SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LIBRARY AT THE KEPIER SCHOOL, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING.[1]

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It may be well to preface this account of the library preserved in the Kepier School by a brief reference to Bernard Gilpin, the founder of the school and library, and to add a few notes as to the antiquities of Houghton itself.

Bernard Gilpin, a member of a family of some standing in Westmorland, was born about 1517. A younger son of Edwin or Ewan Gilpin, of Kentmere, by his first wife, Margaret, daughter of Thomas Layton, or Laton, of Dalemain, in Cumberland, he entered at Queen's College, Oxford, at about 16: he became Fellow, but was subsequently transferred on account of his distinguished abilities to Wolsey's new foundation of Christchurch. At 35 he accepted the vicarage of Norton, in Durham, but found himself too unsettled in his opinions to justify his continuing there, and resigned his living. He then went abroad, and spent two years in Louvain, studying the Reformed doctrines. Returning to England by way of Paris, after an absence of three years, his uncle Cuthbert Tunstall, bishop of Durham, made him archdeacon of Durham and rector of Easington; but Gilpin could not be satisfied of his ability to discharge the duties of both offices, and as the bishop declined to sever them, he resigned both and accepted instead the rectory of Houghton-le-Spring, which he held from 1557 until his death in 1584.

This is not the place to draw the gracious patriarchal figure of "Father Gilpin," well-known as the "Apostle of the North." His sainty personal character, his missionary zeal, his labours and far-seeing plans in the cause of education, his noble and dignified hospitality, have kept his memory fragrant in the north of England. Bishop Lightfoot has called him "in his own personal and

[1] Read before the Institute, 3rd February, 1909.

ministerial life the noblest exponent of the teaching of the Reformation. Even at this late date, after the lapse of three centuries, he is still the best model on which the priest of the English Church can frame and fashion his life."[1]

The Kepier School was founded by Bernard Gilpin in conjunction with John Heath, purchaser of the estates of the dissolved hospital of Kepier in the city of Durham, from the grantees of the Crown, under letters patent granted by queen Elizabeth, and dated 2nd April, 1574, and it was the object of his most anxious care. By his will, dated 17th October, 1582, he left to it "all such books as shall have the name of it in the first leafe, in the middest and in the latter end, to the intent that no man defraud that schole, which I pray God longe to keep and maintain." We learn a little about Gilpin's books from other parts of his will. He gave to the bishop of Durham, Richard Barnes, "the Historie of Paulus Jovius, and also Opuscula Calvini, gathered together into one lardge volume." To John Heath he gave "the Historie of John Sleden in Latin"; to his wife, "my English chronicle of Fabian"; to Richard Belasis, "my historie called *Novus Orbis*." His sometime pupil, Hugh Broughton, had some books of his, "Eusebius, Greek, in twoe volumes, and Josephus, Greek, in one volume, with certayn other little books." These he left to Queen's College, together with "all such books as shall have written on the first leaf 'Bernardus Gilpin, Reginensi Collegio, D.D.,' and all such bookes as shall have written upon the first leaf 'Johannes Newton, Reginensi Collegio, D.D.'"

Four of these books are still in the Queen's College library, though they are not inscribed in either of these ways. They are a Chrysostom (Verona, 1529), Sebastian Muenster's *Biblia Hebraica* (Basle, 1535), a Psalter, and the Aldine Politian of 1498. Armed with this information,

[1] Gilpin's life has often been written, but the source of all later lives is the sketch written by his pupil, George Carleton, bishop of Chichester, and published 1628–9, which has the note of personal knowledge and affection. William Gilpin, vicar of Boldre, a member of the Gilpin family, wrote an extended life founded on this in 1752. Reference may also be made to the more modern lives written by Lewin and Collingwood; to Lightfoot's *Leaders of the Northern Church* and to Canon Ross-Lewin's *Father Gilpin*, 1901. The characteristically quaint paragraphs on Gilpin in Fuller's *Church History* may also be mentioned.

I think it is possible to find amongst the books still in the Kepier School a few which may have belonged to Gilpin, and formed part of those left by him as the nucleus of the library. To these I shall return, but it is first desirable to say something of the library as it at present exists as a whole.

It comprises about a thousand volumes, many of which have been allowed to get into bad condition, partly through usage, partly through neglect. Of these about 690 bear the bookplate of Thomas Griffith, who was master of the school from 1738 to his death in 1776. He had been a student at Hart Hall, Oxford, under the notable Richard Newton, and had the reputation of a good scholar, and these books formed his own private collection which he left to the school. I am afraid we cannot exonerate him from putting his bookplate into some books which were there before his time, in fact there are one or two undoubted instances of this, but they are obviously the exception rather than the rule.

