

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

**RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI
SCRIPTORES,**

OR

**CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND**

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

**PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER THE
DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.**

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an *Editio Princeps*; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

a 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

4

The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

Rolls House,
December 1857.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

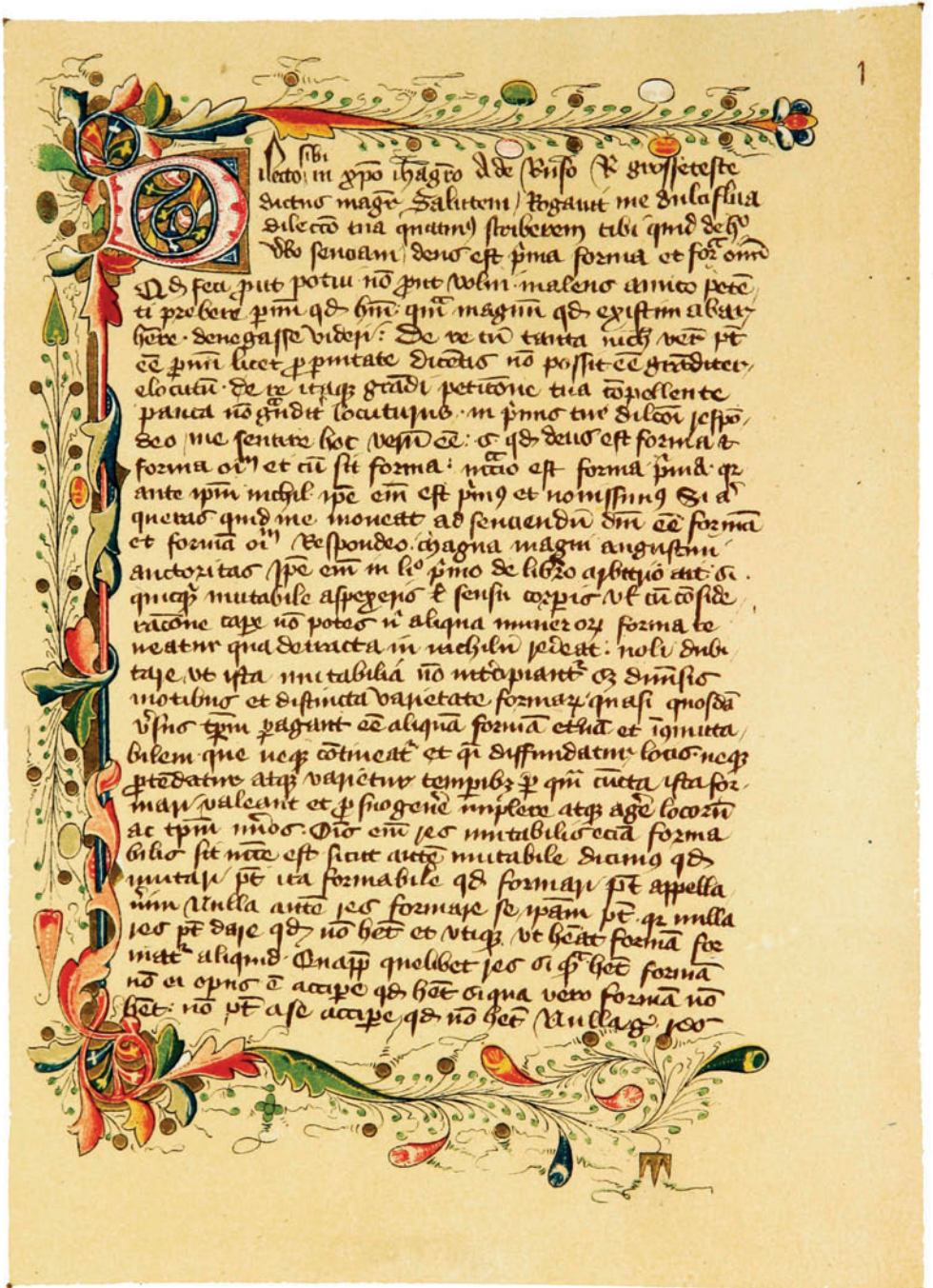
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ROBERTI GROSSESTE

EPISCOPI QUONDAM LINCOLNIENSIS

EPISTOLÆ.



Roberti Grosseteste Epistolae

MS. C.C.C. CANTAB. 453. f. 1.

Dag & Son, Lith^{rs} to the Queen.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ROBERTI GROSSETESTE

EPISCOPI QUONDAM LINCOLNIENSIS

EPISTOLÆ.

