which can be turned either way; though we know that it was created by jurisconsults and pious princes for the purpose of assuaging these contentions. But in truth, as the same science deals with contraries, and the power of reason can be used to opposite ends, and at the same the human mind is more inclined to evil, it happens with the practisers of this science that they usually devote themselves to promoting contention rather than peace, and instead of quoting laws according to the intent of the legislator, violently strain the language thereof to effect their own purposes.

Wherefore, although the over-mastering love of books has possessed our mind from boyhood, and to rejoice in their delights has been our only pleasure, yet the appetite for the books of the civil law took less hold of our affections, and we have spent but little labour and expense in acquiring volumes of this kind. For they are useful only as the scorpion in treacle, as Aristotle, the sun of science, has said of logic in his book De Pomo. We have noticed a certain manifest difference of nature between law and science, in that every science is delighted and desires to open its inward parts and display the very heart of its principles, and to show forth the roots from which it buds and flourishes, and that the emanation of its springs may be seen of
all men; for thus from the cognate and harmonious light of the
truth of conclusion to principles, the whole body of science
will be full of light, having no part dark. But laws, on the
contrary, since they are only human enactments for the regulation
of social life, or the yokes of princes thrown over the necks of
their subjects, refuse to be brought to the standard of
synteresis, the origin of equity, because they feel that they
possess more of arbitrary will than rational judgment. Wherefore
the judgment of the wise for the most part is that the causes of
laws are not a fit subject of discussion. In truth, many laws
acquire force by mere custom, not by syllogistic necessity, like
the arts: as Aristotle, the Phoebus of the Schools, urges in the
second book of the Politics, where he confutes the policy of
Hippodamus, which holds out rewards to the inventors of new laws,
because to abrogate old laws and establish new ones is to weaken
the force of those which exist. For whatever receives its
stability from use alone must necessarily be brought to nought by
disuse.

From which it is seen clearly enough, that as laws are neither
arts nor sciences, so books of law cannot properly be called
books of art or science. Nor is this faculty which we may call
by a special term geologia, or the earthly science, to be
properly numbered among the sciences. Now the books of the
liberal arts are so useful to the divine writings, that without
their aid the intellect would vainly aspire to understand them.
CHAPTER XII

WHY WE HAVE CAUSED BOOKS OF GRAMMAR TO BE SO DILIGENTLY PREPARED

While we were constantly delighting ourselves with the reading of books, which it was our custom to read or have read to us every day, we noticed plainly how much the defective knowledge even of a single word hinders the understanding, as the meaning of no sentence can be apprehended, if any part of it be not understood. Wherefore we ordered the meanings of foreign words to be noted with particular care, and studied the orthography, prosody, etymology, and syntax in ancient grammarians with unrelaxing carefulness, and took pains to elucidate terms that had grown too obscure by age with suitable explanations, in order to make a smooth path for our students.

This is the whole reason why we took care to replace the antiquated volumes of the grammarians by improved codices, that we might make royal roads, by which our scholars in time to come might attain without stumbling to any science.

CHAPTER XIII

WHY WE HAVE NOT WHOLLY NEGLECTED THE FABLES OF THE POETS
All the varieties of attack directed against the poets by the
lovers of naked truth may be repelled by a two-fold defence:
either that even in an unseemly subject-matter we may learn a
charming fashion of speech, or that where a fictitious but
becoming subject is handled, natural or historical truth is
pursued under the guise of allegorical fiction.

Although it is true that all men naturally desire knowledge, yet
they do not all take the same pleasure in learning. On the
contrary, when they have experienced the labour of study and find
their senses wearied, most men inconsiderately fling away the
nut, before they have broken the shell and reached the kernel.
For man is naturally fond of two things, namely, freedom from
control and some pleasure in his activity; for which reason no
one without reason submits himself to the control of others, or
willingly engages in any tedious task. For pleasure crowns
activity, as beauty is a crown to youth, as Aristotle truly
asserts in the tenth book of the Ethics. Accordingly the wisdom
of the ancients devised a remedy by which to entice the wanton
minds of men by a kind of pious fraud, the delicate Minerva
secretly lurking beneath the mask of pleasure. We are wont to
allure children by rewards, that they may cheerfully learn what
we force them to study even though they are unwilling. For our
fallen nature does not tend to virtue with the same enthusiasm
with which it rushes into vice. Horace has expressed this for us
in a brief verse of the Ars Poetica, where he says:
All poets sing to profit or delight.

And he has plainly intimated the same thing in another verse of the same book, where he says:

He hits the mark, who mingles joy with use.

How many students of Euclid have been repelled by the Pons Asinorum, as by a lofty and precipitous rock, which no help of ladders could enable them to scale! THIS IS A HARD SAYING, they exclaim, AND WHO CAN RECEIVE IT. The child of inconstancy, who ended by wishing to be transformed into an ass, would perhaps never have given up the study of philosophy, if he had met him in friendly guise veiled under the cloak of pleasure; but anon, astonished by Crato's chair and struck dumb by his endless questions, as by a sudden thunderbolt, he saw no refuge but in flight.