Griffith's collection is a well-balanced one, comprising an imposing array of the ponderous divines of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a selection of the philosophers and essayists of the time, a fair number of English poets, including the folio Spenser of 1617, and sundry historians, including Bacon's *Henry VII.* (fol. 1641), Buchanan (Elzevir, 1668), and Camden (Elzevir, 1677).

There is a fair sprinkling of French literature, from Jean Jacques Rousseau, Moliere, Racine, the two Corneilles, Bourdeloue and Bossuet, the voyages of Tavernier, the *Pensées* of Pascal (second edition, 1670, with a quotation from Voltaire on the fly-leaf), and the works of the Sieur de Balzac (1657–8), back to Rabelais (an Amsterdam edition of 1711), and the beautiful Philippe de Comines of 1561, in an old leather binding, gilt edged, with the device of Galliot du Pré on the elaborate title-page. Other books of Griffiths are a Boccaccio of 1638, Ariosto (Venice, 1626), Macchiavelli (Geneva, 1640), the *Cortegiano* of Baldesar Castiglione (Lyons, 1550), Petrarch (Venice, 1528), while his classics include the charming Callimachus of 1577, the Estienne edition of Geneva, in gilt lettered parchment cover, and a Pindar (Geneva, 1599), also an Estienne. His Dion Cassius (the Hanau edition of 1606)

has its cover stamped front and back in gilt, with the arms of Jacques Theodore de Bryas, archbishop of Cambrai (1675–94).

Griffith's collection is supplemented by about sixty-six books, presented, in 1742, by Ralph Robinson, one of the governors. These include five out of the thirteen Elzevirs in the library, sundry classical and philosophical works, a greek grammar, in use at Westminster School, 1689, and a selection of epigrams in use at Eton, 1699.

These two collections form, as will be seen, a large proportion of the present library, and inasmuch as a number of other books have lost their covers, on the inside of which the bookplate or inscription is usually to be found, some of these may have also belonged to Griffith's or Robinson's collections. There are, however, a number of books which have certainly been here from much earlier times; and no doubt what is here now does not represent the whole of the original collection. There are traditions, difficult to verify, but by no means improbable, of a rare bible, found between the rafters; of some rare book, of which only some half dozen copies were known to exist, which had been seen here by an expert, and was subsequently found by him in a bookseller's shop in London, when, knowing the other copies could not have been tampered with, he wrote to Kepier, with the result that the school copy was discovered to be missing.

No book can now be found inscribed in the way mentioned in Gilpin's will. There is, however, a folio edition of Cicero, from the press of Anthony Koberger, of Nuremberg (1497), with an Aulus Gellius bound up with it, on the fly-leaf of which is inscribed "Arthurus Laton" and the price, and above this, "Iste liber pertinet ad me bernardū gilpinum ex dono M^ri^ Arthuri Laton." Arthur Laton was an uncle of Gilpin, and it is at least a coincidence that the Politian at Queen's College has the autograph of "Willm. Layton," another relative, with the price marked in the same way.[1] I think we may not unreasonably conclude that we have here at least one volume which dates from the beginning of the school.

[1] The Politian is the only book of those at Queen's College which has what is apparently an autograph of Gilpin. The other volumes have only printed slips on the title-pages stating that they were given by him.

I should like to place in the same category the lovely Aldine Dante of 1502, the first to bear the famous device of the dolphin and anchor, but it has been rebound, and even so has lost its front cover, so that it is uncertain whether it may not have been one of Griffith's treasures. Others, however, which have no link with Griffith, are the *Libri de Re Rustica* of George Merula, from the Aldine Press, 1514, in an old embossed binding of *fleurs de lis* and crowned Tudor roses; a Herodotus of 1526, with a Quintus Curtius bound up with it, in a similar binding; a Priscian of 1492, bound up with Giovanni Tortelli (1488); a Xenophon of 1511, and a Jodocus Badius Ascensius of the same date; Cicero's *Epistles* (1519), in a binding stamped "Houghton" on the front and "Schoole" on the back; an Alphonsus Zamorensis (1526); Pomponius Mela (Paris, 1530), and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (Lugduni, 1561). There is also Sebastian Muenster's *Dictionarium Trilingue* (Basle, 1537), with an inscription stating that it was rebound by Hugh Hutchinson in 1671; and the close connection between this and the *Biblia Hebraica* of the same writer (Basle, 1535), left by Gilpin to Queen's College, is significant.

On Gilpin's death, bishop Barnes, forgetting he had previously made a grant of the advowson, tried to appoint to Houghton his son Emanuel, and we seem to have a reminiscence of this on the title-page of Budé's Greek Commentary (1529). "Emm. Barnes, S. Theologiae doctor, scholae Houghtoniensi."

