

it must of necessity be invaluable to all students of philology and Middle-English literature.

At the request of Dr. F. J. Furnivall, the slips already written have been entrusted to my care; and I now earnestly invite the co-operation of all who are interested in the works of our first great poet, or the study of comparative philology. As there are still a large number of slips to be written out before the final work can be commenced, I hope all who can render assistance will kindly communicate with me at the address given above.

WILSON GRAHAM.

THE SUPPLEMENTAL "NIGHTS."

London: July 28, 1888.

In the *Glasgow Evening Times* (June 9) a writer, whose hand meseems I recognise, charges me with "not using my subscribers well." I had agreed to complete my present work in five supplemental volumes, when a sixth was found necessary to contain a last instalment, "The New Arabian Nights," and to include the various indexes to the entire supplement.

It hardly needs my saying that those who decline taking vol. vi. shall not lose the papers which complete the work as promised in the prospectus. The lists shall be bound up with No. v., and thus my subscribers will not be "likened" (in the courteous phrase of the *Glasgow critic*) "to a good milch cow."

R. F. BURTON.

THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

London: July 25, 1888.

Prof. Holland begins his very courteous, but, I think, not very fair, criticism of my views on the origin of the university by saying that I start "with a series of assumptions to the effect that the schools of Oxford must have been due to a movement *ab extra*," &c. My argument was an argument from analogy. I might even call it an induction. This being the nature of the argument, it is exceedingly difficult to state it in a condensed form. I trust the reader of Prof. Holland's letter who has not read mine will not accept his statement of my case as a fair one without turning back to the *ACADEMY* of June 2.

In so far as it is possible to repeat the argument in a sentence or two, it stands thus. We find that as a matter of fact the schools of the twelfth century throughout Northern Europe were invariably connected in the closest possible way with cathedral or collegiate churches, or with monasteries. The universities invariably sprang up in connexion with the cathedral schools. At Oxford* we find a university which, from the earliest moment at which its constitution becomes known to us, has no such connexion. At Oxford we find no cathedral, and no trace of any organic connexion between the university schools and any monastery. How are we to account for the existence of such schools? There is only one cause known to historical investigation—only one *vera causa*, if I may be allowed to put the matter logically—which can account for the phenomenon, *i.e.* migration. If a great school of arts and theology can be proved to have arisen at Oxford by migration in the twelfth century, even Prof. Holland will hardly dispute that the immigrants must have come from Paris, then the only important school of the kind in Europe. The inference is one of the same kind as the argument by which a palaeontologist infers the structure and life-history of an extinct animal from the discovery of a single bone. The phenomena with which

we have to deal are less rigidly uniform than those with which the palaeontologist is concerned, though infinitely more uniform than can readily be appreciated by those who have not studied them; and the argument is, therefore, weaker in degree. But still it is an argument. I submit that it is not fair of Prof. Holland to call it a "series of assumptions."

I now proceed to notice his remarks upon my attempted disproof of the alleged teaching of Vacarius at Oxford. It should be clearly understood—though Prof. Holland himself does not make the point as plain as could be wished—that his contention is not merely that Vacarius taught at Oxford, but that he did not teach at Canterbury. Now, if the words "*leges Romanæ quas in Britanniam domus venerabilis patris Theobaldi Britanniarum primatis asciverat*," do not mean that the Roman law was first taught in England by some member of the household of Archbishop Theobald, what do they mean? And if Vacarius was not a member of that household, why is he called "noster" by the archbishop's chaplain, John of Salisbury? If it be contended that Vacarius taught both at Canterbury, as stated by John of Salisbury, and at Oxford, as stated by Gervase, the theory is no doubt more plausible. But I contend that when John of Salisbury mentions the introduction of the Roman law by the household of Theobald, and then immediately goes on to narrate its suppression by King Stephen, and the imposition of silence upon "our Vacarius," the natural inference is that John of Salisbury means that this teaching in the archbishop's household went on till the suppression. If that be so, the statements of John of Salisbury and Gervase are inconsistent. And, if so, there can be no doubt which writer is entitled to credence. John of Salisbury was a member of the archbishop's household at the time. Gervase wrote in the thirteenth century at a time when the schools of the archbishop's household had disappeared and Oxford was a flourishing university. The question is, which is most probable—that Gervase mistakenly assumed that if Vacarius taught in England, he must have taught at Oxford; or that John of Salisbury should mention the fact of Vacarius teaching in the privacy of the archbishop's household, and say nothing about what must (had they ever been given) have been the far more important university lectures at Oxford? It must be remembered too that if Vacarius lectured both at Canterbury and at Oxford, the two series of lectures have to be got into the short period—apparently not more than a year or two—between the introduction of these legal studies and their suppression by Stephen. Prof. Holland will hardly contend that Vacarius, like some of his successors, held two professorships at the same time, and lectured at two distant places on different days of the same week.