So much we have alleged in defence of the poets; and now we proceed to show that those who study them with proper intent are not to be condemned in regard to them. For our ignorance of one single word prevents the understanding of a whole long sentence, as was assumed in the previous chapter. As now the sayings of the saints frequently allude to the inventions of the poets, it
must needs happen that through our not knowing the poem referred
to, the whole meaning of the author is completely obscured, and
assuredly, as Cassiodorus says in his book Of the Institutes of
Sacred Literature: Those things are not to be considered trifles
without which great things cannot come to pass. It follows
therefore that through ignorance of poetry we do not understand
Jerome, Augustine, Boethius, Lactantius, Sidonius, and very many
others, a catalogue of whom would more than fill a long chapter.

The Venerable Bede has very clearly discussed and determined this
doubtful point, as is related by that great compiler Gratian, the
repeater of numerous authors, who is as confused in form as he
was eager in collecting matter for his compilation. Now he
writes in his 37th section: Some read secular literature for
pleasure, taking delight in the inventions and elegant language
of the poets; but others study this literature for the sake of
scholarship, that by their reading they may learn to detest the
errors of the Gentiles and may devoutly apply what they find
useful in them to the use of sacred learning. Such men study
secular literature in a laudable manner. So far Bede.

Taking this salutary instruction to heart, let the detractors of
those who study the poets henceforth hold their peace, and let
not those who are ignorant of these things require that others
should be as ignorant as themselves, for this is the consolation
of the wretched. And therefore let every man see that his own
intentions are upright, and he may thus make of any subject,
observing the limitations of virtue, a study acceptable to God.

And if he have found profit in poetry, as the great Virgil relates that he had done in Ennius, he will not have done amiss.

CHAPTER XIV

WHO OUGHT TO BE SPECIAL LOVERS OF BOOKS

To him who recollects what has been said before, it is plain and evident who ought to be the chief lovers of books. For those who have most need of wisdom in order to perform usefully the duties of their position, they are without doubt most especially bound to show more abundantly to the sacred vessels of wisdom the anxious affection of a grateful heart. Now it is the office of the wise man to order rightly both himself and others, according to the Phoebus of philosophers, Aristotle, who deceives not nor is deceived in human things. Wherefore princes and prelates, judges and doctors, and all other leaders of the commonwealth, as more than others they have need of wisdom, so more than others ought they to show zeal for the vessels of wisdom.

Boethius, indeed, beheld Philosophy bearing a sceptre in her left hand and books in her right, by which it is evidently shown to all men that no one can rightly rule a commonwealth without books. Thou, says Boethius, speaking to Philosophy, hast sanctioned this saying by the mouth of Plato, that states would
be happy if they were ruled by students of philosophy, or if
their rulers would study philosophy. And again, we are taught by
the very gesture of the figure that in so far as the right hand
is better than the left, so far the contemplative life is more
worthy than the active life; and at the same time we are shown
that the business of the wise man is to devote himself by turns,
now to the study of truth, and now to the dispensation of
temporal things.

We read that Philip thanked the Gods devoutly for having granted
that Alexander should be born in the time of Aristotle, so that
educated under his instruction he might be worthy to rule his
father's empire. While Phaeton unskilled in driving becomes the
charioteer of his father's car, he unhappily distributes to
mankind the heat of Phoebus, now by excessive nearness, and now
by withdrawing it too far, and so, lest all beneath him should be
imperilled by the closeness of his driving, justly deserved to be
struck by the thunderbolt.

The history of the Greeks as well as Romans shows that there were
no famous princes among them who were devoid of literature. The
sacred law of Moses in prescribing to the king a rule of
government, enjoins him to have a copy made of the book of Divine
law (Deut. xvii.) according to the copy shown by the priests, in
which he was to read all the days of his life. Certes, God
Himself, who hath made and who fashioneth every day the hearts of
every one of us, knows the feebleness of human memory and the
instability of virtuous intentions in mankind. Wherefore He has
willed that books should be as it were an antidote to all evil,
the reading and use of which He has commanded to be the healthful
daily nourishment of the soul, so that by them the intellect
being refreshed and neither weak nor doubtful should never
hesitate in action. This subject is elegantly handled by John of
Salisbury, in his Policraticon. In conclusion, all classes of
men who are conspicuous by the tonsure or the sign of clerkship,
against whom books lifted up their voices in the fourth, fifth,
and sixth chapters, are bound to serve books with perpetual
veneration.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE ADVANTAGES OF THE LOVE OF BOOKS