Jewel's *Apology* (1606), although it bears the bookplate of Griffith, has also on its title-page, in autograph, "Liber Geo. Caunt." Caunt was master of the school, 1639–1686. George Davenport, rector, 1664–1677, added four works, including a Hebrew Grammar, printed at La Rochelle in 1591, and two were presented by Stonhewer, rector, 1727–1769, while a copy of Butler's Sermons has the autograph of Richard Swainston, who was curate to Stonhewer, and to his predecessors, Sir George Wheler and Secker.

Other books which may be mentioned are an Aeschylus, from the Plantin Press of Antwerp (1575); the famous *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* of Robert Estienne (1536); Florio's *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (1611), with

the fine portrait engraved by Hole; the *History of the Evangelical Churches of Piemont, collected and compiled, with much pains and industry, by Samuel Morland, Esq., during his abode in Geneva, in quality of His Highness' Commissioner Extraordinary for the affairs of the said Valleys* (1658); the black letter Chaucer of 1687; Algernon Sidney's *Discourses concerning Government* (1698); and a Diodorus Siculus of 1604, the inscriptions on the title-page of which, "tanquam explorator" and "Sum Ben Jonsonii," in the fine, clear handwriting of the poet, indicate that it belonged originally to the library of Ben Jonson.

Nor should such works perhaps be overlooked as "The Mysterie of Rhetorique unveil'd wherein above 130 the tropes and figures are severally derived from the Greek into English together with lively definitions and variety of

$$\left.\begin{array}{l}\text{Latin}\\ \text{English}\\ \text{Scriptural}\end{array}\right\}\ \text{Examples . . .}$$

. . . Eminently delightful and profitable for young scholars and others of all sorts, enabling them to discern and imitate the Elegancy in any author they read" by "John Smith, Gent." who addresses the "curteous reader" from his "chamber in Mountagu Close, Southwark, March 27, 1656," subscribing himself "Thy real welwisher"; or the enormous and once famous commentaries on the Scriptures of John Trapp, master of Shakespeare's Free School of Stratford-on-Avon from 1624. It is curious to read from the anagrams and verses prefixed to these forgotten volumes how the readers feared, apparently without the slightest reason, that they would have an insufficient supply of Mr. Trapp's wisdom. One anagram reads "John Trap—Harp on it," and the author is therefore entreated "to Harp on it still." Another compliment begins:

> "And was I so mistrustfull as to fear
> There would no more of Trap in print appear?"

These poets need not have been in the least afraid. The worthy Trapp seems to have been capable of "harping on it" to any length.

The schoolhouse, in a parlour of which the books are kept, is a sturdy building of stone, which has been added to and altered from time to time. Beside it, opening on the same broad walk, are the almshouses, erected half by George Lilburn in 1668, half by rector Davenport, and both look on the churchyard and the church, in the south transept of which stands the altar tomb of Gilpin. The school, with some vicissitudes, flourished bravely through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the development of the collieries, coupled with the growth of modern ideas as to the situation and requirements of schools, has brought it to a low ebb, and its future trembles in the balance.

With danger to the school comes danger to the library. Whether Kepier School is doomed to perish or to be reconstituted in some manner more or less foreign to the design of its founder, it is greatly to be desired that the books should be kept together and preserved at Houghton. If scattered, they become, except in a few instances, of little value, but preserved as a whole, they constitute a record of exceptional interest, touching as it does the history of the school at each point, and forming one of the links, all too few, by which the memory of Gilpin, as well as the institution which was dearest to his heart, may be kept alive in the chief place of his ministry.[1]

Even in these days such links with the past are too often heedlessly destroyed. As recently as November last a sale took place at Messrs. Hodgsons, in which were included 46 lots, comprising a large number of volumes, from the Free Grammar School of Coventry, resembling in many respect the older works in the Kepier Library, while including others of greater rarity and value, and a MS. catalogue dating from the end of the sixteenth century and quoted in the *Victoria County History of Warwick*, setting out the masters, scholars, and citizens by whom the different volumes had been presented. I do not know what were the circumstances which led to this sale, but it seems lamentable that such valuable local

[1] I may perhaps say that, until I had the opportunity of cataloguing the library two years ago, there appears to have been no complete record of its contents, and the only details regarding it in print are those contained in a paper read by me before the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries in March, 1907, and printed in *Archaeologia Aeliana*.

records should be dispersed, and I am glad to learn that the MS. catalogue at least has found a resting-place in a Cambridge library, where it can be consulted by those interested in the history of the past.