EDITED

BY

HENRY RICHARDS LUARD, M.A.,

FELLOW AND ASSISTANT TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, AND PERPETUAL CURATE OF
GREAT ST. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S
TREASURY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS.

—
1861.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Printed by
EYRE and SPOTTISWOODE, Her Majesty's Printers.
For Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ERRATA.

- Page 3, l. 10, "in forma mea, veritate tua." So all the MSS., and the printed editions of S. Augustine. But the printed edition of this letter (Ven. 1514) reads, "forma me in veritate tua."
- Page 64, l. penult., for "Rogerō" read "Roberto."
- Page 71, margin, for "Martin de Barton [?]" read "Alardus."
- Page 114, l. 10, for "archiepscoporum" read "archiepscoporum."
- Page 146, l. 6, for "*Lincolniensis*" read "*Lincolniensi*."
- Page 168, ll. 4, 8, for "Thomam, Thomas," read "Theobaldum, Theobaldus." See p. 319. The MSS. have Th. in p. 168.
- Page 171, margin, Graham, *i.e.*, Grantham.
- Page 202, l. 22, for "nobisimetipsis" read "nobismetipsis."
- Page 203, margin, for "S." read "D."
- Page 286, l. 6, "utramque conventionem." *i.e.*, one at Old Temple (p. 259), and the other at Thame (p. 289).
- Page 290, margin, for "1240?" read "1241?"
- Page 346, margin, for "1240?" read "1246?" See the table of contents.
- Pages 348, 351, 353, margin, for "1245?" read "1246?"

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E .

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

P R E F A C E .

THERE is scarcely a character in English history whose fame has been more constant both during and after his life, than ROBERT GROSSETESTE, Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 to 1253. As we find his advice sought universally during his lifetime, and his example spoken of as that which almost all the other prelates of his day followed, so was it also after his death. If threats from Rome and excommunications from Canterbury fell harmlessly upon him while alive, his example nerved others in subsequent years,—as in the case of Sewal¹, Archbishop of York,—to bear even worse attacks without giving way. And probably no one has had a greater influence upon English thought and English literature for the two centuries which followed his time; few books will be found that do not contain some quotations from LINCOLNIENSIS, “the great clerk Grostest.” Nor even with the change of thought that ushered in the sixteenth century do we find his fame forgotten. Richard of Bardney’s² metrical life of him was written in 1503

Gower.

¹ Matt. Par. p. 956, whose words are very remarkable: “ Archiepiscopus, exemplo B. Thomæ martyris et exemplo ac doctrina B. Edmundi, quondam magistri sui, informatus, necnon et B. Roberti episcopi Lincolniensis fidelitate

“ eruditus, de solatio cælitus mit-tendo minime desperavit, omnem papalem tyrannidem patienter sustinendo.”

² Printed in Wharton’s *Anglia Sacra*, ii. pp. 325–341.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

—foolish and worthless as this is, it shows the estimate in which he was even then held. Or to come to later times, the great rebellion saw his *De Cessatione Legalium* first printed, although, to use the words of the preface¹, “the name of bishop is held “in disgust; people think Italy is to be exterminated, “because the Pope rules there, and the river Tiber “is scarcely pardoned because it passes by Rome.” Later in the same century, Brown, in the Appendix to the *Fasciculus Rerum Expetendarum*, made publick almost all that has hitherto been published both of his correspondence and his sermons, and the close of the last century saw the only attempt at anything like an elaborate account of his life by Samuel Pegge. Many abortive attempts had been previously made both to write his life and to collect his works. Bishop Barlow of Lincoln, Samuel Knight, author of the Lives of Colet and Erasmus, Anthony Wood—collected materials for the former. As to the latter, the statement has been frequently repeated, that Archbishop Williams (who also had been Bishop of Lincoln) intended to collect all his works and publish them in three folio volumes. Nor has he been neglected by the historians and biographers of literature; Leland, Bale, Oudin, Tanner, Fabricius, all devote elaborate paragraphs to the lists of his voluminous works.

