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M. R. James (1862–1936) is probably best remembered as a writer of chilling ghost stories, but he was an outstanding scholar of medieval literature and palaeography, who served both as Provost of King's College, Cambridge, and as Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, and many of his stories reflect his academic background. His detailed descriptive catalogues of manuscripts owned by colleges, cathedrals and museums are still of value to scholars today. First published in 1929, this book lists over 300 separate volumes which were part of the library of Peterborough Abbey before the Dissolution. James reconstructs this list from sources including lists of books bequeathed to the Abbey, ancient catalogues, and extant books which can be identified as belonging to the library in the medieval period. He also provides a short analysis of his sources. Now reissued, this book will be welcomed by librarians and researchers alike.

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL
SOCIETY'S TRANSACTIONS. NO. 5

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LISTS OF MANUSCRIPTS
FORMERLY IN
PETERBOROUGH ABBEY
LIBRARY

With Preface and Identifications

By

M. R. JAMES, LITT.D., F.B.A., F.S.A.

Provost of Eton ; sometime Provost of King's College, Cambridge

PRINTED AT THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
FOR THE BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

1926

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P R E F A C E

THE sources known to me, out of which an account of the Library of Peterborough Abbey can be constructed, are these :

a. Lists of books bequeathed to the Abbey. These are to be found (i) in the list of gifts of bishop Æthelwold (†984) of Winchester, formerly Abbot of Peterborough : printed from the MS. chartulary belonging to the Society of Antiquaries (No. 60) in the *Monasticon*, i. 382. (ii) In the lives of the successive abbots from Benedict (†1194) to Nicholas Elmstow (†1396)¹ in Whittlesey's *History of the Abbey*, extracted by Gunton and printed in full by Sparke.

From these we recover the titles of a little over 220 volumes, but many of these are service-books.

b. Ancient catalogues. Of these there are two : (i) in MS. Bodley 163 (Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*). It has been printed several times, by Pauli in *Neues Archiv* ii (1876), 433, and hence in the *Serapeum* xxxviii (1877), 120, and by Becker in his *Catalogi*, No. 96: see also Gottlieb, *Ueber Mittelalt. Bibliotheken*, 515. It is of cent. XII, early, and contains about 70 titles. It is anonymous in the MS., but coincidences with the other documents in the case have made me sure that it must be attributed to Peterborough.

(ii) In a MS. among the Peterborough muniments (now in the Chapter Library). Printed by Gunton in his *History*, and copied and collated with the original by myself in 1908. A reprint of Gunton's text is in the *Serapeum* (xii, xiii : 1851-2). It is a

¹ Whittlesey stops in 1338 : for the later Abbots Gunton does not mention his source.

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tall narrow book of 28 leaves of paper and vellum ($11\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{3}{8}$ in.) in two gatherings of 14 leaves each, and I take it to date from late in the xivth century. The contents are :

Matricularium librarie monasterii Burgi Sancti Petri paucis libris non examinatis.

The catalogue ends on f. 19^b. Then follows without break matter occupying the rest of the page, probably in the same hand : Qualiter agitur cum iustus in extremis agit. Angelus sui custos cum multitudine angelorum venit et animam eius de carcere corporis tollit et cum maxime et dulcissime melodie cantu et cum immenso lumine ac iucundissimo odore ad celeste perducit palatium in spiritualem paradisum. . . .

ending : talis est mutacio dextere excelsi

Qualiter agitur cum impius in extremis agit. Cum autem impius in extremis agit veniunt demones cum maximo strepitu. . . .

ending : dolor horrende visiones, etc. (?) *in ix^o fo. script.*

At top of f. 20 is : Sepe recorderis bone frater quod morieris.

Then : Liber de arte moriendi.¹

This, it seems, is in a different hand. Beginning :

Cum de presentis exilii miseria transitus mortis propter moriendi impericiam multum non solum laicis verum etiam religiosis atque deuotis difficilis . . . orationes dicendos super agonizantes ab aliquo assistencium.

These are in six *particulae*. The first begins :

Cum omnium terribilium mors corporis terribilissima sit.

