A MEDIEVAL GRAMMARIAN ON THE SOURCES OF THE LAW

BY

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I.

The Cambridge MS., Gonville and Caius College, no. 385 (formerly 605), is famous as containing some of the chief works of the English thirteenth century poet and scholar John Garland, and as such it has been studied and partly rotographed many times; since 1928 by nine English, American, Swiss, Belgian, and German students 1). It further contains (on pp. 7a—61a) an anonymous Vocabulary with the initium Sacerdos ad altare accessurus, of uncertain origin. This Vocabulary Sacerdos is a somewhat incoherent series of chapters, dealing with ecclesiastical matters, court life, education, and books. Each chapter consists of a short descriptive text and extensive lexicographical notes, each note referring to the words used in the descriptive part. As the notes are obviously by the same author as the text, the usual expression 'glosses', is perhaps less appropriate. The work must have been written by an Englishman, but for the benefit of French or French speaking readers, as the notes — not the text — constantly refer to French equivalents of the words explained 2). Its historical interest lies in the list of text-books and sources which the author recommends to the scholars of the various arts and higher faculties in the text of his writing. Thus, under Dialectics, he says: Inspiciat etiam metaphysicam Aristotelis et librum eiusdem de generatione et corruptione et librum de anima (p. 52). This would shed light on the history of the Aristotelian revival, if this sentence really contained the first certain evidence that translations of the
Metaphysics and of the physical works had penetrated to the West.

Such was indeed the opinion of Professor C. H. Haskins of Harvard. He dealt with the Vocabulary *Sacerdos* in an article, published in 1909, on 'A List of Text-Books from the Close of the Twelfth Century', of which he inserted a revision in the two editions of his *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, 1924 and 1927 (pp. 357ff.). Here he tried to show: negatively, that the Vocabulary was certainly not, as had been universally assumed, the work of John Garland, who died some time after 1257; positively, that it was very probably written by an older writer, again an English poet and grammarian, Alexander. This Alexander, nicknamed Nequam, and afterwards generally called Neckam, was born at St. Albans in 1157. He studied, and afterwards taught, the arts at the School of the Petit-Pont at Paris in the last quarter of the twelfth century, and returned to England some years before 1195; then he taught at Dunstable (Bedfordshire), and became a canon at Cirencester (Gloucestershire), where he was made abbot in 1213, and died in 1217. The negative part of Haskins' assertions has been generally accepted, while the positive part has met, and continues to meet, with general scepticism. It may be due to a simple oversight that an authority on Neckam, M. Esporito, though citing the article of 1909, does not even mention Haskins' assertion among the attributions of 'doubtful and suspicious works' which he conscientiously discusses. It is more serious that an eminent pupil of Haskins, the late Professor L. J. Paetow, who at first accepted the attribution to Neckam, in a later work affirmed that 'the matter must rest for the present, as neither all of Neckam's nor all of Garland's important works are available in critical editions'. M. Manitius, in the recent last volume of his monumental work, still treats the Vocabulary *Sacerdos* as anonymous. Specialists on the reception of Aristotle, such as Baeumker, Grabmann, Geyer, Birkenmayer, seem unconvinced; but with the exception of Baeumker nobody has advanced the slightest argument against the very weighty ones of Haskins, nor have my own studies produced any reason to doubt him. Baeumker objected, and Haskins did not give