How universal was his genius these lists will amply prove; but to show how extraordinary his powers were thought by his own age,—an age, be it remembered,

¹ “Episcopi nomen, per sæcula
“angustum, ipsique religioni
“Christianæ coævum, jampridem
“sorduit: quicquid Romanum est,
“etiam ipsa lingua Romana, super-
“stitutionis damnatur; eo usque, ut
“non desint nonnulli adeo suis

“furiis agitati ut Italiam fere ip-
“sam exterminandam putent, quia
“Papæ subsit, et vix amni Tiberi
“ignoscant, quia Romam præter-
“fluat.” Preface to Grosseteste’s *De*
Cessatione Legalium. Lond. 1658,
p. 5.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xi

Roger
Bacon.Tyssyng-
ton.

that knew Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus¹,—it may be well to produce some few contemporary opinions. Let us first take Roger Bacon, himself probably second in universality to none. He says of him, “Solus unus scivit scientias, ut Lincolniensis episcopus” (*Opus Tertium*, ed. Brewer, p. 33); or again, “Solus dominus Robertus, propter longitudinem vitæ et vias mirabiles quibus usus est, præ aliis hominibus scivit scientias” (*Compendium Studii*, p. 472). Or to take a very different writer, Tyssyngton (in Shirley’s *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, p. 135) speaks of, “Lincolniensis, cujus comparatio ad omnes doctores modernos est velut comparatio solis ad lunam quando eclipsatur.” And indeed, though his life, as Bacon remarks, was a long one, yet the number and variety of the works attributed to him make it difficult to conceive how a man of such active habits and in such constant occupation could have found time to master, far more to write, so much. Doubtless many books and tracts have been fathered upon him, as is so continually the case with voluminous writers of the middle ages. Thus, the tract *De Dignitate Conditionis humanæ*, which he himself quotes (p. 10) as if from S. Augustine, is included in some lists of his works. So also are the *Oculus Moralis* of Archbishop Peccham, and the *Stimulus Conscientiæ*, which was written in the middle of the following century, by Richard Rolle of Hampole (a writer who in his turn has had a large proportion of the literature of his time attributed to him); while, on the other hand, the *Parvus Cato* (or Pety Caton, as Fabyan, p. 336, calls it,) is found in some MSS. of the twelfth century.

¹ Grosseteste died in 1253; Aquinas in 1274; Albertus Magnus in 1280: and Bacon, who had been a pupil of Albertus Magnus, certainly after 1292.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

PREFACE.

Still, after making every allowance for his being credited with much to which he has no claim, there remain so many undoubted works which proceeded from his pen as fully to justify the expression of the writers quoted above; for besides his sermons and lengthy theological works, we find a large number on both physical and mental philosophy, commentaries on Aristotle and on Boethius, translations from the Greek (besides the undoubted translations which are known to be his, he is said by Boston of Bury to have translated Suidas), French poems¹, works on husbandry, to say nothing of such treatises as the *De Cessatione Legalium*, or those published among the Letters in the present volume; and perhaps after reading the list we may not be surprised at some writers of a later date attributing to him powers more than human, and adding to all the above, treatises on magick and astrology, and ascribing to him the fabrication of the brazen head and the infernal horse. Nor should we forget that besides a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, at that time very rare in England, he possessed also at least considerable knowledge in medicine, as we find stated in the letter of Giraldus Cambrensis introducing him to the Bishop of Hereford (Brewer's *Giraldus Cambrensis*, i. p. 249), and to this a love of musick and skill on the harp must be added.² In spite of all this, in our own time his

¹ Polycarp Leyser, *Historia Poetarum et Poematum Medii Ævi*, p. 996, attributes to him the "Disputatio "Metrica inter Corpus et Animam," which is published among the *Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, Camd. Soc., pp. 95-106, and some verses: "De civilitate morum," beginning "Stans puer ad mensam."

² The following extract from Robert de Brunne's English version of Grosseteste's *Manuel des Peches* is given by Warton, *History of English Poetry*, i. p. 61, and is also given in Pegge's *Life of Grosseteste*, p. 362.

"Y shall you tell as I have herd
"Of the bysshop seynt Roberd;

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xiii

fame has chiefly rested on a single letter,¹ resisting an appointment to a canonry at Lincoln attempted to be made by the Pope; and his character has suffered or gained from this in the estimation of many moderns, according as their feelings have led them to consider that everything that the Pope did must of necessity, or could not by possibility, be right. Thus, while one writer speaks of the letter which Grosseteste wrote on this occasion as having "made his name immortal," another says that in consequence "the story of his life has become a mythic embodying of the principle of opposition to the see of St. Peter." But his character will be more truly understood after reviewing his life and times, and seeing what was the work he laid before himself to do, and how far this was accomplished.