It transcends the power of human intellect, however deeply it may
have drunk of the Pegasean fount, to develop fully the title of
the present chapter. Though one should speak with the tongue of
men and angels, though he should become a Mercury or Tully,
though he should grow sweet with the milky eloquence of Livy, yet
he will plead the stammering of Moses, or with Jeremiah will
confess that he is but a boy and cannot speak, or will imitate
Echo rebounding from the mountains. For we know that the love of
books is the same thing as the love of wisdom, as was proved in
the second chapter. Now this love is called by the Greek word
philosophy, the whole virtue of which no created intelligence can
comprehend; for she is believed to be the mother of all good
things: Wisdom vii. She as a heavenly dew extinguishes the heats
of fleshly vices, the intense activity of the mental forces
relaxing the vigour of the animal forces, and slothfulness being
wholly put to flight, which being gone all the bows of Cupid are
unstrung.

Hence Plato says in the Phaedo: The philosopher is manifest in
this, that he dissevers the soul from communion with the body.
Love, says Jerome, the knowledge of the scriptures, and thou wilt
not love the vices of the flesh. The godlike Xenocrates showed
this by the firmness of his reason, who was declared by the
famous hetaera Phryne to be a statue and not a man, when all her
blandishments could not shake his resolve, as Valerius Maximus
relates at length. Our own Origen showed this also, who chose
rather to be unsexed by the mutilation of himself, than to be
made effeminate by the omnipotence of woman--though it was a
hasty remedy, repugnant alike to nature and to virtue, whose
place it is not to make men insensible to passion, but to slay
with the dagger of reason the passions that spring from instinct.

Again, all who are smitten with the love of books think cheaply
of the world and wealth; as Jerome says to Vigilantius: The same
man cannot love both gold and books. And thus it has been said
in verse:
No iron-stained hand is fit to handle books,
Nor he whose heart on gold so gladly looks:
The same men love not books and money both,
And books thy herd, O Epicurus, loathe;
Misers and bookmen make poor company,
Nor dwell in peace beneath the same roof-tree.
No man, therefore, can serve both books and Mammon.

The hideousness of vice is greatly reprobated in books, so that
he who loves to commune with books is led to detest all manner of
vice. The demon, who derives his name from knowledge, is most
effectually defeated by the knowledge of books, and through books
his multitudinous deceits and the endless labyrinths of his guile
are laid bare to those who read, lest he be transformed into an
angel of light and circumvent the innocent by his wiles. The
reverence of God is revealed to us by books, the virtues by which
He is worshipped are more expressly manifested, and the rewards
are described that are promised by the truth, which deceives not,
neither is deceived. The truest likeness of the beatitude to
come is the contemplation of the sacred writings, in which we
behold in turn the Creator and the creature, and draw from
streams of perpetual gladness. Faith is established by the power
of books; hope is strengthened by their solace, insomuch that by
patience and the consolation of scripture we are in good hope.
Charity is not puffed up, but is edified by the knowledge of true
learning, and, indeed, it is clearer than light that the Church
is established upon the sacred writings.

Books delight us, when prosperity smiles upon us; they comfort us inseparably when stormy fortune frowns on us. They lend validity to human compacts, and no serious judgments are propounded without their help. Arts and sciences, all the advantages of which no mind can enumerate, consist in books. How highly must we estimate the wondrous power of books, since through them we survey the utmost bounds of the world and time, and contemplate the things that are as well as those that are not, as it were in the mirror of eternity. In books we climb mountains and scan the deepest gulls of the abyss; in books we behold the finny tribes that may not exist outside their native waters, distinguish the properties of streams and springs and of various lands; from books we dig out gems and metals and the materials of every kind of mineral, and learn the virtues of herbs and trees and plants, and survey at will the whole progeny of Neptune, Ceres, and Pluto.

But if we please to visit the heavenly inhabitants, Taurus, Caucasus, and Olympus are at hand, from which we pass beyond the realms of Juno and mark out the territories of the seven planets by lines and circles. And finally we traverse the loftiest firmament of all, adorned with signs, degrees, and figures in the utmost variety. There we inspect the antarctic pole, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; we admire the luminous Milky Way and the Zodiac, marvellously and delightfully pictured with
celestial animals. Thence by books we pass on to separate
substances, that the intellect may greet kindred intelligences,
and with the mind's eye may discern the First Cause of all things
and the Unmoved Mover of infinite virtue, and may immerse itself
in love without end. See how with the aid of books we attain the
reward of our beatitude, while we are yet sojourners below.

Why need we say more? Certes, just as we have learnt on the
authority of Seneca, leisure without letters is death and the
sepulture of the living, so contrariwise we conclude that
occupation with letters or books is the life of man.