Not only have the fortunes of the Kepier School declined, but the whole character of Houghton-le-Spring and its neighbourhood has greatly changed during the last fifty years or more. When Griffith was master of Kepier, the prince bishops of Durham still held their court at Durham Castle, and Dr. Stonhewer, rector of the great living of Houghton—whose immediate predecessor, Secker, was now archbishop of Canterbury—kept his state also and drove in his coach and four. Even early in the last century Houghton was the abode of a resident gentry whose carriages and footmen were to be seen waiting outside the church every Sunday, while Kepier had its special "Order Feast," which rivalled the speech days of the great schools of the present day.[1] Scotch gentry, who sent their eldest sons to Eton, sent their younger sons to Houghton, and thus Kepier upheld its title of the "Eton of the north."[2]

The Houghton of to-day has widely changed from the beautiful old place half hidden in its sycamore groves, on which Burghley, Elizabeth's minister and Gilpin's friend, looked back with admiration from Rainton Hill, from

[1] The following note on the Order Feast appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* of Saturday, 22nd December, 1781:

"We hear from Houghton-le-Spring that on St. Cecilia's day the young gentlemen of Kepier School celebrated their annual Order Feast upon an improved plan. It had been thought expedient to abolish the nocturnal parading, as hazardous to the health of the boys. They did not, therefore, begin their festivity till ten in the forenoon, and issued in procession from the school, attended by the Lincolnshire Band of music, with colours flying, etc. After having once paraded through the town, they returned in the same order to the school, at which were assembled most of the principal gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood, Gen. Lambton, Mr. Rotheram, etc. As the plan of their oratorical exhibition was upon a much larger scale than before, it was divided into three acts, with interludes of music, twenty-four pieces in Greek, Latin, French, and English were spoken by Messrs. Milburne, Robinson, Lowry, Fenwick, Richardson, Pixell, Chrishop, Hill, Rudd, Dixon, Wilkinson and Abbs. The concluding piece was delivered by Master Mowbray. The school was illuminated at six in the evening, when the young gentlemen met to partake of the usual repast of cakes and wine, and then retired to their respective lodgings, which were all illuminated, as were also the Rectory, and other principal houses in the town. It is hoped that this regulation will remove every objection to the continuance of this ancient festival.

[2] See also the charming picture of Houghton at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the *Memoirs of a Highland Lady* (Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys), 1797–1830, edited by Lady Strachey, 1898. Mrs. Smith's mother was Jane Ironside of Houghton, a niece of Mrs. Griffith.

the Houghton of Sancroft and Davenport, of Griffith and Stonhewer, or even of the girlhood of Mrs. Smith of Baltiboys. The scholars of the "Eton of the north," whether armed with the bows and arrows of the sixteenth century[1] or with the elegances and graces of the eighteenth, have departed. Ten daughter parishes have been carved out of the ancient parish of Houghton, each with its own church and large mining population. The resident gentry have fled, and their houses are disappearing or being gradually converted to baser uses. At West Rainton, the mansion house of Sir John Duck is now used partly as a small general shop, partly as Salvation Army barracks, and only the ruin of a classic doorway with a broken pediment and the unusual size and character of the back premises, preserve some suggestion of its former importance. The comparatively modern mansion of the Strathmores at Hetton has been altogether abandoned, and presents a pitiful spectacle of decay. The memory of the "Fairy Cradle," which was once to be seen here on its green hill, is only preserved by a stone let into the front of a dismal row of pit cottages.[2] At Eppleton, the old hall, with its beautiful prospect to the south, still stands, but the pit smoke has killed its grove of protecting trees and blackened the buildings, the upper windows are given over to pigeons and the lower rooms are inhabited by a farm servant. The beautiful old house of the Conyers at Horden is a little outside the borders of Houghton, but can hardly be passed over without mention. It is now used as a farmhouse, but is a mere shell. Its famous staircase, its carved mantelpiece and oak panelling have been torn out and removed to the present owner's house at Castle Eden.

Still, Houghton itself retains some monuments of the ancient time. Nesham Hall, the home of the Neshams, is indeed turned into a common tenement house; but Houghton Hall, the Jacobean house of the Huttons, is still occupied as a gentleman's residence; the Puritan

[1] In the statutes drawn up for the regulation of the school, the "schollers" were to have "some time of recreation when the master shall think it meet . . . . to exercise their bowes in matching either with themselves or strangers in the Ox-Pasture or in Houghton Moore."

[2] The hollow stone which was known as the "Fairy Cradle" has been sent to a museum, the hill levelled, and the cottages erected on its site.

captain still lies under his altar tomb in the corner of the adjoining field, "et moriendo vivit," as his epitaph has it; and the noble church, the Kepier School, the almshouses, and the beautiful rectory, standing with so venerable and yet so homely an air in its secluded gardens, form a group of buildings which speak eloquently of a bygone day.