" His toname is Grosteste,
 " Of Lyncolne, so seyth the geste.
 " He lovede moche to here the
 " harpe,
 " For mans witte yt makyth
 " sharpe;
 " Next hys chamber, besyde his
 " study,
 " Hys harpers chamber was fast
 " the by.
 " Many tymes, by nightes and
 " dayes,
 " He hadd solace of notes and
 " layes.
 " One askede hem the resun why
 " He hadde delyte in mynstrelsy:
 " He answerde hym on thys
 " manere
 " Why he helde the harpe so dere:
 " ' The vertu of the harpe, thurgh
 " ' skyle and ryght
 " ' Wyll destrye the fendys
 " ' myght;

" ' And to the cros by gode
 " ' skeyl
 " ' Ys the harpe lykened weyl,'"
 &c.

¹ It is somewhat remarkable that this letter is in none of the MSS. which contain the collected Letters of Grosseteste, unless, indeed, it was in the Cotton MS., now destroyed, from which Brown printed. Still the fact that Matthew Paris gives it as Grosseteste's must remove any doubt as to its genuineness. It has been excessively popular at all times, as besides Matt. Paris and the Burton Annals, there is a very large number of MSS. which contain it, together with Innocent's letter; and besides the editions of Paris, it has been printed at least six times.

b

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

PREFACE.

Position in
English
history.

Grosseteste has been styled one of the harbingers of the Reformation. If this means that by his determined endeavours to raise the character of the clergy, the zeal with which he strove against abuses, his unceasing opposition to all improper presentations,—from however high a source they originated,—his sense of the awful responsibility of his office, his anxiety for the study at Oxford of the Scriptures above all other books, and his efforts to prevent the clergy from usurping functions that would lead them away from their clerical duties, he led the way towards that event, it is certainly true. But if it implies that he had any tendency towards the doctrinal changes then brought about in the Church, or that he evidenced any idea of a separation of the Church of England from that of Rome, a more utterly mistaken statement has never been made. He was essentially a man of his own time, feeling vividly what were the great causes which were disturbing the Church and lowering the character both of clergy and people, and he eagerly seized and directed the means which the age offered towards the removal of these causes, and the improvement of the condition of the country. If judged from this standard and with this in view, there is scarcely a character in English history that stands higher. But to judge him by the ideas prevalent in the sixteenth century, or to expect to find him influenced by similar motives to those which were influencing men's minds then, is to do him great injustice; and such a view of his character can only arise from ignorance of the actual facts.

Reign of
Henry III.

The reign of Henry III. was a critical time for the Church and people of England. The same year that brought to a conclusion the disastrous reign of John, was also fatal to the most illustrious of the Popes,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xv

Innocent III. At this time more than half the country was under allegiance to Louis of France, and the prospects of the young king Henry, then a mere child of nine years old, were far from promising. The new Pope Honorius III. foresaw hence a means of establishing still more firmly the Papal power in England, and, by espousing the cause of Henry in opposition to that of Louis, through the agency of the legate Gualo,—who probably did singly more than all the rest to recover to Henry the allegiance of the kingdom—earned a claim of gratitude from the young king, of which he was not slow to make use. Nor did these feelings pass away in later years. As long after this as the year 1245, we find Henry expressing the debt of gratitude which he owed to the see of Rome for thus securing to him his kingdom. In a style more dignified than we should expect from him, he said to Grosseteste, who had been speaking of the obedience and fidelity due to the Pope (Innocent IV.) and the Church of Rome: “My Lord Bishop, what relates to our crown and royalty we determine to preserve uninjured according to our duty; and our hope is that the Pope and the Church will lend us their aid in this, and you may be assured that always and in all respects we shall show all obedience, fidelity, and devotion to the Pope as our spiritual father, and the holy Roman Church as our spiritual mother; to them will we firmly adhere, both in prosperity and adversity; on the day when we do not do this, we consent to lose an eye or even our head; God forbid that anything separate us from devotion to our spiritual father and mother. For besides all the reasons which affect us in common with other Christian princes, we are above all others bound to the Church by an especial reason; for just after our father’s death, while still of tender age, our kingdom being not only

*Influence
of the Pope
in England.*

*Letter of
Grosseteste
to Pope In-
nocent IV.
cxvii. p.
338.*

b 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

“ alienated from us, but even in arms against us (‘non solum a nobis averso, sed et nobis adversanti’), our mother the Roman Church, through the agency of Cardinal Gualo, then legate in England, re-covered this kingdom to be at peace with and subject to us, consecrated and crowned us king, and raised us to the throne of the kingdom.” These feelings, if so strong then, would of course be more powerful in his earlier years ; nor were the Popes slow to take advantage of them. From this resulted what was the crying abuse of the Church of England of that day,—namely, the number of Italian ecclesiasticks beneficed in England, many, if not all, ignorant of the language and habits of the people¹, and frequently utterly unfit by education, age, and habits of life for the situations into which they were thrust ; and secondly, the large sums demanded from the clergy as subsidies towards the expenses of the Crusades². To what an