Again, by means of books we communicate to friends as well as
foes what we cannot safely entrust to messengers; since the book
is generally allowed access to the chambers of princes, from
which the voice of its author would be rigidly excluded, as
Tertullian observes at the beginning of his Apologeticus. When
shut up in prison and in bonds, and utterly deprived of bodily
liberty, we use books as ambassadors to our friends, and entrust
them with the conduct of our cause, and send them where to go
ourselves would incur the penalty of death. By the aid of books
we remember things that are past, and even prophesy as to the
future; and things present, which shift and flow, we perpetuate
by committing them to writing.

The felicitous studiousness and the studious felicity of the
all-powerful eunuch, of whom we are told in the Acts, who had been so mightily kindled by the love of the prophetic writings that he ceased not from his reading by reason of his journey, had banished all thought of the populous palace of Queen Candace, and had forgotten even the treasures of which he was the keeper, and had neglected alike his journey and the chariot in which he rode. Love of his book alone had wholly engrossed this domicile of chastity, under whose guidance he soon deserved to enter the gate of faith. O gracious love of books, which by the grace of baptism transformed the child of Gehenna and nursling of Tartarus into a Son of the Kingdom!

Let the feeble pen now cease from the tenor of an infinite task, lest it seem foolishly to undertake what in the beginning it confessed to be impossible to any.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT IT IS MERITORIOUS TO WRITE NEW BOOKS AND TO RENEW THE OLD

Just as it is necessary for the state to prepare arms and to provide abundant stores of victuals for the soldiers who are to fight for it, so it is fitting for the Church Militant to fortify itself against the assaults of pagans and heretics with a multitude of sound writings.
But because all the appliances of mortal men with the lapse of
time suffer the decay of mortality, it is needful to replace the
volumes that are worn out with age by fresh successors, that the
perpetuity of which the individual is by its nature incapable may
be secured to the species; and hence it is that the Preacher
says: Of making many books there is no end. For as the bodies of
books, seeing that they are formed of a combination of contrary
elements, undergo a continual dissolution of their structure, so
by the forethought of the clergy a remedy should be found, by
means of which the sacred book paying the debt of nature may
obtain a natural heir and may raise up like seed to its dead
brother, and thus may be verified that saying of Ecclesiasticus:
His father is dead, and he is as if he were not dead; for he hath
left one behind him that is like himself. And thus the
transcription of ancient books is as it were the begetting of
fresh sons, on whom the office of the father may devolve, lest it
suffer detriment. Now such transcribers are called antiquarii,
whose occupations Cassiodorus confesses please him above all the
tasks of bodily labour, adding: "Happy effort," he says,
"laudable industry, to preach to men with the hand, to let loose
tongues with the fingers, silently to give salvation to mortals,
and to fight with pen and ink against the illicit wiles of the
Evil One." So far Cassiodorus. Moreover, our Saviour exercised
the office of the scribe when He stooped down and with His finger
wrote on the ground (John viii.), that no one, however exalted,
may think it unworthy of him to do what he sees the wisdom of God
the Father did.
O singular serenity of writing, to practise which the Artificer
of the world stoops down, at whose dread name every knee doth
bow! O venerable handicraft pre-eminent above all other crafts
that are practised by the hand of man, to which our Lord humbly
inclines His breast, to which the finger of God is applied,
performing the office of a pen! We do not read of the Son of God
that He sowed or ploughed, wove or digged; nor did any other of
the mechanic arts befit the divine wisdom incarnate except to
trace letters in writing, that every gentleman and sciolist may
know that fingers are given by God to men for the task of writing
rather than for war. Wherefore we entirely approve the judgment
of books, wherein they declared in our sixth chapter the clerk
who cannot write to be as it were disabled.

God himself inscribes the just in the book of the living; Moses
received the tables of stone written with the finger of God. Job
desires that he himself that judgeth would write a book.
Belshazzar trembled when he saw the fingers of a man's hand
writing upon the wall, Mene tekel phares. I wrote, says
Jeremiah, with ink in the book. Christ bids his beloved disciple
John, What thou seest write in a book. So the office of the
writer is enjoined on Isaiah and on Joshua, that the act and
skill of writing may be commended to future generations. Christ
Himself has written on His vesture and on His thigh King of Kings
and Lord of Lords, so that without writing the royal ornaments of
the Omnipotent cannot be made perfect. Being dead they cease not
to teach, who write books of sacred learning. Paul did more for
building up the fabric of the Church by writing his holy
epistles, than by preaching by word of mouth to Jews and
Gentiles. He who has attained the prize continues daily by
books, what he long ago began while a sojourner upon the earth;
and thus is fulfilled in the doctors writing books the saying of
the Prophet: They that turn many to righteousness shall be as
the stars for ever and ever.