They end f. 28^a : ut in pace sit locus tuus et habitacio tua in ierusalem celesti, per eundem. Explicit liber de arte moriendi.

On f. 28^b at top are some verses :

Demon. Hanc animam posco quia plenam crimine nosco.

Angelus. Hic si peccauit nece pressus opem rogauit.

Anima. O spes in morte me solue maria precor te.

¹ By Matthew of Krakau? See Royal MS. 8. B. xvi.

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Maria. De qua suxisti fili veniam precor isti.
Filius Dei. Wlnere queso pater [da ?] quod rogitat mea mater.
Pater. Nate petita dabo quod vis volo [nulla ?] negabo.
Angelus. Aspice peccator vbi filius est mediator
 Pro precibus matris qualis est responsio patris.
 Non prius in dulcem declines lumina sompnum
 Omnia quam longi reputaueris acta diei.

Then, in the hand of f. 19^b, follows the continuation of the text there begun. It is followed by a paragraph *De generali iudicio*, ending: erubescet luna. Require in 4^o fo. ante matricular(ium). But nothing now precedes the *Matricularium*.

c. A short list of books (15) seen by Leland at Peterborough shortly before the Dissolution: printed in his *Collectanea*, iv. 31.

d. The extant books which can be identified as having belonged to the library in medieval times.

From what has been said it will be apparent that the most copious source of information is the *Matricularium* preserved at Peterborough, occupying as it does some 38 pages in the MS., and containing entries of 346 separate volumes. A discussion of its character and of the principle on which it is arranged will therefore be a proper preliminary to making any use of it. And at the outset I remark that the *format* and material of the book suggest that it can hardly be the official catalogue drawn up for use in the library. Examples of such official catalogues we have, e.g. in those of Dover Priory; St. Augustine's, Canterbury; the Austin Friars of York; Leicester Abbey; Sion Monastery, all of them much more carefully and better written books than ours, the aspect of which at once suggests that it was made for private use.

We proceed to examine the arrangement of the catalogue, and find it to be quite systematic. The volumes are arranged under a series of alphabets of 23 letters (A–Z, omitting J, V, W). Each letter of the first alphabet has a single dot after it; each letter of the second has two dots; each of the third, three; the

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fourth has the numeral IV attached to each letter, and so on with V, VI, etc., up to XVI; but this last alphabet is incomplete, only going down to letter C. Thus we ought to find $23 \times 15 + 3$ entries = 348; but irregularities or errors reduce the number to 346.

Then we look at the contents: and here we are surprised to find that a great many of the works which form the staple of ordinary monastic libraries are wholly absent from the list. Not only so, but when we turn to the bequests of the abbots, we find among them many of these ordinary books, which yet make no appearance in our catalogue. By ordinary books I mean Bibles, glossed books of the Bible, Augustine on the Psalms, and on the Trinity, Gregory's *Moralia*, the Sentences, the *Summa* of Aquinas, the *Decretum* of Gratian, the Digest: you will be hard put to it to prove from this catalogue that Peterborough Abbey owned any of these or scores of others which one could readily name.

I have made two Indexes, one to the *Matricularium*, the other to the remaining documents; and a glance at them will prove my point to demonstration.

The question then arises: Is this in some sort a supplementary catalogue which designedly omits the large treatises and only records those of smaller compass? and there are two phenomena which point to an affirmative answer. One is in the catalogue itself. There are several entries which are plainly incomplete as they stand. No. 24 (C. 2), *Retractationes Bede de quibusdam questionibus precedentis tractatus*; No. 83 (Q. IV), *Aliud Psalterium de beata Virgine*; No. 175 (Q. VIII), *Tractatus eiusdem de confessione*; and again, No. 124 (L. VI), *Liber de arte poetica, Sermones eiusdem, Epistole eiusdem*; No. 35 (O. 2), *Liber Penitentialis in fine*; No. 218 (N. X), *Numerale in tribus quaternionibus sequentibus*. Such phrases show that part of the document which was being copied has been omitted: they do not prove that this was done designedly.