¹ A curious remark is made by Eccleston, *De Adventu Minorum*, illustrating Grosseteste’s feeling on this point. He desired a friar to provide six or seven clerks from abroad, whom he could benefice in his diocese, to preach by example, though they could not speak English ; “ thus showing,” says Eccleston, “ that he refused to institute those whom the pope nominated and the nephews of the cardinals, not because they were ignorant of English, but because they sought only after temporal things.” Eccleston, p. 64. But in one of his latest letters (p. 443) he makes this ignorance of English an especial charge against the foreigners beneficed in England. See also below, p. lxxvi.

² Dr. Milman (*Latin Christianity*, iv. p. 213), speaking of the sources of papal revenue from England in this reign, mentions, beside the above, “ the ancient payment of Peter’s pence,” and “ the 1000 marks, the sign and acknowledgment of feudal vassalage, stipulated by king John.” But the first of these was not peculiar to the time, and the second was an arranged payment, which, however distasteful to the country, could not be regarded in the same light as the other two. Indeed, Dr. Milman adds that, “ during the whole reign of Henry III. and later, no question seems to have been raised of the Pope’s right.”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xvii

extent the first of these was carried we shall see in speaking of Grosseteste's computation of the amount received by Italians in England. In 1231 it led to a disturbance of considerable importance, in which an attack was made on them, some of the most dignified of the Italians being imprisoned, and one, John de Ferentino¹, Archdeacon of Norwich, to whom two of the letters in the present volume are addressed, only escaping by concealing himself in London. The tax for the Crusades was always collected with difficulty; we find even Henry III. writing angrily to the bishops, who were collecting it from the clergy and regulars, and expressing his astonishment and indignation that they had ventured to do this against his distinct commands. We have the answer of Grosseteste to this letter, stating in very decided terms that, instead of there being any cause for astonishment at the bishops collecting the tax, there would be justly much more both of astonishment and indignation if they refused to do it. He speaks of the reverence necessarily due from the bishops to their spiritual father and mother (as if recalling the king's own words to him, quoted above), and that especially at a time when the Pope was in exile, and threatened by the emperor. The position of the bishops between the two opposing powers was always a very difficult one, and still more so in the reign of a weak king like Henry III., who could not be depended upon to support them even if they embraced his cause; and this led to their carrying out the more readily the exactions of the Pope. Matthew Paris has seen and expressed this clearly,

Matt. Par.
p. 708.

Letter cxix.
p. 340.

¹ See the accounts of this in Pegge's *Life of Grosseteste*, Appendix xviii. p. 364; Milman's *Latin Christianity*, iv. p. 215. Dr. Milman calls him John of Florence.

This is an error of Wendover's, iv. p. 231; though previously, iii. p. 187, he had called him by his right name.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xviii

PREFACE.

when he points out the dangers of the Church of England between Scylla and Charybdis, the Pope and the king. "Many of the prelates," he adds, "fearing the king's Matt. Par. p. 709. instability in this determination and the pusillanimity of the royal counsellors, favoured the Pope's cause, although they must have seen that by such expenses the Church could not gain, but must incur heavy loss." During this reign the Pope seems generally to have obtained the subsidy demanded, with however much discontent it may have been paid. But under the sway of a more vigorous prince, such as Henry's son and successor, a very different state of things, though perhaps even more disastrous to the clergy, was brought about. Then we find the king exacting, and the Pope protesting against the exactions, and at last in the well-known bull "*Clericis laicos*," formally forbidding the clergy to pay the king's demands. The seizure of all their lay fees, and the whole body of clergy being put out of protection, were the results, whence, to use the words of the contemporary historian, "*clericalis ordo vilissimus et vilior plebe reputabatur.*" Bart. Cotton. a. 1296, p. 322.