Moreover, it has been determined by the doctors of the Church
that the longevity of the ancients, before God destroyed the
original world by the Deluge, is to be ascribed to a miracle and
not to nature; as though God granted to them such length of days
as was required for finding out the sciences and writing them in
books; amongst which the wonderful variety of astronomy required,
according to Josephus, a period of six hundred years, to submit
it to ocular observation. Nor, indeed, do they deny that the
fruits of the earth in that primitive age afforded a more
nutritious aliment to men than in our modern times, and thus they
had not only a livelier energy of body, but also a more
lengthened period of vigour; to which it contributed not a little
that they lived according to virtue and denied themselves all
luxurious delights. Whoever therefore is by the good gift of God
endowed with gift of science, let him, according to the counsel
of the Holy Spirit, write wisdom in his time of leisure (Eccles.
xxxvii.), that his reward may be with the blessed and his days
may be lengthened in this present world.
And further, if we turn our discourse to the princes of the world, we find that famous emperors not only attained excellent skill in the art of writing, but indulged greatly in its practice. Julius Caesar, the first and greatest of them all, has left us Commentaries on the Gallic and the Civil Wars written by himself; he wrote also two books De Analogia, and two books of Anticatones, and a poem called Iter; and many other works. Julius and Augustus devised means of writing one letter for another, and so concealing what they wrote. For Julius put the fourth letter for the first, and so on through the alphabet; whilst Augustus used the second for the first, the third for the second, and so throughout. He is said in the greatest difficulties of affairs during the Mutinensian War to have read and written and even declaimed every day. Tiberius wrote a lyric poem and some Greek verses. Claudius likewise was skilled in both Greek and Latin, and wrote several books. But Titus was skilled above all men in the art of writing, and easily imitated any hand he chose; so that he used to say that if he had wished it he might have become a most skilful forger. All these things are noted by Suetonius in his Lives of the XII. Caesars.

CHAPTER XVII

OF SHOWING DUE PROPRIETY IN THE CUSTODY OF BOOKS
We are not only rendering service to God in preparing volumes of new books, but also exercising an office of sacred piety when we treat books carefully, and again when we restore them to their proper places and commend them to inviolable custody; that they may rejoice in purity while we have them in our hands, and rest securely when they are put back in their repositories. And surely next to the vestments and vessels dedicated to the Lord's body, holy books deserve to be rightly treated by the clergy, to which great injury is done so often as they are touched by unclean hands. Wherefore we deem it expedient to warn our students of various negligences, which might always be easily avoided and do wonderful harm to books.

And in the first place as to the opening and closing of books, let there be due moderation, that they be not unclasped in precipitate haste, nor when we have finished our inspection be put away without being duly closed. For it behoves us to guard a book much more carefully than a boot.

But the race of scholars is commonly badly brought up, and unless they are bridled in by the rules of their elders they indulge in infinite puerilities. They behave with petulance, and are puffed up with presumption, judging of everything as if they were certain, though they are altogether inexperienced.

You may happen to see some headstrong youth lazily lounging over
his studies, and when the winter's frost is sharp, his nose
running from the nipping cold drips down, nor does he think of
wiping it with his pocket-handkerchief until he has bedewed the
book before him with the ugly moisture. Would that he had before
him no book, but a cobbler's apron! His nails are stuffed with
fetid filth as black as jet, with which he marks any passage that
pleases him. He distributes a multitude of straws, which he
inserts to stick out in different places, so that the halm may
remind him of what his memory cannot retain. These straws,
because the book has no stomach to digest them, and no one takes
them out, first distend the book from its wonted closing, and at
length, being carelessly abandoned to oblivion, go to decay. He
does not fear to eat fruit or cheese over an open book, or
carelessly to carry a cup to and from his mouth; and because he
has no wallet at hand he drops into books the fragments that are
left. Continually chattering, he is never weary of disputing
with his companions, and while he alleges a crowd of senseless
arguments, he wets the book lying half open in his lap with
sputtering showers. Aye, and then hastily folding his arms he
leans forward on the book, and by a brief spell of study invites
a prolonged nap; and then, by way of mending the wrinkles, he
folds back the margin of the leaves, to the no small injury of
the book. Now the rain is over and gone, and the flowers have
appeared in our land. Then the scholar we are speaking of, a
neglecter rather than an inspector of books, will stuff his
volume with violets, and primroses, with roses and quatrefoil.
Then he will use his wet and perspiring hands to turn over the
volumes; then he will thump the white vellum with gloves covered
with all kinds of dust, and with his finger clad in long-used leather will hunt line by line through the page; then at the sting of the biting flea the sacred book is flung aside, and is hardly shut for another month, until it is so full of the dust that has found its way within, that it resists the effort to close it.

But the handling of books is specially to be forbidden to those shameless youths, who as soon as they have learned to form the shapes of letters, straightway, if they have the opportunity, become unhappy commentators, and wherever they find an extra margin about the text, furnish it with monstrous alphabets, or if any other frivolity strikes their fancy, at once their pen begins to write it. There the Latinist and sophister and every unlearned writer tries the fitness of his pen, a practice that we have frequently seen injuring the usefulness and value of the most beautiful books.