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The other phenomenon, however, does seem to show that. It is the evidence of extant books.

No. 23 (B. 2) in the catalogue runs thus :

Beda super Tobiam.

„ super triginta questiones de libris Regum.

„ super canticum Abacuc.

„ de templo Salomonis.

Augustinus contra quinque hereses.

Sermo Augustini de muliere forti.

Ieronymus super Ecclesiasten.

Tractatus Ernulfi Episcopi Roffensis de incestuosis coniugiis.

Now these are the exact contents of MS. Lambeth, 191: only, the first, and longest, article in that MS. is Beda super parabolas Salomonis. Again, No. 3 (C. 1) gives :

Pastorale Ambrosii.

Questio Ieronimi de induracione cordis Pharaonis et de aliis quatuor questionibus.

Item de xv signis ante diem iudicii.

And the Eton MS. 21 has exactly these articles, but preceded by Jerome on Daniel and the twelve Prophets, which occupies 323 leaves out of a total of 338. Be it noted also that the tract of Ernulf and ‘Jerome’ on the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart are both uncommon texts, especially the latter.

A third instance is afforded by the Helmingham MS. No. 6 which begins with Rabanus on Genesis (a long book), and proceeds with the smaller tracts which are catalogued under No. 36 (P. 2).

Again, one of the gifts of Abbot Robert de Sutton (d. 1274) was *Vita S. Thomae et S. Oswaldi versifice*; and No. 84 (K. IV) begins with *Vita S. Oswaldi versifice*. It has other items, but this makes no real difficulty, for the notes of the abbots’ bequests are obviously made as brief as is consistent with clearness.

Returning from this evidence to the catalogue, we find many

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entries which can hardly represent the contents of complete volumes : e. g. No. 47 (C. 3), *Litera que sic incipit* ; *Hugoni S. Victoris Priori* ; No. 54 (K. 3), *Edilnulfus [sic] de monachis*, i. e. the rather short poem of Ethelwulf. (This may, perhaps, represent MS. Bodley 163, in which Ethelwulf's poem follows Bede's *History*.) No. 120 (G. VI), *Paruus tractatus inter defensorem et accusatorem* ; No. 251 (Z. XI), *Tractatus Ratriani (Ratramni) de eo quod Christus natus est de Virgine* (a quite short text) ; and so on. Moreover, to any one who is accustomed to dealing with MSS., many examples will occur of tracts commencing entries which it is not usual to find in that position : No. 10 (M. 1), Chrysostom on the Epistle to the Hebrews would almost certainly be preceded by the *Opus imperfectum* on Matthew ; No. 25 (D. 2), Bede on Nehemiah, would be preceded by Bede on Ezra ; No. 42 (X. 2), the letter of Alexander to Aristotle would have either the *Gesta Alexandri*, or Orosius, before it.

These considerations taken together have convinced me that the principal object which the compiler of this catalogue had before him was to record the smaller and subsidiary contents of the volumes in the library, omitting the long treatises which in many cases filled whole volumes or formed the main part of them. The title of his work allows, indeed, for some omissions, in the words ' *paucis libris non examinatis* '. But like most amateurs, he is not consistent in his practice. He does not always leave out the first item in the book ; his entries, No. 2 (B. 1) and No. 14 (Q. 1), seem to give the whole contents of two volumes, the first of which is named in Bodl. 163, and the other seems clearly to be identical with Lambeth 202. And in a good many other cases, especially perhaps in the later part of his work, his entries appear to be full. No. 342 (Y. XV), which I identify with Gonville and Caius MS. 437, is an instance.

It is a real objection to this view that the numbering of the books in their sixteen alphabets is consecutive, and allows no

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room for the many volumes which contained single treatises. Against this must be set the fact—I believe it to be a fact—that no volume can be produced in which a press-mark corresponding to our catalogue is entered; nor, indeed, is a Peterborough press-mark of any kind known to me. One legitimate inference from this is that the alphabet system of our catalogue was invented by the compiler of it for his own convenience; another, less likely, that it was a system which did not include any volume which contained only a single treatise.