But if, either from seeing the hopelessness of making a stand against papal exactions with the support of a king so little to be depended upon as Henry III., or from an idea that the Pope, as the spiritual head of Christendom, demanded no more than his right, Grosseteste's influence was thrown into this rather than into the opposing scale,—with regard to the other great abuse of the time, the filling the English benefices with foreigners or otherwise unfit persons at the nomination of persons of influence either in Italy or England, no one could have acted with greater straightforwardness or determination. Englishmen and foreigners, if he knows them to be unfit persons, are alike rejected; and this is the case with all indiscriminately, however great their patrons may have been. The nominees of English nobleman, Roman cardinals,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xix

the king, and the Pope meet with the same fate. And in his rejection no little skill is frequently brought into play that as little offence may be given as possible. He knows how important it is to preserve the rights of patrons, and therefore only interferes when higher claims come in. Sometimes he is obliged to temporize, sometimes to offer to provide for the applicant's *protégé* by some other means,—occasionally to give way altogether. But if ever the persons to whom he has thus once submitted presume on an easy victory afterwards¹, he soon makes them feel that they will lose their labour. On one occasion, that of an application from the all-powerful cardinal legate Otho, with whom he seems to have been on very intimate terms, after using various arguments against the institution of the person presented, he refers the case to Otho's own conscience, and leaves it to him to decide. How frequently and often shamelessly these applications were made these Letters afford ample proof. And the influence brought forward to bear upon the bishop was often such as must have made refusals very difficult. Thus we find Otho's influence used to obtain a benefice for a lad under age and not yet in orders (p. 151). Immediately on his election to his bishoprick, a deacon was presented to him not tonsured, dressed in scarlet clothes and jewelled, a layman, or rather soldier, in dress and manners; soon afterwards a boy “videlicet adhuc ad Ovidium episcoporum palmarum porrigenis”² (p. 63). On another occa-

¹ In Letter xlix., p. 145, he mentions that since his consecration a nephew of the Pope was promoted to one of the best prebends at Lincoln. Dr. Milman finds a difficulty here, apparently from expecting this to be a nephew of Innocent IV. (*Latin*

Christianity, iv. p. 364, note d.) But the Letter was written in 1238 probably, and while Gregory IX. was Pope.

² Does this mean “a boy still in his Ovid?”

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xx

PREFACE.

sion he is asked to admit to the living of Stamford on Avon a person “omnino fere illiteratus” (p. 204). And judging from the numerous instances of which we find mention in these Letters, of similar requests addressed to a prelate whose character and determination must have been so well known, how many more must there have been made to others, in whose case it was only to ask and have? And still more so in the instance of such prelates as were Italians themselves, and whose prejudices would naturally be in favour of their countrymen. This would incline us to form a sad picture of what, to a great extent, must have been the condition of the Church of England at the time, even had we not direct testimony that the natural result did actually follow from such presentations. And I think we shall thus get the true idea of the well known “sharpe pistle” of Grosseteste (cxxviii.) to the Pope, Higden, refusing a canonry at Lincoln to his nephew Frederick di Lavagna. It was rather his youth and unfitness for the post, than that he was the Pope’s nephew and nominee that caused his rejection. Indeed, no one can exceed Grosseteste in his reverence for the papal power, and for Innocent IV in particular, as shown in several of the other Letters in the present volume.

Infideli-
ty in Europe.

But there were other influences at work at this time that affected the rest of Christendom as well as England, and tended to make the work of an English prelate a very arduous one. The Crusades had brought the influence of Saracen thought and Saracen tastes into Europe¹, and these combined with the other infidel tendencies of the age,—the Manichæism which certainly gained strength from the increased intercourse between east and west²,—were bearing their natural fruit in

¹ See Mr. Brewer’s Preface to *Monumenta Franciscana*, p. x.

² *Ibid.*, p. xxxix.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xxi

spreading unbelief throughout Christendom. Added to this, the study of Aristotle, introduced through translations¹ from the Arabick, and with commentators like Averrhoes, had doubtless the same tendency with many minds. And though on the one hand fire and sword had been unsparingly used, and on the other (though somewhat later) the great efforts of the schoolmen were directed to reconciling Aristotle with Revelation, yet the poison had to some extent done its work, especially in England. The influence of the emperor Frederick II., suspected, if not actually guilty, of the worst infidelity, and his terrible struggle with the see of Rome, must have added no little weight to the same scale. Now the chief means that the age afforded for struggling against and resisting these tendencies were the rise and influence of the two orders of friars, the Franciscans and Dominicans². The use to be made of these Grosseteste seems to have seen at once, nor was he slow to avail himself of them, especially of the former. Their first establishment in England took place in September 1224, and as we find them almost immediately after (November)

Eccleston,
pp. 5, 9.