Again, there is a class of thieves shamefully mutilating books, who cut away the margins from the sides to use as material for letters, leaving only the text, or employ the leaves from the ends, inserted for the protection of the book, for various uses and abuses-- a kind of sacrilege which should be prohibited by the threat of anathema.

Again, it is part of the decency of scholars that whenever they
return from meals to their study, washing should invariably precede reading, and that no grease-stained finger should unfasten the clasps, or turn the leaves of a book. Nor let a crying child admire the pictures in the capital letters, lest he soil the parchment with wet fingers; for a child instantly touches whatever he sees. Moreover, the laity, who look at a book turned upside down just as if it were open in the right way, are utterly unworthy of any communion with books. Let the clerk take care also that the smutty scullion reeking from his stewpots does not touch the lily leaves of books, all unwashed, but he who walketh without blemish shall minister to the precious volumes. And, again, the cleanliness of decent hands would be of great benefit to books as well as scholars, if it were not that the itch and pimples are characteristic of the clergy.

Whenever defects are noticed in books, they should be promptly repaired, since nothing spreads more quickly than a tear and a rent which is neglected at the time will have to be repaired afterwards with usury.

Moses, the gentlest of men, teaches us to make bookcases most neatly, wherein they may be protected from any injury: Take, he says, this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. O fitting place and appropriate for a library, which was made of imperishable shittim-wood, and was all covered within and without with gold! But the Saviour also has warned us by His example against all
unbecoming carelessness in the handling of books, as we read in
S. Luke. For when He had read the scriptural prophecy of
Himself in the book that was delivered to Him, He did not give it
again to the minister, until He had closed it with his own most
sacred hands. By which students are most clearly taught that in
the care of books the merest trifles ought not to be neglected.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHOWETH THAT WE HAVE COLLECTED SO GREAT STORE OF BOOKS FOR THE
COMMON BENEFIT OF SCHOLARS AND NOT ONLY FOR OUR OWN PLEASURE

Nothing in human affairs is more unjust than that those things
which are most righteously done, should be perverted by the
slanders of malicious men, and that one should bear the reproach
of sin where he has rather deserved the hope of honour. Many
things are done with singleness of eye, the right hand knoweth
not what the left hand doth, the lump is uncorrupted by leaven,
nor is the garment woven of wool and linen; and yet by the
trickery of perverse men a pious work is mendaciously transformed
into some monstrous act. Certes, such is the unhappy condition
of sinful nature, that not merely in acts that are morally
doubtful it adopts the worse conclusion; but often it depraves by
iniquitous subversion those which have the appearance of
rectitude.
For although the love of books from the nature of its object
bears the aspect of goodness, yet, wonderful to say, it has
rendered us obnoxious to the censures of many, by whose
astonishment we were disparaged and censured, now for excess of
curiosity, now for the exhibition of vanity, now for intemperance
of delight in literature; though indeed we were no more disturbed
by their vituperation than by the barking of so many dogs,
satisfied with the testimony of Him to whom it appertaineth to
try the hearts and reins. For as the aim and purpose of our
inmost will is inscrutable to men and is seen of God alone, the
searcher of hearts, they deserve to be rebuked for their
pernicious temerity, who so eagerly set a mark of condemnation
upon human acts, the ultimate springs of which they cannot see.
For the final end in matters of conduct holds the same position
as first principles in speculative science or axioms in
mathematics, as the chief of philosophers, Aristotle, points out
in the seventh book of the Ethics. And therefore, just as the
truth of our conclusions depends upon the correctness of our
premises, so in matters of action the stamp of moral rectitude is
given by the honesty of aim and purpose, in cases where the act
itself would otherwise be held to be morally indifferent.

Now we have long cherished in our heart of hearts the fixed
resolve, when Providence should grant a favourable opportunity,
to found in perpetual charity a Hall in the reverend university
of Oxford, the chief nursing mother of all liberal arts, and to
endow it with the necessary revenues, for the maintenance of a
number of scholars; and moreover to enrich the Hall with the
treasures of our books, that all and every of them should be in
common as regards their use and study, not only to the scholars
of the said Hall, but by their means to all the students of the
before-named university for ever, in the form and manner which
the following chapter shall declare. Wherefore the sincere love
of study and zeal for the strengthening of the orthodox faith to
the edifying of the Church, have begotten in us that solicitude
so marvellous to the lovers of pelf, of collecting books wherever
they were to be purchased, regardless of expense, and of having
those that could not he bought fairly transcribed.