I may perhaps strengthen my case by remarking that in innumerable cases the assumption that a certain person taught at Oxford or Paris, because he is known to have taught in England or in France respectively, has been made by writers of what ought to have been a more critical age than that of Gervase (see Bulaeus, Bale, Pits, Wood, &c., *passim*). My scepticism about such statements is not an *a priori* scepticism, but is begotten of experience. I may also remind the reader that the existence of schools and a body of learned men—in fact, of something like a university—in the archbishop's household is independently ascertained. For further information about them I may again refer to Bishop Stubbs's *Lectures*.

But the fact is that Prof. Holland hardly appreciates the real *nodus* of the problem with which we have to deal. Let it be admitted *argumenti causa* (and only *argumenti causa*) that

Vacarius did teach at Oxford. The admission would in no way explain the origin of the university or of the schools out of which it arose. It is admitted that these law lectures of Vacarius ceased in consequence of Stephen's edict. When the schools of Oxford again dawn upon our view, they are schools of "diverse faculties" (so says Geraldus Cambrensis), while among those faculties arts and theology are clearly the most prominent. Where did these schools come from? They are not accounted for by the law-lectures of Vacarius. The original problem—the existence of a numerous body of masters and scholars in no constitutional relation to an Oxford church—returns in all its force. If my critic should think it worth while to pen a rejoinder, will he tell us how he accounts for the facts of the case? In his whole treatment of the subject, if I may say so with all respect, Prof. Holland seems to me somewhat to ignore the difference between the conditions of legal and those of historical evidence. He writes as if I were trying to convict Vacarius or Gervase, or some other twelfth-century writer, of some kind of imposture. I quite admit that if I were to attempt to support a plaint, in the court over which Prof. Holland presides with so much dignity, upon the evidence by which I have attempted to strike Vacarius out of the list of Oxford professors, it would be his duty to dismiss my case with costs; unless, indeed, I were allowed to subject Gervase of Canterbury to five minutes' cross-examination as to the sources of his information, in which case I should be quite content to leave my case in Prof. Holland's hands. But it will be generally admitted that the historian may be morally certain of many things which he cannot prove by legal evidence. The exact degree of adhesion which the principles of historical evidence warrant me in claiming for my theory can hardly be a matter for argument. I submit that it is, at all events, deserving of the consideration which is due to a hypothesis which completely accounts for all the facts (including the fact of Gervase having made a mistake), and which is the only hypothesis yet propounded which is in that position. I may even claim for it something of the respect due to a hypothesis which enables predictions to be made which are subsequently verified. Some time ago I declared on the evidence of the analogies of university constitutional history that Oxford must have arisen by migration from Paris. I have since discovered that a migration of scholars from Paris into England did take place at about the time postulated by my theory. I have no actual evidence that the immigrants went to Oxford; but no one acquainted with the habits of mediæval clerks will suppose that if a large body of them were compelled to leave Paris for England, they would fail to set up schools of the same type somewhere in England. As a matter of fact, there is no trace of such schools anywhere but at Oxford. My argument is a very simple application of the method of exclusions. Such is my "series of assumptions."

If Prof. Holland has any theory of his own which accounts for all the facts, and which does not involve a series of assumptions larger, more arbitrary, and more improbable than mine, will he enlighten us? The fact is the history of the past cannot be reproduced without "assumptions." The evolutionary hypothesis involves a series of assumptions quite as extensive as mine, which do not, however, prevent the scientific man from accepting it as practically certain, at least within certain limits. All that can be demanded of "assumptions" of this kind is that they shall be in accordance with the analogies established by actual historical evidence. I believe that my assumptions satisfy these conditions, and that no others will do so.

* Cambridge I believe to have originated in a similar way by migration from Oxford.