¹ Compare what Roger Bacon says upon this point: "My Lord Robert, formerly the Bishop of Lincoln of holy memory, entirely neglected the books of Aristotle and their modes of reasoning ¶ (vias eorum) . . . and knew and wrote those things about which the books of Aristotle teach a hundred thousand times better than can be learnt from the wretched translations of Aristotle himself. The bishop's works on the rainbow and on comets prove this." Though this probably refers to the scientific works of

Aristotle, especially as we find Grosseteste quoting the Ethics frequently, he goes on to say: "Had I the power over all the books of Aristotle [*i. e.* translations], I would have them all burnt, as it is only waste time, and the cause of error to study in them."—*Compendium Studii*, p. 469.

² See Wood, *Hist. et. Antiq. Univ. Oxon.*, p. 62. As regards the Franciscans, see Brewer, as above quoted. My only object is to show Grosseteste's connexion with them.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxii

PREFACE.

settling at Oxford, we can have little doubt that it was through Grosseteste's influence and invitation, as he was at that time probably resident there, if not actually chancellor, and as he became their first rector. The Dominicans had previously established themselves there in 1221. His affection for both the orders was very great, and continued through life. Thus, on entering on his bishoprick, we find that almost his first request was that he might have two of the friars with him, a request repeated frequently as regards both orders; and later he appears as insisting on the importance of members of these two orders as *latera* to the Archbishop of Canterbury¹. In some of the Letters in the present volume he bears very remarkable testimony to their great zeal and usefulness. Thus, writing to Gregory IX., he says: "Your holiness may be assured that in England inestimable benefits have been produced by the friars; for they illuminate our whole country with the light of their preaching and learning. Their holy conversation excites vehemently to contempt of the world and to voluntary poverty, to the practice of humility in the highest ranks, to obedience to the prelates and head of the Church, to patience in tribulation, abstinence in plenty, in a word, to the practice of all virtues. If your holiness could see with what devotion and humility the people run to hear the word of life from them, for confession and instruction as to daily life, and how much improvement the clergy and the regulars have obtained by imitating them, you would indeed say that *they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*" In

Wood, i.
62=i. p.
192.Epist. lviii.
p. 180.

¹ See Adam de Marisco's Letter cxi. p. 242, where he mentions that the Bishop of Lincoln had allowed a certain sum for the expenses of the Friars Minors at their chapter of Gloucester.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xxiii

similar terms he speaks of them to Cardinal Raynald, afterwards Pope Alexander IV., at a time when there was great danger from some internal cause to the order,—“*unius hominis effrænata voluntate occasionem vel causam præstante*,”—which I am inclined to suppose refers to the disputes in the chapters of the order relating to the twice deposed minister-general Helias. See Eccleston, pp. 44–47. On another (probably earlier) occasion he writes to Alexander de Stavensby, Bishop of Lichfield, who had spoken bitterly against them because they wished to live at Chester in company with the Dominicans: “Your discretion knows how useful the presence and intercourse of the Friars Minors is to the people with whom they dwell, since both by the word of preaching and the example of a holy and heavenly conversation, and the devotion of continual prayer, they are indefatigable in causing peace and in illuminating the country, and in this part supply in a great measure the defect of the prelates¹.” The difficulty seemed to be a fear that the alms of the city would not be sufficient for the Minorites and the Dominicans together, and that the Dominicans had first occupied the ground. The Dominicans, however, never obtained the influence in England or the hold upon the people that the Franciscans did². On one occasion Grosseteste endeavoured to arrange, though without effect, a mission of the Franciscans to Denmark. Another reason for his patronage of the new religious orders was the state of the parochial clergy

Epist. lix.
p. 182.Epist.
xxxiv.
p. 120.A. de Marisco, Epist.
viii. p. 91.

The parochial clergy.

¹ There seems a hint here that the Bishop of Lichfield's duties were not performed as diligently as they might be; but *prelati* means the clergy holding preferment as well as the bishops. The friars were generally disliked by the bishops; see Adam de Marisco's Letter

from Lyons on this subject, ccxiii, p: 377, and also by the parochial clergy. See p. 317 of the present volume.

² See the account of the quarrel between the two orders in Matt. Par. p. 611.

and the capitular bodies of his time. A darker picture of the condition of the people, owing to the neglect and even to the example of the clergy, can scarcely be found than what we have traces of both in some of these Letters, and in those of his friend Adam de Marisco¹; and though in the case of a man so conscientious and earnest as Grosseteste, his language probably rather exaggerates than underrates the abuses of his diocese, yet that can have been no slight cause which called forth such language as the following (the passage will scarcely bear translating):

“ Nos tam multiplicia mala, tam gravia, tam deformia, tam foeda, tam flagitiosa, tam facinorosa, tam scelerata, tam sacrilega populo Christi cruore redempto universaliter inesse et inhærere ex neglectu rectorum, ex incuria pastorum, et, quod heu fiendum est potius quam scribendum, *ex exemplo pessimo et pernicie rabida et impudenter ubique serpente,* cernimus evidenter.”