For as the favourite occupations of men are variously
distinguished according to the disposition of the heavenly
bodies, which frequently control our natural composition, so that
some men choose to devote themselves to architecture, others to
agriculture, others to hunting, others to navigation, others to
war, others to games, we have under the aspect of Mercury
entertained a blameless pleasure in books, which under the rule
of right reason, over which no stars are dominant, we have
ordered to the glory of the Supreme Being, that where our minds
found tranquillity and peace, thence also might spring a most
devout service of God. And therefore let our detractors cease,
who are as blind men judging of colours; let not bats venture to
speak of light; and let not those who carry beams in their own
eyes presume to pull the mote out of their brother's eye. Let
them cease to jeer with satirical taunts at things of which they
are ignorant, and to discuss hidden things that are not revealed
to the eyes of men; who perchance would have praised and
commended us, if we had spent our time in hunting, dice-playing,
or courting the smiles of ladies.

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE MANNER OF LENDING ALL OUR BOOKS TO STUDENTS

It has ever been difficult so to restrain men by the laws of
rectitude, that the astuteness of successors might not strive to
transgress the bounds of their predecessors, and to infringe
established rules in insolence of licence. Accordingly, with the
advice of prudent men, we have prescribed the manner in which we
desire that the communication and use of our books should be
permitted for the benefit of students.

Imprimis, we give and grant all and singular the books, of which
we have made a special catalogue, in consideration of affection,
to the community of scholars living in ---- Hall at Oxford, as a
perpetual gift, for our soul and the souls of our parents, and
also for the soul of the most illustrious King Edward the Third
from the Conquest, and of the most pious Queen Philippa, his
consort: to the intent that the same books may be lent from time
to time to all and singular the scholars and masters of the said
place, as well regular as secular, for the advancement and use of
study, in the manner immediately following, that is to say:

Five of the scholars sojourning in the Hall aforesaid shall be appointed by the Master thereof, who shall have the charge of all the books, of which five persons three and not fewer may lend any book or books for inspection and study; but for copying or transcribing we direct that no book shall be allowed outside the walls of the house. Therefore, when any scholar secular or religious, whom for this purpose we regard with equal favour, shall seek to borrow any book, let the keepers diligently consider if they have a duplicate of the said book, and if so, let them lend him the book, taking such pledge as in their judgment exceeds the value of the book delivered, and let a record be made forthwith of the pledge and of the book lent, containing the names of the persons delivering the book and of the person who receives it, together with the day and year when the loan is made.

But if the keepers find that the book asked for is not in duplicate, they shall not lend such book to any one whomsoever, unless he shall belong to the community of scholars of the said Hall, unless perhaps for inspection within the walls of the aforesaid house or Hall, but not to be carried beyond it.

But to any of the scholars of the said Hall, any book may be lent by three of the aforesaid keepers, after first recording,
however, his name, with the day on which he receives the book.

Nevertheless, the borrower may not lend the book entrusted to him
to another, except with the permission of three of the aforesaid
keepers, and then the name of the first borrower being erased,
the name of the second with the time of delivery is to be
recorded.

Each keeper shall take an oath to observe all these regulations
when they enter upon the charge of the books. And the recipients
of any book or books shall thereupon swear that they will not use
the book or books for any other purpose but that of inspection or
study, and that they will not take or permit to be taken it or
them beyond the town and suburbs of Oxford.

Moreover, every year the aforesaid keepers shall render an
account to the Master of the House and two of his scholars whom
he shall associate with himself, or if he shall not be at
leisure, he shall appoint three inspectors, other than the
keepers, who shall peruse the catalogue of books, and see that
they have them all, either in the volumes themselves or at least
as represented by deposits. And the more fitting season for
rendering this account we believe to be from the First of July
until the festival of the Translation of the Glorious Martyr S.
Thomas next following.

We add this further provision, that anyone to whom a book has
been lent, shall once a year exhibit it to the keepers, and
shall, if he wishes it, see his pledge. Moreover, if it chances
that a book is lost by death, theft, fraud, or carelessness, he
who has lost it or his representative or executor shall pay the
value of the book and receive back his deposit. But if in any
wise any profit shall accrue to the keepers, it shall not be
applied to any purpose but the repair and maintenance of the
books.