It is not easy to gather from the *Matricularium* a clear idea of the arrangement of the library. This is not surprising if my theory of its character is correct; for we well know how little the medieval people cared about preserving uniformity of complexion in the contents of their books. Tracts of the most diverse kinds might be collected in one volume, consideration being only had to their bulk and not to their subject. However, as we look through the pages of the book, some grouping does seem to emerge.

We begin with Theology, and though we cannot be sure that the common custom of putting the four great doctors at the head of the list was followed, there are places (11 sqq.) where Augustine is conspicuous, others where Bede (22 sqq.) and Ambrose (29 sqq.) come out. As we proceed, books of devotion and meditations and the apparatus of the later centuries are common. At 93 we enter the sphere of Grammar, but it is infected by Medicine and Theology; it is between 118 and 156 that we find most of the classical authors. We then relapse into miscellanies, among which some of the names of the authors, e.g. Bonaventura, and the general complexion, show that the books are of rather recent date. About 199 are three or four French books; Canon Law is prominent about 212. French texts and romances are fairly common after 307. I gain the impression that with about 156 the older part of the library ends, and that most of the books which follow were the gifts of

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single monks ; this, from a comparison of this catalogue with that of Christ Church, Canterbury, in the first part of which a classification (alphabetical) is perceptible, while in the second the gifts are chronicled apparently in the order of their accession.

This notion is neither confirmed nor refuted by the older catalogue in Bodl. 163 which begins with Augustine, Histories, Jerome, Ambrose, and then becomes very miscellaneous, but contains, as it happens, no 'grammatical' books at all. It has to some extent, but not completely, the character of a 'cloister' library, such as is separately entered in the Christ Church catalogue, and consists of standard books of reference.

The moral of what I have said so far is that the *Matricularium* is a thoroughly abnormal catalogue, and that the process of identifying extant books by its means is not easy, and is beset by uncertainties. It will not help us at all, we have seen, in the case of Bibles or Glosses or Augustine's *de civitate Dei* or many more ; and even when a series of small tracts in an extant MS. reminds us of something in it, we have to reckon, on the one hand, with possible omissions by the cataloguer or mutilations in the MS., and, on the other hand, with accidental coincidences due to the confirmed propensity of some groups of tracts to circulate together. Still, now that its real character has been pointed out, it ought not to be unfruitful in bringing Peterborough books to light.

As a matter of fact the number of Peterborough books known to exist is remarkably small. Of Psalters and service-books, Consuetudinaries and Chartularies, there may be a score ; but these are not library-books. Of library-books proper, I doubt if more than a couple of dozen can be pointed out. We know from Gunton and Patrick how cruelly the Church suffered in the Civil Wars ; we do not know from them or from any other source what proportion of the library had remained *in situ* down to that date. Nor do the experiences of the neighbouring abbeys afford much help. Crowland books are not common,

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but we have no catalogue by which to judge of its wealth. Thorney books are perhaps commoner, e.g. at Edinburgh. For Ramsey we have a fragmentary catalogue showing it to have been rich, especially in Hebrew, but extant MSS. are rare. In Ely we have a case like Peterborough, where the buildings were preserved: we know its press-mark, though we have no catalogue, and Ely MSS. may be quickly numbered. I am afraid it is clear that at the Dissolution there was great havoc wrought among all these libraries. Bury and Norwich were by far the luckiest of all those in East Anglia. In the former case a large block of MSS. came into the hands of a man who passed them on to Pembroke College, Cambridge; in the latter, the Chapter seem to have been persuaded by one of their members to present a good many books to the University of Cambridge.

At Lambeth there is a small set of MSS. described in the old catalogues as 'Bundles', *fasciculi*; the medieval ones among these are imperfect fragments of larger volumes, and in some cases I thought I saw reason to believe that they came from Peterborough. This conjecture, if substantiated, would point to a devastation of the library earlier than the Civil Wars, and would confirm my guess that the Peterborough books were badly treated at the Dissolution.