Capitular
bodies.

The capitular bodies at this time claimed to be independent of the bishop, asserting that the power of visitation over the chapter was vested in the dean, and that the bishop had no right of visitation, except in cases where appeal was made to him, or of culpable negligence on the dean's part; and no small portion of Grosseteste's episcopate was spent in vindicating his rights on this score. Almost all parties were likely to be against him; his quarrel with Lincoln would of course excite the observation of every chapter in the country. Nor would the bishops of necessity be on his side; there were certainly some only too glad to be spared the burden of the visitation of powerful bodies like their chapters; and besides, if the bishop had this right over the chapter, the archbishop would

¹ “His diebus damnatissimis” are the words of the latter in a letter to Grosseteste, xxvi. p. 116.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xxv

have a similar right over the bishops¹; and, as he asks, what bishop will allow that? Indeed, at the very time of his own quarrel, a cause was still *sub judice* on this very question of visitation between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London. After he had determined to refer the matter to arbitration, the difficulty was to find impartial judges. Who in England, he asks, would dare by his decision to offend all the chapters in the country? What person, who is subject to bishops, will be willing to decide in favour of the power of visitation, when scarcely one can be found who is ready to submit to the inspection of his superior? However, in spite of delays and opposition, the bishop carried the case before the Pope at Lyons, and was triumphant. It is very remarkable that, throughout his letters and pamphlets on this question, he always allows the power of the Pope to give exemptions from the bishop's visitatorial power, though he must have felt that most of the evils of the monasteries sprang from this cause.

Nor was he less strenuous in the case of the ^{Monasteries.} monasteries, making them the subjects of his visitation equally with the other parts of his diocese. In many instances the rule was kept in anything but a stringent manner; and though there is little evidence² of more than general laxity and ease where there should have been strictness and close attention

¹ This is Grosseteste's own argument (see p. 257), though it appears a *non sequitur*. And indeed later in his life he joined the other bishops in resisting an attempt of this very description from Archbishop Boniface. See below, p. lxxv.

² In two letters in the present volume (pp. 168, 319) mention is made of the immorality of certain monks of Minting. But to say nothing of these being from a

foreign monastery, the way in which they are spoken of would incline us to believe the case was an exceptional one. Indeed, the parochial clergy seem to have been far more guilty in this respect than the regulars. See Grosseteste's Constitutions for his diocese (Letter lii.*, p. 154), where the parish clergy are especially spoken of as keeping *focariae* in their houses.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04280-2 - Roberti Grosseteste Episcopi Quondam Lincolniensis Epistolae

Edited by H.R. Luard

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xxvi

PREFACE.

to the services, yet the monks were very far from being the helps in the diocese that might have been expected by an active prelate like Grosseteste. The fact that so many benefices were in the hands of the monasteries, who received the rectorial tythes, and appointed a vicar¹ to serve the parish, made constant inspection still more necessary.

It would appear then that by his patronage of the two orders, and especially that of the Franciscans,—while at the same time he weakened if not destroyed the independence of the capitular and monastick bodies,—he hoped to carry out his reforms, expecting by the teaching and example of the friars to shame the secular clergy into greater energy of practice and purity of life. But there was another agency to be employed, to which he looked for effecting more to withstand the growing infidelity of the age than all besides—I mean the University of Oxford, with which he has identified himself in a great measure during his whole life. Sent there at an early age, he felt the immense influence such an institution might have over the country, and he apparently never lost sight of this. And when convinced that it was through the friars that the reformation was to be worked, his energies were devoted to spreading their influence through the agency of Oxford. Thus, soon after becoming doctor, he became the first lecturer to the Franciscans settled there, and one Chronicler has stated that he only left this occupation on his appointment to his bishoprick. That he was chancellor² for

University
of Oxford.

¹ The first endowed vicarage in the country is said to have been Leysdown, in the Isle of Sheppey, about the beginning of the thirteenth century. On the subject of vicarages see Pegge, *Life of Grosseteste*. Appendix No. vii. p. 322. From a passage in the Dunstable

Annals, i. p. 312, it appears that Grosseteste met with considerable opposition in his endeavours to increase the values of the vicarages.

² It must be remembered that the chancellor was always resident, director of the studies of the whole University.