CHAPTER XX

AN EXHORTATION TO SCHOLARS TO REQUITE US BY PIOUS PRAYERS

Time now clamours for us to terminate this treatise which we have
composed concerning the love of books; in which we have
endeavoured to give the astonishment of our contemporaries the
reason why we have loved books so greatly. But because it is
hardly granted to mortals to accomplish aught that is not rolled
in the dust of vanity, we do not venture entirely to justify the
zealous love which we have so long had for books, or to deny that
it may perchance sometimes have been the occasion of some venial
negligence, albeit the object of our love is honourable and our
intention upright. For if when we have done everything, we are
bound to call ourselves unprofitable servants; if the most holy
Job was afraid of all his works; if according to Isaiah all our
righteousness is as filthy rags, who shall presume to boast
himself of the perfection of any virtue, or deny that from some
circumstance a thing may deserve to be reprehended, which in
itself perhaps was not reprehensible. For good springs from one
selfsame source, but evil arises in many ways, as Dionysius
informs us. Wherefore to make amends for our iniquities, by
which we acknowledge ourselves to have frequently offended the
Creator of all things, in asking the assistance of their prayers,
we have thought fit to exhort our future students to show their
gratitude as well to us as to their other benefactors in time to
come by requiting our forethought for their benefit by spiritual
retribution. Let us live when dead in their memories, who have
lived in our benevolence before they were born, and live now
sustained by our beneficence. Let them implore the mercy of the
Redeemer with unwearied prayer, that the pious Judge may excuse
our negligences, may pardon the wickedness of our sins, may cover
the lapses of our feebleness with the cloak of piety, and remit
by His divine goodness the offences of which we are ashamed and
penitent. That He may preserve to us for a due season of
repentance the gifts of His good grace, steadfastness of faith,
loftiness of hope, and the widest charity to all men. That He
may turn our haughty will to lament its faults, that it may
deplore its past most vain elations, may retract its most bitter
indignations, and detest its most insane delectations. That His
virtue may abound in us, when our own is found wanting, and that
He who freely consecrated our beginning by the sacrament of
baptism, and advanced our progress to the seat of the Apostles
without any desert of ours, may deign to fortify our outgoing by
the fitting sacraments. That we may be delivered from the lust
of the flesh, that the fear of death may utterly vanish and our spirit may desire to be dissolved and be with Christ, and existing upon earth in body only, in thought and longing our conversation may be in Heaven. That the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation may graciously come to meet the prodigal returning from the husks; that He may receive the piece of silver that has been lately found and transmit it by His holy angels into His eternal treasury. That He may rebuke with His terrible countenance, at the hour of our departure, the spirits of darkness, lest Leviathan, that old serpent, lying hid at the
gate of death, should spread unforeseen snares for our feet. But when we shall be summoned to the awful judgment-seat to give an account on the testimony of conscience of all things we have done in the body, the God-Man may consider the price of the holy blood that He has shed, and that the Incarnate Deity may note the frame of our carnal nature, that our weakness may pass unpunished where infinite loving-kindness is to be found, and that the soul of the wretched sinner may breathe again where the peculiar office of the Judge is to show mercy. And further, let our students be always diligent in invoking the refuge of our hope after God, the Virgin Mother of God and Blessed Queen of Heaven, that we who for our manifold sins and wickednesses have deserved the anger of the Judge, by the aid of her ever-acceptable supplications may merit His forgiveness; that her pious hand may depress the scale of the balance in which our small and few good deeds shall be weighed, lest the heaviness of our sins preponderate and cast us down to the bottomless pit of perdition. Moreover, let them ever venerate with due observance the most deserving Confessor
Cuthbert, the care of whose flock we have unworthily undertaken, ever devoutly praying that he may deign to excuse by his prayers his all-unworthy vicar, and may procure him whom he hath admitted as his successor upon earth to be made his assessor in Heaven. Finally, let them pray God with holy prayers as well of body as of soul, that He will restore the spirit created in the image of the Trinity, after its sojourn in this miserable world, to its primordial prototype, and grant to it for ever to enjoy the sight of His countenance: through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE END OF THE PHILOBIBLON OF MASTER RICHARD DE AUNGERVILLE, SURNAMED DE BURY, LATE BISHOP OF DURHAM THIS TREATISE WAS FINISHED IN OUR MANORHOUSE OF AUCKLAND ON THE 24TH DAY OF JANUARY, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR, THE FIFTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF OUR AGE BEING EXACTLY COMPLETED, AND THE ELEVENTH YEAR OF OUR PONTIFICATE DRAWING TO AN END; TO THE GLORY OF GOD. AMEN.
One of the earliest treatises on the value of preserving neglected manuscripts, building a library, and book collecting, Richard De Bury’s The Philobiblon was written in 1345 and circulated widely in manuscript form for over a century. The chapter titles of this legendary work reflect its nature, combining the author’s love for and commitment to the importance of books and the knowledge they contain with thoughts on collecting them, lending them, teaching with them, and simply enjoying them: “That the Treasure of Wisdom is chiefly contained in books,” “What we are to think of the price in the buying of books,” “Who ought to be special lovers of books,” and “Of the manner of lending all our books to students.”

The Author of the Book.

Richard de Bury (1281-1345), so called from being born near Bury St. Edmunds, was the son of Sir Richard Aungerville. He studied at Oxford; and was subsequently chosen to be tutor to Prince Edward of Windsor, afterwards Edward III. According to the concluding note, the Philobiblon was completed on the bishop’s fifty-eighth birthday, the 24th of January, 1345, so that even though weakened by illness, Richard must have been actively engaged in his literary efforts to the very end of his generous and noble life. His enthusiastic devoted biographer Chambre[1] gives a vivid account of the bishop’s bookloving propensities, supplementary to what can be gathered from the Philobiblon itself.