Of extant Peterborough books perhaps the most famous is the copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Bodl. Laud. Misc. 636, which, though it has no Peterborough inscription or mark, was undoubtedly written in the abbey.

The list which I have been able to get together is, as I have said, a sadly short one. Of service-books I reckon more than of library-books.

Psalters :

Oxford. Bodl. Douce 296, of cent. xi.

Barlow 22, of cent. xiv.

Cambridge. C.C.C. 53, of cent. xiv.

„ St. John's 81, Robert de Lindsey's glossed Psalter.

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Society of Antiquaries 59, Robert de Lindsey's un glossed
Psalter, both of cent. xiii.

Fitzwilliam Museum, MS. 12, of cent. xiii.

Brussels Bibl. Royale 9961-3, given about 1320 to a
French cardinal ; of cent. xiii, late.

Other service-books :

Oxford Bodl. 18330, Gough Liturg. 17, Breviary, cent.
xiv.

Cambridge Magd. 10, Antiphoner of Gilbert de Stanford,
cent. xiii.

Lambeth 198, 198^b, Directory of Services, cent. xiv.

Library-books :

Oxford Bodl. 96 (1919), Augustine, Cassiodorus, etc., cent.
xiv. Liber Rob. Spyrman Capellani de Burgo S. Petri.

Bodl. 163, Bede Hist. Eccl. = 54 (K. 3).

Laud Misc. 636, A-S. Chronicle.

Cambridge C.C.C. 92, Florence of Worcester.

160, Bede in Epp. Canon.

Gonville and Caius 437, Ordinarium vitae religiosae = 342
(Y. XV).

454, Will de Woodford's Summa de
vitiis et virtutibus (129).

St. John's 256 (probably), Somme le Roi.

British Museum Cotton, Julius D. 11 Gesta Henrici II,
given by Abbot Benedict (40).

Otho A. 17 (destroyed) contained Peterborough Chronicles
and the Passio SS. Wolfadi et Ruffini, perhaps that
seen by Leland (2).

(Nero C. 7, Vesp. A. 21, 22, Cleop. C. 1, 2, Faust. B. 3,
are Registers, Rentals, or the like, as also Add. 39758.
recently acquired, which contains Whittlesey's Chronicle
printed by Sparke.)

Harley 3667 has two leaves of a Peterborough Chronicle,

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cent. xii, and the letter of Dionysius Exiguus. Cf. No. 22 (A. 2).

Harley 3097 = I. 1 (8), Jerome on Daniel, etc.¹

Lambeth 5 Concordance, not in the Catalogue.

? 96 (2 parts), Gregory on Ezekiel 'liber W. de Folkyngham'.

? 182 (part), French exposition of the Lord's Prayer (? 345, B. XVI).

191 Beda in parabolis, etc. (23, B. 2).

202 Augustini summa, etc. (14, C. 1).

(360 (part), Injunctions of Bp. Russell, 1483).

367 (part), Sententiae: has the name of Henry de Morcott (Abbot 1353-61).

The Society of Antiquaries owns the Liber Niger (No. 60 of their MSS., and another Register (No. 38)).

Eton College 21, Jerome on the prophets (3, C. 1).

Helmingham Hall 6, Rabanus etc. (36, P. 2).

Besides the well-known Swaffham book at Peterborough, and the *Matricularium*, Peterborough has one or two MSS. of medieval date, and one—S. 6 in the Chapter Library—which I identify with F. IX (188).

In the Royal Library at Copenhagen the MS. Ny kongelige Samling, 1854, acquired in England in 1921, appeared to me probably identical with C. 2 (24).

It is, however, hardly conceivable that such collections as the Old Royal and Harley and the older Bodleian *fonds* should not contain a fair sprinkling of Peterborough MSS. May the present publication have the effect of bringing them to light.

¹ This very good example was furnished me by Mr. Gilson, as also that from Helmingham. In the Harley MS. the table of contents, which begins with 'Ieronimi super Danielem liber unus', is almost verbally identical with that of the *Matricularium*.